The First Year of Our Reign
This may surprise you if you’re holding a bound volume, but all the content contained within was either underwritten by the fans of the game REIGN, or was put up gratis by myself in order to promote and support it. (If you’re curious about how this happened, point your web browser at http://www.danielsolis.com/meatbot/ransom.html. Wondering if more material has been freed since this book came out? Oh, it has. http://www.gregstolze.com/downloads.html)

This may raise the question: Why a bound volume? The answer has several elements. First off, because I can. Organizing the material (easily over 80,000 words) and laying it out wasn’t free or effortless, but it doesn’t really compare to the work of producing it in the first place. Secondly, because there seemed to be demand. The people who paid for the files, and those who used them, seemed to have interest in a convenient hard copy. Thirdly, because the risk is slight. It costs me nothing to publish this through Lulu.com, and (to be frank) the idea of getting another layer of profit from the files is pretty tempting. Not to mention: I want a hard copy for me!

If you’re reading this as a compiled PDF that you got free, that’s fine too. Maybe it’ll please you enough to go to www.lulu.com or http://www.indiepressrevolution.com/ and purchase a hard copy. If you don’t, well, I hope it’s more convenient to have all the material in one single, fat file.

That brings us to organization, which is the sticky subject when you have a lot of varied material and want to make it as searchable as possible. Initially, I thought about putting everything in one long alphabetical list, but it seemed more useful to have the book split into an encyclopedia of the small setting details (broken up alphabetically), single chapters for large pieces of integrated setting material, and then the rules (which are arranged in their own chapter, starting on page 64.)

As well as I can achieve it, the contents include every word and image I’ve put up as a supplement, and most of the REIGN wiki. I removed the articles that were introductory material for complete neophytes: Seemed redundant. Subjects that were covered in greater depth in the REIGN core book were elided too, unless further elaboration occurred in the wiki. Finally, I did not include any of the fan-generated pictures or text from the wiki. It seemed presumptuous of me to publish and charge money for the work of Chris Cooper, Martin Nerurkar, Neal Dalton and Jeffrey Straszheim, and it seemed easier to leave the delights of the Noble Fan and the Long Wasps to entice you, esteemed reader, back to the wiki.

So that’s what you’ve got: The first year of REIGN, in one glutinous lump. Let’s hope we have as much fun in year two.

– Greg Stolze, February 10, 2008
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Aqueous Divination

One of the Ob-lob people’s most marketable commodities is information about the future, garnered through visions discerned in pooled water. A versatile style, Ob-lob oracles can foresee years into the future or (when necessarily) only a few moments. Along with its utility at discovery is a secondary ability to confuse and confound magical visions of all styles. It’s described at greater detail on page 91.

Black Mountain Free State

Wider than the Anvil of Heaven, taller than Skytusk, Black Mountain rises above the plains and forests of eastern Heluso in solitary majesty. Remarkable for more than its size and uniqueness, Black Mountain soil is rich and fertile. On its lighted face it produces abundant wheat and rice, while its shadow is thick with the fungi, mosses and vines that thrive away from the sun’s regard.

Black Mountain isn’t a traditional nation or city, but an amalgam of both. The entire mountain is settled, but only in certain areas – the government district, the marketplace, the soldiers’ quarter – is the population dense enough to meet the expectations of ‘city’. It’s spread out and sprawled with terraces and waterfalls and irrigation canals crisscrossing the mountain’s gentle slopes. Even where it is most chokingly populated, one only has to walk for an hour or ninety minutes to reach a farmer’s field. Indeed, one can walk through the soldiers’ quarter and, in the middle of it, find the descendants of a stubborn farmer who refused to sell his land. The one-acre farm is walled in on all sides by tall buildings, but it has simply switched to crops that thrive in darkness.

At the summit are the pastures where the fabled Black Mountain sheep are grazed and tended and carefully watched. Black Mountain can feed itself, but is surprisingly bereft of mineral wealth. For trade, they offer instead their woven goods. The looms on the lower slopes work white wool brought in from the area around, but the black sheep at the summit... their wool is reserved for the sorcerers who tend them and need them to produce fateskeins.

Fateskeins can only be hand-woven from the wool of a Black Mountain sheep, and they have the eagerly sought quality of drawing things to them. Like destiny’s drift nets, a properly-woven fateskein can draw wind into a ship’s sails, or lure animals to a hunter’s snare, or draw the blows of weapons away from the body and towards a shield.

Black Mountain exports fateskeins at fabulous prices, and every invader has been met with the threat of killing the mystic sheep, halving the province’s value in a single stroke. Holding their sheep ransom, as well as being a defensible position that has sprouted many fortifications over the years, dissuades invasion of the fiercely proud mountain people.
Black Mountain is a member of the Heluso Confederacy, but far more protective of their national identity than the other three Confederate nations. The Free State is too small to support many noble houses, but it does possess two royal bloodlines. There is the line of the King and the line of the Queen, which are forbidden by law to ever mix. Every generation, rule is divided between the King, the Queen, and their spouses (who are expected to govern with the same wisdom and authority as the rulers by blood). As one might imagine, an unmarried King or Queen is regarded with intense interest by anyone of marriageable age and appropriate gender. The rewards for making such a match are tremendous, and with no second-tier nobility, the Queen could theoretically marry a beggar and give him the power of Queen's Consort in one stroke. (This has never happened.) The King and Queen have incentive to stay unmarried in order to keep their authority undiluted. At the same time, the healthy and affectionate rivalry between the two royal families pushes them to ensure legitimate heirs as soon and safely as possible.

Bloodcutters

The Bloodcutters were a school of sorcery developed in, and employed by, The Empire during its era of conquest. They concerned themselves with family relations and the connections of blood, and their signature spell was one that let them stab a person and have the injury appear on one of their victim's relatives, no matter how far away that sister or cousin or father might be. Once The Empire captured one member of a royal family, they could threaten all the others at will. There was one demonstration of their ability and willingness to erase entire families, and the unfortunate victims were the royal line of Uldholm.

In time, the Bloodcutters tired of being the means of enforcing Imperial authority, and began taking a more direct role in the control of The Empire's client states. The Empire had no tolerance for such a thing, and even appeared as the lesser evil when it sought its vassal nations' aid in destroying the treacherous mages. The implement of the Bloodcutters' doom was called The Orphan Army, composed entirely of those without family. It succeeded in killing the renegade enchanters. Or, at least, driving the survivors deep into hiding.

In every civilized nation, practice of bloodcutting is punishable by death, maiming or exile.

Blue Face

This tribe of Truils has suffered most from the incursions of the Ulds, because their tradition calls for meeting challenges with direct, kratig-fueled aggression. Since that hasn’t worked well for them, some are adopting Uldish ways and settling down, others are displaced into Mountain Rider and Night Hunter migratory paths, and still others have switched tactics and mount stealth raids against the newcomers.

Broadland

Broadland is one of the four nations in the Heluso Confederacy and among them is physically central, with Green River to the south, North Hold to the north, and the ocean coast to the east. This situates them nicely as an importer of Milondese goods. In fact, Broadland has allowed the Ob-lob to establish a free and independent city on its coast to facilitate trade with far Milonda. It was something of a bitter pill to swallow, admitting that their own ships couldn’t compete equally with the white tribes of the ocean, but the concession was worth it to match The Empire as a switching point for goods between the two continents.

Like North Hold, Broadland has both forests and fields, but unlike North Hold, much of their land lies in eternal shadow. The Empire literally stands between the dark parts of Broadland and the sun, eclipsing it permanently. All the forests of Broadland have their dangers, but the dark forests are particularly perilous and ill omened.
As for the plains of the dark, they’re sparsely populated and desolate. There are farmers scratching a living out of the unlit soil, but the land there scratches back.

Broadland is the most liberal of the Confederate nations. There’s a noble class and a king, but they all govern much more easily when blessed by the Faceless Clergy. The Clergy, worshippers of the Secret Gods, are influential but deliberately mysterious. They intercede against tyranny and earn the love of the people, but also demand cryptic sacrifices and utter threats that, were they not phrased in religious terms, would sound an awful lot like a protection racket. Broadland functions because, while the peasantry have no formal power, both the lords and the priests claim to be protecting them from each other. Privately, both clergy and gentry hope the peasants protect them as well.

**Burai**

Burai province is one of the five that comprise Dindavara. The westernmost part of the nation, the Meiren family lies to the east and the Xuedei to the south. To the west of Burai lies a bleak and forbidding chain of mountains, which Burai province has relied on since time immemorial to provide coal, iron, silver and gold. It is an appalling irony to them that they share the mountains with the small nation of Pluta, which adheres to the faith of the Ironbone Theocracy. Every Shu Riyen who has ruled form Gaozhang Burai has dreamed of invading Pluta, but it’s a tactical challenge to daunt even Dindavaran courage. In ages past, fear of their own brethren kept the Burai from striking Pluta. Now, they’re bound by the oath that ended the war with The Empire. But when and if the terms of that oath are ever completed, Pluta will be a very worried nation.

**Center**

Center is, as the name might suggest, the core nation of The Empire, embraced by the Western Marches to the west, Deerwood to the east, and having small borders with the Sunless Plains and the Nation of Pahar as well. A land of fertile fields surrounding great hills, Center has mineral wealth, but its own resources are dwarfed by the commerce that travels through it as the crossroads of the world. Just the trade of the five Imperial nations would suffice to make a barren land rich, but Center also holds the most direct land route between Heluso and Milonda. Though war with the Maemeck Matriarchy has seriously reduced the caravans and trading expeditions, it’s likely that no force in the world could halt them permanently.

At the middle of Center is Center City, the Imperial capitol. It covers the largest hill like a blanket, and at the peak is the palace of the Empress.
CONGMA
Congma, the Hearth Mother, is the goddess most commonly worshiped in Dindavara. A soft-hearted figure credited with creating animals and most of the human race, she is fond of her children and is believed to answer prayers when appeased with sacrifices and devotions. She is married to Dindakuan.

CONJOINING PRIESTS OF SETEKESH
A Pahar sect, the followers of this minor goddess of fertility and creation study disproportionately powerful magic. In their sacred groves, they are able to bind pairs of creatures together, creating new prodigies that have traits of both sources. Rumors insist that a debased offshoot practices human sacrifice, but the mainstream faith condemns such abhorrent devotions.

They are also colloquially known as “monster binders.” More information on them can be found on pages 96-102.

CRIMSON GUARD
The Crimson Guard are few in number but large in reputation. The Empire boasts these elite soldiers as the personal guard of its leader and ruler. To even be considered for admission to the Guard, one must be an expert with both blade and sorcery. The Crimson Guard are also loyal to the Empress, to the point of giving her the right and power to extinguish the life of a guard at any time. Furthermore, the process of initiation involves hideous personal disfigurement.

Why do it? Beyond the pride of being the best, the Guard are lavishly rewarded. Rather than a salary, they are simply granted whatever they want, within the considerable power of The Empire to grant. The most beautiful, charming and accomplished men and women of The Empire are encouraged to apply to become companions to the Guard. Being a companion earns one the same lavish rewards, and in return all one must do is marry a Guard, translate their language of gesture into speech, and sometimes chew their food for them.

Crimson Guard magic evokes blood spirits and is cast by waving bloody swords around.
**Culong**

Culon are native to the Wuha plains, so people native to the eastern side of The Empire have probably heard an accurate description of them, most people in the Maemeck Matriarchy have at least seen one, most people west of Center in The Empire have heard strange tales about them, and they’re unknown in Dindavara, Uldholm and most of the Confederacy. The number of people who have seen a culong and one of the Truils’ Walking Mountains is exactly zero, so no one has noticed the remarkable similarities – tusks, trunk, body shape, proportions, four knees, floppy ears, tail, behavior and so on. Anyone who’d seen both would think they were of a type, in the same way that a giant condor and a tiny finch are alike.

The differences are important, of course. Culong are hairless and thrive in a warm climate, but most importantly they’re only the size of a small mountain lion or a very large wolf.

Culong are domesticated from the Wuha tribes to the city of Kiqwani, though outside their native habitat they can be expensive to own and maintain. They can pull small loads and fetch things with their trunks, but they’re rare as work animals outside the Wuha nation. Their intelligence and ability to manipulate objects make them prized pets everywhere they’re available, but only in Wuha lands are they plentiful enough to be herded for meat, ivory and hides.

For more information on Culong, see page 67.

**Danifa**

Danifa is one of the five provinces of Dindavara, and the only one to border The Empire. The frontier is mountainous and difficult, but it’s long, and the history of warfare between Danifa and The Empire’s Western Marches precedes both The Empire’s formation, and the unification of the five Dindavaran clans under one rule. The rivalry between the Marches and Danifa found its fullest expression during The Empire’s wars of expansion, when the capital of Danifa was captured – the only Dindavaran capital to ever fall to an invader. Eventually the Danifa Riyans recovered their city, but some of them feel they’ve never recovered their honor.

Danifa province has a narrow border with Uldholm to the south, Xingshao province to the north, and Meiren to the west. The family colors of Danifa are blue and black.

**Death Forgers**

Dindavara’s most lauded sorcerers really only practice one trick, though it is a very versatile one. These master smiths cool fresh-forged blades in living creatures, thereby stealing part of that creature’s power. They can infuse a sword with the quickness of the cat or alerness of the hawk. They can also capture skills from slain humans, or even entire personalities. There are legal limits, however, on how many humans a Riyan may condemn to the forges in a year.

**Deerwood**

Deerwood is one of the five nations of The Empire, bordering allied Center to the west, the friendly Nation of Pahar to the north and south, and the contentious mountains of the Maemeck Matriarchy (decidedly unfriendly) to the east. Heavily forested, Deerwood is known for the wildercraft of its specialist forest soldiers, as well as The Way of the Wood, sorcerers adept with the properties of plants.

Deerwood exports lumber, the fundamental ingredient of a drink called barkwater, and is also a major source of the drug joude. The people there have no cultural taboo against nudity.

**Dindakuan**

Dindakuan, the Sword Father, is the prime god of Dindavara. An austere figure that eschews worship, Dindakuan crafted the world...
in his forge and was quite content to leave it in unpopulated perfection. It was only the meddling of his wife Congma that created the first men, whom she crafted from clay. Seeing how haphazard and destructive humanity was, the two of them created a superior race with souls of shining steel, to subdue the mud-men and bring the blessings of order to the world. Those people founded the five noble families of Dindavara.

Dindakuan's most fervent worshippers are an order of sorcerer-monks called the Stoneheart Guardians.

**Dindavara**

Dindavara lies north of Uldholm, west of the Western Marches in The Empire and to the northwest of the Heluso Confederacy, all of whom it has attacked at one time or another. It's a nation governed by an elite warrior class, and they take their obligations very seriously. According to their religion, (which is administered by sorcerer/priests called the Stoneheart Guardians) their primary obligation is to conquer the rest of the world in order to bring the enlightenment of Dindavaran rule. Fortunately, their religion also holds that their god, Dindakuan, has no need of human worship. Those who follow him, do so out of conviction that his plan for the world is right, not out of hope for any divine favor. Since there's no apocalypse story in their holy writ, there's little urgency to their plans for conquest. They're taking their time.

A “dinda” is a sword, “Dindakuan” means “sword father” and “Dindavara” means “the land of the people of the sword.” They are an unrepenant military culture, but not an unreconstructed one. Culture flourishes in Dindavara, taking the form of music, painting, embroidery, sculpture and dance. All these arts are yoked to serve and glorify the ruling class and their martial values, but that's taken as a matter of course.

Dindavara has five provinces, each with their own ruling family. These are: Xingshao, Meiren, Burai, Danifa and Xuedei. Above them is a single ruler, the Hai Riyan. Currently, the Hai Riyan is from the Xingshao family, which causes no small resentment and plotting among the other families, however loyal they act in public.

Underneath the noble crust is a second culture of peasants and commoners, who typically revere the goddess Congma, the wife of Dindakuan. Unlike her aloof husband, Congma is believed to give her favor, in the form of good fortune, to those who are devout and pious in their praise of her.

**Dindavaran Language**

The Dindavaran language possesses its own alphabet, in which every symbol stands for a syllable in the word. The central framework of the symbol is triangular, and indicates the vowel sound. Above the vowel is a ‘crown’ symbol that, if present, shows what sound the syllable begins with. In the middle of the triangular vowel is the ‘core’ symbol that, if present, shows what sound concludes the syllable. Thus, if the syllable ‘Din’ was drawn, the D crown would be on top of the ‘IH’ symbol, with the core N symbol.

Dindavaran words that have already been defined include...

- Bo, ‘small, lesser’
- Caiba, a combined mouth/nose flute
- Cong, ‘hearth’
- Dinda, ‘sword’
- Geguo, ‘banner chief’
- Guo, ‘chief’
- Hai, ‘great, exalted’
- Kuan, ‘father’
- Libei, ‘ripping, tearing’
- Ma, ‘mother’
- Nong, a five-stringed musical instrument
- Riyan, ‘leader’ or ‘commander’
- Shijinghui, a musical instrument composed of hammered chimes
- Shu, ‘clan’ or ‘province’
- Zu, ‘bird’
Dunim were the Wuhra steed of choice before the horse was imported from Heluso. A minority of Wuhra, perhaps a third, still prefer dunim mounts, and that proportion rises steadily as one gets closer to the desert. A few have been taken to Heluso, but unlike horses they have not thrived abroad. Dunimu are not constituted to survive cold winters.

In appearance, a dunim is akin to the turtle, the lobster, and the cricket. Its dome body rests six feet above the ground on six gangly legs, while two small, weak claw-arms project in front to scoop food into its mouth. It has antennae and eyes the size of dinner plates, eyes that look like woven rainbows. They are voiceless except for the clicking of their mandibles.

The body of the beast is an oblong the width of a man's arm span, with a length equal to his height. Staying balanced on the curve without a saddle is difficult, unless one splays flat on it, belly-down. Their riders typically kneel on a heavy pad, except when their mount is going to jump. When a leap impends, they flop forward and grab a bar positioned for exactly that purpose. Most dunimu are trained not to jump until they feel their rider go flat. Dunimu are guided by leather traces that hook into the joints of their legs. Pulling the line causes discomfort, like a horse's reins, and the dunim moves away from it. Some riders rig their traces across the top, so that pulling right causes the beast to move right. Others thread them under its thorax, so that pulling right causes it to move left. The really old-fashioned riders eschew reins altogether and control their mounts with hooks on poles, which they deftly insert in the leg joints from on top.

Unlike horses, which have various gaits at different speeds, the dunimu have only two ways of moving. Usually, they walk. They can walk about as fast as a human walks, and no faster. When provoked to run away (or trained to do it as part of an attack) a dunim jumps. The longest distance ever leaped by a dunim is thirty horizontal feet in one bound. They can't get much higher than twenty vertical feet, but half that height is reached quite reliably.
Earthquake Drummers

Earthquake Drummers are highly sought by generals far and wide for their ability to bring a wall crashing down simply by tapping a rhythm on it with sticks. Of course, the larger the structure they would destroy (or construct) the longer the drummer has to play, so the fantasy of bringing down a fortress in seconds is still only a commander’s pipe dream. Even with that limitation, they’re useful, and just as much so to architects and city planners. They can create from stone just as easily as they can destroy.

Empire, The

The Empire is the largest and most powerful political entity known. Monopolizing the only land route charted between Heluso and Milonda, its member states are distinct, but governed by a dizzying array of intermarried, consanguineous and viciously competitive noble families. On top of it all sits the Empress, a title which is handed from eldest daughter to eldest daughter down through the generations. There is no Emperor: Instead, The Empress typically establishes a stable of consorts, who vie for her attention, vend what influence they have, and engage in petty, conniving acts of palace one-upmanship.

The Empire consists of five nations: Deerwood, Center, the Western Marches, the Nation of Pahar and the Sunless Plains. Each has its own native culture, but the cultures of the nations have become as entangled as the bloodlines of the ruling families.

Great though it is, The Empire is much reduced from the days of its greatest glory. At one time, The Empire had subdued Uldholm, subsumed all but one of the nations that would eventually form the Heluso Confederacy, conquered the Maemeck Matriarchy, occupied much land now held by the Wuhra and were in the process of pacifying Opetka. Of all the nations that currently border The Empire, only Dindavara held out against being overrun, and even they lost part of Danifa in the process.

The Empire was able to hold such vast territories during its conquest through the agency of sorcerers known as the Bloodcutters. Other Imperial schools of enchantment include The Way of the Wood, Shadowbinders, Smoke Sculptors and The Empress’ personal defenders, the Crimson Guard.

Faceless Clergy

The Faceless Clergy of Broadland worship the Secret Gods and intercede on behalf of all mortals. They are never seen in public without their featureless masks. They all answer to “Priest” or “Priestess,” having forsaken their names, possessions and titles once anointed by the deity they chose (or that chose them).

Most Faceless seem educated, at least to some degree. Many study the practical arts of medicine, and most seem learned in a set of ethical precepts that, while unexplained, tend to yield decent and just decisions when the priests are consulted for advice. At the very least, they can make their wisdom palatable.
There are whispers that the Faceless practice some form of sorcery, and the name is more than an honorific. There are those who claim that beneath their masks, they’re charlatans no different from anyone else, others who say they have no features whatsoever, some who say they’re impossibly beautiful and some who claim they’re hideously scarred. The truth is ambiguous.

What is not ambiguous is their political power. A lord who is condemned by the local clergy is going to encounter resistance from his people in ways subtle or overt, or both. In the past, they’ve incited nationwide work stoppages, riots, and armed uprisings. Every Broadland King takes the threat seriously when the Faceless tell him, ‘We fear you are in danger of losing the favor of Heaven.’

**Fodandutikanitandu**

Fodandutikanitandu is the language of the Obotilobitanolonikututano, who are more commonly known as the Ob-lobs. It is a strange tongue, different from any other known on the two continents, and speculated to be entirely artificial – perhaps a religious secret language that came to supplant its predecessor.

Whatever its source – the Ob-lobs claim it was given to them by their god, for what that’s worth – Fodandutikanitandu has the curious property of assigning words importance by length. The most important word in Fodandutikanitandu is the name of God, and it’s sixteen syllables long. The thirteen syllables in Obotilobitanolonikututano show that the concept of the race is more important than the language of the race, since the name of the language boasts only nine syllables. That’s still pretty impressive, since one can make it comfortably through a day of Ob-lob conversation without ever uttering a word of more than eight syllables.

It also means that when an Ob-lob wants to emphasize the importance of something, she can simply repeat some of its syllables. For instance, ‘kotanitututami’ is the seven-syllable word for ‘sailor.’ If an Ob-lob was talking about a sailor who was, for some reason, very important, she might say ‘kotanitututami’ or ‘kotantanitutami.’ Deciding which syllable to duplicate invokes a string of implied meanings, from sarcasm to fear to awe. Similarly, many words are shortened into informal terms, and the choice of which syllable to elide can indicate the hurried speech of an emergency (‘kotan’ is what you call a sailor when you’re shouting him a warning during a storm), casual familiarity (‘tanituma’ is the word for sailor used among close friends) or scorn and disrespect (‘kotami,’ if you’re curious). Raising any word to sixteen syllables is blasphemy.

Fodandutikanitandu (which, when used for informal and common communication is ‘fodantukan’) has its own alphabet which, like the spoken language, is both cumbersome but curiously consistent. Every word is represented by a line (for mundane texts) or a spiral (for spiritual writing), with marks on the spiral for each syllable. The more marks, the bigger the spiral or longer the line, and the more important the word. For more details, turn to pages 36-41.

**Futai**

Futai is the language spoken in the Seven Cities of the Great Milonda Desert. It is rare to hear it spoken elsewhere.

**Green River**

Green River is one of the four nations in the Heluso Confederacy. A nation of broad sweeping plains, amply watered by the river that gives the nation its name, Green River is known for its horsewomen. Their cavalry evolved from the mounted tactics applied by cowgirls herding Green River’s plentiful cattle. It’s a rare Green River citizen who can’t ride, and a rare Green River woman who can’t ride well. The school of enchantment called Equine Unity is centered in Green River. The nation is known for its fine steeds and cattle, both of which it exports from time to time.
The Ob-Lob Alphabet

All Ob-lob writing is based on a line, called the 'trunk' -- typically horizontal, but spiral in the case of important spiritual words. The name of God, for example -- which is secret from outsiders and sixteen syllables long -- is never, ever printed on a straight line. To do so is blasphemy. It's also blasphemous to write words in inverted spirals. The correct spiral turns right (or down) after starting. To spiral leftwards is, at best, an ignorant and insolent mistake and, at worse, an attempt at cursing or use of black magic.

Vowels

The direction and shape of the line that crosses the trunk shows which vowel sound the syllable makes. There are only five vowel crosslines, which means that there's a great deal of pronunciation overlap. This is only one of the elements that confuses students of the Fodandutikanilandu language. For outsiders this is, it must be said, often a secondary confusion after the Ob-lob's reluctance to teach their tongue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ay</th>
<th>Ee</th>
<th>Eye</th>
<th>Owe</th>
<th>Ewe</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aw</td>
<td>Eh</td>
<td>Ih</td>
<td>Ow</td>
<td>Ooh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh</td>
<td>Ah</td>
<td>Uh</td>
<td>Euh</td>
<td>Oo</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Consonants

The mark on the top of the vowel branch shows the starting consonant of a sound, while the same mark underneath it shows the ending sound. There's only one exception to this rule, which is the 'F' sound. No syllable in Fodandutikanilandu ever ends with the 'F' sound.

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Fodandulikanilandu Examples

- A holy spiral containing the syllables "In ek sup res ih bu" (or "inexpressible").

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Ek zam pul suh
Coo Per Soe Lis
Dem Awk Riht Uhs
It is ruled by a rowdy collection of horse-lords, with eight ‘great families’ and eleven ‘subordinate families’. There is a single ruler, the Horse Queen (or King), who serves for three years before being sacrificed to ensure the fertility of the herds. When one ruler dies, the crown passes to another family. The great families take turns, serving six out of every nine years. Every third term, the crown goes to one of the subordinate families.

To clarify: If we number the great families 1-8 and give the subordinates letters from A-K, the succession pattern looks something like this: 1,2,A,3,B,4,C,5,D,6,E,7,F,8,G,1,2,H,3,A,4,B,5,C,6,D,7,E,8,F and so on. This means that each major family gets to rule once in every thirty-six years, while each subordinate gets the crown every ninety-six years. It is possible to refuse the crown if there’s no one who wants to die for three years of power, but in Green River’s entire history, that’s only happened once.

### Heluso

Heluso is the westernmost of the two charted continents. It is generally colder than Milonda, with greater seasonal variation. Politically, historically (and in some cases literally) it is overshadowed by The Empire but hosts many lively and developing nations, including warlike Dindavara, industrious Uldholm, the Ironbone Theocracy and the states of the Heluso Confederacy. In its far, cold western regions lies the Truil Wastes, home to the pale tribes that give those desolate lands their name. It also boasts the Lightless Jungle, a dense morass of violence, barbarism and brightly-colored birds.

### Heluso Confederacy

Long ago, when The Empire was at its peak, it conquered a string of medium-sized nations in Heluso, and its grip on them lasted for generations. With the rebellion of the Bloodcutters, Imperial control fragmented. For a generation or so, The Empire maintained an illusion of control by steadily conceding power to the surviving nobles, but in the long run that policy just acted as the first steps of a transfer of power. The four nations rebelled, subverted as many politicians and soldiers as they could, then killed or drove out the rest.

The four nations – North Hold, Green River, Broadland and the Black Mountain Free State – almost fell back into the pattern of constant warfare that had previously characterized their relations, but the renegade Imperial scholars and bureaucrats who’d abandoned the Empress succeeded at bringing the kings and leaders of the lands to a summit at the last minute. Meeting free for the first time, they found that much of what The Empire had forced upon them – a new language, adherence to the Imperial calendar, a couple generations of forced religious tolerance – had inextricably glued itself to their native cultures. They were no longer alien to one another. They were different, still, but different like brother and sister instead of like sworn enemies.

At that famous meeting, the four nations bound themselves by oath to aid one another in the face of renewed Imperial aggression. They founded a new city, called Meetpoint, to commemorate their decision and Confederate business has been run out of Meetpoint ever since.

In time, the countries broadened their pact to include any outside attack. While the four nations govern themselves separately, travel between them is open, tariffs are low and they often negotiate with foreigners as a single entity in order to increase their leverage. The Confederacy isn’t an Empire and will never use that hated name for itself. But with every generation, the differences between three of the four nations become increasingly picayune, meaningless and petty.

### Horses

Horses are native to Heluso, and are most common on the plains of the Heluso Confederacy. They have spread across both
continents, however, and are common beasts of burden nearly everywhere. North Hold is famed for its massive war-chargers, while the Wuhras have bred their steeds for speed and endurance.

It is a belief of timeless age that if a man rides astride, he loses all sexual potency. This belief started in the nations of Broadland, North Hold and Green River, and as horses have spread across the lands, this article of absolute faith has traveled with them. Thus, the best cavalry troops are women or, far less commonly, eunuchs.

**Imperial Language**

Imperial, once the language of The Empire, spread across both continents, first on the lips of Imperial conquerors and later as a trade language between Imperial citizens, former client-states, and anyone else who didn’t want to get left out. It’s not complicated to develop a pidgin command of Imperial, and its phonetic alphabet is the simplest and most efficient of the writing systems known on Heluso and Milonda.

**Inuan Islands**

The Inuan Islands are a string of four islands lying between Heluso and Milonda. One of them is ruled by the Ob-lobs, one is uninhabited and the remaining two are the property of natives who have been there since time immemorial. The natives believe their land is an extension of Milonda under the water.

**Ironbone Theocracy**

The Ironbone Theocracy is a mid-sized nation on the continent of Heluso, governed by priests and priestesses who worship Heluso itself. (Or, to hear them say it, ‘himself.’) They believe they live on the body of a resting god, from whose very flesh humanity arose (well – dark skinned humanity, so Truils and Ob-lobs don’t count).

The Ironbones (as the priests and priestesses of this faith are called) hold a near-total monopoly on a rune-based system of spells that can give ordinary materials the qualities of metal. An ordinary human arm can be infused with the strength of a coiled steel spring, or a piece of paper made as durable as steel. These spells are essential, since the most noteworthy element of Ironbone theology is an absolute and inflexible abhorrence of mining.

Since the ground is the body of their god, digging deep within it is profound sacrilege. Blacksmithing is punishable by death in the Theocracy, and given the infrastructure needed for high-quality work, it’s rarely practiced there. Woodworking skill is highly refined there, but for arts and applications that require the strength or edge of metalwork, what are the citizens to do?

Apply to a priest, of course.

With their magic, the priests can give a wooden knife an edge sharp as a fresh-honed Milondese razor. They can weave rune armor as hard as iron but light as linen. In addition, they can bless the land with fertility, and they do so willingly... for those who adhere to their faith and don’t make trouble.

The Theocracy is peaceful, prosperous, and utterly at the mercy of its ruling caste of sorcerers. They monopolize the economic niches occupied by metalworkers of less devout lands. They manifestly aid the nation’s food production (and farmers who sin are quickly used as examples of what spurning their advice gets you). They are the arbiters of religious law, and it is the only law.

Unsurprisingly, the religious route has always been the career path of choice for the ambitious in the Theocracy. Since their Holy Writ is explicit about accepting for training any who wish to devote themselves to Heluso, many study at their seminaries. To preserve their power and authority, the established priests are utterly unforgiving of their novitiates: Discipline is harsh and any failure whatsoever is likely to result in the candidate being unceremoniously ejected. Despite the strictness, there is still a preponderance of priests, which let to the tradition of evangelism.
With their swelling population and advanced abilities with light weaponry, the idea of another doctrinal invasion is gaining favor with some factions high up in the hierarchy. This same faction is behind a recent, controversial and unpopular reading of religious law claiming that those who attune to Ironbone magic imperfectly are unfit for the blessings of the Perfect Land and should, therefore, be sent on indefinite journeys of evangelism: That they should, effectively, be exiled. Since imperfectly attuned Ironbones are at least as common as the perfect variety, this has caused a great uproar in the magic academies that have accepted the ruling. An exodus of dissatisfied enchanters at the same time as a possible theocratic invasion makes the Ironbone Theocracy an interesting place to be indeed.

**Joude**

The plant joude was native to the forests of North Hold, but it was only when transplanted to Deerwood that it became anything other than a mild agent of wakefulness for watchmen and late-night scholars. People of North Hold had chewed the sap of the joude fern for generations, enjoying its invigorating properties. In Deerwood, the plant grew thicker, larger and far more potent. In Deerwood, too, began the practice of boiling the sap down and drinking the resulting distillate, often mixed with liquor or barkwater.

Unadulterated joude sap simply reduces weariness, with the Deerwood variety producing a more pronounced effect. When concentrated into a drug, it fills every muscle with jumping energy and fires the nerves with feelings of immense physical potency. At the same time, these very qualities lead its users not only to overconfidence, but to clumsiness and misjudgment. Every gesture, while quicker, is exaggerated to the point of oafishness. It is, nonetheless, a popular substance with the ailing, the violent and aficionados of aphrodisiacs.
Kininguvu is the most distant, insular and provincial of the Seven Cities in the Great Milonda Desert. It lies on the banks of the Nguzi River and has enough farmland to support a small population. In addition to subsistence farming, Kininguvu is the sole supplier of several rare spices and desert plants considered great delicacies to refined palates as distant as Uldholm. Getting cargo to and from Kininguvu isn’t easy, however.

One options is to sail up the Nguzi, which is an unpredictable rocky torrent during the brief flood and rain season. The rest of the year, it’s a treacherous swamp full of alligators, foot-long leeches, razor swallows that live by stripping chunks off live animals and flying away to eat, and poisonous toads. The most dangerous residents of the swamp, however, are doubtless the pirates, exiles and renegades that hide there, many of whom consider a merchant barge a rare treat.

The other option is to travel overland through Punga, which means blistering heat, few sources of water, no sources of good water, and more bandits. No alligators though.

No one can quite explain why Kininguvu is home to not one, but two schools of magic, including the world-famous Earthquake Drummers.

For more information on Kininguvu and the Ruhini desert, turn to pages 48-63.

Lightless Jungle

The Lightless Jungle borders the Sunless Plains, Uldholm and the Heluso Confederacy, all of whom regard it with unease and trepidation, for very good reasons.

First off, it’s dark in there. Not merely the twilight of the Plains, which have at least the ocean’s dimly reflected light during the day. No, in the Jungle, trees that can be as large as a hundred paces across soar unimaginably high, tangled in thick and bewildering profusion. The ground, if you can even reach it, hasn’t seen natural light in centuries.

Secondly, the animals are strange and dangerous. Of the nine most poisonous creatures known to Imperial scholars, all nine hail from the Lightless Jungle. There are blind albino gorillas in there that find their way with a mysterious darksense, like bats. There are two headed snakes twenty feet long and blood drinking dragonflies the size of eagles.

Worst of all? The so-called ‘people.’ There are humans in the Lightless Jungle, or at least entities that started out human. Living in warring, primitive tribes, the Jungle tribesmen revere plant or animal totems and practice schools of magic based around their patrons and gods. This magic is universal to everyone born there. To become a full-fledged adult, a tribesman or tribeswoman must attempt an attunement ritual, many of them fatal if performed incorrectly. The survivors are divided into two classes. Those who attune perfectly are favored by the gods and rule. Those who attune imperfectly are fit only to serve. Refusing to attempt an attunement is typically punished with exile, which is usually a death sentence.

Lightless tribe culture has no concept of ‘natural death’. From their perspective, the only ways to die are (1) by violence, (2) by your own bungled magic, (3) by someone else’s successful magic or (4) killed by an accident or natural creature. They don’t see sickness as anything other than bad enchantment, from one of the other tribes. (Who else could it be?) The only cure is war. Dying of old age happens rarely, and when it is, it’s a particularly bad spell. Obviously, anything that could fell a powerful tribal elder without even being felt must be bad indeed.

This isn’t to say that the Ulds and Imperials and Confederates don’t occasionally mount expeditions. There’s good stuff in there. For one thing, those nine known poisons fetch a pretty
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penny from assassins of any class and nation. There are monkeys whose brains are prized delicacies in Uldholm, glowing giant butterflies to delight the children of nobles, rare medicinal plants, birds with brilliant plumage and, inevitably, rumors about dead Hulgue, ancient mines full of gold, demons of great power, surviving members of the old royal Uldish lineage and similar wonders. Certainly there is a dizzying array of magic systems in use by the inbred and barbaric tribes – enough to make the fortunes of anyone who could learn them without incurring the wrath of their keepers.

Maemeck Matriarchy

The Maemeck Matriarchy is a rigidly caste-based society. It divides and subdivides its citizens, classifying them by the nature of their job (a class into which they’re either born or must marry), by their qualifications for their job (rigorously tested, with requirements for certain tasks rigidly enforced), and by gender (with women considered the more wise, stable and insightful gender). The interactions of these myriad factions can be puzzling, and it’s difficult for an outsider to know at a glance if a female Fourth Degree laborer is more or less worthy of respect than a First Degree judge who happens to be a man. But the citizens know, and defer, and any who question the system are punished – not just legally penalized, but often ostracized.

All the divisions, tests and qualifications are set down in the Book of Maemeck. It started out as a religious text, but so much civil and legal material has been added to it over the decades that the religious part is now less than a fifth of the whole.

Magic

Magic is widely used in both Heluso and Milonda, but there’s a sharp decrease in use as the complexity and difficulty of spells rises. In short, many people know an easy, useful, everyday spell or two. Fewer people have put in the study needed to understand and harness greater power. World-shaking enchantment is as rare as command of a world-shaking army.

There is no consensus, even among the learned, about what the force of magic actually is. But it is observed to flow through the world, influenced by the shapes and elements of the physical realm, and exerting power over them in turn. To cast a spell, an enchanter draws in this power, shapes it in some fashion, and then releases it back into the world to make the desired change. To cast a more powerful spell, the caster must draw in more energy.
All humans and some animals have the ability to naturally sense the flow of magic through the world. In most people, this sense is stunted and undeveloped, but just as some are born with naturally keen eyesight, there are some who are natural prodigies at perceiving the silent sounds and unseen shapes of the arcane. Using this eerie sense, it is possible even for the untrained to know when a sorcerer is drawing power. Some spells harness so much energy that, for miles around, any but the most ignorant can feel it.

**Meetpoint**

Meetpoint is the capital of the Heluso Confederacy, held in common by North Hold, Green River and Broadland. The Black Mountain Free State saw no reason to invest its time, treasure and people in building a city to add more governance when they can already take care of themselves just fine. Their refusal to invest in Meetpoint, beyond a few desultory gifts, has been a sore point since.

Meetpoint is actually located in Broadland, but the roads to it from North Hold and Green River are ‘open,’ meaning that Broadland has no legal tariffs on them and wields no formal authority to eject travelers from its allied nations. On the other hand, North Hold and Green River aren’t going to make a fuss if the Broadland army gives trouble to people of no consequence.

Though not the biggest city in the Confederacy – not even in the top three – Meetpoint is an epicenter for government, diplomacy, and business enterprises that involve all the allied nations.

**Meiren**

The Meiren family is the river family, and their colors are green and yellow. In Dindavara their productive fields are rivaled only by their neighbors to the southwest, the Xuedei, and even the Xuedei rarely surpass them. Meiren province feeds the nation, and is the location of the Anvil of Heaven. The priests of Dindakuan say that it was at that very spot that their god forged the five families of Dindavara, setting them above the lesser races to guide and rule them. The capital of the nation is built on its slopes, and the Meiren never let anyone forget that the city on the hill is theirs.

Their reputation is an odd mix of the stodgy and the fanciful. The arts have always flourished under Meiren Hai Riyans, and they are the most avid consumers of culture both foreign and domestic. But in matters of politics and warfare, they are hard-headed realists. Some of the more ambitious families say they are more cautious than is seemly for people of the sword.

**Milonda**

One of the two known continents, Milonda lies to the east. Closest to the sun, it’s a warmer, drier continent. Nations there include the Maemeck Matriarchy and Opetka. One group of disparate tribes, the Wuhra, have united and call themselves an Empire. The great Ruhini desert stretches through Milonda, broken up only by rare oases and a single fertile river, dotted with cities along its length like pearls on a string. These cities include Upunzi, Mwa, and Kininguvu. The only other city in the desert is Punga.

**Mountain Rider**

One of the Truil tribes, the Mountain Riders are regarded as mere myths by many in Uldholm, but the western provinces of Dindavara know the truth of it. They know the Mountain Riders are real, and that their mounts dwarf the greatest horse or dunim. In a cruel irony, most of the Dindavarans who’ve gained enough trust from the Mountain Riders to see their steeds are common folk, merchants who wouldn’t appreciate the military potential of such beasts. The nobles who have seen living mountains are rarely believed.
The munguth is a food animal raised in the Nation of Pahar and the Sunless Plains. It was a Pahar animal first, and the biggest munguthi still hail from there.

Munguthi are slugs, very large yellow slugs with yellow or green spots. (The more greenish the spots, the more sour the meat is.) The Pahar munguthi can grow to be as large as a man's thigh, while the Sunless variety are more the size of a forearm or calf.

Murgwark

“Wark” is Truilish for “rat,” but lacking a word for “master” they had to make do with the Uldish “murg” which roughly means “masterful” and is what the Ulds use for “Imperial” when they don't want to use the Imperial word for “Imperial.”

Ahem. A murgwark, then, is an imperial rat. The Truils don't mean 'imperial' in the sense of terribly dangerous or impressive, as murkwarks are neither. They’re big as typical rats, and fatter, and have heavier, softer fur. If you ignore the wormlike tail and snouty face with black beady eyes, they’re kind of pretty. Their fur comes in patterns of yellow, white, black and red, much like Truil hair, and murgwarks are found banded and mottled and spotted, as well as a few that are all one color. (The Blue Faces believe that solid-color Murgwarks are good luck.)

Murgwarks are very slow. In fact, they can't run. In the wild, they trundle along chewing grass, eating carrion, digging insects out of trees and anthills and being ignored by predators because their flesh is poisonous. It won’t kill a grown man or even a large eagle, but it’s a surefire ticket to cramps, vomiting, dizziness and general misery.

Unlike most rats, murgwarks are communal, like bees or ants. They live in colonies of eight to twelve, led by a dominant female. The female stays in the den all the time and the others bring her food. (In fact, they chew it for her. Upon becoming 'Empress' the rat's teeth fall out.)

Many Truils keep murgwark colonies in a position somewhere between a pet and a work animal. They produce nothing but fur and body heat, but in the Truil Waste any source of warmth is welcome. If you find a murgwark den and toss the Empress in a sack, come nightfall the rest of the colony sniffs her out and crawls into the sack to sleep. If you keep your blanket in there, it's pre-warmed at bedtime and you can put the sack under your feet to keep them cozy. Some Truils get familiar enough to their murgwarks that they become imbued with that rat family’s distinctive scent and are accepted as part of the colony. When that happens, the murgwarks will groom the human, patiently pulling ticks and fleas out of his hair and off his skin. More fastidious Truils find this habit repugnant.

Rules for Murgwarks are on page 67.

Mwa

Mwa is one of the Seven Cities of the Great Milonda Desert. Lying midway between sophisticated Upunzi and far Kininguvu, Mwa is a crossroads and a city of contradictions. It lies along the Nguzi river, it is blessed with fairly manageable farmland in a river valley, and it has a reputation as both the most moralistic and most dissolute of the Seven. It’s moralistic by day, and the Concordance of All Faiths unites most of its churches in opposition to drinking, gambling, drugs, prostitution, suggestive dance and other vices. (The churches that wouldn't join the Concordance were driven out, which should suggest just how politically powerful the Concordance has become.) But by night, the criminal gangs that have gotten rich providing the forbidden delights at outrageous prices war with each other, with Concordance churches, with citizen militias, with bandit gangs trying to muscle in to the city and, on rare occasions, with the guards of the actual civil authorities.
Pahar

A member of The Empire, Pahar is culturally, racially and linguistically distinct from the other four Imperial nations. The Pahar people show a far greater proportion of Milondese blood than is otherwise common. They have their own religion, with few external converts and little ambition to gain them. And while almost all Pahar speak the Imperial language, many also speak their own Pahar language.

Perhaps what sets the Pahar most apart from their fellow Imperials is a history of elected representation, somewhat like Uldholm but older. In its pre-Imperial past, the Kings of Pahar were served by wise counselors selected by the people. This tradition continued when the nation joined The Empire, but after a failed Pahar rebellion the Kings were dethroned. The Empress then ruling decided to allow the Pahar to keep their ‘rulers by acclaim,’ perhaps seeing them as a nonthreatening affectation. In the years since, the Pahar Elector has often proven to be anything but ineffective.

Pahar borders the Sunless Plains which lie to the west, and Deerwood to the north and south. There are two small provinces bordering Center, and to the east is a desolate section of the Maemeck Matriarchy. Though The Empire has long struggled with the Matriarchy and is now at open war, the mountains between Maemeck territory and Pahar are so brutal, desolate, dark, forbidding and storm-wracked that no one has ever succeeded in taking an army through them, or even settling them.

Night Hunter

Notorious for stealth and tracking, this Truil tribe is also the most reverent towards the race’s patron goddess Raungmüt. The Night Hunters have been displaced from their normal nomadic routes by settlers from Uldholm, though they haven’t had as bad a time of it as the Blue Faces. It is the Night Hunters, or more specifically the Night Hunter’s Art, that most frighten the Ulds.

Night Hunter’s Art

This Truil practice is not just magical, it’s religious. By howling to their moon-mother Raungmüt, Truilish enchanters gain insight, summon bloodlust and transform themselves (and others) into her patron creatures, the wolves.

North Hold

North Hold is one of the member-states of the Heluso Confederacy. Bordering Dindavara to the northwest and Broadland to the southeast,
North Hold is an incomplete feudal state. It has Lords and Ladies, who own all the land, it has serfs who work it, but there is no king at the top to whom the gentry swear fealty. Instead, the nobility meet in council once per season to pass laws, decide policy, and kill each other. That last option doesn't happen every time, but it's a rare year when someone doesn't at least get maimed during discussions. Most points of contention are solved by argument, bribery, persuasion, blackmail, seduction, shaming, appeals to fear or honor, coercion and bargaining, but when two or more just cannot agree, they settle things through personal combat. These trials by combat are supposed to be fought to submission or unconsciousness but, well, sometimes a helmet cracks, and sometimes particularly oppositional fighters won't quit until there's only one.

In many North Hold fiefdoms, there's a yearly opportunity for commoners to challenge their masters to single combat if they feel particularly wronged by some ruling or action. This almost never ends well for the commoners, since the North Hold nobles are warriors first and foremost. With Dindavara on their doorstep, they need to be.

North Hold is a kingdom of forests and plains, with a short ridge of mountains extending from the Dindavaran ranges. The mountains hold coal and iron, the prairies have crops, and the forests provide copious timber. That last, lumber, is their most common export, sometimes in caravans reaching as far as the Ironbone Theocracy but more often selling to ship-building Ob-lob.

**Ob-lob**

The proper name for this race in Fodandutikanitan (their language) is “Obotilobitalonokinikututano,” a thirteen-syllable mouthful that people of other races shortened to “Ob-lob,” a contraction that has gained everyday use among the Obotilobitalonokinikututano themselves, though given their language it is, by default, an unimportant designation, implying that the Obotilobitalonokinikututano have no real regard for what foreigners call them. This is just as well, since ‘Ob-lob’ is often the least insulting phrase used for these seafaring nomads and merchant princes.

The Ob-lob hold a few coastal towns and even cities, they hold one of the Inuan Islands, but their real homes are their ships. And what ships they are! Opetka has built a few pursuit ships that are as fast, which is less impressive when one realizes that the Ob-lob don't build for speed. The Heluso Confederacy has a few giant ships that carry more weapons, but they're unable to do anything beyond wallow along the coast. By and large, any real competition to the Ob-lob would come from merchant vessels, and given the Ob-lob advantage in all things nautical, their mercantile rivals are either slower, hold less
cargo, or are weakly defended in comparison. Typically, it’s all three. If you’re a seagoing merchant, the Ob-lobs can outrun you and if they don’t, they undersell you, and if they can’t do that, they’re as likely as not to seize your ship or sink it trying.

To call them ‘competitive’ is putting it mildly. Their convoluted business/family/religious enterprises feud bitterly, until some outsider tries to take advantage, at which point they put their differences aside for exactly as long as it takes to deal with the foreign threat.

Unlike the people of Milonda or Heluso, the Ob-lobs have colored eyes and hair that comes in shades beyond black, gray and white. In this, they’re clearly related to the Truils, so much so that both races’ myths make mention of the other. But at the same time, their language seems to have nothing in common with Truilish, they’re shorter, stockier and far more swarthy of skin. Though of course, that last factor could be due to generations of greater exposure to the sun and/or far more opportunities to breed with Helusans and Milondese.

They are covered in much greater detail, starting on page 34.

**Opetka**

Opetka is a coastal nation on the continent of Milonda, sharing a slight border with the Maemeck Matriarchy and a much larger one with the Wuhra Empire. Opetka has rich soil, a fairly large population, and a history of complete callousness in matters of war. These factors, along with that damn tricky Opetkan mirror magic, keep the country relatively secure against the Wuhras, though raiding across the border is common enough that it barely causes diplomatic incidents any more.

Opetkans are known for being melancholy and stoic, and for giving other people reasons to be melancholy and stoic. They are the world’s most refined glassblowers, and are equally admired for the quality of their glass flutes and for the haunting melodies their composers have written for them.

**Opetkan Vanishing**

Opetka is a nation with a reputation for ruthlessness in the espionage of peace, as much as in the violence of armed conflict. The deceptions of their mirror magi are so notorious (and feared) that many of Opetka’s traditional targets for spying – their Wuhra neighbors, the Seven Cities of the Ruhini Desert, the Maemeck Matriarchy and even the Empire – have invested heavily in seers and sensitives who can feel the presence of enchantment, no matter how confusing. These perceivers are, however, no better than anyone else at finding the mundane Opetkan infiltrators, especially those who have been schooled in vanishing.

Unlike many Esoteric Disciplines, which develop uses from a particular practice, Opetkan Vanishing picked the most useful techniques from a number of experts and refined them into a course that spies could learn through brute repetition. Of course, the very nature of espionage tends to attract some people who easily betray. It should therefore come as no surprise that some agents, mourned as dead in their homeland, have traveled far and earned much by teaching these secrets far, far from Opetka.

For particulars of the practice, see page 80.

**Otamitandek**

Otamitandek is the legendary “Swimming City” of the Ob-lobs. Ringed by peculiarly flat docks (because its surface rises gently out of the water instead of emerging at right angles, as if the ocean were only a lake), Otamitandek has no fixed location. Its citizens are absolutely certain that they are on the back of some terribly vast whale or turtle or similar creature. Its surface above the water is about two miles across (though sometimes it lowers in storms, shrinking its available mass and shedding expensive piers). A few twisted, hardy trees grow along its gentle, hilly contours, as do some scrubby grasses, but mostly the surface is just...
surface. It’s a leathery, fleshy, grey and brown and greenish matter that feels like nothing so much as cold, tough leather. If cut away, it comes to smell bad and rot, unless cured or smoked. Smoked ‘otamipublom’ (which roughly means ‘island flesh’) has a texture and toughness similar to a turtle’s shell, though perhaps a touch more supple. Homes are made of otamipublom, which can be carefully mined since a plate cut from the soil grows back in time – though a round patch as far across as a man can reach takes about ten years to regrow.

The properties of otamipublom indicate that the city is built on a giant creature, as do several other features. First off, it clearly moves, sometimes against the wind and the currents. Secondly, it seems to excrete, based on the thick clouds of detritus-eating fish that follow its wake. Thirdly, there’s a blowhole. A big pit the size of a courtyard, the hole pulls wind into it on odd-numbered days, and blows fetid warm air out on even days. Every decade or so it seems to spasm and convulse, and sometimes it erupts in hundreds of gallons of waxy or gelatinous material. This substance is sometimes yellow and mildly acidic, sometimes greyish and pungent. Students of the properties of matter are fascinated by the stuff, but beyond distilling the yellow into a slightly stronger acid, they have found no uses for it.

The people of Otamitandek fish and farm. They catch fish in most of the usual ways, throwing lines, casting nets, and setting out in boats. Generally they do this on the sides and rear of the city, since that’s where the fish are most plentiful. Farming is not quite the same, as the most easily cultivated crops are edible seaweeds that grow thickly in the island’s wake. One of these weeds can be dried, ground up in mills (of which there are several ringing the blowhole) and baked into bread.

Otamitandek is a floating port of all calls, and capable of hauling truly awe-inspiring quantities of material. Much of the land at its crest is taken up with warehouses owned by the three great Ob-lob families. They buy durable goods from any land Otamitandek passes near, store them for years while the city travels, and then sell the items where they’re rare and exotic. For example, Otamitandek might pass near Opetka, where its citizens would buy fine mirrors and store them. Five years later, when the city has swum around to the Truil Wastes, the Ob-lobes can sell the mirrors for many times their original values, taking Truil gems in trade and hoarding them until they’re back in the sunlit lands. Sure, a cunning Ob-lob trader could make the same journey on a ship, with the same cargo and make the same exchanges. But it’s more profitable for Otamitandek because they can carry more (and, if necessary, flood the market to destroy any competition), carry it safer, and travel without the expenses and dangers of a shipboard voyage.

Otamitandek has its own exports as well, and it’s not just fish. Its people are also great whalers, having a slow-moving platform on which to butcher their catches without fear of depleting an entire region’s pods. More famously, the oysters that cling thickly to the island’s side produce exquisite pearls, though diving form them is a hazardous profession requiring great stamina and intense training.

In addition to importing trade goods to hoard, Otamitandek also imports some food, but more often wood and metal goods. No matter how much they purchase and re-use, there’s always demand for more.

Pahar

The Nation of Pahar is one of the five states that comprise The Empire. Bordering the Sunless Plains, Deerwood and Center, along with a truly formidable geographical barrier to the east, Pahar is distinct from the rest of The Empire culturally and socially. The Pahar people have their own language, customs and religion, all fiercely preserved and defended. There has been
an unavoidable degree of intermarriage between the Pahar (who have the typical yellowish skin tones, angled eyes and straight hair of the Milondese) with the dark-skinned and curly-haired peoples of the rest of The Empire, but enough Pahar are provincial or racist (or simply fall in love with people who share their culture, values, language and appearance) that the ‘Pahar look’ remains fairly distinct.

Pahar culture stresses the intellectual, sometimes to the point of looking down on the physical or the practical. It also puts a great deal of emphasis on the value of emotion, particularly the expression of emotion, even more particularly the passionate expression of emotion. A typical resident of Deerwood, to choose a phlegmatic example, is less dramatic when confronting an adulterous spouse than the average Pahar is with a neighbor who hasn’t returned a borrowed tool promptly.

The Pahar religion is formidably complex. This, combined with a language barrier and an active disinterest in evangelism, means that very few outside the people practice it. It revolves around a twelve-chapter epic in which the gods fight, procreate, switch duties, betray one another, have changes of hearts, have changes of gender, and create various elements of the natural world (often by accident or in passing). Each chapter is associated with a particular month, and the entire thing is a closed cycle: There is no ‘beginning’ nor ‘end’ and something that happens in Plantingmonth can be the result of one thing from the Angermonth chapter while setting the stage for something else in a later Angermonth stage. It gives outsiders headaches.

**Pahar Language**

The tongue of the Nation of Pahar is refined, complicated, and increasingly uncommon in everyday speech. The Pahar consider it their private cultural property and, as often as not, speak it only with one another. It is the language of their religion, and the great twelve-part Pahar religious epic has only recently been translated into the Imperial language – something many conservative Pahar nationalists consider a terrible affront, if not actual blasphemy.

**PUNGA**

Punga is the smallest of the fabled Seven Cities of the Great Milonda Desert. Unlike the other six cities, Punga doesn’t lie along the Nguzi River but instead relies of a series of springs and wells, many of which are unreliable, barely palatable, or both. It has a small population and a small army, but has never been seized and seldom attacked because Punga is home to the Sunwise Healers, and for the Pungese army the cure to any wound is just a handful of sand away.

Punga is the closest settlement to the Mount of Rays, the spot on Milonda nearest to the unmoving sun. It is there, and only there, that people can attempt to become Sunwise Healers. Only the sand of Punga and its environs can fuel Sunwise magic, and though the healers are few in number, the sand they require to heal others is in demand anywhere an aging monarch can afford the services of the greatest physicians known on two continents.

Punga’s only other reason to exist is as a way station leading to the city of Kininguvu – itself a desolate backwater attracting few visitors. Like all the Seven Cities, the most common language is Futai, and like them it is described more on pages 48-63.
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**Salck**

High in the mountains, like a bubble on the border between Opetka and the Maemeck Matriarchy lies the small valley nation of Salck, which simultaneously operates as a feudal state, religious domain, and merit-based government.

The ruling family of priest-king-librarians glorifies a god of magic and learning, whose name is never spoken, only written. Being born to the royal line ensures an excellent education in academic lore and practical sorcery. Each Salck (for the nation is named after the holy family) is expected to find one subject of fascination and devote him- or herself to learning every known fact about it. Their ever-growing knowledge is a living sacrifice to their god.

Naturally, this often involves travel, which is carried out incognito. (Otherwise, their instructors might be biased.) When a national crisis arises, the expert whose field of study best addresses the problem takes charge of the situation.

Some fields of study are natural to running a country – diplomacy, military defense, economics, law, animal husbandry and the like. Those experts run the country almost all the time, and take on apprentices to step in when they retire or die. Often they have several apprentices, competing fiercely.

Largely infertile, Salck has some goats, but most food is imported. However, they sit on a large vein of mid-grade iron ore, and their long-studied mining methods make it a profitable export. Needless to say, their economy is closely managed.

Bordered by two military cultures, Salck’s survival depends on playing Maemeck against Opetkan. They must be sure each nation would rather buy Salck iron than risk seeing their enemy get it. (This means Salck must keep prices low).

Of course, there’s also the wall. Entering Salck, one first passes through a small market village and then comes upon a wall that seals off the entry to the rest of the valley as effectively as the mountains on its two sides.

The wall looks different to different people, but it’s usually imposing and always impassible. Some see a twenty foot mass of writhing arms bearing hatchets, some get lost in an endless pile of human hair, while for others it’s really vile.

There’s a gate. No one goes over, under or through the wall any other way.

**Secret Gods**

The Secret Gods of Broadland are only worshiped directly by their masked servants, the politically powerful and astute Faceless Clergy. No one but the Faceless are permitted to know the names of the Secret Gods, what they control, or even how many of them there are. The public is told that the Secret Gods care for all who act righteously, and defend even the lowliest as much as the mightiest, but beyond that, the people of Broadland know nothing.

On occasion, a Faceless Priestess may ask (or demand) some task, sacrifice or ritual. The requests of the Faceless range from the petty to the epic, the cryptic to the obvious. The people of Broadland obey often enough that it’s expected, and disobey often enough to keep the Faceless honest.

**Shadowbinders**

Shadowbinders are from the Sunless Plains and operate by inviting spirits of darkness to inhabit their bodies. The spirits get to vicariously experience the world of the flesh. The enchanter gets powers over darkness, notably the ability to conjure forth still more dark spirits which can animate corpses, terrify enemies, and bite people. They are described in greater detail starting on page 103.
Smoke Sculptors

The Smoke Sculptors are a school of magic hailing from the Western Marches in The Empire. They concern themselves with giving smoke the qualities of solid matter, conjuring weapons, siege machinery, or pieces of art out of smoke using sinuous hand and body gestures. They are described in greater detail starting on page 108.

Stoneheart Guardians

The Stoneheart Guardians are a religious order that reveres Dindakuan, sacrificing human warmth and human weakness to better pursue their god’s goal of subduing the peoples of the world under the five families of Dindavara. They never sleep. They are described in greater detail starting on page 113.

This is the story the Stoneheart Guardians tell.

“Long ago, there was a peasant named Wun, and she was the best and most faithful of servants to her lord. Her master was Riyan of the Xuedei family and his example inspired Wun. No matter what task the Riyan asked of Wun, Wun eagerly performed it. ‘What is this task,’ she would say,’In comparison to the glory of reforging mankind?’ If the task was hard, Wun would ask, ‘What is this difficulty, next to the difficulty of being the world’s examples?’ When commended for her hard work, Wun was modest and asked, ‘What is my strength, next to the strength of my steel masters?’ And when offered reward, she replied ‘What reward could exceed the joy of working the will of Dindakuan?’

‘Wun was a great asker of questions, and always the foremost in her mind was, How can I best serve my nation, my ruler and my ruler’s god?’

‘In time, Wun’s master grew aged and infirm. Drawing his favored servant to his side he said, ‘Wun, see to my son, for I fear his heart is weak.’

‘How could a weak heart abide in a son of the steel?’ Wun asked.

‘Even steel can be forged with flaws,’ the Riyan said. ‘My last charge to you, most faithful retainer, is this. Do not let the Xuedei name fall into disgrace. The Ulds… they are waiting. If my son shows weakness, they will come.’

‘The old Riyan was right in every particular. His son was weak, and seeing this the kingdom of Uldholm attacked through the mountains. It was a hard fight, and bitter, but the Ulds were fierce and the new Riyan was untried and untested. He gave way, and much brave blood was shed on either side. Step by step, he retreated before the Ulds. In time, Wun could hold her tongue no longer.

‘Riyan,’ she said, ‘Why do you not pool all your men and strike hard at their center? They creep through the mountains like pouring water and in trying to resist them everywhere, we are strong nowhere. Force them to stand and risk on an even field, and you must prevail.’

‘It is not so simple as it appears,’ the new leader said.

‘You are steel and they are clay,’ she said. ‘How can direct warfare be anything but a foregone conclusion?’

‘But her master’s son dismissed her counsel, saying that she read too many legends and fairy tales, while he had to strive against the substance of history. ‘It is a new day, Wun,’ he said. ‘Why should we battle the Ulds over worthless mountains when we have rich rivers and fertile fields? For years we have wasted men to illness and idleness, stationed in those mountains, prepared for an invasion we never made.’

‘It is our duty to convert the unruly and place them in the joy of Dindakuan’s gaze,’ Wun said. The new Ryan laughed at her.

‘Our troops in the mountains were never truly there to fight the Ulds!’ he said. ‘The Burai family made plea to the Hai Riyan with tales of glory to come, but their goal was to thin our troops on their border. When the time came for them to front the rest of the invasion, they wormed their way out of their obligation. Indeed, we are lucky
they forebore, for had their troops come through our lands freely, I suspect it would not have been Dorin's Hold besieged, but our own home.’

‘How can you see such treachery in the will of a Dindavaran Riyan? Were she so false, would not the Hai Riyan know?’

‘Wun, you are naïve. We have less to fear from the Uldish king than from our neighbor, sister and rival. The Ulds have at last had enough of seeing us perched like a wolf at their door? Let them have the mountains and waste their troops there. I am tired of it, tired of that conflict.’

‘Wun tried to show him the error of ceding the high ground to foreigners, but he ordered her away, putting her to work in the kitchens out of his sight.

‘In time, the new Riyan went to speak with the Uldish invaders, and Wun made her way with his retinue. When she heard the oily false promises of the invader, she held her tongue, but when she heard her master’s son begin to blindly accede to their scheme, the force of her promise to his father was too strong. As he presented his swords to the foreigner for a ceremonial binding, she seized the handle of his short sword, drew it and buried it in the Uldish ambassador’s throat. ‘Assassins!’ cried the Ulds, leaping to their feet, but before anyone else could act, the new Riyan drew his long sword and shouted, ‘This madwoman acts against me!’ He drove the point of the weapon through her heart, then cast the blade down before the Ulds and begged their pardon. Pointing to Wun he told his soldiers, ‘Haul this trash away.’

‘But Wun’s heart was so great that the blow had not killed her, and even after she had been thrown down a stony crevasse she struggled to climb back and serve, for her final oath was unfulfilled. But the blow of a Dindavaran noble, even one flawed and uncertain of purpose, was too strong for her worldly flesh and she felt death coming upon her. ‘Oh,’ she prayed with great feeling, ‘Why could I not have more time to fulfill the command of my master, to serve the greatness of my country and to fulfill the destiny of our gods?’

‘Dindakuan does not answer prayers, but his soft-hearted wife Congma saw the suffering and true spirit of Wun and she approached her husband. ‘Can we do nothing for this woman? She is more of a noble than the noble who struck her! Can you not give her a heart of steel to seize the family from him?’ Congma did not realize what a disaster this would be and the disarray into which it would throw the nation.

‘She is of you, not me, wife. She cannot be steel. But some rock is hard indeed, and she is the finest of your offspring. If she wishes to serve my will, I will grant it.’

‘By the will of Dindakuan, Wun was enlightened in her last moments. Seizing a rock, she struck her failing chest and infused her body with stony strength. Rising, she set off following the Ulds. Coming into their camp by night, she heard their warlord presenting the orders of battle, organizing the treachery that her weak lord had made possible. She strode forward, decrying him for his evil, and the Ulds’ spears and arrows broke against her skin. Seeing this frightful apparition, the invaders scattered, but Wun knew they would regroup in time. Striding all day and night for three days without rest, she found her master and warned him of the impending attack. Seeing her alive and with a stone in her breast for a heart, he fell down before her and begged forgiveness.

‘How can one lowly as I forgive one of your station?’ she asked, pulling him to his feet. ‘You are the leader and the master, and now it falls on you to lead.’

‘I doubt my judgment,’ he cried. ‘My heart is weak.’

‘Then Wun showed him how to take his flawed heart and replace it with obdurate rock, and when he did as she showed him his mind was cleared of its fears and confusion. After flinging back the Ulds, Wun and the Riyan went on to found the sect of the Stoneheart Guardians. Our glorious church has spread forth from Xuedei province since that ancient time. Today, we are everywhere in Dindavara. In time, beside our noble masters, we will be everywhere in the world!’
Sunless Plains

Hidden forever from the light of day, the Sunless Plains are one of the five kingdoms of the Empire. They share extremely short borders with Uldholm to the southwest and Dindavara to the northwest. Due west, between those civilized lands, is the Lightless Jungle – a place that, if not exactly a hell you can walk to, is close enough for any sensible person. Their broadest borders by far are to the north and south, both connecting to their historical enemies, the Western Marches. To the east they border their fellow dark state, the Nation of Pahar, and also the Center Kingdom.

In earlier days, their rivalry with the Western Marches took the form of direct, open and extremely zestful warfare. Today, as states of The Empire, they behave like struggling siblings under a mother’s watchful eye. On the surface, one big happy family (and given the number of political marriages intended to settle things down, the disputants are often literally family, if distant). Behind closed doors their relations are characterized by rudeness, disdain, malice, distrust, falsehood, entrapment and ruthless manipulation.

The Sunless soil is rich, and needs to be without direct sunlight. The reflected light from the ocean in their sky is sufficient to see across the misty moors by day, but their primary crop is the godsthumb mushroom, a fungus with a pinkish, fleshy texture and an interesting bitter/beefy flavor. Godthumbs often grow as tall as six feet high, and under careful cultivation can reach nine tall, three feet thick. Other cash crops include: Spotted frill mushrooms, which are distilled into a rich, potent wine that can, on good years, add an intensified sense of color to ordinary inebriation; Blackdrop mold, which is tricky to raise in quantities but much sought for its curative properties; and sweet spirals, finger-length toadstools shaped like drillbits, bright red with white spots and second in sweetness only to sugarcane.

Some Sunless landowners have adopted the great munguth slugs from the Pahar, though they don’t grow as big in the Plains. Their most commonly cultivated animals are hand-sized insects called the waxlighters. It’s possible to eat them, if there’s nothing else, but their value lies in illumination. When they mate, waxlighters emit greenish yellowish flashes similar in intensity to a lit candle. Keeping a dozen around the home can cut down on fuel costs when it’s warm. Their real value comes when they shed their skins, however. The chrysalis of the waxlighter can be lit just like a taper, emitting about an hour of cold, blue-white light. (More on waxlighters can be found on page 32.)

The culture of the Sunless Plains blends an appreciation for the melodramatic and the blasé. The well-to-do of the Plains are expected to be involved in passionate love affairs, treacherous political maneuvers and clandestine business activities as a matter of course. At the same time, such a person is also expected to be casual and devil-may-care, when not blanketed in dark shrouds of hopelessness and despair. (Peasants are typically sullen and long-suffering, but patient and dignified.) Everyone wears a lot of black, preferably incorporating something – a cloak, a coat, sleeves, a skirt – that can be described as ‘sweeping.’

Sunwise Healers

Sunwise Healers are, to the best of most scholars’ knowledge, the only magicians on either continent who can erase injury with magic power. They harness the power of the life-giving sun to knit flesh and restore bone, but to do so for others they must mediate its power through the sand native to the desert near Punga. That town is far nearer than any other to the Mount of Rays, which is the only place new Sunwise Healers can initiate themselves.

The process of becoming Sunwise is risky and harsh, but not complicated. One simply climbs to the summit of the Mount of Rays (the hottest place on the hottest continent) and stares into
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hairy behemoths they ride. Mountain Riders monopolize the mountain passes that reach the fourth tribe on the far coast, so they serve as a bottleneck each way for commerce.

One thing all Truil tribes have in common is the ritual practice of cannibalism. Living in the resource-scarce Waste, they don’t often leave meat behind. When a Truil dies, his family and clanmates prepare his flesh and consume it. This contrasts with the reviled practice of biting a dead enemy’s corpse to prevent his spirit from resting easily. In between the sacred and the profane lies the tactic of biting in battle with sharpened teeth. That’s regarded as just a matter of preference and practicality.

The great challenge facing the Truils is the Ulds, their neighbors to the southeast. In recent decades, the Ulds have experienced a boom in both culture and population. The pressure of numbers is forcing them west into the Waste, where they attempt to farm the land which the Truils have traditionally roamed. This has, of course, resulted in far more violence and resentment than fruitful cultural exchange. The frontier between them has become a smoldering, low-level battlefield between the Ulds, who are numerous and advanced, and the native Truils, who know the territory and feel increasingly cornered. Some Truils have abandoned their folkways and are attempting to mimic the Ulds’ settled habits. Some have even intermarried, though they and their offspring (‘hob-Truils’) are typically distrusted or even persecuted by both sides. It’s far less common for an Uld to cross over and join the ‘savages,’ but it does happen.

Uldholm

Uldholm is a large and prosperous Helusan nation lying south of Dindavara, east of the Truil Wastes and west of the Heluso Confederacy. It has small frontiers with the Lightless Jungle and the Sunless Plains as well.

Ulds (as its people are known) are assumed to be clever, hardworking, and promiscuous. In actual fact, they possess these qualities in no greater proportion than any other people, but their society rewards cleverness and hard work more than other cultures tend to, because Uldholm has no rulers-by-blood.

At one time, Uldholm was a typical kingdom, but when The Empire invaded, the noble houses were devastated by the Imperial Bloodcutters. The royal family was, to the best of anyone’s knowledge, completely eradicated. Without the traditional ruling structure in place, the only remaining authorities stepped in to fill the gap – and, to everyone’s surprise (including their own) they did a fine job of running things.

These authorities were secular guildsmasters, organizing peasant industry in order to teach techniques and bargain collectively with the nobility. The collective bargaining actually hadn’t gone too well, but the point was moot after the nobility were scraped from the country like mud off a boot. The guilds established courts, legislature, a ruling council and have been running the place ever since.

Guild rule isn’t necessarily any kinder or gentler than the old way. In fact, some peasants long for the days when paternal nobles guided and protected and thought for them. Guildsmen tend to feel that anyone who’s poor is lazy, and there’s no sense of ‘noblesse oblige.’ But it is more open. Fools aren’t tolerated gladly, position is transitory and there’s always someone ambitious from a rival guild angling for your job, your house, and possibly your spouse if you’re spending too much time on national business.

Which brings us back to the Uldish reputation as a nation of libertines. Certainly, they’re sexually open in comparison to their prudish neighbors to the west, but the perception of insatiable appetite has formed by outsiders who notice how common children are Uldish cities and how large Uldish families tend to be.
This isn’t because they’re making love any more frequently. It’s because their children die less often. That, in turn, is due to their extensive use of aqueducts – they figured out the technology, they had a lot of cities to rebuild after the Imperial war, and they incorporated a system to get fresh water in and get sewage out. Outsiders think they’re fastidious, but they often privately appreciate the reduced stench in Uldish cities.

Uldholm is known for its sorcerers, whose prowess has deterred Dindavaran aggression since time immemorial. Two of the more renowned practices are the Flame Dancers and a system called Wings of Words.

**Upunzi**

Upunzi is a desert city in Milonda. An independent city-state, Upunzi is ruled by a council of eleven Elders. When an Elder dies, the remaining ten pick a replacement and, if that candidate successfully attunes to their vision-magic, he joins the council.

The attunement transformation of the Elders of Upunzi is extreme. Among other effects, they grow a second mouth somewhere on their person, their skin becomes scaly, and they develop an extreme intolerance for sunlight. Most notably, Elders do not age or sicken as long as they consume the vitreous fluid of one living human one time per month. The most senior of the Elders has been ruling her city for over 450 years.

In addition to immortality, their enchantments allow them to penetrate illusion, see at a distance and give their favored servants visual blessings. The city’s motto is “No One Defies/The All-Seeing Eyes.”

**Waxlighter**

Waxlighters are a significant export of the Sunless Plains. A few Pahar manage to raise some, but never in the numbers that the waxlight ranches of the Plains can manage.

A waxlighter is shaped like a large preying mantis, about the length of a man’s hand from wrist to finger-tip. Its outer shell is white and very slightly transparent. When they mate, their rear thorax glows with a green or yellow light. They mate frequently.

Many people of the Plains keep a dozen waxlighters or so around the hut as illumination, but their commercial value arises when they molt. Their shed skins can be lit like a candle wick, and they burn with a bright blue flame. These natural tapers are known as “sheds” as in “it shed its skin.” (This is a source of frequent confusion among foreign visitors who aren’t quite good enough at the Imperial language to figure out from context if a speaker means a little flammable insect shell, or an outbuilding where tools are kept. This double meaning is also the source of much feeble humor.)

A shed burns brighter than a candle, and about half as long, but the light is cold and stark. The Plains nobility prefer it because it’s so dramatic.

**Wuhra**

At one time the Wuhra were simply desert nomads, tribes loyal only to kinfolk and united only by their language, their mastery of the dunim, and by a habit of solving their problems with a fast-drawn arc of razor-sharp steel.

The Helusans changed all that.

People of Heluso brought horses to the Wuhra Plains, to which many Wuhra quickly adapted. It brought trade, and since some of that trade passed through the plains, it encouraged some tribes to stop fighting each other in order to better tax (or raid) the foreigners. Eventually, it brought invasion.

Had the Wuhra resisted The Empire individually, they would have been individually consumed and digested, but a small band of visionaries, hermit enchanters, and at least one known confidence trickster managed to convince the tribes of the peril and persuade them to resist as a united force. They did not beat The Empire as
resoundingly as some Wuhra partisans would tell it, and they did not suffer the greatest losses of honor, land and dignity (as some who still resent The Empire would have it), but they lost land and lost soldiers. They did not lose everything, however, and after the Imperial withdrawal they remained united and vigilant against renewed aggression. In this, they made a great gain.

The Wuhra plains are now dotted with cities, and if many tribesmen still travel the desolate regions, others have settled to apply irrigation methods learned from Mwa or Upunzi, creating farmland where before there was only scrub. Communication with those cities only came, of course, once the Wuhra had horses, and could ride them without fear of assault from their tribal neighbors.

The united Wuhra are the first people to call themselves an ‘empire’ since the The Empire’s aggression receded.

**XUDEEI**

The Xuedei family rules Xuedei province in Dindavara, bordered by Burai and Meiren to the northwest and northeast, Uldholm to the south, and a thick mountain band containing several small nations to the west. Unlike Burai, they have no mountain pass leading directly to the Truil Wastes. The rare traveler between Xuedei and the Wastes must do so by boat. Going downstream from Dindavara to the Wastes is exciting enough, involving a trip through the deadly black rapids and through lands notorious for their schenvemlig infestation. Coming back against the hard current is so difficult that it’s rarely tried and almost never tried successfully.

The Xuedei are more interested in the Ulds than the Truils in any event. Attacking past the great Skytusk mountain is daunting, but historically they’ve tried it three times. The first time they captured Rulfoun, the second time they were called back to quell a plague-spurred insurrection, and the third time they laid waste to Dorin’s Hold. Each time, they’ve eventually been forced out, but the old Uldish kings were generous enough in their bribes that later generations of Xuedei always considered an Uldish invasion worth contemplating at least. Now that the old kings are gone, the Xuedei Riyans and guo are curious about fighting the nation of guilds.

Among their countrymen, the Xuedei are regarded as clever – too clever for their own honor, perhaps. They cluck their tongues and knowingly refer to the influence of the wily and sensuous Ulds, while the Xuedei deny and scoff and, as always, scheme and plot. Their family colors are black and white.

The current Hai Rian had a Xuedei mother.

**XINGSHAO**

The current Hai Rian, ruler of Dindavara, is Jibu Xingshao. While he has taken pains to show no favoritism to his home province, the perception of favoritism is, perhaps, inevitable. The people of Xingshao preen, smug in the knowledge that their man is on the throne, and the other four families grumble.

But to hear the Xingshao tell it, it is their lot in life to be envied. Xingshao is called ‘the home of heroes’ – sometimes even by people who don’t live there. Their tactical school is unsurpassed in Dindavara (which is to say, unsurpassed anywhere) and they have always been characterized by boldness, surprise tactics, and what can only be deemed ‘style’.

For all that, Xingshao is the poorest of the five Dindavaran provinces. There is some iron and some coal in the mountains that separate them from the Heluso Confederacy and The Empire, but it lies deep and is stubborn to mine. They don’t have the sprawling fields of Xuedei or Meiren, nor the trade routes that Danifa, ironically enough, gained when The Empire built roads and bridges to march its army there. Their colors are red and green, their smirks are arrogant, and their blades are deadly swift.
“T he Obotilobitanolonikututano are pushy, they’re rude, they look ugly and their language sounds like a pen full of chickens falling down a staircase. But they are also cunning, and skillful, and the only ones who can sell what we don’t see and can’t find. If you want visions, or news, or the goods of far lands, you will find the Ob-lobs a necessary nuisance.”

–King Ruhur of Green River

This is the story the Ob-lobs tell.

Longer ago than any can know, the Abyss From Which Everything Arose And To Which Everything Returns spewed forth a world. No one can say why this happened.

It was a world of beauty and glory and terrors, of great learning and horrible cruelty. In time, that world became broken, and its fragments returned to the Abyss From Which Everything Arose And To Which Everything Returns.

Eventually, another world arose, and this one was all purpose and darkness, a land of toil in which each, like an ant, worked unceasingly for an uncaring hive that benefitted no one but which was, nonetheless, central to the world and those who dwelled there. In time, the great hive consumed all that was in the world, assimilating everything into itself. With nothing left to incorporate or consume, it starved and collapsed and, at some point, the Abyss From Which Everything Arose And To Which Everything Returns consumed that which had consumed its world and itself.

Then came a third world, one of peace and light and flawless crystal beauty. Nothing could live there. After uncountable aeons, a single tiny flaw formed, and having no tolerance for such things, the best of all possible worlds shattered and its fragments fell into the Abyss From Which Everything Arose And To Which Everything Returns.

More worlds rose and fell, each floating to the surface of the Abyss From Which Everything Arose And To Which Everything Returns and, in time, being pulled under. Our world arose as a sphere. On that sphere, and tiny in comparison, was a sea. In that sea, and tiny in comparison, were two forms. Some say they are alive, others dead, others merely sleeping. But on and around those forms, and tiny in comparison, there are people.

The wreckage of unknown worlds is laced throughout this one, and things both wonderful and terrible can be washed to the surface on any wave, or unearthed in the soil by any tremor of the land. The world of toil and darkness is reflected in the mindless labors of bees and wasps, and in those people who lock themselves into one land. Rooted in the ground like plants, in time they rot there.

Other people are unique to this world, entirely new, and driven by its restlessness to travel, and see, and collect, and in so doing gather a glimpse into the Abyss From Which Everything Arose And To Which Everything Returns. We view a tiny perspective on a tiny part of a tiny portion of all the things that are. But even that is better than closed eyes.
The Ob-lob are a curious people, in both senses of the world. For one thing, their language (and, therefore, their thoughts) intrinsically ranks concepts by length. If a word is long, it's something that matters. If it's short, it's relatively unimportant. If an Ob-lob is speaking and the given word isn't long enough for the weight she feels it should carry, she simply adds syllables. The word “King” seems silly to Ob-lob – one measly syllable for the ruler of a country! An Ob-lob, even one speaking the Imperial language, would instinctively want to stutter the word longer, into “Ki-ing-in-gin-nin-ing” for a lesser monarch or even “Key-in-nin-gin-ging-nin-nin-ing” for one of great importance. Saying “King” like everyone else sounds mocking to Ob-lob ears. This is one reason that Dindavarans tend to find them easier to deal with than Ulds.

The other meaning of ‘curious’ is even more apt. They are a culture of explorers, investors, risk-takers and acquirers. The only thing that pleases a typical Ob-lob more than finding something previously unknown, is selling that thing for a huge profit.

The Ob-lob Journey

They regard life as a voyage, with particular stages that parallel a ship's journey. The first is, obviously, childhood. Ob-lob children are expected to learn, play and stay out from underfoot. They're expected to acquire a few basic skills and to keep themselves healthy, but there are few consequences for failure as a child. Competition is encouraged, but there's no stigma or penalty for losers. Rewards and praise are heaped on winners, and being excluded from that can feel like a punishment, but most adults regard childhood's activities as so unimportant, they can't be bothered to make a child unhappy over them.

Building a ship, the Ob-lob know it's important to design and build with care and skill, but there's really nothing too bad that can happen with a ship until it's in the water. A child is the same, they're being shaped for their purpose and aren't at risk.

At childhood's end, usually about eight to ten years old, the child embarks on adventure. This mimics the launch of a ship, and the family often makes a big deal out of this maiden voyage. It's typically a literal voyage, usually on board ship but sometimes just a trading expedition. Whatever it is, the child leaves her parents and learns a skill, or skills that she use for the rest of her life. This phase is characterized by hard labor, and the expectation of earning coin. Some Ob-lob (such as ship captains and officers) stay in this phase their whole lives, some leave as early as eleven or twelve years old. It varies greatly by person.

People in the venture stage are strongly discouraged from getting pregnant. By the time a pregnancy is visible, Ob-lob don't want you on a ship. It's a social taboo, but no mere superstition. A ship at sea, in danger from storms, foreign navies, or piracy from other Ob-lob, isn't safe for anyone and is triply dangerous to a pregnant woman.

Life's final stage is like a ship returning to port, to either unload priceless cargo, or to be scuttled as garbage. For Ob-lob, this means settling down on dry land, marrying, raising children and becoming a respected, wealthy and wise member of society. In practice, most retire and get by doing whatever they learned in their travels, if they don't pick up another trade. Some leave the ship and become bums, criminals, or wandering ‘adventurers.’
It is not at all difficult to puzzle out the values of Ob-lob society. One simply counts the syllables.

Sixteen Syllables: Only one word has sixteen syllables – Ahazumpadorzahirvomeckneeramutruuzmecklotan, their name for the uncaring Abyss From Which Everything Arose And To Which Everything Returns. It is their god, endlessly creative, endlessly destructive and endlessly perceptive.

Fifteen Syllables: “The world” meaning everything in the known cosmos, Heluso and Milonda and the ocean and any lands beyond.

Fourteen Syllables: “Ocean.” There are short forms of the long word used for the entire ocean as a concept and force of nature. When dealing with “this immediate patch of ocean our ship currently occupies,” Ob-lob shipboard use a three syllable word. For “the ocean we can see as far as the horizon,” it’s a four-syllable word.

Thirteen Syllables: Obotilobitanonikututano, their word for themselves as a people and a culture. Shortened by the outsiders into “Ob-lob.” Do you get a sense of how accidentally insulting that nickname was? The Ob-lob are used to it now and even use it themselves, with a touch of modesty and/or irony, but back in the day… well, it may explain a bit about their attitude towards foreigners.

Twelve Syllables: “Family.” A concept central to Ob-lob culture, far surpassing duty to law or any personal shame or ambition. The fundamental unit of Ob-lob thought is the immediate family (parents, children, siblings), then the secondary layer (uncles, cousins, grandparents, grandchildren), out to the local name-sharers, as led by elders. After that is the great family as a whole, and the Ob-lob race. The out-blooded are, at best, peripheral. An Ob-lob owes greater loyalty to a hated enemy who shares his last name than to a foreigner (or even an Ob-lob of a different bloodline) who has been his boon companion for decades. In theory. When it comes down to hard, cutting choices, abstract relationships have a tough job overwhelming the heart.

“Sky.” In Ob-lob mythology, the sky is one of the mirrors through which the Abyss From Which Everything Arose And To Which Everything Returns watches its creation. Aside from its religious significance, attention to the sky is a very real and concrete concern for those who traditionally live on the water.

“Virtue.” The word for ‘taking the correct course of action’ is very similar to the word for ‘family.’ When spoken quickly, it can be hard to tell them apart. But given the position of family in Ob-lob ethics, there are many contexts where it really doesn’t matter which word is spoken.

Eleven Syllables: There are no words of eleven syllables. Eleven is a bad number. The only time you’d trim a word down to eleven syllables is when you’re expressing profound hatred and contempt for it. Likewise, the only time you’d expand a word up to eleven syllables is when you’re emphasizing its importance while cursing it.

Ten Syllables: “Life.” It’s not quite as important as the overarching notion of doing the right thing, but it’s close. Sailing is a difficult trade, and the ocean is unforgiving of mistakes. Many notions people of other countries die for – honor, pride, even love – are less absolute values than survival. The Ob-lob don’t believe that an individual’s personality survives death. Rather, all his memories and experiences are pulled down into the Abyss From Which Everything Arose And To Which Everything Returns, eventually being recast into something entirely different. They regard their lives as the only one they get, so they want to enjoy it as much as they can.
Values

The Seekers of Eleven

Ob-lob children’s stories feature a group of evil wizards whose name (which no one knows) has eleven syllables. To join the group, an Ob-lob has to change both his first and last name to an eleven syllable perversion of the names his parents gave him.

These sorcerers, the Seekers of Eleven, are also blasphemers who cast hexes by inscribing holy words on inverted spirals to desecrate them. They steal children, sink ships, offer corrupting bargains and can only be overcome by obedience to family elders.

The eleven sorcerers who rule the desert city of Upunzi are a source of much discomfort to Ob-lobs who know about them. There are some — brave, agnostic and stubborn — who dismiss the fear of eleven as superstition and the facts of the Elders of Upunzi as a coincidence. But there aren’t many.

Kokadumurinsapantuheno. That’s the name of one of the three great families. Privately, the Kokadumurinsapantuheno consider themselves superior to other Ob-lobs. Privately, the other Ob-lobs think the Kokadumurinsapantuheno are arrogant snobs putting on airs. When they’re alone and being affectionate, demure and casual, the Kokadumurinsapantuheno call themselves the Kodumurpanatu, a cozy and loving diminutive. The other families, when they wish to be insulting, or dismissive, or when they simply can’t be bothered with the whole mouthful, shorten the name to Kokarinsap.

Nine Syllables: Gursanzotulevomurfofan. The second of the three great families. The short form is “Gursanzo” and is used so commonly that it has no particular emotional connotations. The only way to insult one of the Gursanzotulevomurfofan by calling him Gursanzo would be at a formal occasion with family pride on display.

Rotamatamakuludohey. The third of the three major families. As far as the Rotamatamakuludohey are concerned, there is no polite diminutive of their name. The common reduction among other Ob-lobs is “Rotam.” Given that it hacks off seven important syllables, use of the nickname has been the spur to more than one duel, or to murder even. More acceptable is the Imperial substitute “Riser-Above.”

Eight Syllables: Minor family groups typically have names of eight syllables. If a family group did something horrific – treason against the entire Ob-lob race, practice of bloodcutting, allying with outsiders against Ob-lobs in a deadly conflict, giving away trade secrets – they might lose a syllable off their name in a generation or two.

“Out-blood.” People who have no Ob-lob name. Foreigners, aliens, outsiders. These people are usually regarded as ‘human’ and it’s even possible to ‘blood them in’ if they marry an Ob-lob, but on a spiritual dimension they’re set apart. They can be friends, lovers, close trading partners and respected employers. Doesn’t matter. On some level, the barrier always remains.

Seven Syllables: Surdomohaikutano. This is not a formal title, but it is influential nonetheless. Meaning, roughly, “community elder,” it is given to someone who is respected, liked, and trusted. Have a conflict with a cousin? Take it to one of the local surdomohaikutano. Like a girl and don’t know what to do? Surdomohaikutano. Got an issue with an Ob-lob from a different lineage? Ask your surdomohaikutano to talk to his surdomohaikutano. Surdomohaikutano preside over marriages, naming ceremonies, funerals and the christening of ships.

They are taught the deeper secrets that the Obotilobitanonikututano have discerned about the world, the cosmos, other people and Ahazumpadorzahirvomeckneamrutruumektlan itself. All this, despite there being no formal or agreed-upon way for someone to become, or be recognized
Matters of Color

Values

Verbs

Fodandutikanitandu words connoting action are quite short. Even important verbs like “to love” or “to sail” or “to haggle” vary between four syllables and one (depending on emphasis, importance of the person taking the action, and the object of it). In fact, there is little connection between the noun denoting ‘love’ and the verb describing its action. Ob-lob value having love for someone more than loving them. It’s an object-oriented language, leading to a culture that reveres the unchanging and objective.

Law, on the other hand, has a different meaning for Ob-lob than it has for most other people. In the broadest sense of being codes all follow, it’s the same. There’s also the same notion of punishment for transgression. But Ob-lob law is common law in the purest sense. Your family, friends and neighbors communicate to you what is and what isn’t acceptable. There is a written code of local ordinances, and some regulations are common to almost all Ob-lob societies, but mostly the process is that, if something’s thorny enough to require mediation from elders more than once or twice, the elders get together and have it out. Once they agree, they write it down and nail it to the door of the local mercantile exchange, where everyone can see it. Eventually, it gets copied into a large book for reference – usually when the poster on the door starts to curl up and becomes hard to read.

Law, then, arises in a messy and informal way, much in the same way the authority of an elder does. It isn’t presented as a grand, codified Word of the People (as in Uldholm) or as divine will, or as the command of a tyrant. It’s just “the way Ob-lob do things” and if no one cares when a law gets broken, it must not be that important.

Six Syllables: This is where the everyday vocabulary starts. Most people don’t have long, intense conversations about monumental principles. It’s at that level – the level of important, life-altering stuff – that the Ob-lob language gets cumbersome (though many of the Obotilobitanonikututano argue that the long words give you extra time to marshal your feelings and arguments). Six syllables is the mid-point between theology and “Where’s my hammer?”

Mosemomadoco. It’s their word for the most important of sex acts, the one by which children are conceived. Everything else is nostoviol (q.v.) and while engaging in nostoviol before marriage or outside of it may or may not be a word for pride, it comes to mean arrogance or a false confidence.

as, surdomohaikutano. It just happens. It settles on people gradually. Others come to them for advice because of personal connections or regard, and their reputation spreads until it reaches a tipping point. Sometimes there’s a moment of acclamation – a brave admiral fights off an invading force and is greeted by cheers of “Surdomohaikutano! Surdomohaikutano!” upon his return. But more commonly, one becomes an admiral because the qualities of a surdomohaikutano have already been observed. Most surdomohaikutano are old, many are learned and most are benevolent, but none of those qualities are completely necessary. In some places, the legend of the local surdomohaikutano becomes so great that even the out-bloods come to her for advice.

“Law” and “Pride.” It’s telling that these two words have the same value. Pride means being able and willing to hold your head high, be that due to competence, accomplishment or a clear conscience. If a few syllables are taken out of the

verbs

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social faux pas, mosemomadoco is qualitatively different. People who do it before marriage are typically forced to marry – in some cases, even when the partner is an out-blood. When mosemomadoco violates an Ob-lob marriage, the choice of whether to punish or not is usually given to the spouse or spouses of the guilty. Punishments are flogging and/or public humiliation. Mosemomadoco rape is regarded with particular loathing. The penalty for that is to sail the perpetrator out of sight of land and see if he can swim back to shore after his hands and feet have been lopped off. If the rapist and victim are both unwed, they’re forced into marriage first, so that if she’s pregnant, her child is legitimate. It also means that she can inherit the rapist’s property in the very likely case that he fails to survive.

“Parent,” “Captain,” and “Honor.” These concepts are linked by both syllable count and their content. These words involve obedience, especially in split-second situations. You don’t want to second-think your captain or parent in an emergency. Nor do you want a chance to rationalize dishonor. But all these obligations can be set aside for higher principles – you protect your family’s reputation before your mother’s, if it comes down to it.

In Ob-lob culture, disobeying an order from an officer or the rule of a parent is far easier to justify if it’s the result of honest calculation for the greater good. A spontaneous mutiny is likely to be dealt with more harshly than one carefully calculated to minimize violence and disruption of shipboard activity. That said, no mutiny is something to take lightly.

“Competence,” “Exploration,” “Curiosity,” “Knowledge,” and “Communication.” These are the everyday virtues of the Ob-lob – not reluctant obligations, but rather joys that are right to pursue. Members of the race are expected to value knowledge for its own sake, revel in passing news (or gossip) and pursue the unknown simply for the thrill of it. As for competence, it’s more than just an appreciation for a comrade who’s good at his job. There’s also a strong notion that doing a thing well is worthwhile even if it’s unrewarded, or misguided, or comes to nothing. Someone who has devoted decades to mastering a worthless skill is still viewed with a certain respect – more than someone who succeeds through feckless luck.

“Progeny.” Just as children have a powerful obligation to obey, parents have an equal obligation to protect, instruct and provide for their children. Often the parents take this more seriously than young offspring.

Five Syllables: “Self.” There it is. That’s where the individual fits in the Ob-lob value hierarchy.

“Money,” “Magic” and “Water” – in particular, the kind of water you drink, not the kind that’s in the ocean. These concepts are things that are useful and desirable, but not possessed of any necessary moral weight. What matters is that they can accomplish things. They’re means to an end, and they don’t inherently elevate that end.

“Persuasiveness,” “Freedom,” “Loyalty,” “Courage” and “Love.” These are nice to have, but not necessary. They are generally good, and often one accrues money or pursues wealth and position in order to compel or enhance these qualities. But an Ob-lob doesn’t judge himself flawed if he lacks them, just unfortunate. They’re treasured when found, but not expected.

Four Syllables: Konudtapu. A great act of evil is designated with the word “konudtapu.” It’s a rare person who commits konudtapu. To sin so greatly, it must be deliberate, fully understood, and have permanent results. An example would be someone who, after his suit is rejected, kidnaps his ‘beloved’ and tortures her family to death in front of her and only then slays her. (Makes you wonder why she said “no,” doesn’t it?) As a rule of thumb, konudtapu is something so bad that people still talk about it thirty years after.

“Beauty,” “Ship,” and “Honesty.” These are the imperfect virtues. In an ideal world, everyone would have them. But this realm is flawed, alas, and sometimes these compelling things must be jettisoned.
Nostoviol. It's a specifically Ob-lob word for any and all sexual activity that isn't mosemomadoco. It has a component of frivolity – "playing around" comes close in Imperial. Consent is implied. It's accepted that everyone engages in nostoviol, especially on long shipboard voyages. Nostoviol before marriage is something people do, that's all. Once you're married, it's no one's business if you do it with your spouse. If you do it with someone who isn't your spouse, that's between the three of you. Some Ob-lob family (notably of the Rotamakuludohey family) hold that once you're married, your spouse has exclusive rights to your sexuality. The Kokadumurinsapantuheno, on the other hand, hold that only mosemomadoco is reserved for spouses and other than that, all's fair. The Gursanzo family generally sides with the conservative Rotamakuludohey, but they make an exception for out-bloods, since their feelings are less important and it's assumed that a Gursanzo's feelings for an out-blood are insignificant compared to those for his Ob-lob spouse.

“Food.” While low on the ranking list of Ob-lob ideas, this gets a lot of attention and frequently, a few extra syllables for emphasis. Like every other human culture, the Obotilobitanonikututano spend a lot more time talking what's for dinner than about the great philosophies of life.

Three Syllables: Kotapu. Great evil, but not quite epic. A person who violates another's honor, life or dignity in the heat of passion has probably committed kotapu. Or someone who attempts atrocity, but gets stopped before anything really happens. (Think “konudtapu minus competence.”) In a small community, kotapu probably happens once every year or two. In a major city, it's probably happening weekly, if not more often.

“Gross Stupidity.” Not just a moment of head-smacking forgetfulness, but true folly. The kind of error that sinks ships in a safe, calm harbor, the sort of situational misread that sends a platoon to a needless death, the epic dumbness of someone given more authority than they know how to handle – that merits the three syllable dumb word. You do something that foolish, it's going to follow you for the rest of your life.

Values

Child” and “Animal.” These words are used generically, and convey a sense of something that can't take care of itself and needs to be guided or led. When you're talking of your own children, you might want the six syllable word for "progeny," which is more serious and emotional.

“Fighting” and “Gambling.” These activities aren't formally encouraged or approved. But when they’re condemned, it's often with a smile and a roll of the eyes, and it's better to be good at these things than not. In other words, everyone does it and those who do it well are proud of it. But they are activities outside the formal society that the language represents.

“Manners” and “Dry Land Property.” Like gambling and fighting, these important things aren't formally encouraged or approved. But when they're condemned, it's often with a smile and a roll of the eyes, and it's better to be good at these things than not. In other words, everyone does it and those who do it well are proud of it. But they are activities outside the formal society that the language represents.

Two Syllables: Kopu. To do something kopu is to do something that demands punishment, but which doesn't necessarily set you apart from society as a monster. Stealing, beating up fellow Ob-lob without good reason, expensive vandalism and blatant disrespect for elders are examples of kopu acts. Bad, certainly, but it's hard to live an interesting life without doing kopu at least once or twice.
“Idiocy.” An oversight or misjudgment that avoids serious consequences merits two syllables. It didn’t kill anyone or cost too much money, but it’s still dopey. Friends may bring it up years afterwards when they want you to turn red. Enemies may do so as well, for that matter.

“Servant” “Weapon” and “Liquor.” This class of two-syllable words indicate implements whose use can have serious consequences and which therefore require a little more restraint, wisdom and forethought. They’re more important than an everyday tool, but still means by which their controller achieves his desires, whether those desires be an organized life, someone’s bloody death, or just an evening of shirtless revelry.

“He” “She” “Them” “Me” “They” and other pronouns are almost all two-syllable words. No matter how important the person is, Ob-lobs often save their breath by not using her name every time they talk about her. Otherwise they’d never get anything done, and competence is a six-syllable virtue.

**One Syllable:** Pu. Pu is everyday moral weakness, more embarrassing than bad. Deniable snubs and insults, petty theft, minor dishonesty and cowardice are pu. Just about everyone does something pu, especially if they’re having a lousy day.

“Foolishness.” Just as pu is everyday wickedness, the one syllable word for a mistake indicates something commonplace, unimportant and forgettable.

“Tool.” Many tools have one-syllable names, as does the generic word. They’re something one controls to impact other things, unworthy of intellectual contemplation.

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**Values**

**Personal Names**

Most Ob-lob first names have four syllables. A few have five, and are typically given to children who are eagerly desired and spoiled or, conversely, on children of misfortune who need a lucky break. Similarly, there are names of three syllables, which are either given by strict parents who want their children to be humble and self-sacrificing, or which are an expression of despair, or of false modesty.

Ob-lobs are expected to share a bond of some sort to people with the same first name. It’s nothing extreme. An Ob-lob isn’t expected to invite a penniless stranger into his home just because they’re name-brothers. But it wouldn’t be too weird if one did. If nothing else, an extra degree of politeness, intimacy and kindness is normal between those who share such a critical word.

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**Fisher Birds**

The Ob-lob fisher bird is native to the Inuan islands but has spread throughout the world, traveling in racks on the backs of Ob-lob ships. They’re long-necked and broad-winged, like swans with smaller legs and bodies. They swoop down, pluck fish out of the water and swallow them whole. At least, that’s what they do in the wild.

The Ob-lobs slip a metal ring on the bird’s neck when it’s still young. As it grows the ring constricts its throat so it can’t swallow fish whole any more. Instead, the birds are trained to bring the fish to their Ob-lob trainer, who cuts out a bite that the fisher can swallow and cleans the rest for the crew while the bird goes out for another catch. Lucky for the birds, the detritus from Ob-lob ships draws fish, so the pickings are usually pretty rich.

In addition to the ringed birds, farsighted Ob-lobs often release ringless specimens in foreign lands. That way, when an Ob-lob needs some new fisher bird eggs, there’s a chance of catching them in the wild.
Storytelling is popular with Ob-lobs, especially in their language where emphasis is so easily placed and subtle diminishment is simple. It's a language that lends itself to internal and end-stopped rhyme, so verse and song are both appreciated and widely practiced.

The Ob-lobs have several musical instruments that are nearly unique to them. The rodo is called 'the devil's comb' in Imperial, because it somewhat resembles a large metal hair comb. The teeth of the rodo are of different lengths and it's played by holding the ends between the knees and plucking the teeth to make them sound. The makmak or “water flute” is usually a tall, thin glass bottle of water connected to metal slide. By moving the slide forward and back, the water level in the column rises and falls. You sound the makmak by blowing across the tube's open top. Ob-lobs on the Inuan islands have, in recent years, arranged series of makmak tubes with independent slides so that they can be played like a complex set of variable pan pipes.

Ob-lob culture focuses both on things and on concepts, but it treats them very differently. An object is prized as a commodity first. They're not sentimental about anything you can hold in your hand. It's tolerable to be fond of a statue or to have sweet memories associated with a painting, but turning down a great price for it because of feelings… that's a little peculiar.

The value of things that can't be touched and seen exists on a higher plane and there's little comparison or interaction between them. A song, a story, a dance – these things are all enjoyed and entertainers are often lavishly rewarded by Ob-lob merchants who wish to amuse their associates and display their wealth. That said, there's no notion of ownership of these things. Even if a particular man wrote a song, it's not 'his' song and any expectation that he'd play it better than another is minor. By the same token, a storyteller who crafts a tale would be regarded as a blustering buffoon if he presumed to correct anyone else's alteration or modification of it. Once a story's told, anyone who hears it can do with it as they wish.

Cuisine

Ob-lob native cuisine is often regarded by out-bloods as a crime against food, and while they put a brave face on it, in private the Ob-lobs often agree. This does a disservice to it, which (like everyone else's) ranges from awful to sublime. It's just that when an Ob-lob gives you a good meal, it's probably based on another culture's habits. Ob-lobs in Confederate cities cook and eat a lot of beef and grain, like everyone else in the Confederacy. Ob-lobs in Opetka adapt Opetkan recipes while those near Upunzi cook like the people of Upunzi do.

The shipboard dietary staples are fish and a few edible types of seaweed that can be cultivated (though often not easily). Fresh fish is grilled or boiled in stew. On long journeys, salted and smoked fish is often a monotonous mealtime element, along with rock-hard biscuits and 'salads' of dried seaweed.
Combined cuisine – fish cooked Upunzi style or in an Opetkan stock or with Confederate noodles – often takes what’s good about the host diet and changes it to either last longer or taste better. What’s most exciting about Ob-lob chefs is their exposure to different spices and styles. No Opetkan is going to start preparing meals like a Green River cook, but an Ob-lob has nothing to lose from making hybrid dishes. Nothing but the endless taste of fish, anyhow.

Clothes

Shipboard, Ob-lob typically wear tough sailcloth pants, a tough sailcloth shirt, no shoes and a thick belt to hold tools. Newcomers, officers, or people with delicate skin wear a cotton undergarment to relieve the chafing, and even the tough might put a kerchief around the neck to keep the rough fabric from sawing their neck. (Also good for sneezes and sweat.) A leather hat, with the brim high on the sides, extending out in front of the eyes and the neck is useful in both sun and rain.

Jewelry is also popular, mostly rings and bracelets that won’t get tangled in rigging. After all, it’s not just decorative, it’s compact currency you’re unlikely to lose to a pickpocket or a shipwreck. Many also wear an amulet with the spiral name of their god on it, hanging around the neck and held in place over the heart with a string or chain around the back.

When sailing in the cold, lined leather boots are reluctantly worn, along with a long, hooded coat of oiled felt.

Most sailors’ clothing is either undyed or dark blue. Officers wear shirts dyed some bright color (often green) so that they can be seen clearly – a bonus that enemy archers appreciate. This, in turn, has led some officers to punish insubordinates by making them trade shirts during the next engagement.

Captains wear red, by tradition, and often shoes as well (since they aren’t expected to be climbing around in the rigging). Only officers are permitted to carry sabers during the everyday toil of shipboard life. Honestly though, the curved knives most sailors carry for trimming rope miss being shortswords only by virtue of weight and a finger’s length.

Culture

Sting Sacks

The creature known as a ‘sting sack’ is native to Milonda’s far eastern shores. They’re about the size of a forearm, transparent, and tentacled. In the water, they’re hard to see, so many people’s first hint that one is nearby comes from the unbelievable pain of touching one. The poison on their bodies causes flesh to swell, crack and puff up, as if burned. It was those very properties that led a shipwrecked Ob-lob who couldn’t start a fire to experiment with using sting sacks as an alternative to grilling. It was a fortuitous discovery.

If you (carefully!) rub a sting sack over meat or fish, it changes color, texture and taste much like cooking would. It doesn’t preserve meat, and many Ob-lob still bake or boil meat after it has been stung, having noticed that fish that’s only sting-cooked can make you sick just like raw fish can. (It won’t restore meat or fish that’s gone really rank, but sly cooks know it disguises the rancid flavor.)

While straightforward contact with the poison is agonizing, when it’s filtered through a fish or piece of meat, it merely becomes spicy hot… and delicious. It’s a delicacy in Pahar lands, it clears the sinuses, and it’s reputed to be an aphrodisiac.

Of course, some Ob-lob are more interested in turning the sting sack into a weapon than a meal. Ships carry them live in tanks of seawater and, when engaged with an enemy vessel, grind them up in a sausage mill and flinging them at enemy crews with catapults. This is a Morale 3 Attack and not really any better than firing stones, but it’s confusing and alarming.

Touching a sting sack in the wild (or having a piece of a fresh-killed one touch your skin) results in exposure to poison. It’s Potency 7. The Minor Effect is that it hurts like hell and does a point of Killing damage to the contacted surface. The Major Effect is that the Waste Dice of the Potency roll do Shock damage to every location that turns up.
Politics among the Obotilobitanolon-ikututano operate on two levels, the close and the distant. Close politics occurs between the three families and the minor Ob-lob bloodlines aligned with them. Distant politics is Ob-lob interaction with the nations, states and companies with whom they trade.

The Three Families

The three major branches of the race are the Gursanzotulevomurfofan, the Rotamatamakuludohey and the Kokadamurinsapantuheno. The intermarriage and business connections between them are intricate and copious.

Two inflexible laws govern weddings. The first is that the husband changes his name to the wife’s. The second is that when estate matters that are in doubt, name trumps blood.

As an example, suppose the oldest son of a rich Gursanzo merchant marries a fetching young Risers-Above. The groom’s last name becomes Rotamatamakuludohey and if his father dies without a recognized will, a cousin who got the Gursanzo name through marriage has a better claim to inherit than the son who forsook the family name. Naturally, most Ob-lobers are very clear and public about their wills – local surdomohaikututano adjudicate these sorts of disputes on behalf of the community, and oral wills are valid.

This encourages marriage within the family name, but a poor man can marry into prestige if he brings intangible value to the table.

Even without marital conflicts, there is friction between the families. It’s simply accepted that they compete for trade routes, big contracts, rich plunder and anything else of value worth taking. There are implied limits – murder, sex crimes and kidnapping are beyond the pale, and one can only get away with bare-faced robbery once every couple years – but other than that, all’s fair. Blackmail, deception, bribery, taking advantage of the foolish and weak – these are all accepted tactics in a healthy Ob-lob marketplace. There’s little pity for the losers. If you got blackmailed, it’s your own fault for doing something bad, or for leaving evidence. If you’re too trusting, you deserve to be fooled and if you put an idiot in a position of trust, you’re begging for his three-syllable screwup.

Kokadamurinsapantuheno

Called ‘Kodamurpantu’ as an affectionate diminutive, this is the family that does much of the sailing around the northern coasts of Heluso, around the bend as far as the Truil territories, but primarily concentrated in the Confederacy. They retain one small town in the Inuan islands, and some of their long-range ships make a good profit delivering Helusan goods to Opetka and its neighbors.

The Kodamurpantu are regarded by the other Ob-lobers as being too friendly and inviting towards outsiders, even as they’re too formal and suspicious of their white-skinned brethren. In extreme cases, the suspicion is that they regard everyone outside their family as equally inferior – Gursanzo, Risers-Above and out-bloods alike. Placing family chauvinism above Ob-lob chauvinism is a serious accusation, and there’s some truth in it. The Kodamurpantu are more likely to intermarry (especially with Truils) and more of their family have gone native in the Helusan lands, forsaking sea and language and Ob-lob custom. The Kodamurpantu publicly bemoan the youngsters who forget their heritage, while insisting it’s no more common in their family than elsewhere. In private, the surdomohaikututano don’t like it, but they accept it as the price of peace, stability and good trade. It’s undeniable that their intermarriages give them the best access to their hosts in the Truil Waste and the Confederacy.

In each case, the Kokadamurinsapantuheno have been ceded small coastal towns to govern, independent of Helusan interference.
The Gursanzos are the most blunt and impatient of a blunt and impatient people. Controlling one of the Inuan islands, they use it as a hub for trading between northern Milonda and Heluso. They also range as far as the deep east of Milonda, trading with distant nations and peoples that even The Empire has never encountered.

Marriage with out-bloos is still an oddity among the Gursanzo, but as the only Ob-lobs with a defensible homeland, they have less opportunity (or, perhaps, need) to look outwards for advantageous matches. While they’re cautious, even standoffish, with official alliances, they’re swift with informal friendships of convenience. This is equally true of business and personal matters.

Their willingness to engage in nostoviol with Ob-lobs, foreigners, and people of both genders is a matter of much discussion (and, inevitably, some exaggeration). The family’s blasé shrugs about such activity across marriage bands elicits equal measures of suspicion and envy from less cosmopolitan families.

The Risers-Above control the farthest southern waterways and have settlements in the southern parts of both continents. Trading between Milonda’s desert cities and the nations south of the Confederacy is brisk, thanks to this Ob-lob cartel.

The Riser-Above are uncharacteristically fond of hierarchy and structured authority. They choose representatives, empower them to make agreements on behalf of all the Rotamatamakuludohey, and then abide by the papers signed. They remain distinct and separate from their neighbors, and that understood distance allows both sides to feel that the other is, if not cozy, at least comfortably predictable.

This love of order applies to personal matters as well. A certain amount of nostoviol is tolerated and expected, but doing it with foreigners? Or with anyone but your spouse when married? That’s weak, and disgusting.
Ob-lob at War

Conflict, for the Obotilobitanolonikututano, has a different tenor than for more settled peoples. They have little territory to defend, but much treasure. Their greatest capital is their ships, which are constantly on the move and overmatch anyone else’s craft of comparable size.

Complicating matters is their attitude towards the sea, which is, “Everything upon it belongs to us.” It’s a little more complicated than that, not a lot. They recognize the right of others to sail, at Ob-lob sufferance. They understand that people take a sort of possession over the goods they transport, but to the Ob-lob way of thinking, that right is subordinate to any Ob-lob’s right to it as soon as it shifts from the pull of the land to the pull of the sea.

This firmly held belief is expressed in many ways, the most obvious being blatant, outright piracy. Ob-lob pirates stick to coastal waters, use divination to predict when a ship’s coming, sail out to it and overwhelm it through sheer force of numbers. Since a freight galley has to go farther and has to carry all the food for the voyage on it, plus the cargo, it can only carry a limited number of fighters. Opportunistic coastal buccaneers have none of those restrictions. They can eat a hearty breakfast, load the ship with all the men its cargo hold can contain, then close in for the kill – or the surrender.

A minor variation on outright piracy (in which the Ob-lob takes everything of value, seize or sink the ship and dump the crew a few days’ hike from civilization) is ‘sea tax.’ The approach is just the same, but instead of taking everything, they only take one coin in ten. Rotamatamakulu dohey tax crews even provide a letter indicating the date and time of the raid, encouraging other Riser-Above crews to give the ship a pass. While this method yields a fraction of the payoff, there’s only a fraction of the danger. A lot of captains are less likely to fight over ten percent of their cargo than over all of it.

Some pirates graduate to raiding coastal towns or holding cities for ransom with naval blockades. The attitude of the major families is that that sort of criminality is the business of the crew committing the crimes. It’s the city or town’s problem and asking the family to intercede without a serious cash reward is naïve.

Ob-lob, then, like to fight on the water where they have a serious edge – and where, if they’re overmatched, they have a better chance of fleeing.

But not all of the Obotilobitanolonikututano live shipboard. Many settle in towns and cities under the laws of some out-blood ruler. These settled Ob-lob usually obey the laws of the land and some even consider themselves citizens, but they almost always live in one central location within the city. Other people don’t want the white strangers living next door, and the Ob-lob like having a safe haven where they can rely on the surdomohaikututano to give them a fair shake. When one Ob-lob harms another, they rarely take it to the official authorities. It goes to the elders. Civil authorities are typically all in favor of this, since it gives them fewer headaches.

The problem with having Ob-lob clustered is that it makes it easy for firebrand hate-mongers to point a finger and say, “There are your enemies! Fetch torches and follow me!” The defensive response varies from polis to polis. Some barricade their barrio. Some fight house to house. Still others immediately surrender and offer to buy their freedom with a trove of coin buried in the hill. (How many Ob-lob communities actually have emergency funds hidden nearby? Enough to make the offer plausible.) Most commonly, however, the Ob-lob are along the docks and can evacuate on shipboard.

Their tactics, then, rely on massed troops only when they’re on the offensive, and then only to create an overwhelming advantage so they may not have to fight at all. Defending, they evade until they can get a better position, often while the most capable and cunning leaders delay pursuit. In any case, divination magic often gives them time to prepare.
Everything Arose And To Which Everything Returns. She gathers a large group of followers and insists that all Obotilobitanolonikututano acknowledge her new doctrine. She and her followers are out-bloods...

...a crew limps into port with strange cargo, claiming to have found a gap in the great ring of ice that surrounds the two continents...

...the Seekers of Eleven appear, wielding awful magic and offering diabolical bargains...

**Ob-lob Character Concepts**

...rebel oracle who hates the sea and everything upon it...

...aged and manipulative surdomohaikutano...

...drunken sailor, abandoned when the tide went out...

...uppity pugilist, challenging other nations' fighters to prove the superiority of Ob-lob martial techniques...

...wealthy and jaded merchant, retired young and looking for thrills...

**Ob-lob Company Concepts**

...tiny Obotilobitanolonikututano enclave within a large and marginally hostile port city...

...inland minor family trying to work Ob-lob haggling wiles on unprepared land-locked nations...

...mercenary cruiser escorting transports of soldiers into hostile territory...

...refugees of a pogrom, fleeing to a rival nation and scheming for revenge...

...conspiracy of self-hating half-breeds who can pass as out-bloods, negotiating backroom deals and spying on (and for) both the Ob-lob and the host nation...

...explorers commissioned by a major family to completely circumnavigate both continents...

**Ob-lob Plot Complications**

...an influential local out-blood forces an Ob-lob woman into mosemomadoco and laughs at the notion of being held responsible...

...two of the major families start actually killing one another, in organized numbers, over a trade dispute...

...a charismatic speaker claims to have received direct commands from the Abyss From Which...
This is the story the people of the Ruhini desert tell. "When, after much persuasion and offering of gifts, the Spider King convinced the Sun Mother to lay with him, she became great of belly and in time gave birth to twins. The first was Ivwinu the Unseeable (may his gaze be delayed) and with that birth time began."

"The Spider King greeted his firstborn son with great joy and said that any gift the boy asked, the King would provide. Regarding his father's largesse, all Ivwinu (whose name commands respect) desired was a blanket, under which he might rest, shielded from the insistent gaze of his mother the Sun.

"He was disappointed at his son's laziness, but the Spider King fulfilled his promise, making a blanket as big as the entire world. It was a marvel of knots and gems and decoration, but where Ivwinu (the great and inexorable) touched, it aged into sand. Crawling under it, the god slept."

"Close after the delivery of Ivwinu came his sister Kurwis the Crafty (may her name be blessed) who wanted nothing more than the love and devotion of her parents and brother. But while the Spider King delighted her with all manner of tricks and games, and while the Sun Mother's attention was always upon her to a greater or lesser degree, her brother did nothing but sleep. Kurwis (the wise and generous) began to weep with frustration, and in time she cried so much that her tears became a serpent of water, issuing endlessly from her eyes and crawling across the world. She flung it upon her brother's blanket and said, 'If you will do nothing for me, then trouble unto you!'

"As her tears touched the blanket and soaked through to the sleeping god beneath, the growing power of time was awakened, and the serpent gave life to it. First came plants, then animals, then people, all growing up along the life-giving serpent, who was named Nguzi. Seeing these novelties, Kurwis (may her joy be undiminished) was pleased, and the Spider King was intrigued, and the Sun Mother was delighted."

"So great was the Sun Mother's delight that she turned the full force of her warming gaze upon them, and caught between her heat and the age of the Unseeable's desert, many were burned up. So the Spider King wove for her a veiled garment, and told her to wear it and shield the people, animals and plants. Reluctantly, she agreed, but so fascinating where the things of the world that she periodically took peeks above her veil. This is day, and when she shields her countenance again to protect us, that is night."

"In time, the endless flowing of Nguzi created a sea, and some men who were washed down into the water came ashore elsewhere and founded new lands. But the Spider King, the Sun Mother and Kurwis the Crafty (long may her joy persist!) remained at the edges of the Unseeable's blanket, always watching the deeds of the first people and, sometimes, becoming involved themselves. Those times were times of great joy and blessing, no matter how many homes burned, or cities were consumed in the earth, or how many spears drank blood. All praise to our creators!"
The Ruhini desert is a dangerous, cruel and inhospitable place. Lying close under the sun, its summers are the hottest in the known world, the spring and autumn days are hot as Imperial midsummer, and even the winter rainy season is warm enough that snow is largely unknown. But despite the difficulties, life persists and even thrives in select enclaves.

The settlements of men depend on fresh water, and its greatest source is the Nguzi river. The Nguzi begins in the mountains to the southeast, nourishing the ancient city of Kininguvu. It meanders west through Ovyo and Mwa before splitting into a delta just past the city of Sudevu. The delta has rich farmland but also dense swamp, alligators, stinging insects, poison snakes and Ob-lob pirate hideouts. The swamp is unstable, plagued by sinkholes, floods after the rains and the occasional earthquake or ocean-born monsoon to keep things interesting. If that wasn’t enough, the city of Upunzi lies to the north of the delta, with Kiqwani to the south. All three city-states (Upunzi, Sudevu and Kiqwani) contend for the rich farmland surrounding the delta, while attempting to probe or patrol the depths of the swamps in search of corsairs or military encampments of the two rival cities.

During the summer and fall, the Nguzi shrinks and the farmland around it cracks, even where irrigated. In the autumn, when the river is at its lowest ebb, it can become impossible to navigate. During the rainy season, it floods and alters its course, sometimes wiping out the fields (and homes) of farmers, who then struggle to replant and rebuild. It’s hard to determine when the last of the great rains has fallen, so planters (particularly near the delta) simply resign themselves to losing a crop or two until they get one in right after the last major storm. Flush with water, the crops thrive during the spring, which is when most of the vegetable production for the whole year is done.

The only major city off the Nguzi is far Punga, which exists around a series of wells and geysers. While there’s enough water to survive on, it fluctuates enough that every neighborhood has to deal with a dry well sooner or later. Furthermore, Punga water is foul and thick and usually opaque. However, while the taste is repulsive to outsiders (and rarely liked by natives) it’s good for the plants, which is the only reason Punga is anything other than a town around an oasis. (Well, that and the Sunwise. But more on them later.)

### Commodities

Trade between the cities is regular. In years of heavy rainfall, Punga and Kininguvu get good crops while delta farms flood out. Dry years are brutal for Punga and less plentiful for Kininguvu, but gentler floods are better for the Sudevu, Upunzi and Kiqwani. So no matter how the weather trends, caravans and barges end up hauling produce up or down the Nguzi. That’s primarily what the Seven Cities trade among themselves, food and gold. (If the priests in Mwa hadn’t decided that the use of letters of credit was sinful, the exchange of grain futures might develop and revolutionize trade for all of the seven. But as it is, very few even suspect that an opportunity was missed.)

Some commodities are unique to the Ruhini, and these command increasing prices the farther from the Cities they go. Foremost among these is incense, which is trafficked legally throughout Heluso and Milonda, with demand particularly keen in Pahar (where it has become a frequent religious sacrifice) and Dindavara (as a particularly honorable gift to present at a funeral). It’s sold (and used) more often in Opetka and the Wuha Empire, where it perfumes homes and clothing when it’s not being used as a medicine for ills of the lungs.

Incense is grown by all the cities, but the finest and most plentiful comes from Mwa. The scrubby incense trees stubbornly resist cultivation and have failed to thrive anywhere outside the Ruhini. To harvest it, slashes are made in the tree bark right after the rainy season, when the sap bleeds out. Fifteen
days later, the dried and crystalized sap is collected and taken to a city for processing, if it’s not stolen. There’s a black market for premature incense, which can be processed into inferior but still marketable product, usually for sale abroad. The cat-and-mouse activities between sap thieves and the guards of the incense cartels are quite involved and there’s a good natured respect – a real feeling of sportsmanship. This doesn’t stop either side from killing members of the other, but there’s surprisingly little hatred between them.

The succulent *mohrim* cactus has a modest market. You get the highest prices for dried mohrim in Uldholm, but the profits are almost always consumed by travel costs. The thorns of the scrubby and uncommon *oza* bush can be ground into a powder that eases pain and hastens sleep. But like incense, oza resists cultivation and, furthermore, can’t compete with other plants if there’s too much water. Gathering oza thorn means hours spent in the desert, taking chances with lions, scorpions, and (reputedly) evil spirits of a time before men walked the earth.

The most controversial product of grudging Ruhini fertility is *mwivu*. Mwivu grows abundantly in moist river soil, and when its spongy flesh is ingested there are several effects, the most immediate being an agonizingly sour flavor. That, however, is quickly eclipsed by clutching stomach cramps and piercing pains throughout the eyes and ears. This discomfort persists about an hour, after which one finds out if the mushroom is going to have a positive effect or not. If it doesn’t, well, too bad. If it does, you see.

What you see is manifestly difficult to describe in words. The most fervid and frequent mwivu users are Mwa’s priests of Ivwinu the Unseeable (may his slumber be peaceful), get a good meal and a decapitation. Or they can be turned over to one of the other sects, who might break their legs and leave them in the desert, or starve them to death in an oubliette, or maybe just sell them to the Upunzi Elders after removing their hands and feet (and, with them, presumably any ability to engage in crime again).

Given the uncertainty and length of other modes, some choose a swift, predictable chop to the neck. As a reward for finding religion at the last hour, their heads are displayed on poles outside the city, with their mouths pulled into jolly grins by a double-hooked chain. The Unseeable’s ministers explain that this is to show how happy the criminal is in the afterlife, having aged into wisdom (and death) with Ivwinu, all praise to his name!

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**Overview**

The Smiling Dead

Mwa, city of strict laws and wealthy outlaws, occasionally resorts to capital punishment. To avoid ghosts, it’s an option offered to prisoners convicted of serious crimes like murder, treason or serial blasphemy. They can admit their guilt, be shriven and purified by the priests of Ivwinu the Unseeable (may his slumber be peaceful), get a good meal and a decapitation. Or they can be turned over to one of the other sects, who might break their legs and leave them in the desert, or starve them to death in an oubliette, or maybe just sell them to the Upunzi Elders after removing their hands and feet (and, with them, presumably any ability to engage in crime again).

What you see is manifestly difficult to describe in words. The most fervid and frequent mwivu users are Mwa’s priests of Ivwinu the Unseeable, who base most of their policy decisions on mwivu visions. A sect of Pahar Conjoiners, who believe it a divine gift, speaks of seeing their goddess, while the Howling Stone cult of Punga say they see a god. Spider priests have seen the web of magic that underlies all creation, while Ob-lobs have beheld the very vortex from which all worlds emerged.

Not all these visions are desirable. People have gone mad, been plagued by nightmares, or abandoned their families to become lone prophets in the wilderness. But others have found spiritual peace, forsaken sinful compulsions and found great insights in the drug’s grip.
The cities of the Ruhini are spread out, there are chasms of inequality in the distribution of wealth and a great variety of religions thrive and compete. There are very few hard-and-fast generalizations about what these people care about, with two exceptions.

First, there is always merit in hospitality. Faced with an inclement setting, the people who've survived have been those who bound together and offered kindness to those in need. Usually, they were keenly aware that they might be in need soon. Without an expectation of at least the minimum for survival from strangers, no one would have dared cross the desert and establish trade between the river, Punga, and the rest of Milonda. This trust is ingrained, and anyone who violates it is guilty of terrible dishonor.

Honor is the second central value. Among the poor and striving classes, keeping one's word is essential. The average merchant or laborer of the cities would rather die than violate an oath. This means (of course) that oaths are never taken lightly. It's expected that they're sworn sober in front of three impartial witnesses. The ideal is to have the witnesses be as different from one another as possible. Rich, poor, native and foreign, religious or faithless, variety is the key in those who sanctify vows.

Among the families and professions and people who have amassed great wealth and power, the appearance of honor is greatly prized, as is the ability to amass power and wealth with a spotless public record. If this means privately bribing those to whom one has made promises, or assassinating witnesses, well, if no one knows it doesn't really matter.

“...It's difficult - but important - to understand that when a merchant says something along the lines of 'Buy my grapes, they are as firm and delightful as your mother's magnificent nipples' he is actually trying to compliment her, as well as his fruit."

—Mian Meiren, “A Journal of Distant Travels"
Matters of Color

"Punga is where Ivwinu the Unseeable (may his repose be forever blessed) pisses in his sleep."

—Sunwise Muhun of Punga

**Culture**

Shoes and sandals are important in the Cities’ sartorial culture. Whether the streets and sands are scorching hot at noon or bitter cold at night, they’re nothing to walk on barefoot. Footwear with thick soles (either wood or dunim carapace) is common to all but the most destitute. High, enclosed boots demonstrate a readiness for the unexpected – they’re worn by riverboat captains, thief-takers, many governors and almost all soldiers. Open sandals indicate indolence (and sometimes opulence). A person in sandals isn’t going anywhere far or in haste. They’re favored by some courtiers and many merchants, to show that they’re above the kind of rushing about that the soldiers and captains do. Whichever is chosen, shoes are removed when in private, inside with someone trusted. To show honor to a guest, the host washes his feet and anoints them with perfume or oil.

The extremes of sunlight and temperature mean clothing has to adapt. Next to the skin lies a light, thin layer of linen, cotton or even imported silk. (Some cotton is grown in the Nguzi delta, but it’s lower quality than Opetkan imports.) For both genders, this close layer is knee-length pants and a sleeveless shirt. Sometimes women wear gowns instead. This is extremely feminine.

The next layer depends on circumstance and temperature. If it’s during the day and one is going to be in the shade, something billowing, gauzy and light is worn – a caftan or enveloping robe, colored or plain, patterned or solid. Out in the sun, looseness is still prized, but it has to be thick enough to shield the skin from burns. Often the city dweller covers his head in layers of cloth which trail down the back of the neck, or a with a wide-brimmed, loose-woven reed hat.

**Cuisine**

During the rainy season, corn and wheat are harvested for the whole year’s use, along with vegetables and even a few hardy fruits. The sourbelly cactus is inedible to any but the desperate, but is cultivated for vinegar, which is then used to pickle many vegetables for later consumption. Grapes are eaten raw during the rainy season, or turned into wine, or very rarely dried into raisins as a delicacy for the children of wealth. On the coastal cities, fish is a staple. In the hills of Punga and the mountains near Kininguvu, goats and some sheep are raised for milk, cheese and wool. In Mwa and Ovyo, meat is most commonly imported, if you’re unwilling to hunt for crocodiles.

Most food is cooked over small, hot fires on thin grilles or pans. Sauces and soups are almost unheard-of, though various fluid-filled organs of animals are considered good eating by the middle class (primarily eyes, especially in Upunzi, where the idea of consuming eye fluid is frequently in mind). Bread is cooked in balls, meat in strips, and outside the rainy season the vegetables are preserved, often pickled.

In all the Seven Cities, it is considered improper and impolite to touch food with your hands once it has been cooked or served. Eating with one’s hands is vulgar and even desperate, so the fork (singly or in pairs) and the knife are usually close at hand. One traveler recounts seeing a man who’d been lost in the desert for five days pause to whittle a food-spear before eating a proffered strip of dried fish. Only someone from beyond the Ruhini would consider this behavior worthy of comment.

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Most food is cooked over small, hot fires on thin grilles or pans. Sauces and soups are almost unheard-of, though various fluid-filled organs of animals are considered good eating by the middle class (primarily eyes, especially in Upunzi, where the idea of consuming eye fluid is frequently in mind). Bread is cooked in balls, meat in strips, and outside the rainy season the vegetables are preserved, often pickled.

In all the Seven Cities, it is considered improper and impolite to touch food with your hands once it has been cooked or served. Eating with one’s hands is vulgar and even desperate, so the fork (singly or in pairs) and the knife are usually close at hand. One traveler recounts seeing a man who’d been lost in the desert for five days pause to whittle a food-spear before eating a proffered strip of dried fish. Only someone from beyond the Ruhini would consider this behavior worthy of comment.
By night or on cold days, a final layer is added, a leather cloak or cape with a felt or fur lining. These are typically plain, but nobles and the wealth pride themselves on having elaborate patterns embossed on the skin.

Jewelry is common, with even the poorest wearing glass beads on strings. Necklaces, rings, anklets and earrings are all frequent, and some in the coastal cities have adopted the foreign fashion of inserting progressively larger hoops into the earlobes.

The practice of fingernail sculpting originated in Kininguvu. Nails are grown long, then carefully filed and filigreed into plant patterns, the forms of animals, architectural forms or abstract shapes. They’re then lacquered, but of course this art is temporary in common circumstances. When someone dies with sculpted nails, the nails may be cut off as keepsakes for loved ones.

Just as sandals are a subtle sign of luxury, delicate and elaborate nails are a blatant one. It says, very clearly, “I do not have to work and can afford expensive and transitory art.” The more nails are decorated, the greater the effect. Social climbers of the middle class are known to decorate a single nail, and then wear rings or fingernail guards that chain down to a bracelet, so that the nail is not risked if the finger gets used by mistake.

Mwivu

Mwivu is a Potency 5 drug. The Minor effect is crippling pain, levying penalties equal to having your torso fully Shocked. (Just touching it to your tongue won’t have this severe an effect, and as for sneaking it into food — forget it. That sour flavor can overwhelm anything.)

The Major effect is the vision. The nature of the vision depends on the user. The first time a vision arises — the first time only! — roll Knowledge. People who believe they’re going to have a religious insight can roll Knowledge+Student of Religion (or some similar Skill). Those who have a more mystic perspective can roll Knowledge+Sorcery. If a Passion applies to the pursuit of vision, it can offer its dice, but the vision then certainly pertains to that aspect (or aspects) of the taker’s character.

If the Knowledge roll yields a set and beats Difficulty 6, the vision is meaningful. The partaker gets an insight into himself, or the world around him. He learns something new and, for his trouble, gets three bonus XP that can be spent only on a relevant Knowledge Skill. If the Knowledge roll gets a set under the Difficulty, the vision isn’t anything new, but it seems to be a profound affirmation of what the character already believes. If the Knowledge roll gets no sets, the character is confronted with some repressed or forsaken understanding that she absolutely did not want. The player who gets this result has to make a serious change to the character — gaining a relevant Problem, or perhaps changing (or gaining) a Duty or Craving. (Usually, those Passions can’t be easily altered, but this sort of thing can do it.) With all results, it’s up to the player to describe the vision.

Understand, the nightmare result doesn’t have to uncover something true. But to that character, the substance of the vision feels true, no matter how much compelling evidence to the contrary is presented.

Repeated doses don’t provide equivalent insights, but rather reinforce the original epiphany.

Body Pearls

Many women and girls in Mwa cultivate patterns of “body pearls” by applying oils to the forehead or cheeks until a pore clogs and the skin swells and tightens. These small pustules — annoyances or blemishes in other cultures — are admired by certain segments in the Ruhini, as long as they’re clearly in deliberate patterns or lines. Accidental body pearls are acceptable, but not as alluring. The most prized have a glossy white surface. Red or black-headed swellings are less desirable, though it’s always better to have all the same sort of pearl than a mixture.
“You don’t believe all that madness about the desert being a blanket and the river being a snake, do you? Good, good. Religion’s fine when you’re teaching a child right from wrong, but it’s not so useful when you’re the one who’s been wronged.

“Out in the desert, you find ruins. Now and again, the winds blow the sand off them, or an earthquake pushes one up, a dune pirate stumbles across one or a Drummer finds one while laying road.

“They’re not fancy, but not like you see in the cities, either. What’s that mean? It means people were here before. This land was invaded by the city people, who forgot all about the folks they trampled underfoot. But the first owners, who used to live in those ruins, you can wager they didn’t. They remember just fine and they teach their children.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t come for you when my sister died. I was detained. Yes, prison. I imagine my brother-in-law couldn’t wait to tell you. Just like he didn’t wait long to remarry, did he now?

“I loved my sister, your mother, but she always denied what she was, where she came from, and that drove us apart. I shouldn’t have let that happen, but as much as I can, I want to right it through you. Come with me, nephew. I’ll take you tonight, to one of the old places. Take my hand, and take your first steps towards learning your real place in the world.”
became too uncomfortable or (as in the case of the Spider King church) at spear point.

Seventy years is a long time and many of the religions in the Concordance have, essentially, combined. In each there are those who insist that their deity is supreme and the others are, at best, angels in their god's heaven. At the same time, there are pragmatists whose first loyalty is to power, which means their second loyalty is Concordance influence, and loyalty to the church... mm, it's on the list somewhere.

The Concordance of All Faiths

In the city of Mwa, the King rules in name but the real authority lies with the ministers of the churches. About seventy years ago, when a particularly weak and dissolute queen sat upon the throne, a popular uprising threatened to unseat her and throw the entire city into anarchy. Since Sudevu was watching with the avid interest of a dog waiting for a bone to fall off a plate, the religious leaders set aside rivalries of practice to form the Concordance of All Faiths, which issued a pair of doctrines they all supported.

One: Rulership is a divine prerogative. It is sinful to rebel against a legitimate monarch and equally sinful to obey a false one.

Two: Any sin performed on the person of a priest or priestess is doubled in vileness, and any virtuous act is similarly twice as blessed.

With those principles to guide them, the Concordance promptly declared that heaven had rejected the queen for her sloth and unholy passions. Anointing a pious minor cousin as the new king, they led a crusade against the encroaching Sudevu army and scattered them like dust in autumn.

In the decades since, the Concordance has solidified its grip, added elements of doctrine that forbid strong drink, gambling, suggestive dancing, blasphemy in all forms and public criticism of civil authority on any grounds other than religious. As they’ve calcified into ever less tractable positions, several churches have been squeezed out of the city, either because it simply

...and by “Seven” I Mean “Four”

Reading this, you may notice that of the seven cities of Ruhini, only four are described in any detail at all – Upunzi, Mwa, Kininguvu and Punga. The cities of Oyo, Sudevu and Kiqwani get little or no description. This is intentional: While they share broad cultural details with the other four, they’ve been left for individual GMs to detail. If you want to have everything laid out for you, use one of the four. If you want a complete blank slate, take one of the three and make it your own. Otherwise, they can be bland and unmemorable.
Matters of Color

needy or trick the simple, and learn something new every day. Do that and be right with his majesty.

There is a splinter cult called the Reformed Church of the Spider King who cleave to the joyless precepts of the Concordance of All Faiths and who have accordingly been permitted back into Mwa. There is, however, enough interplay between them and the mainstream church that some suspect their condemnation of alcohol and dancing are merely lip service.

The Supernal Fellowship

To join the Supernal Fellowship, one must show mastery of at least two spells, each of which must be of the Second Intensity. Alternately, one must demonstrate a recognized form of flawless attunement.

The Supernal Fellowship, then, is open to anyone who has achieved a decent measure of arcane power. Its professed goals are to gather magic knowledge together and, at the same time, spread it far and wide. By learning as much as they can, they seek to preserve valuable lore from loss. By sharing it freely, they ensure that its blessings can reach as many as possible, instead of being hoarded by a miserly elite.

In practice, as is so often the case, their goals tend to drift. Many members act like they’re trying to ensure that the ‘blessings’ of The Bone-Crack Curse reach as many as possible. They make elegant arguments in favor of sharing knowledge, and their passion for acquiring it is vividly genuine. When you’re after their lore, they’re equally elegant with their evasions and delays.

The problem with the Fellowship, as with so many companies of mystics, is that at some point every enchantress faces the tough choice of attuning or remaining forever a dabbler. (Or, to hear the ‘dabbler’s describe it, the choice of remaining free instead of courting ghastly risk in order to cut one arm off and make the other stronger.) The attuned get the most use out of many spells and hesitate to share with those whose dedication to the system is less manifest. The unattuned have broad knowledge to share, but once you’re permanently Sunwise, what good are the spells of the Earthquake Drummer?

Were the Fellowship truly enlightened, the Drummers would do those valuable tasks that the Sunwise can’t, and vice versa, in a free and open exchange of goodwill and brotherhood. Sometimes, that even happens. Far more often, there’s bitter argument and harsh haggling, the meticulous counting of favors, widespread distrust and endless recriminations from wizards who feel shortchanged. The Sunwise have a particular reputation for stinginess and high-handed attitudes, while no one fully trusts the Upunzi seers. The Earthquake Drummers often serve as intermediaries between those factions (when they’re not laying low after dune pirate attacks), as do the Chosen of the Spider King. Many suspect the Spider Priests’ real goal is religious conversion. But that’s still less of a barrier than the unpleasant sensation of being measured for a goblet that many, even magi, feel when meeting an Upunzi elder’s gaze.

The only thing that really unifies the Fellowship is a challenge from without. Since their goals are superficially innocuous, and in practice constipated by conflicts of interest, there are few challenges. The only point of significant friction is that the Fellowship claims the right to try any members in a ‘Court of Just Enchantment’ that takes precedence over political authority. This right is rarely pursued, but now and then a magician who gets arrested becomes the center of a power struggle between the Fellowship and the city holding him. Whether the Fellowship wants to try him in order to give him a slap on the wrist, or to ensure a gruesome execution, is often a matter of uncertainty right to the moment where the enchanter finds out who’s sitting on his three-judge panel. The Fellowship sometimes intercedes because they truly want to produce a fair outcome and don’t think the enchanter will get one in an ‘unenlightened’ court. Mostly, though, it’s ‘who owes whom’ versus ‘whose ego got bruised.’
The Ruhini Merchant Confederation

It’s what it sounds like: A group of merchants who banded together to share advice and information, to protect and encourage one another, for all to make sure each was treated fairly, and to fix prices.

It started out as a group of friends, but as their businesses prospered and spread up and down the river, they introduced each other to new people and, without anyone really noticing, their opinions all started to sound alike, throughout the whole Nguzi valley. When one of their number was imprisoned in Upunzi, they all complained. The Elders are a tough group to back down but, in this instance, six of them decided that their economy outweighed the costs of quietly (but publicly) recanting. Not that they admitted a mistake: But they did agree to exile the merchant instead of blinding him and setting him to work sorting rags by touch.

Realizing just how much pressure they could exert, the Confederation established a formal rules charter, started collecting dues and got permanently kicked out of Punga. Since Punga was off the river, they couldn't quite get their hooks all the way in, and it still rankles them. Confederated Merchants travel to Punga in secret, but none have established a permanent shop, stall or storehouse there. The Pungese merchants aren't crazy about a clubby clique invading their territory, so they're vigilant and cooperative with the city authorities, when they don't just chase away outsiders themselves.

The Confederation isn't open to just anyone. It's by invitation. Only the prosperous, who can afford the membership fees, get invited. Legal troubles can keep you out, though the strongest barrier is having an enemy on the inside.

By and large the Confederation wants to strengthen its grip on finance, drive out independent merchants who undercut their agreed-upon prices, and ensure that members are above the law. The throw a lot of resources into pursuing dune corsairs and rooting out the Wronged, but at the same time they have some deniable connections to both groups. Criminals need to exchange their goods like anyone else, no matter how ill-gotten. The Merchants consider it their ethical duty to make sure crooks don't get good prices for what they steal.

The Dune Pirates

The commerce between the cities attracts robbers, like a crippled lamb draws predators. There are oases in the desert that can't support a settlement but which are sufficient – barely – for a tough, determined group. Caravans simply expect to be attacked, or at least threatened. Actual violence can happen as often as one trip in ten, unless the travelers don't show obvious arms. Then it's about every other time.

There are two primary groups of dune corsairs. The first consists mostly of Ob-lob, many exiled by their own people (or descended from exiles) who use dune rafts, chariots and mounted harriers to conduct lightning raids. They prefer to drag down rapid transports, meaning that encounters often come down to a question of who has the fastest sled, the best captain, and the least fear of death.

The other desert pirate clan consists of natives, many taking refuge at hidden cisterns whose locations have been family secrets for generations. These corsairs have close ties to the Wronged, often sharing in their beliefs and sometimes guarding their desert ruins. They’re usually mounted on horses or dunim, but rather than making quick surprise raids, they set traps and encircle caravans. Often they can be bought off – surrender one wagon of wheat, they let you keep the other ten and no one has to die on either side. Some caravans even bring special wagons of wormy or inferior produce, hoping that they can foist it off on raiders. Canny thieves aren't fooled. If their position is strong, they may insist on an inspection, or on picking a wagon at random.
Each style of banditry takes what it can get, of course. Big armed groups sometimes try to encircle a quick transport before it can wheel around, find a weak spot, punch through and be gone. Small, fast corsairs sometimes try to pounce, take control of the last wagon in the train and drive it away before a meaningful resistance can be mounted. But these tactics are dicier.

**The Wronged**

Centered in Mwa, the Wronged appear, to outsiders, as a simple collection of criminal gangs. There are smugglers, panders and whores, thieves and blackmailers and merchants of forbidden delights. These outlaws have a loose network, connecting the seven cities, transporting contraband and helping one another flee when a city gets too persistent in its inquiries. In function, the Wronged are a typical criminal company.

The reason for their focus on Mwa is a mutually-necessary hatred with the Concordance of All Faiths. In Kininguvu, where alcohol is legal, the crooks can’t compete with open, legal wine houses. But in Mwa, it’s forbidden and very profitable. The Wronged need the Concordance to keep prices inflated and competition in check. The Concordance needs the Wronged to rail against. Without the evolved lawlessness of an outside enemy, the churches would have no threat to protect their flocks from and no urgent task to distract them from their doctrinal conflicts.

But once one joins the Wronged, a hidden culture emerges. The Wronged teach of a lost civilization, destroyed and scattered long ago by the founders of Upunzi and Punga and the other five scars on the face of Ruhini. The Wronged take their name because they believe their birthright was stolen by invaders. Those conquerers’ laws have no foundation and can therefore be ignored by the land’s rightful owners. The Wronged have their own religion, their own courts and laws, existing invisibly beneath the veneer of the cities. They talk of one day rising up to reclaim what’s theirs, but such a thing is, at the present time, impossible.

Then again, when their position is strong, they might just fight. Armed caravans with outriders may spot the trap beforehand and hunker down defensively, but the sun is always shrinking on such battles: The siege of a caravan is almost always settled by access to water. If the caravan has lots and the attackers are far from resupply, the pirates usually withdraw, and sooner rather than later. If circumstances are reversed, it plays right into the thieves’ hands. If the caravan master is too foolish or stubborn to yield, he could wind up with a massacre. Then the cities send out their soldiers to enact reprisals, and it’s all very uncomfortable for everyone. Except the foolish caravan master and his people, who are dead by that point. But such total slaughters are rare, perhaps only occurring one year in three.
The real excitement comes when both sides have chariots. Then an encounter starts with the chariots rumbling out to clash, pinging each other with arrows and trying to move too fast to get hit, each trying to flank and not be flanked and, at the same time, not let the other get too close to the vulnerable infantry. This takes skilled drivers, highly trained (and lightly armored) horses, and above all leadership. Chariot leaders are highly visible, often with a large flag or pennant used to direct the followers. Kill the leader and the corps usually retreats to regroup.

Behind the glamorous chariots trudge the infantry, armed with spear, helmet and shield. They attack in formation, usually starting as a line three men thick but, when enveloped, condensing into a block bristling with weapons. The problem with the block formation is that, in the desert, you can't maintain it long before the sheer heat of the day, coupled with the body heat of the men pressing against you, starts to cause men in the center to fall, even as those at the edges get picked at by enemy spears.

Squad leaders for infantry carry a tall flag or banner instead of a spear, and may have better armor and other weapons of their choice. That said, they typically don't fight when things are going well, instead bellowing orders. Leaders are typically protected by a spearless individual called a ‘man-bulwark’ who carries a large tower shield and positions it as directed by the leader.

Infantry commands aren’t complicated, though following the wrong simple order can result in catastrophe. Infantry units don't charge to attack, they just lock shields, brace spears and walk forward in unison. The lines crunch together and grind against one another, grunting and sweating and pushing and stabbing, until one line breaks. Then the line that held isolates the two parts of the line and usually tries to hold off one while overwhelming the other with numbers. Alternately, one line may get around the side of the other and envelop it, attacking from front
The Delta Cities

Of the three cities on the Nguzi delta, two are ports (Upunzi and Kiqwani) which face the typical dangers of enemy ships approaching and being able to fire weapons straight up, hoping that they pass out of the sea’s pull and to the land’s, crashing down deep into the city. The cities can do the same thing, of course, but rather than let things get that far they maintain fleets of swift ramming ships to keep enemies out of range. These ships are exclusively rowed and are ill suited for anything other than sticking close to the city and being ready to slam into an enemy. Over short stretches, the ram-ships are faster than multipurpose sailing/cargo/warships – even Ob-lob ones. A big ship has several possible responses to these chargers. One is to pepper them with missile fire, which works sometimes, but is seldom enough by itself to back one off. It can also send out its own longboats with borders. They can usually grapple and board the rammer, but then they’re outnumbered and isolated. Still, it can certainly slow the ram-ship down and a really tough party might stop one altogether. Finally, the big ship might try to take the hit towards the front, where the keel is strongest. The very nose of a ship is usually thick enough that it won’t get holed (and it leaves the rammer in a terribly vulnerable position, out of momentum and overmatched) but it takes an incredible captain to bring his ship’s stem around to meet an attacker that’s smaller, lighter, faster and more maneuverable.

Other than the ocean-defense element, attacking a delta city is like besieging a city anywhere fertile. You camp out, you live off the land, you exchange catapult fire, try to breach the walls and you hope they don’t have friends on the way.

and back and rolling the enemy in on itself. Then again, it’s not uncommon for two lines to meet, each successfully flanking on opposite sides. Then the lines very slowly twist and shrink until one has been shredded or until all line discipline disintegrates and it’s one-on-one with few having any idea which direction is safe for retreat. It’s in those chaotic breaks that any leader who can rally people back into formation can turn the tide of battle.

But the wild card of any combat is always magic. Earthquake Drummers can tumble entire groups off their feet, but it takes time for them to build up significant force. Any army tries to break through to the enchanter as soon as it senses what’s happening.

The Seven Cities at War

The Seers of Upunzi can’t split walls or knit sundered limbs, but their battlefield intelligence is unparalleled. The limit is not on what they can find out, but on how quickly they can communicate their knowledge to the front. The Eleven are hardly going to go out into the uncertainty of combat, especially given their vulnerabilities. Upunzine commanders are either the toadying apprentices of Seers who haven’t been attuned but who still know how to see the field (or see their rulers, who can communicate superior knowledge to them), or they’re career military men who understand what the information all means – if and when it can get to them. A commander with good military education and a middling grasp of Upunzine visioning could command high fees just about anywhere, but most who qualify as Upunzine apprentices spent their time in duels of wits and intrigue, not spear and chariot.

The single most important magic in a Ruhini conflict, however, is undoubtedly the Sunwise. As long as they have sunlight, sand, and not a lot of time they can heal any injury. This makes conflict considerably less frightening in the abstract and makes it possible to make do with a much smaller army, as long as there are enough Sunwise to send casualties right out to fight once more. But even the Sunwise can’t resurrect the dead, and recreating severed limbs takes considerably more time, effort and experience. The Sunwise tend to be individualistic, and all the cities have some. Furthermore, as soon as a soldier sees a highly visible enemy Sunwise, the temptation is to slit the throats of the fallen. When the only options are coming back from the fight dead or perfectly well (though quite possibly mad from being made to fight immediately after suffering grievous pain), wars get ugly and soldiers veer between cowardice and dishonorable viciousness. Thus, among the cities, there’s a tacit understanding that Sunwise are kept off the field and only perform their miracles far from the front lines. When only one side has magical healing, of course (Punga against Wuhra invaders, for instance), then the Sunwise who are willing get right up close.
A collision of cultures in the Ruhini produced ‘road schooners’ or ‘sand rafts.’ The first ingredient was the Earthquake Drummers. With their ability to shape and harden earth through magic, it was obviously sensible to string some flat, wide roads between the seven cities.

The second element was Ob-lob seacraft. The people of the cities haven’t been able to copy the secrets of the Ob-lob’s success on the water, but simple observation taught them a few things about sail power.

The third ingredient was the local history of chariot warfare. The cities all knew how to build a light, spoke-wheeled chassis. It was then just a matter of attaching a sail instead of a horse and shooting down the smooth-drummed roads between cities.

While driving a dune schooner has its similarities to a chariot, or a carriage, or a sailboat, it’s different enough to be unique. (Someone with a skill at sailing or driving can attempt to control one, but at a -2d penalty. A dune driver can pilot a boat or drive a wagon at -2d.) The friction on the axles limits a sand craft’s top speed, but it’s a much higher limit than a boat has with hull drag.

The typical dune roller has a triangular chassis made of light, springy wood. Two large wheels at the front flank a bowsprit. The back wheel is smaller and pivots on a tiller. There’s a slim mast in the center of the hull, and a short spar projecting out from each side near the pilot’s seat. The sail is connected to the tip of the bowsprit, the top of the mast, and a loop of rope running around pulleys on the spars. Pulling the rope lets the captain trim the sail to take advantage of the wind, no matter what direction it comes from. The spars also serve to brace brake flaps — usually they lie flush against the hull, but when deployed they open to create drag. Once the brakes are released, it’s not easy to get them folded back until the vehicle stops or slows considerably. Some daredevil pilots have learned you can make unusually sharp turns by opening the brake on one side only, but at the risk of rolling the craft, snapping the mast and possibly dying.

Schooners can travel offroad, as long as it’s fairly flat, but it limits their speed and maneuverability. They’re used primarily for moving small, light and precious cargo. Most schooners have a single pilot and perhaps one guard in a precarious seat on the bowsprit. Guards are most often spellcasters specializing in wreaking havoc at distance, sometimes a very skilled archer. (A fully attuned wingspeaker can command a princely salary as a schooner escort.) The biggest schooners can carry four persons, including crew. Schooners also carry news and messages, scout ahead of slower caravans, and act as decoys. Passage between cities on one is possible at rates ranging from Wealth 2-4.

A single, lightly-armed craft carrying important people or precious items like gems or incense is tempting for thieves, and dune pirates love to pluck a ripe sand raft. Some of them have schooners of their own, and the chases can be quite exciting — at least until one captain or the other makes a mistake and sends his craft barrel-rolling across the desert.

A schooner’s top speed equals a racing stallion at full gallop. The difference is, a schooner doesn’t tire, as long as there’s even a mild breeze.
Characters Concepts From the Ruhini

...fearless dune pirate captain, haunted by a tragic romance...

...benevolent Sunwise who risked attunement for her son, tied to a sadistic and power-hungry spirit...

...Wronged assassin, hiding in Kininguvu after murdering an Upunzi elder's apprentice...

...faithful Spider King convert, making the pilgrimage to the Holy Land in hopes of becoming an attuned priestess...

...prosperous merchant by day, rebel against unjust oppression by night...

Companies of the Seven Cities

...conspiracy to unseat the Upunzi Eleven and install a new form of government...

...occult scholars seeking ancient lore in the desert ruins...

...mid-level functionaries of all seven cities, attempting to unite them under a single rule...

...Pungese merchants to the Wuhra with dune pirate ties...

...death-cult of Ivwinu, to whom all who die fall! And rightly so!

Plot Complications in the Desert

...Sudevu starts building a dam, promising to divert the river into two firm channels and drain the noxious delta swamp...

...as one, the sorcerers known as Earthquake Drummers pack their bags, leave the cities, and hide in the mountains, giving no explanation...

...the king of Punga is murdered, and his heir is far too friendly with the Ruhini Merchant Confederation...

...after a tremor, a vast new spring opens in the desert. In time, it could become another Punga, but who will settle it?

...the Wuhra ally with two Ob-lob families to invade the delta cities...

Futai Names

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Seven Cities in the Ruhini
If you already bought the Indomitable Advantage, Die With Your Boots On only costs 4 points.

**Indomitable (1 point advantage):** An indomitable character can force himself to keep going past the point where his body would stop. He can resist unconsciousness, run on a broken leg, or swing a weapon with two broken arms. Indomitable characters are not to be trifled with.

If an indomitable character has a limb filled with Killing damage, she can choose to use it normally for one round at the cost of putting a point of Killing damage into her torso. Similarly, by changing a point of Shock damage in her head to Killing, she can remain awake for one round, even after her head fills with Shock. Finally, by changing a point of Shock damage in her torso to Killing she can ignore the usual penalty for having a torso full of Shock, for one round.

**Language Genius (5 point advantage):** When a language genius already has 1+ED in a language Skill, he can change his ED to an MD for 1XP instead of the usual cost. If you take this advantage at character generation, you can apply its benefits while buying language MDs then, too.

**Last Push (Varies):** The player can spend up to 5 points on a Last Push advantage. Once the character has taken enough damage to die, she can continue to act for a number of rounds equal to the points spent.

**Linguist (3 points):** Every session, you get a bonus XP that can only be spent to improve Language skills. If you take this advantage at character generation, you get a free point in one language as well.

**Literate in _____ (1 point):** The character does not automatically lose dice from a Language pool when reading. This can be taken multiple times to reflect literacy in different languages.
Rabbity (4 points): In combat, the character can move twenty feet per round without a roll instead of the usual fifteen.

Ruhini Archer (1 or 3 Points): All the Ruhini cities use composite bows with a horn arrow-groove, and thumb rings are standard issue. These two refinements don’t seem very meaningful to the untrained eye, but they extend the weapon’s range and reduce in-flight drift.

A Ruhini archer can, when using an arrow-groove and thumb ring, extend the range of his arrows. If using a shortbow, it becomes a Long range weapon. When using a compound bow or a longbow, he can ignore either a -1d Penalty or reduce a Difficulty by 2.

The one point version of the advantage indicates someone who was raised with this style of archery. These natives take a -1d Penalty whenever they aren’t using the tools to which they’re accustomed. The three-point version allows a character to switch archery styles with no problems.

Secret of the Librarians of Salck (2 points): The character can read without speaking or moving his lips. This can only be used in conjunction with the Literate Advantage.

Soldier’s Slumber (1 point): When at rest, the character can fall asleep with a simple Body+Vigor roll. To sleep through disturbances – shaking, the thunder of catapult stones, vigorous lovemaking by the next room’s tenants or their cats – another Vigor roll is all that’s required. Physical pain still wakes him as usual.

Subtle Beauty (3 points): This functions like the Beauty advantage, promoting all low Fascinate or Graces rolls to a minimum Height of five. However, this physical appeal is conditional. Sometimes it’s active, sometimes the character is as forgettable as anyone else. It’s up to the player to decide when it’s off or on, and why. Maybe she needs to let her hair down and stand up with good posture, or change into the right clothes. Maybe he’s only gorgeous to his fellow Truils, while other races can’t see past the white skin.

Tranquil Presence (1 point): There’s something comforting and reassuring about the character’s demeanor and reactions. When Morale Attacks are made in his presence, they are reduced by one point. (That is, when someone produces a Morale Attack 5 against his followers and he’s there, it’s only a Morale Attack 4.) However, any Morale Attacks the character creates are decreased by 3, whatever their source.

Unconventional Strategies (5 points): Some soldiers believe the character’s brilliant. Some believe he’s crazy. Some believe he’s simply thinking about troop movements with logic so alien to traditional thinking that he might as well be brilliant and crazy. Whichever it is, the character follows principles that make sense only to him, and that makes him difficult to predict. If your character is in charge during a big engagement, you can forfeit your army’s Strategy roll in order to force the opposing
leader to forfeit hers. (This applies only to the roll to get a +1 Might bonus. Any Strategy rolls that create other effects or activate Esoteric Disciplines are unaffected.)

**Unorthodox Healing (2 points):** When the character treats illnesses, diseases or injuries, she does it based on radically different theories of her own. If she chooses to use an experimental treatment, the Healing roll is at Difficulty 4, but any set that beats the Difficulty has its Height raised to 10.

**Weather Limb (1 point):** With a successful, unmodified Sense roll the character can tell (by consulting the twinges and pangs in a long-healed injury) whether the humidity, air pressure or temperature are due for a big change in the next 12 hours. Characters can only take this Advantage at character generation if they have some kind of missing limb Problem. It can be bought in the course of play after a limb has filled completely with Killing damage.

**Whale Blessed (2 points):** When swimming, the character never faces Difficulties due to rough or cold water. (Difficulties from exhaustion are levied as usual.) Furthermore, the character can swim in Heavy armor, though with a –4d penalty.

**Nuhou Death Trance (3 points):** This trick originated with the great Nuhou family of the Wu-hra tribes. The Nuhou who practice this trance (and those monks who share their beliefs in a cyclical, godless cosmos) claim they literally die. This seals off their lives up to the point of the trance, putting it into a loop while the person who awakens from the trance is someone entirely new (though with a full memory of the body’s previous user). This is a drastic step, of course. Some do it when anticipating a downturn of fortune, so that they can put off those forthcoming problems on a new soul. Others do it after a great tragedy, so that their skills and abilities can continue in service to the Nuhou, unburdened by the fear of living through the tragedy again and again, through death after death. Indeed, under some Nuhou leaders, a death trance is sufficient to serve out a death sentence.

It’s an odd practice, and it has spread to other Wu-hra as well, for a variety of personal and obscure reasons. Someone who knows how, and who wishes to enter a death trance, has to spend an hour lying still and concentrating on controlled breathing. At the end of that hour, she can make a Knowledge+Body roll (a peculiar combination, to be sure). If it succeeds, she goes into a coma for hours equal to the Height of the roll multiplied by its Width. (Thus, a 2x3 result puts her out for six hours. A 5x9 puts her under for 45 hours.)

If examined, someone in a death trance is cooling, unresponsive (even to pain), and not visibly breathing. Finding the slow, weak, pulse is hard, as is determining the very gradual exhalations. Determining that someone is in a trance and not actually dead requires an opposed Healing roll. If the dice from the Healing roll can gobble out the Death Trance set, the healer realizes that the person is still just a little bit alive. It does not let him waken the person early, however. That requires a regular Healing success after he’s won the opposed roll.
All the creatures listed here are described at greater length in the Encyclopedia. This section just has their game mechanic stats.

**Murgwarks**

Murgwarks have no Threat. If eaten, their flesh is a Potency 4 poison. The minor effect is puking, disorientation and distress. This gives a –1d penalty to all actions for about an hour. The major effect is to painfully lock the throat, jaw and stomach muscles for about three hours. During that time, the victim can breathe and kind of moan, but can’t move his mouth or tongue to form words. Nor can he eat or drink.

**Culong**

**Culong Hit Locations**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>ROLL HEIGHT</th>
<th># OF WOUND BOXES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEAD</td>
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<td>BODY</td>
<td>7-9</td>
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<td>3-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEFT FORELEG</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Body 2-3**  **Coordination 2-4**  **Sense 3**

- Gore 3  Grab 3  Hearing 2
- Run 3   Sight 2  Scrutinize 3

**Trainability:** 1-3

**Tricks:** 5-7

**Special:** Culong have AR1 on their heads.

**Movement:** 10-15’ per round

**Attacking:** Culong tusks do Width Killing damage. A very few of them have been trained to use the Trip maneuver with a Coordination+Grab pool.
Dunim Hit Boxes

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<th>LOCATION</th>
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<td>LEFT HINDLEG</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Body 5-6  Coordination 2  Sense 4

- Trample 1
- Jump MD

Trainability: 3-5

Tricks: 4-7

Special: Dunimu naturally have AR 1 on their body and head. They can carry more, enough to give them AR 4 on those locations, but they can't move with more than AR 1 leather on their legs. When encumbered by any mundane armor at all, they can't jump.

Movement: 10' per round, walking. When they jump, roll their Jump pool the round the jump is declared. (Even though the jump is Slow 1, you roll on the declaring round.) The next round, they can move ten horizontal feet, plus an additional five feet for each point of Width in their Jump roll. If jumping vertically, start with a minimum of 10’ and add a foot for every point of Height.

Attacking: They attack by trampling, which sometimes just means walking over somebody. A walking trample does Width in Shock. Far nastier is a jumping trample. It's just what it sounds like: This big heavy beast jumps at least ten feet up and then lands on you. To perform a jumping trample, it has to make a Jump roll one round and roll its Trample pool the next round. If it fails the Trample roll, it misses. If the jumping trample succeeds, it does Width Killing damage plus an Area Shock attack equal to the Width of the Jump roll. The target is then downed.
Counterspell: Spiritual Escutcheon

In the Ruhini, there is a subculture of criminals who call themselves “The Wronged.” Believing they are survivors of a people conquered and mostly forgotten, they hold themselves above the laws of the Ruhini’s cities. (The cities don’t quite see it that way.)

One argument that supports their origin myth is the practice called ‘ruhui hanal,’ which roughly translates as “Spiritual Escutcheon.” Whether they’re wronged revolutionaries or just self-righteous crooks, their study of foiling magic indisputably works.

Spiritual Escutcheon is used with the Counterspell Skill. For more on the Wronged, see page 58.

My Power Is My Own (1 Point): Most counterspelling works through a mental process of reinforcing one’s personal energies and separating them from the environment. But instead of building a wall, the Wronged observe and avoid unwanted mystic changes, rather than flatly resisting them. My Power Is My Own can be combined with all the other elements of Spiritual Escutcheon.

The character can use Sense with Counterspell instead of Knowledge.

Defense Before Thought (2 Points): Get targeted with spells often enough, and avoidance becomes second nature.

If a Sense+Eerie roll produces a second set, and detects a spell targeting the character, the later set can be applied as a Counterspell, as long as its Width isn’t larger than the character’s Counterspell pool.

No Chains (3 Points): The character can use Counterspell to break lingering enchantments upon herself. Any success set is sufficient.
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Community Oath (4 Points): The character's awareness of the mystic landscape is significant enough that he can not only perform the equivalent of ducking out of the way of a baneful spell: He can shove his friends aside too.

The character can counter spells that target anyone within ten or fifteen feet, as long as he's aware of the enchantment. This works exactly like a character using Parry to defend someone else.

Reclaiming What Is Mine (5 Points): The character can break ongoing spells, not only on himself, but on his friends or even on objects. He has to be touching the object or person he's disenchancing.

First Need (1 Point): When seeking fresh water, the character either gains a +2d bonus or reduces all Difficulties by 5 points. If this is the only level of One With the Land known, it can only be used in the character's home terrain (that is, the one in which she was raised).

Second Need (2 Points): This functions like First Need, except that it relies on finding game and edible plants. At this level, the character can use all these abilities in one terrain besides her native.

Sheltering Embrace (3 Points): This functions like First Need, except that it helps find the best locations to shelter from the elements. The character can now use One With the Land in her home terrain and two others.

Cloak of the Land (4 Points): It's like First Need, except that it helps in finding hiding places. The location may not be as warm, dry or secure from animals as the places found by Sheltering Embrace, but it is definitely harder to spot. The character can use this path in her home terrain and three others.

Unveil Like a Lover (5 Points): This gives the bonuses of First Need, but each time it's used, the character can designate a goal that either occurs in nature (a particular moss) or that significantly changes the landscape (such as a road or building). By the time the character has mastered this final technique, she can use the path anywhere on her home continent, and in three terrains beside.

Direction: One with the Land

The Hunter Kings are masters of their lands in a very literal way that few other monarchs can approach. Most kings know the map, but by the time he takes the crown, a Hunter King has traveled each province, scouted each forest and walked each border. The Hunter Kings, and their chosen scouts and trackers, know how to read the land and listen to it. In return, the land surrenders to them its secrets.

One With the Land is used by making Sense+Direction rolls. As it grows, the user can apply its benefits to additional terrains. The terrains which can be studied are: Shoreline, forest, plains, hills/mountains, desert, jungle and tundra. If a player suggests a terrain that's not on this list (“city”?) it's up to the GM to decide if it's all right. But an absolute requirement is that the character spend at least a month traveling through and studying the appropriate terrain. A Hunter King who never left his kingdom would have limited use of these techniques outside his domain, even if he’d learned up to Unveil Like a Lover.

Seek and Survive

Finding some general category of thing on a stretch of land – shelter, water and the like – can be done with an ordinary Sense+Direction roll. The goal must, of course, be something that is of the land or that leaves traces through its presence. Finding ‘jewelry’ is hopeless, but knowing which mountain is most likely to contain gold is certainly possible.
The followers of the Golden Monk’s philosophy try to emulate their master in surpassing their innate desires and deceptiveness in pursuit of transcendent truth. The process of unveiling their own minds often gives insight into the minds of others, of course.

Golden Insight is used by making Sense+Empathy rolls.

Mankind Unbridled (1 Point): The disciples of the Golden Monk warily study lost control, which is the shadow of intense emotion. Recognizing the signs in others is the first step to understanding the dangers within themselves.

To use Mankind Unbridled, roll Sense+Empathy and choose a person to observe. If the roll succeeds, any time thereafter that the person gains a bonus or takes a penalty from a Passion, the character recognizes the emotional intensity. (This assumes he observes the behavior, of course.) Only one person can be studied at a time, but a successful roll is all it takes to switch targets.

The Donkey Rides the Man (2 Points): This works like Mankind Unbridled, with nuance. Not only does the character recognize impassioned action, he can tell what kind of Passion was used and how many are going off simultaneously.

The Enemy of Disquiet (3 Points): The name of this technique arises from an ambiguous section of a Golden Monk dialogue. From context, it’s unclear whether he refers to disquiet as the enemy, or whether he means he is the enemy (of disquiet).

Diligent study of this passage allows the disciple a chance to master himself whenever he takes an action that would give him a penalty for transgressing Passions. Roll Sense+Empathy. If the roll succeeds, he can decrease his penalty by the roll’s Width.

Choose Your Own Disaster (4 Points): “So many of us choose our own disasters, and so few have the presence of mind to decline our chosen poison when it is offered.” So said the monk. Those who understand the nature of human lust, dread, obligation and compulsion can read others with a precision that seems supernatural. It’s not. They’ll tell you it’s not that they’re so perceptive, but that most are so willfully blind.

To use this ability, the monk observes someone who is in the throes of a Passion. With an Empathy success, he knows what the relevant Passions are.

Profound Honesty (5 Points): The deepest level of empathy is understanding of self. With Profound Honesty, a character can rid himself of his Duty, Craving or Mission. No roll is required, but once the Passion is eliminated, it can never be regained, nor can another Passion of the same type take its place.

Endurance: Soul Armor

One tribe of Lightless Jungle savages developed a set of physical and mental conditioning exercises to help them survive the near-constant violence they face from their rivals and from their fellow tribesmen. Their totem is the lizard, but even those who fail to attune and develop tough scales are still entertainingly hard to kill, at least according to the Sunless Plains’ defenders.

Soul Armor is used by making Body+Endurance rolls. Unless otherwise noted, these disciplines can be part of a multiple action, with the usual penalty.

Soul Armor only protects against cuts, bruises, abrasion, impact and the like. It won’t protect against fire or poison or magic, unless it’s a magical punch or magically thrown rock. It helps if you fall, though.

Brace for the Blow (1 Point): If the character takes no other action in a combat round than to brace for impact, you can roll his Endurance pool and ignore W+1S damage. Note that timing matters on this: If the attack goes off before his action, he’s hurt as usual.

Move With the Strike (2 Points): As comfort with the techniques grows, the tribesman learns how to redirect the impacts so they do less harm. Now you can roll Endurance as part of a multiple action, without penalties, and ignore WS damage after getting the set.
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Eight Ears Open (1 Point): Diplomats meet many people and spend endless hours talking, talking, talking. Many of them also listen. By training oneself to pay attention to facts and retain them, what started as an interesting conversational tidbit can become a piece of lifesaving information. With a successful Fascinate roll while chatting with dignitaries, the character can (quite coincidentally) learn something that is or becomes relevant to his life. The next Lore you make gets a +1 bonus because of this datum.

Dashing Confidence (2 Points): Presenting a pleasant air of imperturbable urbanity makes anyone more confident. While plying wiles to improve Influence, your character gets the benefits of the 1 point Beauty Advantage (all Fascinate or Graces rolls of Height less than 3 have their Height raised to 3). If he already has that Advantage at that level, it rises to the 3 point Advantage (Fascinate or Graces rolls less than 7 rise to 7). If he has the 3 point Advantage, it operates like the 5 point Beauty (all Fascinate or Graces rolls get Height 10). If he’s already a 5 point Beauty, enjoy it, because this Discipline won’t help you further. It does not affect the Gruesome problem.

The Benefits of a Strong First Impression (3 Points): If human Unworthy Opponents of Threat 2 or less attack the character while he’s raising his company’s Influence, make a Fascinate roll before combat starts. If it succeeds, five of the Unworthies refuse to fight against him. This doesn’t have to represent a sudden change of heart. It could be that he met them earlier and treated them well, or they heard his reputation and are too frightened to attack, or that they’ve been so misinformed about him in various ways that they’re too confused to act. In some way, however, his presence as a public figure makes them unwilling to attack. This only works if they weren’t specifically sent after him by name.
Knowledgeable Discourse on Geography and Architecture (4 Points): Getting the lay of the land can be crucial, and the next best thing to spending years roaming around a region or rattling around a castle yourself is knowing how to draw the interesting information out of people who have it. In this case, the interesting information is how to find good hiding places, and the knowledge is how to frame questions that sound completely innocent on the topic. (“Abandoned cider house, you say? Sounds very picturesque!”) If, in the course of glad-handing and reception attendance, your character speaks to someone who knows the surrounding region well, you can make a Fascinate roll. If it succeeds, you can add a free Gobble Die 10 to your next Stealth roll in that area. (This die can be used regardless of timing.)

Name Drop (5 Points): By referencing the right impressive dignitary, the character cloaks himself in reflected honor. Make a successful Fascinate roll before mangling the truth, and your Lie roll can be squished up to 2 points in either direction.

Fascinating Anecdote (2 Points): In the process of greasing the wheels, the character either hears a good story or lives through one. Thereafter, you have three chances to use that story to your advantage. With a Graces roll, you can change a Jest or Fascinate die into an MD. (You choose which the first time you use the Discipline, depending on whether or not it’s a funny story.) After the third time you attempt to use the story (even if the roll fails), it gets old enough to lose its juice. Characters can only experience one Fascinating Anecdote per month.

Obligation is a Privilege (3 Points): Through the character’s gracious modeling, she teaches patriotism and loyalty. When you make your Territory+Treasure roll, make a Graces roll as well. If the Graces roll succeeds, your Territory does not drop from use after that particular roll. The people are inspired to give and keep giving.

Personal Loyalty (4 Points): After successfully raising Sovereignty, make a Graces roll. If it succeeds as well, any Followers who fight at your side for the next month gain the Morale bonus to their Threat. (That is, they behave as if you'd just made a successful Inspire roll.) They’ve become convinced you’re someone worth fighting to defend.

The Burdens of the Visionary (5 Points): After a failed roll to improve Sovereignty, you can make a Graces roll. If it succeeds as well, any Followers who fight at your side for the next month gain the Patron advantage at half your Company’s Sovereignty level (round down, minimum 1).

Hearing: Ear of the Bard’s Guild

To be accorded the title of ‘Uldish Bard,’ one must not only be literate in several languages and able to play several instruments. One must also satisfy the other members of the guild that one is worthy. This is easy for descendants of influential bards, less simple for others. In many cases, it helps to attend a bardic college and master its heavily codified curriculum.
Ear of the Bard's Guild is based on the Hearing Skill and helps use trained pitch and a ruthlessly disciplined sense of rhythm to aid performance.

**Follow Your Own Beat (1 Point):** When performing tasks that require rhythmic synchrony, the bard can combine a number of Skills equal to his Hearing Skill without penalty. For instance, to mix Perform (Dance) and Flame Dance Sorcery into a single roll without the usual -1d penalty, the bard would need Hearing 2 to align the two Skills.

**Flawless Tone (2 Points):** The character can combine Sense+Hearing with any musical or dance Perform Skill without penalty. If the Hearing roll succeeds, he can raise the Width of the Perform roll by one.

**Technique Without Inspiration (3 Points):** The name refers to the Bard Guild's official disdain for relying on inborn talent or (worse) intense emotion to fuel a performance. They like training and craft, and if you don't have that, all your native power is going to come out flawed.

When using a rhythmic Perform Skill (not Flame Dancing, but possibly the dance that accompanies it) the character can squish the Perform set a number of steps equal to his Hearing Skill.

**Technique Without Thought (4 Points):** Similar to the above, but described and taught with a vocabulary that approaches the mystic.

When rolling a rhythmic Perform Skill (again, not Flame Dancing but possibly the dance that goes with it), any Height lower than your Hearing Skill is raised to equal it.

**A Master's Performance (5 Points):** No matter how much they despise him, the bards who listen to a Master's Performance are forced to admit virtuosity. This discipline combines the previous four and allows them to be used simultaneously.

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**Chapter 4: Esoteric Disciplines**

**Intimidate: Heart Stealing**

This practice is a closely kept secret of the Sect of the Gravedigger Queen. Many who have felt its icy grip assumed they were under some sort of sorcerous assault, and some sorcerers and sensitives who've realized it wasn't any magic they knew have come to suspect that the Gravedigger Queen is more active in the world than other so-called gods. But in fact, there is nothing supernatural involved. It is simply the yield of years of practical interactions with terrified people. Gravedigger Priests believe terror is their blessing, that they are owed fear as their due by all they meet. Their confidence and zealotry often make it so.

Heart Stealing requires Command+Intimidate rolls.

**The Devil's Shout (1 Point):** Through posture, gesture, expression and tone, the heart stealer projects aggression so forcefully that most people instinctively flinch. This discipline allows the character to make the Feint maneuver with his Intimidate pool instead of an attack Skill.

**I And Those Behind Me (2 Points):** When the priest verbally intimidates someone, you can squish his Intimidate set a number of steps equal to one of his Company's Qualities. The threat must involve the Company and the relevant Quality, however. If he wants to use Might to squish, he has to threaten military action. If it's Sovereignty, he has to work in the loyalty of his followers, and so on.

**Mortal Silence (3 Points):** The priestess no longer has to speak to make an Intimidate attempt. Simply her gaze and demeanor is enough to shorten breath and shake knees. When making a silent threat, add a +1d bonus to the pool. She has to be visible, and Mortal Silence cannot be used if she has just been embarrassed or humiliated.

**Hail to the Queen (4 Points):** Battle is, of course, terror-prone already. It is possible for the higher initiates of the Queen to incorporate their knowledge of fear-mongering into actual
Chapter 4: Esoteric Disciplines

Matters of Law

combat maneuvers. Thus, every time the priest kills someone in combat (even an Unworthy Opponent) he creates a free Morale Attack equal to his Intimidate Skill. This doesn’t need to be declared, but it can’t be activated if any other Martial Techniques or Esoteric Disciplines were used that round. The Morale Attack goes off at the beginning of the next round’s Resolve phase.

Grave Triumphalism (5 Points): To use Grave Triumphalism, the priestess must visibly kill (or disable) an enemy leader. (Specifically, it can’t be used after taking out an Unworthy.) As with Hail to the Queen, it can produce a Morale Attack after the fact. The Morale Attack is equal to the killer’s Command+Intimidate pool. This can be combined with other Martial Techniques and Esoteric Disciplines. The Morale Attack is resolved immediately.

Language: Eloquence and Elocution

When the diplomat nobles of the Western Marches were slowly (but surely) supplanted by those who succeeded on the battlefield, they had two choices. They could pursue arms and hope to augment their blood with bloodshed for their flag, as many did. But those with no innate martial talent, who had gained their position through craft and persuasion, found a new niche as advisors and figureheads. Or they simply stole the victories from their ill-spoken generals, usually as a prelude to prosecuting them for slander or sedition.

Naturally, once the Marches joined The Empire, these secrets didn’t stay confined in the land of their birth.

Eloquence and Elocution is used with Knowledge+Language rolls.

Dextrous Tongue (1 Point): Jests about the lurid methods used to produce such agile mouths aside, this is the ability to seamlessly combine an acute awareness of the general power of word choice, with the specific goal of any specific speech. In other words, they always speak as if they’d written it out beforehand. With Dextrous Tongue one can use Language for multiple actions without penalty. It combines with all the other Disciplines in the path, except Beyond Formality.

Beyond Formality (2 Points): The diplomats and courtesans schooled Beyond Formality elevate manners beyond correctness into an intensely personal realm. It’s quite a trick.

Any time you rolls a second set on a Graces roll, you can apply it as a free Fascinate set. This can’t be part of a multiple action or combined with any other Discipline. The Width of the free Fascinate set can’t exceed the character’s Language Skill, and its Height can’t be greater than his Language pool.

Lashing Tongue (3 Points): Being fearful is often more a matter of circumstance than ability, but ability counts too.

To use Lashing Tongue, the character rolls Language to set up the threat. If the Language roll succeeds, she can add the lower of her own Knowledge Stat, or her opponent’s Knowledge, to her Intimidate pool. (This means it works better the smarter both threatener and listener are. The subtleties require a certain degree of intellect to grasp.)

Mesmerizing Raconteur (4 Points): Using Dextrous Tongue, the character can roll a penalty-free multiple action between Language and Fascinate. If both rolls succeed, he can use the best Height of either with the best Width of either as his Fascinate set.

Heart Chaining (5 Points): Any time the character rolls Inspire and has more successful sets than she needs, she can dispose of one set to give the remaining set +2W, +2H, or +1 to each.

This doesn’t need to be declared beforehand.
LIE: Military Deceit

Even with magic, it’s not always easy to get an overhead view of a battlefield, or pass messages from one military squad to another, or figure out where the enemy is and what he’s doing. The chaos and uncertainty of warfare can drive weaker generals mad, no matter how brilliant their insights.

But to a strong general, confusion is just another arrow in his quiver.

Military Deceit is used when you make Charm+Lie rolls during a defensive situation (that is, when your Company is rolling Might+Territory).

General Winter (1 Point): This is the tactic of pulling back while burning fields, fouling wells and collapsing bridges. It’s meant to lure in the enemy with seemingly easy pickings, then trap him in a hostile environment and let cruel nature do the dirty work. With a successful Charm+Lie roll while setting this up, you can temporarily drop Territory by 1 for a month, in order to give your opponent a temporary −1 Might penalty for the rest of the season. This can only be used for one season, and it has to be the most unforgiving and dangerous season in the country. Thus, it’s General Winter in the cold fields of the Heluso Confederacy, but it could be General Summer in the deserts of Milonda.

Liars Gambit (2 Points): This risky maneuver involves getting deliberately captured and interrogated by the enemy. If you do not lose any Lie contests while being questioned, the enemy’s Treasure drops by 1 for the rest of the month and for all the next month. (This represents his misplaced efforts to compensate for what he thinks he learned.) Escape is, of course, always desirable after the Liars Gambit is complete.

Whirlpool Lure (3 Points): Relying on a superior knowledge of the terrain, the Whirlpool Lure lets you instigate a contested roll – your Charm+Lie against the enemy general’s Sense+Direction – as you travel around leaving false maps for him to find, letting peasants see misleading troop maneuvers or “overhear” plans, and tearing down or re-arranging signposts. If your roll wins the contest, he takes a −1 Treasure penalty for the rest of the month.

Gambler’s Assault (4 Points): In desperate straits, the final charge of an army on the verge of being overwhelmed can (if properly managed) look like just the first in a series of vicious attacks. No roll is required to make a Gambler’s Assault. It gives you +1 Might for one roll, at the cost of taking an additional −1 Might penalty for the rest of the month. (That’s in addition to the usual −1 degradation of Might as a Quality. Usually you’d make an attack and take a standard −1 penalty. With Gambler’s Assault you make an attack with +1 and then get a total of a −2 penalty.)

False Failure (5 Points): To use this technique, you must plan and execute a deliberate defeat. After that battle, your Might and Treasure do not decrease from use. Next month, his Might and Treasure do not recover from use.

LORE: Ardent Scholarship

The libraries of the Uldish guild of scholars draw students from all over the known world (and sometimes farther). Whether they realize it or not, many leave with not only an expanded set of facts, but with expanded tools of thought.

Ardent Scholarship is used with Knowledge+Lore.

False Scholarship (1 Point): It’s a shame, but often the first thing a student learns is how to alloy some knowledge and truth to a bluff or lie in order to seem more learned still.

After spending a day studying a subject of written or spoken knowledge, you can roll Lore. If the Lore roll succeeds, the next time the character tells a lie relating to that field, he can add a +1d bonus.
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**Ride: Suuldru Mount**

The Sh’vani tribes dwell on the Milondese coast south of the desert. They are primitive, having failed to even cast bronze. But their one unique accomplishment is taming a large aquatic predator called the suuldru. A suuldru looks like a manta ray, with a pair of stout, rending arms underneath, flanking a round toothy maw like an eel. In the wild, suuldru hunt in groups of seven to fifteen, surrounding schools of fish to so they can’t escape, ganging up on small whales or even attacking large sharks.

The Sh’vani have improved on suuldru instinct with human cunning. They don’t ride them astride (of course) but the back of the animal has two lines of indentations into which knees and hands can fit. Lying along the creature’s back with arms around its shoulders, the Sh’vani range out to sea, spearing large fish or towing nets between paired steeds.

Trading with Ob-lob over the decades, the Sh’vani have acquired javelins, heavy spear heads, and copper pipes, which they use as snorkels for sneaking up on unsuspecting ships.

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**Chapter 4: Esoteric Disciplines**

**Intellectual Diversion (2 Points):** When this Discipline is bought, pick a narrow subject of study (such as herbalism, geography, history – anything that would qualify for a Student of _____ Skill). Thereafter, the character can use Lore for that subject as if it was a Student Skill. Only one subject can be an Intellectual Diversion, and once picked it can’t be changed.

**Structure of Curiosity (3 Points):** Learning gets to be a habit, and then an instinct. If your character has a Structure of Curiosity, you can roll his Lore pool once per session. If you get a set, you get a free XP.

**Scholarly Insight (4 Points):** Sometimes the flashes of intuition among the sages are so oblique and obscure that the sages, themselves, don’t understand their understanding. Not that they let on.

Once per session, you can roll Lore. If the roll succeeds, the GM gives you some form of clue, hint or advice to move the plot (or the character’s fortunes) forward.

**General Specialist (5 Points):** Scholars seem to pick up a bit of expertise in a huge variety of fields, and it’s hard to tell when any given piece could come in handy. That ancient general’s motivational speech, the forgotten manual of swordplay, the obscure volume of love poems… recalling them at just the right time can make a scholar inspiring, fascinating, or deadly.

Once per session, the player may substitute Lore for any Skill as long as he can come up with some justification for how obscure knowledge allows (for example) a bedridden old scholar to suddenly apply his Lore MD to swinging a battleaxe or climbing a tree.
Suuldru Mount is used with Coordination+Ride rolls while on the creature.

Suuldru Friend (1 Point): The character can ride a suuldru without penalty.

Travel From Beneath (2 Points): The character can make multiple actions combining Swim and Ride without penalty, usually to remain underwater for an extended period.

Suuldru Battle (3 Points): The character can make multiple action Ride and Fight rolls without penalty.

Victory From Beneath (4 Points): Instead of a penalty, the character gets a +2d bonus when combining Swim and Ride, or Ride and Endurance, to remain underwater.

Whelm And Destroy (5 Points): Instead of a penalty, the character gets a +3d bonus when combining Ride with either Fight or with any Weapon skill.

Sight: The Eyes of the Crown of Salck

Eyes of ivory and ruby adorn the crown of the librarian-kings of Salck. It is passed from head to head situationally as the Salck family of priests and experts exchange authority. Since each is expected to be a master scholar, their memories are trained from infancy for sharpness of recall, even as their eyes are taught quick focus.

These techniques are used with Sense+Sight.

Diplomat’s Glance (1 Point): As rulers, it behooves the Salcks to remember the people with whom they negotiate. When your character with Diplomat’s Glance meets someone, you can make a Sense+Sight roll. With any set, that face is indelibly etched in his memory. For the rest of his life, he can remember the face and (if he knows it) the name.

Scholar’s Gaze (2 Points): When studying a document, you can make a Sight roll to drive the letters or diagrams firmly into the character’s mind. Thereafter, with a Knowledge+Lore roll the character can recall the document with perfect fidelity.

Library Of The Eye (3 Points): As with the Scholar’s Gaze, the character can use a Sight roll to memorize a document. However, he can now remember it without a roll.

Painter Of The Mind (4 Points): The character can regard a scene, a person, a document or anything else she sees and, with a Sense+Sight success, seal the image in recollection. It’s like Library Of The Eye for anything seen, not only documents.

Reliving Sight (5 Points): The character can, without a roll, remember anything he has seen since mastering Reliving Sight.

Stealth: Autumn Warfare

Conflict is rife among the Ussient Tribes, and given the unusual terrain on which their battles occur (up and down the sides, and along the massive branches, of trees with trunks up to an acre in diameter) big head-on assaults are uncommon. Stealth, ambush and sabotage are far more favored, and the challenging season for it is autumn, when the dry bark underfoot combines with the crackling debris of giant leaves to make a silent tread almost impossible.

Almost.

Autumn Warfare is used when making Coordination+Stealth rolls specifically to remain unheard.

Feather Tread (1 Point): If the character’s declared action is to use Stealth specifically to remain unheard, you get a +1d bonus (or can offset a -1d penalty).

Quickstep Grace (2 Points): All Stealth sets for silent movement are timed as if their Width was one greater.

Dust’s Fall (3 Points): Anyone attempting to locate someone with Dust’s Fall by ear suffers a -1d penalty to their Hearing pool. Dust’s Fall can be combined with all the other techniques of this path, but not with other Martial Paths or Esoteric Disciplines.

Stalker Foot (4 Points): Any time you declare an action and roll a second set for a character with Stalker Foot you can apply the extra set as a silent move Stealth set. It doesn’t matter which Skill was used, unless it’s an action that necessarily makes noise.
The bonus set cannot exceed your Stealth pool in Width. If, however, you declared multiple actions and got two sets, you can scrub one of the declared actions to move quietly instead. Stalker Foot can’t be used when there’s only one set, period.

**Utmost Stillness (5 Points):** If the character has a round to prepare and remains still, he cannot be detected by hearing. He is simply making no discernible sound whatsoever. No roll is required.

Against those with truly supernal Hearing (10d+ pool or a Master Die) the character can only use Utmost Stillness if there is ambient sound, or if wearing a special undergarment to keep the sound of his heartbeat from betraying him.

**Stealth: Dancing Unseen**

Depending on the rumors one hears, these techniques were developed by Opetkan assassins, by long-defeated insurgents against the rulers of Upunzi, by sadistic natives in the Lightless Jungle, or by the sinister nobles from the dark side of the Empire. (Generally, the farther away one is from the nation in question, the more likely the techniques are to be credited to its natives.)

Dancing Unseen is the result of a study of light, shadow, how the eye moves and what catches it, and the myriad tricks of human attention and consciousness. Its adherents practice to improve their quickness, balance and flexibility, so that they can more smoothly and silently flow from one area of concealment to the next.

These disciplines are used with Coordination+Stealth. They apply only to remaining unseen.

**Dance of the Burglar (1 Point):** When you use Stealth with one other skill, or attempt to do two stealthy things simultaneously (such as remain both unseen and unheard) you may roll without the usual one-die multiple action penalty.

**Shadows, Haze And Undergrowth (2 Points):** When the character has some form of cover, or something that obscures or interrupts vision, he can either remove all Penalties and Difficulties from his Stealth roll, or he can add a +1d bonus to his pool.

**Dancing Without An Audience (3 Points):** When your character masters this technique, her sense of where people are looking is so refined that she can dodge and weave out of their way – contorting herself to forever be out of their visual field. To someone unaffected by the technique, she appears to be frantically ducking, stepping and twisting away from her oblivious targets.

Here’s how the mechanics work. You roll your Coordination+Stealth pool, but your successes do not become Gobble Dice against Sense rolls. Instead, you can pick a number of persons in your presence, a number equal to the Width of your roll. Those people cannot see the character. Period. No more than they could if she were behind a brick wall. They don’t get rolls to detect her because she’s placed herself outside their visual field. Other people can see her with any successful Sense+Sight roll, so this isn’t a genius idea against a dozen searchers, but against one or two it works wonderfully.

Of course, it’s difficult to keep vigorously dodging away from someone’s eyes, so she’s only protected for a number of rounds equal to the Height of the roll – and then, only if she doesn’t choose to attack anyone. However, she can use those rounds to look for good hiding places, possibly giving you bonus dice on your next Stealth roll.

**Instinct For Distraction (4 Points):** If she’s under observation, and something startling happens, she may take advantage of her observer’s momentary distraction to duck out of the way and begin Dancing Unseen. She may do this if she creates the distraction or if she’s as surprised as anyone else. The only restrictions are that (1) she must be able to move and (2) the distraction is something that makes any observers look away from her or that gets between her and them, even for a moment.

No roll is required to use an Instinct For
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Chapter 4: Esoteric Disciplines

Distraction. It just lets characters use Dancing Unseen when they normally couldn't.

Assassin’s Dance (5 Points): If you successfully combine a Coordination+Stealth roll with any attack action, your opponent may not dodge or parry. Essentially, your character has ducked out of his vision in the middle of the fight, so she can strike him from his blind side. This combines with Dance of the Burglar.

Example: Luovis is in a fight with someone who’s got a barrel full of damn tricky Dodge and Parry techniques. Sick of seeing his every attack blocked, Luovis uses Dance of the Assassin. His Coordination+Stealth pool is 8+MD, but his highest attack is Body+Fight – a less impressive 7d. He doesn’t have to take the usual multiple action penalty, so he rolls the lower pool, hoping to get at least two pairs. If he doesn’t get at least two pairs, he doesn’t get the benefit from Dance of the Assassin. If he gets both sets, he can use his slower set as an attack that can’t be blocked or avoided – assuming, of course, that his enemy doesn’t hit him first and ruin both pairs.

Stealth: Opetkan Vanishing

The history and use of these techniques is covered on page 23.

All techniques in Opetkan Vanishing are used with Coordination+Stealth.

A Stance Outside the Self (1 point): The outsider’s stance was taught by an apostate apostle of the Thief God. Initially, it was a form of meditation in which a robber monk sought to eliminate everything that made him unique, that his will and individualism might no longer wall him off from communion with his deity. As an ancillary benefit, intense scrutiny of everything that makes one memorable – appearance, word choice and tone, body shape, posture and mannerism – can teach one to offset and suppress those traits.

Using A Stance Outside the Self requires the spy to prepare for at least a few minutes unobserved, then roll his Stealth pool. If he gets at least one set, strangers who see him for the next hour or so are unable to remember him well enough to identify him by face, voice or action. Sometimes, this technique simply isn’t feasible. It can’t be done in the middle of hot pursuit, and a Truil in an Uldish city would be hard pressed to pass as an Uld without some way of obscuring his skin. But if the person chased can hide long enough to catch his breath, or that Truil can find a ragged hood and mud to daub on exposed flesh, the technique is possible.

Note that it doesn’t help the person hide or alter any Stealth rolls to be spotted. It just means that if he does get away, those who saw him won’t recognize him later as the person they chased. They remember only a vague, indistinct person, utterly ordinary and unremarkable.

A Series of Undifferentiated Occult Knacks (2 points): Mechanical locks are rare in Heluso and Milonda. Only in Uldholm are they well known among wealthy citizens, and even there they’re something of a curiosity. They’re beginning to see use in the Confederacy and the Sunless Plains, but almost universally, the art of closing something up to keep someone out relies on either enchantment, or guards, barred doors and heavy weights.

Opetkan enchaners worked long and hard to develop a process that isn’t even really a spell as much as a painful and unhealthy way to force your own energies to mingle with those of a magically locked box, door or other enclosure. To use the Series, one must spill blood, enough to do a point of Shock damage, and smear it on the locked area. A successful Coordination+Stealth roll opens the lock, but must be made against a Difficulty equal to the sealing spell’s Intensity.

Close to the Madding Crowd (3 points): Another technique stolen from the Thief God (whose followers, to the great surprise of Opetka, don’t seem terribly annoyed or vengeance-minded), this one builds on A Stance Outside the Self. Instead of just erasing the qualities that comprise easy identity, Close to the Madding Crowd lets you absorb those
common to a group. If you’re in a crowd and make a successful Coordination+Stealth roll, you fade into it like a snake into grass. Normal folks don’t even get a chance to spot you unless you leave the group. There must be at least fifteen people around you to use this technique, however, and your clothes must be something that won’t stand out.

**Shadow Foot (4 points):** An intense awareness of every action is common to everyone trying to remain unseen, but Opetkan spies couple this with memory training. When they leave an area, they can take ten to twenty minutes and, with a successful Stealth roll, either remove or obscure identifying traces of their passage. What that really means depends on what they did. If they were trying to be hidden the whole time, they can usually remove any clue of their presence. If they got in a fight or dragged away a priceless statue, it means they create false trails and rework the genuine ones until they can’t be followed.

**Mist’s Vantage (5 points):** The highest form of secrecy is to make it a part of everything you do, and make everything you do contribute to secrecy. Those who can take Mist’s Vantage have achieved that. It cannot be used with any other Esoteric Discipline, but other than that, if a character using it rolls more than one set on a Stealth roll, he can apply that second set to a second action. It’s as if he retroactively declared a multiple action and got his multiple sets. There is one restriction on use of the second set, however: It can only be applied to pools that are at least twice as large as the set’s Width.

Example: Tulaq uses Mist’s Vantage to position himself in a garden while waiting for his wife’s lover to meet her. With an MD in Stealth and a big pool, he gets a 4x10 result. Splitting that into two 2x10 results, he can use one to remain hidden and the other to spring out and bludgeon the adulterer with a Body+Fight pool – as long as his Body+Fight pool is at least 4d.
Wanting to create new styles of enchantment for your game is common, healthy and normal. This kind of creative permission is one of the great strengths of tabletop RPGs. But how to do it so that it feels integrated to the setting? How to do it so that it doesn't throw everything established out of whack? The temptation to build a school that's “better” than all the others in all ways is strong, but resist it. Magic styles, like people, are interesting for their flaws, limits and weaknesses.

Take a look at the considerations on pages 249-253 in REIGN. All the issues that arise with putting magic in a general setting also apply on the smaller scale of putting a type of magic into a part of the setting. What does it change to have this sorcery present? How widespread is it? How is it limited? This is especially important when designing a school for an established setting like Heluso and Milonda. It's firmly established that there's no easy healing for Killing damage in the setting, and that (zombies and ghosts excluded) coming back from the dead isn't happening either. If a GM wants to add resurrection magic, fine. But unless it's going to be really limited (say, it's a base effect at +7) or really rare for some other reason (you can only cast the spell if you die in the place of the person who's coming back), it's an upheaval. Think how your neighborhood would react if technology found a way to bring back the dead. Yeah. Just because the Helusans and Milondese are somewhat familiar with magic doesn't mean they won't be shocked by a new magical development (or a rediscovered ancient one).

Should you incorporate powerful effects? Sure. But make sure they're balanced or limited. The Flame Dancers are powerful. They have plenty of direct damage that is, point for point, pretty cheap. On top of that, they can defend themselves and others from fire (a very common threat). But to do it they have to dance, which either slows them down or makes casting very, very iffy. Ironbone priests have some mighty good effects too, but can only apply them in limited ways unless they devote a lot of their Skills to different ways to use the runes. Equine Unity has few limits on it, which is why the Intensity of the spells tends to run high.

To build a new school from the ground up, answer the following questions.

**What Function Does the School Fulfill?**

Why do you want to create a new school? This does not have to be a big, thematic reason. “I want guys who can make your guts jump up your throat and strangle you” is a perfectly decent reason. But try to broaden the vision a bit. Is it that you want a body-based school of
Example: My Pahar Monster Binders (ooh, is that a good name? Nickname?) are focused on hybridizing creatures. What’s a domain for hybridization? What is it about? It’s about nature pushed to the breaking point, unnatural fecundity and hypertrophic fertility. So the mastery of animal forms and natures is the domain of the Monster Binders.

Methods aren’t just meaningless surface gloss. They can be as limiting as the Domain or the Stat pick. You can find something, some action that’s a good match for the Domain. For instance, dance and fire seem to match because they’re both beautiful, mesmerizing and always in motion. They blend smoothly. But at the same time, you can go for something directly against expectation and generate tension. An example there would be the as-yet-undescribed Earthquake Drummers, who combine music (which is creative and entertaining) with destruction. (Though there’s more to it, since they also build. They’re blend and contradict.

Example: I want to build a school for the Pahar, who are known as being powerful enchanters. That’s in comparison with the Smoke Sculptors, who are pretty tough. I also want to put more freaky creatures in the setting and want a justification for singular creatures like the chimera of Greek myth. Plus, since I’ve got flying men and centaurs, why not giants? Is there a way to pool all this together? Some kind of creature construction school, maybe.

What Domain Supports That Function?

A school’s domain is often more symbolic than literal. Your school doesn’t have to be scientific in the way it connects effects. The sun is life giving, therefore the Sunwise can both heal and create light and warmth. (In the spirit of balance, they’re heavily constrained by circumstance, because their purview is so open.) Darkness is scary and associated with bad things, so the Shadowbinders get scary spells and zombies in addition to just causing darkness and seeing in it.

Why Multiple Actions Are So Limiting

As a side note, I was surprised during my own playtesting by what a huge flaw it was to require a multiple action with another Skill. But on examination, your chances of getting two sets is iffy even with a great pool, and your chances of having both sets be good enough to act before someone can hit you and ruin one is iffy on top of iffy. Let’s imagine a character with a 9+MD pool to cast Flame Dance spells, and he’s also got a 9+MD Dance pool, and he’s got an Esoteric Discipline that lets him combine those skills without losing his MD to the multiple action penalty. He’s optimized for the task. If he tries to cast a spell of the Fourth Intensity while dancing, he could easily roll 1,1,2,3,5,7,8,10. No matter how he sets his MD, if someone hits him with a set faster than 2x3, he can’t get his spell off. If he widens one of his low sets, he can get the dance completed, but is left without the Height needed to beat the spell’s Intensity. If he builds a 2x10 set, he has three sets and can preserve two sets even after getting hit… but the dance set has to go first, so he’s still left with sets too low to activate the spell. And this guy’s a master enchanter!

Example: My Pahar Monster Binders (oh, is that a good name? Nickname?) are focused on hybridizing creatures. What’s a domain for hybridization? What is it about? It’s about nature pushed to the breaking point, unnatural fecundity and hypertrophic fertility. So the mastery of animal forms and natures is the domain of the Monster Binders.

What Method Fits?

Methods aren’t just meaningless surface gloss. They can be as limiting as the Domain or the Stat pick. You can find something, some action that’s a good match for the Domain. For instance, dance and fire seem to match because they’re both beautiful, mesmerizing and always in motion. They blend smoothly. But at the same time, you can go for something directly against expectation and generate tension. An example there would be the as-yet-undescribed Earthquake Drummers, who combine music (which is creative and entertaining) with destruction. (Though there’s more to it, since they also build. They’re blend and contradict.
When asked how to teach something the student didn’t want to know, the Golden Monk gave a terrible sigh and said, “Through example.”

—Epigrams of the Golden Monk

That’s okay too.) The unexpected or the awkward often makes for good roleplaying opportunities, by forcing players to think about how they’re going to (say) manage a scarce resource (the Shadowbinder with a limited number of puppets for the Wracking Spell, or a follower of the Way of the Wood who only has a few of the plants he needs to make his spells work) or arrange a cumbersome ritual (like a Death Forger who wants to turn a captive into a sword, or anyone casting a high Intensity spell that takes hours to perform). It also provides another lever for play balance. Now, ‘play balance’ is always highly personal and idiosyncratic, but it’s basically a code for “not allowing one player to hog the spotlight because he picked mechanics that trump everything else.” If a spell lets someone kill better than an expert warrior, it better have some other kind of limit. This is sometimes called ‘niche protection’ and can be taken to ridiculous extremes, but there’s a lot to be said for allowing the guy who’s good at a certain task be good at it, without worrying about being rendered obsolete by a single spell.

Example: Monster Binders are clearly going to be fearsome with their unpredictable creatures. There are already lots of options for people who want to be scary with their followers – various Inspire and Tactics Disciplines are there for that exact purpose. So what do we do to keep the Binders from being better leaders than leadership experts? First off, let’s keep in mind having the creatures be rarer and harder to create as they get more powerful. Creating a legion of wussy mooks shouldn’t be hard, but making something the equivalent of a Truil Walking Mountain needs to require some serious doing. At the same time, we want a method that’s not only limiting but also thematic.

I think gardening is a good pick.

On one hand, it’s quirky and different and not attached to much other magic. On the other hand, it fits perfectly with nature being turned to mankind’s monstrous ends. Finally, it’s time consuming and ties you down to your plot of land. This sets a Binder apart from the typical leader, who can field up any group of troops or recruit more fairly easily. Thus, our Monster Binders can’t learn a spell whose Intensity is more than double their Skill ranks in Student of Agriculture.

What Culture Makes Sense?

Now that you know what the enchantments do and how they’re done, it’s time to figure out the type of person who wants to do that stuff. As with Method, you can play to stereotype. The Death Forgers, for example, are practically a caricature of the ruling elite. They jealously guard their secrets, they’re highly trained, and they see everything and everyone as a potential tool for their ambitions. But you can also switch it up: The stereotype healer is saintly, benevolent and boring. The Method for Sunwise Healers flips that on its ear. People who are willing to risk going blind in their pursuit of magic power? That sounds a lot more like someone desperate, or crazy, or someone with nothing to lose. Now instead of milquetoasty do-gooders, you get people who are perfectly in character being arrogant, or selfish, or crazy. Isn’t that more fun to deal with?

Who wants to learn how to adopt the qualities of trees? Hermits out in the wilderness. Who wants to be perpetually vigilant at the cost of their humanity? Religious fanatics trying to
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Chapter 5: Home Made Schools

low-Intensity spells let you dominate a fight, within a few generations those spells are going to be well-known and the manly art of self-defense will be forgotten and obsolete. No one wins when a new school of magic makes big chunks of the established material obsolete or pointless.

Example: Command is clearly right out for Monster Binding, since that’s what people are going to need for mundane follower wrangling. Body is a possibility, but since these creatures are probably going to be quite dangerous, it might steal the thunder of big, brawny, danger-dealing warriors. That leaves Sense, Charm and Knowledge. Charm has the issues of Command, though not as intensely… Sense just doesn’t seem to make sense… so how about Knowledge? It fits okay with the Agriculture angle, it’s appropriate to the priestly culture, and it seems better than anything else. Knowledge it is.

Where Does Attunement Fit?

Some systems have no attunement at all and some require it for every spell. Some attunement spells make minor or cosmetic changes, and some have the potential to turn the caster superhuman (or subhuman). Some systems don’t even have temporary attunement, only permanent – they demand commitment.

When building your school, the question of attunement is really a way to indicate openness. A school that doesn’t require attunement is much easier to learn, and even if people try to keep it secret, it’s going to be more difficult with one less barrier to learning the effects. A school where attunement is necessary means that getting any effect out of it demands greater devotion of time (from the character) and greater investment of points (from the player). Secretive, private groups probably have required attunement, and it’s a chicken-and-egg question whether the demands lead to secrecy or the secrecy leads to the demands.

compensate for failing to be noble. Don’t worry about making a distasteful culture, either. If it’s too uncool, your PCs who still want the style can have a change of heart or be heretics or apostates hated by the rest of the school. Now you’ve got a plot hook, too.

Example: Who wants to torque and twist nature? Who feels they’re entitled to warp the shapes and habits of animals? One pictures a cadre of shiny-eyed mad scientists, but the Pahar are already so characterized as intellectuals that the predictable route doesn’t seem appealing. Groves that produce monstrous guardians seem more mythic and fantastic to me, so why not make this a religious organization? That’s often a good match for magic. They worship a creator/nature goddess and see themselves as doing her work. Creating a constant stream of new beasts is their form of worship.

What Stat Makes Sense?

Picking the Stat that binds to the Sorcery skill to create a magic system’s pool is a place where it’s essential to weigh “what seems to fit” against all those questions of niche protection and game balance. A school might be very aggressive and damaging and, thematically, basing it on Body might seem really cool. But if that happens, all this sorcerer needs to do is add a couple cheap Skill points in Fight and suddenly, as an afterthought, he’s half-optimized for combat too. Excellence should only come with effort (represented in the game by investment of valuable points). So if the school is going to make you really good at finding out information, perhaps it shouldn’t be based on Sense, the Stat that finds information. If it’s going to change your appearance and make you a super-trickster, it might be a good idea to base it on something other than Charm, which is the Stat that mundane tricksters use. A good guideline – not just for the Stat pick but for all these questions – is “Does this system achieve some general end so easily and at such little cost that no one would ever bother pursuing it without magic?” People are lazy. If a couple
This is another lever for play balance. If you do the math on a spell and it seems awfully good for its cheap price, making it require an attuned caster takes it a step back from the game-breaker precipice. Now, in addition to just acquiring the cool spell, the player has to also (1) pay for a flawed permanent attunement Advantage, which comes with baggage, (2) pay for an expensive permanent attunement Advantage or (3) buy a temporary attunement spell, which effectively doubles the casting time of combative spells.

This can feel like nickel-and-diming the player to death, so it’s always a good idea to keep a few spells without the requirement, to keep the versatile enchanter happy. Just make sure they aren’t spells so great that they’re getting cast over and over every session.

Don’t misread this and think I mean that only weak, wussy spells should be free of the attunement burden. But if you’re going to make a powerful spell accessible, make sure it’s one that’s got some other limit, or is only powerful in a few narrow circumstances, or requires player ingenuity to work well.

The other thing you can do with attunement is put a unique stamp on the school. Fragile, winged enchanter are pretty different, I hope. Same for the dancers who bleed fire. Attunement and its effects are your chance to make your school stand out. Just make sure the positive and negative effects of permanent transformation work out okay. If a transformation is universally positive, it should cost lots more than the transformation that makes you emotionally dead (like the Stonehearts).

Example: In the spirit of doing something different with the Pahar monster builders, I’m going to include attunement, but it isn’t the sorcerers who get attuned. They have to build many of their perfect beasts in consecrated, attuned land. Now the gardening bit is more than set dressing, their mystic gardens are sacred places to defend, even as they spill forth their mutant blessings. Since this is a different kind of attunement, I’m going to balance the plusses and minuses a little differently. In addition to being a fertile ground for building wicked little critters, the land also grows normal plants at a wildly accelerated speed—say, what, ten times as fast as unenchanted soil? You put a patch of that in your castle and you can waggle your naked bottom at besiegers for years as long as you’ve got a good store of seeds. But it’s not really that unbalancing in the big picture because having a hyperfertile square mile isn’t much different from farming ten square miles, on the yearly scale.
REIGN has all kinds of advice for building magic in homebrew settings, and it has a starter kit of spells and systems for the default setting. But somewhere between doing it all yourself and having it all done for you is a place for guided expansion of the setting. That is where this article sits.

Spells in REIGN are defined by a few simple parameters, which are listed right in each spell description. The Intensity indicates how difficult it is to cast and learn. Casting Time is self-explanatory, as is Duration. Attunement just tells if the caster needs to be aligned with the school’s occult framework.

The factors aren’t complicated, or at least they aren’t meant to be. The trick lies in balancing them against one another. Otherwise spells which are vastly superior get all the play while others molder on the page as unused wastes of ink.

**How Are Spells Balanced?**

Spells are balanced with sweet, sweet math. Don’t worry, it’s just simple addition. First you figure out what the spell targets. It’s harder to effect fifty swords than one, reasonably enough. Next you gauge the cost of the effect, whether it’s very very mild or cataclysmic. The duration, simple, how long the spell lasts. Then you just add Extras and Flaws. Each factor increases or reduces a single sum. When you’re done? That sum is the Intensity. No spell can have Intensity less than 1, no matter how flawed it is.

This sounds very concrete and precise, and it certainly can be, but there are times it gets a little mushy. Most significantly, there are lots – lots – of instances that aren’t covered on the laundry lists below. It’s up to the GM to decide if that effect is Minor (raising the spell’s Intensity by 1) or Major (+5 Intensity).

The other question that’s purely subjective is “Does the caster need to be attuned?” That’s up to the GM. Totally up to her.

### Target

What or whom does the spell target? Essentially, it’s either changing an entity, an object or an area. Pick one and add the points.

#### Targeting Creatures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>+0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A single creature within a hundred paces</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A single creature within eyesight</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-10 creatures within 100 feet</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20 creatures within 500 feet</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-50 creatures within a mile</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-100 within ten miles</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone seen</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Targeting Objects

This one has a bit of a caveat: ‘One item’ or ‘a series of objects’ is vague, terribly vague. Is a catapult one item, or is it a combination of objects, or should ‘very large objects’ be bumped up a category or two? Up to you and/or your GM. These are guidelines. I pictured these ‘objects’ as something a person could pick up with reasonable effort. For your game you may want to define it precisely, or evaluate on a case-by-case basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One item</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 objects of the same type</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-20 objects of the same type</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-20 objects of different types</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-50 objects of the same type</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-50 objects of different types</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of a type seen</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All objects seen</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Targeting Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fist-sized or smaller</td>
<td>+0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A five foot radius</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-50 foot radius</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of a large house</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A square mile</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten mile diameter</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As far as the eye can see</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### A Special Case: Slow Spells

A Slow rating is a Flaw rated at -1, but the exact Slow rating varies. I like having the Slow rating equal to its modified Intensity, with a minimum of Slow 1 and a ceiling around Slow 3. This is a good place for the GM to exercise some discretion, depending on how influential the spell seems. Not all the spells in the book followed this guideline, but they all ‘feel right’.
As mentioned above, a lot of this is going to be a GM judgment call, and that’s probably a good thing. An effect that severs plots in one game can be fairly minor in another. That said, here’s a big framework of common effects that might come up a lot. They’re all specific examples of the General Effects. Just keep a close eye on spells that can alter Company rolls or Qualities.

**General Effects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nugatory</td>
<td>+0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cataclysmic</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attunement Effects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary, ‘vanilla’ attunement</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attunement with physical transformation</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mental Effects**

I made this list back before I’d really given a lot of thought to how much mind-changing magic I wanted in the game. I’m unlikely to put in any new canonical spells that ‘alter how people feel’ including giving the morale bonus to Threat. (I find that emotional reactions are best left as individual characterization choices, but your games may differ greatly.) If I did, though, here’s how much they’d cost. They’re also good for influencing animals. The automatic Eerie check can be a lot of fun, too, I’ve used that a couple times.

Someone automatically succeeds at an Eerie check: +0

Morale Attack X: +half X

+1 Threat (morale): +1

Suppress a Mission: +2

Suppress a Craving: +3

Suppress a Duty: +3

Add a Mission: +4

Add a Craving: +5

Add a Duty: +5

**Protection Effects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armor X against a specific sort of damage*</td>
<td>+X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armor X against all damage, at one location</td>
<td>+X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armor X against all physical damage</td>
<td>+2X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spell set acts to gobble** a specific sort of damage*</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spell set gobbles** any physical damage</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty X against a specific attack*</td>
<td>+2+half X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty X against all physical attacks</td>
<td>+X+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armor X against all attacks and dodgeable spells</td>
<td>+3X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spell set gobbles** all attacks and dodgeable spells</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*‘Specific’ could mean “fire” or “swords” or alternately, “all temperature-based damage” or “all cutting wounds.” Something that protects against all weapons equally is probably widespread enough to cost more than the cost for ‘specific’. If a spell is narrower in effect (protecting only against falling instead of all impact, for instance) you can make it up with slightly greater duration (lasting for Height instead of Width in its duration category).

**Spells that gobble defensively can usually do so regardless of timing – you get a 2x10 with a gobble spell, you can still use it against a 4x2 to reduce it to a 2x2. But that’s also open to GM interpretation and fiat, depending on what seems right and appropriate to the specific campaign.**

**Skill / Stat Boosts**

What is a ‘rare Skill’ and what is a ‘frequent Skill’? That depends on whether your game focusses on skull-splitting axe attacks or side-splitting Jest rolls.

+1d to a rare Skill: +0

+1d to a frequent Skill: +1

+MD to a rare Skill: +2

+1d to a Stat, with some form of restriction: +2

+1d to a Stat: +3

+ED to a frequent Skill: +3

Reallocate some or all Stats in a prearranged pattern*: +4

Reallocate some or all Stats at will: +5

+ED to a Stat: +5

+MD to a frequent Skill: +5

*For example, ‘reduce Command by 2 and raise Body by 2’.
Chapter 6: Custom Ensorcelment

Direct Damage

This is what you use for your fireball, lightning bolt, withering limb type spells. Note that Area attacks on this chart still only hit one target.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Width</th>
<th>Height</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>+0</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Width</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste+3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area X</td>
<td>+one third X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area X</td>
<td>+half X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Weapon Enhancement

This is the chart for making magic swords, arrows or just making your kick real strong. You shouldn’t use these to beef up the effects from Direct Damage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+X</th>
<th>+X Killing</th>
<th>Waste Shock</th>
<th>Waste Killing</th>
<th>Ignores X Armor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shock</td>
<td>+2X</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killing</td>
<td>+X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group Damage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area X</th>
<th>+half X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killing*</td>
<td>+X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Don’t forget that free Morale Attack at half the value!

Summoning/Creating Followers

This shows how many creatures can be created or summoned, and their Threat level. If you want a spell to create a number of Threat 2 unworthies equal to the Height of the casting roll, it’s a +3 effect. These creatures should do Width Shock and be susceptible to Morale Attacks unless, of course, there’s a balancing problem for more damage or Morale Attack immunity. For instance, followers that can only defend and not attack are much more balanced with Morale Attack protection. If you want beasties that can’t be scared and do extra damage, you can pay more for them, bumping their cost up a few more points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extra</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repeats effect next round</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeats effect for Width rounds</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeats effects for Height rounds</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterspell rolls against it are at X Difficulty</td>
<td>+X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t be detected by Eerie sense</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Duration

Every spell has a duration, even those that are combative, eyeblink-instant effects. True, that duration is “instant” but it can really help with the book keeping. When there is a duration, it’s typically Width or Height in the relevant time scale. GMs get to dial in the specifics of those vague duration labels. Of course, once you exceed 60 minutes you have to pay for an hour and once you exceed 24 hours you pay for days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instant</td>
<td>+0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minutes</td>
<td>+0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forever</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fine Tuning

This is the section where you either jack up the spell’s Intensity by adding shiny extras, or reduce it by making it, in some fashion or another, a pain to cast.

Extras

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extra</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repeats effect for Width rounds</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeats effects for Height rounds</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counterspell rolls against it are at X Difficulty</td>
<td>+X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can’t be detected by Eerie sense</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Flaws

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flaw</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casts in minutes*</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casts in hours*</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be parried, if an attack spell</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must be cast after success with another skill</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must be a multiple action with another skill</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires simple ingredients and preparation</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires baroque ingredients and preparation</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kills the caster even if the casting roll fails</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does 1 Shock to each of the caster’s limbs**</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does 1 Killing to each of the caster’s limbs**</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The number of minutes or hours a spell takes to cast is equal to its unmodified level – that is, the total of all the plus factors before you take away the minus factors.

**Meaning, one each to head, torso, each arm and each leg.
Example: Instead of just giving other substances the qualities of metal, a GM decides the Ironbone Priests should also have some spells that alter metal. Specifically, she wants one that corrodes worked metal into dirt so that it can nourish the land and, eventually, return to its rightful place in nature.

Clearly, the target is one object (+1), and the effect is corroding it away to dirt. How much should the ability to destroy a single metal object be worth? This is where the subjectivity comes in. Knowing that this is an Ironbone rune, the caster is going to have to paint a symbol on the object. That limitation doesn’t have a numerical cost assigned, but we can factor it in to the effect. Instead of “destroy a single metal object” it’s now “destroy a single metal object that I can paint a symbol on.” No one’s going to be vaporizing swords and shields in the middle of a brawl with this, but it’s still going to be nice for dissolving manacles, ruining those gold bars that are too heavy to escape with, taking apart siege engines or getting through metal defenses. Not quite minor, not hugely significant. Looking at the +2 effects, this seems about that useful. As for duration, the metal stays transformed forever (which is arguably a +4 effect) but since it’s not changing into any useful form, I’m more inclined to say this is an instant effect (+0). (See how tricky this balancing can be?)

I could leave it right there as a Third Intensity spell, nice and simple, but... there’s the whole ‘rune drawing’ element. As written, this is something that can be cast in the time it takes Tud the Truil to swing his club, and Ironbone spells have always been a bit more deliberate. Picturing this as a quick and dirty rune, let’s just give it a Slow rating (-1) equal to its modified Intensity, (which, after the Slow rating is factored in, is 2). There’s a case to be made that, like most Ironbone spells it requires a painting roll or the like, but this doesn’t seem like it’s going to be overpowering if it’s not hobbled like that. It’s a simple shape. Leave it as is, at Second Intensity. Now the only question is, is Attunement required? I’m torn. On one hand, this is a useful spell that lends itself to all kinds of creative use (and possibly abuse at the hands of rules lawyers). On the other, it’s nice to have a few nifty spells that a non-attuned sorcerer won’t use every day, but which are very slick when they come up. I’d say Attunement isn’t required, but I’d also understand GMs who changed that.
Domain: Forecasting the future

Method: Gazing into water. Spells may require water in particular states.

Associated Skill or Stat: Sense

Society and Beliefs: Like so much of Ob-lob culture, the practice and the teaching of Aqueous Divination are unregulated and casual. Diviners teach the spells to people they think ought to know them. While this might sound like a recipe for widespread knowledge, there are limiting factors that keep divination limited to a fairly select number.

First off, neither learning nor teaching magic is easy, so educating someone in a spell above the First Intensity may require effort and time. Secondly, there's old-fashioned race bias: Outsiders do learn divination, but the standards for Ob-lob students are a lot lower. Finally, many sorcerers see no reason to create competition that might steal away their clients. This is trebly true in the case of spells that make divination more difficult.

Thus, the typical diviner is an Ob-lob who learned the spells from his relatives, or is someone who proved himself to the community and was deemed worthy. Some diviners teach their skills for money, but the sums involved are prohibitively high. In any event, most oracles would rather cast the spell and charge you for the vision than teach you how to get a vision yourself.

Required Knowledge: None.

**Weather Wisdom**

Intensity: 1
Casting Time: Five minutes
Duration: Instant
Attunement: No

Effect: The caster runs water over his elbow or knee and, looking at it, understands what the next day’s weather is likely to be. Note that this predicts the weather's natural course only. If a sorcerer decides to call up a snowstorm or still the winds, Weather Wisdom isn't going to forecast that.

Froth

Intensity: 2
Casting Time: Five hours
Duration: Width in days
Attunement: No

Effect: To cast this spell, the enchanter swirls water around in a cup, agitating it with her hands, and then flicks drops of water on the spell’s target. If the spell works, any attempt to divine that person’s future (or present) becomes more difficult. Specifically, any spell that would see that person as a component of a vision has its Intensity increased by 4.
Clearwater Oracle

Intensity: 3
Casting Time: Six minutes
Duration: Height in minutes
Attunement: No

Effect: This spell requires a bowl of clean, clear water, into which the caster gazes while casting the spell. It targets one person and gives a vision of that person’s future. It is not possible to ask questions of the Clearwater Oracle or pursue specific information. It just shows what it shows. No one can receive a Clearwater Oracle more than once a week — or, rather, casting it successfully within that time only reveals the same vision.

As for what it shows, that depends on the roll. If the roll is a success, the caster rolls again. The second roll has no Difficulty from Intensity, and the pool is equal to the Height of the casting roll or the character’s Sense+Sorcery pool, whichever is higher. All the sets and all the Waste Dice contribute to the vision, according to the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roll</th>
<th>Topic, if Set Height</th>
<th>Detail, if Waste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Embarrassing social mishap</td>
<td>Someone of unusual appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bizarre coincidence</td>
<td>Atypical weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Disaster</td>
<td>Misfortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Deceit</td>
<td>Someone or something unseen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Obstacle to goals</td>
<td>An old acquaintance or enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>A relative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Travel or weather</td>
<td>A vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>A treasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>A weapon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Romance</td>
<td>A tall, dark man or woman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example: Two Ob-lob merchant ships are racing towards a secluded cove where a treasure is hidden. They’re neck and neck before the wind, and either one of them might turn and fight at either moment. Captain Totunapi knows how to cast Battle Prophet and Captain Solotokai knows Froth. Solotokai gets down in the hold and successfully works her magic. The next day, when they reach the cove simultaneously, Totunapi casts Battle Prophet in an attempt to gain a tactical advantage. However, because he’s trying to intuit Solotokai’s actions, he hits the interference of the Froth. He now has to beat a Difficulty of 9 with his spell, instead of the usual Intensity of 5.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, an Ob-lob prophet is trying to cast Clearwater Oracle on a man who is augured to fall in love with Solotokai. He doesn’t know this. Solotokai doesn’t know it. The Ob-lob seer casting Clearwater Oracle doesn’t know it. But because the object of the divination involves Solotokai, its Difficulty rises by four due to the Froth spell.
The GM (or the player, if the group agrees) strings this stuff together into a vague prediction. It doesn't have to be a narrative, since it's only a cloudy prophecy.

Example: Odonogue casts a Clearwater Oracle for his friend Lady Burrows. Odonogue's Sorcery pool for this is 8d. He rolls and gets a 3x9 – he's tuned in. Now he rolls 9d for the content of the vision, getting 3,4,5,7,8,9,10,10,10. The 2x9 means the vision is about conflict, and the 2x10 means it's about romance. The details from 3,4,5,7,8 are: Misfortune, something unseen, an old acquaintance or enemy, a vehicle and a treasure.

Odonogue's player Mitch has cleared it with the group to be the arbiter of these visions, so he thinks for a moment and says, "I see someone from your past, an old friend, perhaps from your childhood… you never paid him much attention." (Now he's worked in the waste dice from 4 and 5.) "There is a possibility for a great romance to spring up between you and this man, but there is danger too – it is a passion fraught with peril!" (That takes care of the sets.) "I see… it's dim, it's cloudy… a dagger! Daggers in the darkness, blood spilling over gold as figures struggle in the hold of a ship! Someone is hurt… maybe dying." (There you get the treasure, weapon, vehicle and misfortune.) "I… it's… no, I can't see who it is! But I see a terrible choice for you, my friend. You have to choose between that cargo of gold and… and something else you treasure. Perhaps this newfound love or perhaps… someone's life."

Remember, of course, that all prophecy is flawed. If the GM can't accommodate the vision, then some choice of the character stalled it before it could start. After all, foreknowledge of an event is often the best way to avoid it – even if you don't want to avoid it.

**Brightwater Oracle**

**Intensity:** 4  
**Casting Time:** Seven minutes  
**Duration:** Height in minutes  
**Attunement:** No

**Effect:** The caster sets a bowl of water in bright light and stares at the reflections on its surface, thereby casting the spell and seeing visions and portents of the future for himself. This spell can be directed: The oracle can ask a question about how to attain some goal or happiness, either for himself or another. If the roll is successful, he gets guidance (preferably in the form of vague images or advice).

This spell is, more or less, a clue dispenser. The PCs cast it and the GM gives them a hint. Note that, as with many spells of this school, it can be repetitive if cast too often. Just as the Clearwater Oracle shows the same fate over and over if repetitively cast, this gives a hint, but not an endless array of different hints.

Different GMs have different comfort levels with this sort of hinting, of course. GMs who don't like the idea at all should probably disallow this spell (or the whole school of magic, for that matter). As a guideline, GMs can look to the chart for Clearwater Oracle.

Having a plan for the direction of the game opens the GM to charges that he's railroading the PCs and forcing them along a particular path. On the other hand, no one made them cast the spell, so in this instance, they have essentially paid for a ticket.
Chapter 7: Aqueous Divination

Darkwater Oracle

Intensity: 4
Casting Time: Seven minutes
Duration: Height in minutes
Attunement: No

Effect: The diviner receives a dark vision of a future event, either for himself or for one other person. It can be anything, ranging from “unfortunate” up through “perilous” to “disastrous.” He can then prepare accordingly, so that when the event occurs he is braced to meet it, or even turn it to his advantage.

The mechanics for this spell involve a little bit of metagaming. When a character casts the spell correctly, note it down on the character sheet somewhere – “protected by Darkwater Oracle.” At various times, the player can choose to describe very vague things the character is doing to prepare for this doom – “I go and spend Wealth 4 on things I’ll need” or “I give detailed instructions to twenty of my followers” or “I explain things to the other characters and advise them.” At no point does the GM or the player tell – or even know! – what the dire event being braced for is. This is because the player gets to decide at some point that, “This, right here, is what I was warned against!” Then, retroactively, all the preparations he made swoop in (if at all plausible) to change the situation.

This can be a bit hard to wrap one’s head around, so here’s an example. Mitch’s character Odonogue casts Darkwater Oracle successfully. The next day, Odonogue goes and spends some money at the market, preparing. He also warns the other characters. Mitch and the rest of the group keep playing through a couple weeks of game time, until disaster strikes. Their ship is caught in a storm, the hull gets holed and they start to sink. “This is it,” decides Mitch. “This is what Odonogue foresaw. Therefore, the characters know the instant the hull gets holed, and they’re there with the exact right patching supplies that Odonogue bought the day after the vision.” If Mitch had decided not to use the spell then, the boat might have sunk, taking Odonogue’s material preparations with it. (After all, if Mitch decided that the boat wasn’t the predicted doom, then he had no way of foreseeing an event that would ruin his plans.) A week after washing ashore, the group’s attacked by cannibals. If Mitch decides to use the prediction then, the characters are braced for it, knowing when and how their enemies strike.

No character can have more than one Darkwater prediction operating at a time. If the caster performs the divination again, the same vision repeats. Casting the spell requires a bowl of still water, to be gazed at in shadow.

Liquid Loquaciousness

Intensity: 4
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Height in minutes
Attunement: No

Effect: This spell gives a Master Die in Fascinate by revealing to the character the proper topics to discuss and the right attitude to affect about them. To cast it, the character must drink a mouthful of water. It interacts with Froth and Standing Whirlpool the same way Unlikely Avoidance does.

The Truth, Like Water, Cannot Be Seized

Intensity: 4
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Height in minutes
Attunement: No

Effect: This spell provides insight into what lies are most palatable to a particular audience. It gives a Master Die to the Lie Skill. It interacts with Froth and Standing Whirlpool the same way Unlikely Avoidance does.
Chapter 7: Aqueous Divination

Unlikely Avoidance

Intensity: 4
Casting Time: Combat
Duration: Height in minutes
Attunement: No

Effect: To cast this spell, the character gazes into water, at least a mouthful's worth of it. It can be a puddle on the ground or in a cup or anywhere, as long as there's enough of it. He foresees the steps he must take in order to remain unseen and unheard for the duration of the spell, if remaining hidden is possible at all. He gains a Master Die in Stealth.

If someone who is searching for the character is protected by Froth or Standing Whirlpool, the character's Stealth rolls are made against an appropriate Difficulty (4 or 6), but she still gets the Master Die.

Battle Prophet

Intensity: 5
Casting Time: Combat
Duration: Instant
Attunement: No

Effect: This spell targets one person, either the caster or one individual with whom she shares the vision. It can be seen in any body of water that has blood in it, even as little as a single drop. Though the vision is quick as an eyelash, it can be recalled with all the clarity of a leisurely memory.

What the vision conveys is a sense of a conflict's immediate future tendencies. If the person receiving the vision would not usually be allowed a Tactics roll (due to insufficient information) he now knows enough to make one. If the seer would get a Tactics roll without the benefit of the spell, he makes that roll with an added Master Die. Note that multiple castings do not provide increased effect. If you couldn't make a roll before and one Battle Prophecy let you roll, a second Battle Prophecy does not add an MD to that roll.

Standing Whirlpool

Intensity: 6
Casting Time: Ten hours
Duration: Permanent
Attunement: No

Effect: To cast this spell, the oracle immerses himself or another person in rapidly moving water. (This could be a stream or just a tub with a few servants agitating it. The target has to remain in there for the whole ten hours, though if the caster is performing the spell on someone else she can cast it from the comfort of dry land.) If the spell succeeds, any attempts to divine the target's future are made at +6 Difficulty. This is a great boon to those who have little recourse to oracular magic, since it becomes far harder for their enemies to predict them. However, it's a double-edged sword to those favored by the Ob-lobs, as such a person cannot benefit from helpful oracular castings. As with Froth, this distortion of the fortune currents applies to any situation where the character is significantly involved.
Conjoiners regard the actual animal produced by their magic as a byproduct of the worshipful act of creation. More pragmatic priests make a pretty profit off sales of their unique abilities. Even the dreamy giants of the faith are often willing to build custom creatures for outsiders (as long as said outsiders are Pahar of good reputation). They regard imagining a new creature as a form of devotion to Setekesh. It’s a mild devotion, but most laypeople can't do anything else, poor things.

**Required Knowledge**: Conjoiners cannot learn any spell with an Intensity greater than double their number of Skill ranks in Expert: Agriculture (or Gardening, or Herbalism, or something similar).

**Gift of the Eagle**

**Intensity**: 1  
**Casting Time**: Eight hours  
**Duration**: Permanent  
**Attunement**: Yes

**Effect**: To cast this spell, the caster must ritually sacrifice two creatures, one of which must be a bird or other flying creature. The other sacrifice is the dalaq-ta (see sidebar). Both bodies are then buried in one of Setekesh's groves, while plants symbolic of them (usually something the flyer eats or nests in, or something it resembles) are used to form an intertwined structure above their common grave. If the spell succeeds, a strange hybrid plant crashes up out of the ground, swells to fruition, delivers a single massive fruit, and then withers into a stump. The fruit cracks open and a hybrid creature emerges. It appears to be a young example of the dalaq-ta, only with wings appropriate to its partner in sacrifice. The new creature loses a wound box at each hit location and can fly at a rate equal to its walking speed +5.

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**Domain**: Fertility and the nature of animals.  
**Method**: The gardeners of Setekesh ritually sacrifice animals in their sacred groves and, once the animal corpses are buried, a magical tree or vine grows and releases a new form of life from its fruit.

**Associated Skill or Stat**: Knowledge

**Society and Beliefs**: Setekesh the Maker spends most of the Pahar year as the goddess of creation and toil. (For one month of the year, Setekesh is male.) Despite being credited with creating light, darkness, plants, animals, humanity, magic, mathematics and writing, Setekesh is regarded as a minor goddess in the Pahar religion – possibly because she's always so busy with her own projects that she has relatively little time to spend with her family. The Conjoiners (as they’re called) tend her groves, perform her services, honor her holy days and express their worship by creating new types of animals. Their interactions with local economies and political forces are often complex. It should be noted that many

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**Dalaq-Ta**

"Dalaq" is the Pahar word for base or foundation – something that gets built upon. "Ta" means “beast” or “animal." Thus, the dalaq-ta of many Conjoining spells is a creature which retains most of its traits, but not quite all. If you cast Gift of the Eagle with a horse as a dalaq-ta, you get a horse with wings that can fly. If you cast Gift of the Rhino on a hummingbird dalaq-ta, you get a really big hummingbird.
The Hummingbird’s Gift

Intensity: 2
Casting Time: Seven hours
Duration: Permanent
Attunement: Yes

Effect: This is another spell cast by sacrificing two creatures on land that is holy to Setekesh, while weaving together plants that represent each animal. One creature is the dalaq-ta, while the other must be something small enough to hold in one hand. If the spell succeeds, a new plant bursts forth and splits open a fat tuber from the soil. Within that root is a new creature, identical in shape and attitude to the dalaq-ta, but one quarter of its size and a scant thirty-second part of its weight. The new creature is identical to the dalaq-ta, except that it loses three points off Body (to a minimum of 1) and gains a point of Coordination.

Hooves of the Horse

Intensity: 3
Casting Time: Eight hours
Duration: Permanent
Attunement: Yes

Effect: The caster sacrifices two creatures in one of Setekesh's gardens, one dalaq-ta (see sidebar) and one horse. Both are buried together. A structure of symbolic plants (horse chestnut or horseradish for example, and whatever plants are appropriate to the dalaq-ta) is built over the dead animals and, when the spell succeeds, a tree shoots up out of the soil and splits open. From within it emerges a young adult specimen of the dalaq-ta’s type, only much faster than normal. Specifically, it moves an additional ten feet per round, without even a Run roll.
**Matters of Law**

**Ch.8: The Conjoining Priesthood of Setekesh**

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**The Soft Blessing**

*Intensity:* 3  
*Casting Time:* Eight hours  
*Duration:* Height days  
*Attunement:* No  

**Effect:** This is the temporary attunement spell. The eight-hour casting time involves an elaborate ritual in which four different seeds are placed at the four corners of the garden, while various songs of praise are sung. The rite culminates with some form of animal sacrifice, and with the blood being used to trace the outline of the target area (which is about a thousand steps on a side). If the spell succeeds, the four corner seeds immediately sprout from the ground. (The four sacred plants of Setekesh are considered weeds by the rest of the Empire, since they are inedible, aggressive, homely, and lacking in industrial or medicinal value.) The enclosed area then becomes attuned for several days and is ready to have a dalaq-ta buried in it.

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**Claws of the Tiger**

*Intensity:* 4  
*Casting Time:* Nine hours  
*Duration:* Permanent  
*Attunement:* Yes  

**Effect:** Despite the name, the spell does not require the sacrifice of a tiger. In addition to a dalaq-ta, however, it does demand the blood and flesh of a large and dangerous animal – something that could kill a man single-handedly and which does at least Width Killing with its attacks. After sacrificing and burying the two beasts, the caster then weaves a structure above them composed of plants representing both. (The predator plant is often thorny and/or poisonous.) If the spell works, a tree surges up out of the ground and immediately begins bending over under the weight of a single nut. The nut swells and the tree tips until the weight causes the tree to break. The nut falls and splits open, revealing a composite creature – it has the shape of the dalaq-ta, but the coloring of the predator. More significantly, it has the predator’s claws and/or fangs and/or horns. The new creature conforms to the stats of the dalaq-ta, except that its attacks do an additional +2 Killing damage.

Conjoiners often use dogs as the dalaq-ta, because they’re so easily trained. The native dogs of Pahar are small and quick, and those unfamiliar with Monster Binders are often shocked to see a forty-pound dog sporting claws three inches long. Often, the shock doesn’t last long.

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**Gift of the Hound**

*Intensity:* 4  
*Casting Time:* Nine hours  
*Duration:* Permanent  
*Attunement:* Yes  

**Effect:** A dalaq-ta is sacrificed and buried with an animal of unusual intelligence and loyalty. This is most commonly a dog, as the name indicates, but large apes and other trainable creatures have been used. A structure is constructed over the two dead creatures, built from plants that symbolize their natures and qualities. When the spell is complete, a bush springs up covered with berries, one of which is many times larger than the others. That big berry swells, drawing all the mass out of the plant, until it pops open and reveals a creature that looks like the dalaq-ta and has all the dalaq-ta’s Stats, except for Tricks and Trainability (see page 306 in REIGN for an explanation of what those measure). Instead, the new creature is as easy to train as the other animal sacrificed. Want to create a shark that’s obedient as a puppy? This is the spell that does it.

It is possible to sacrifice intelligent and self-aware creatures (humans) and create an animal of human intellect. This is regarded as anathema by mainstream Setekesh followers, but the heretics who do it are very difficult to take by surprise. If this has ever been tried with demons, the outcome is not recorded. If tried with two humans, the spell simply fails.
**Gift of the Rattlesnake**

*Intesity: 5*
*Casting Time: Ten hours*
*Duration: Permanent*
*Attunement: Yes*

**Effect:** By the time a Conjoiner is giving the Gift of the Rattlesnake, his appreciation for Setekesh’s power has grown to the point that he has a broader and more flexible ability to alter nature’s creature. While rattlesnakes are frequently sacrificed with this spell, as a matter of tradition, it can use just about any creature as the companion to the dalaq-ta. The double death is required, as always, along with burial and the construction of the symbolic mound above the animal bodies. When the plant arises (and its exact nature can vary widely) it produces a new creature that has the basic frame and Stats of the dalaq-ta, but also one feature or special ability of the other sacrifice. It can’t give the gift of flight or change the creature’s size – the Gifts of the Eagle and the Rhino are required for those sorts of restructuring. But a serpent’s poison, a bat’s uncanny navigation, a parrot’s colors, the nest-building nature of a wasp or the camouflage of an anole can all be grafted on to the dalaq-ta.

**The Sharp Blessing**

*Intesity: 6*
*Casting Time: Thirteen hours*
*Duration: Permanent*
*Attunement: No*

**Effect:** This is the permanent attunement spell, and the sanctified area is now a mile on a side. The four sacred weeds of Setekesh (used in The Soft Blessing) are planted in each corner and along the four cardinal directions, and each border is traced in blood – one with a fish, one with a bird, one with a creature that digs and one with a creature that runs. The final hour of the spell involves the caster, alone, mingling his own flesh with the soil as a sign of devotion. (This does a point of Killing damage to each limb, the head, and the torso.) When the spell succeeds, the land is permanently given over to the goddess. This has the following effects.

1) A wall of thorns springs up along the grove’s borders, with only one opening (always pointing in the direction of the moon). The thorns are easily a foot long and seem to curve into the gaps of armor with cruel cunning. They’re envenomed – no Potency or game effects, but they cause itching, burning swellings where they scratch. When cut, the wall regrows with visible speed. It gives a +2d bonus to the pools of Unworthy Opponents defending the grove from intruders.

2) A group of trees grows in the center, forming a decent-sized chapel. It’s waterproof and produces a variety of succulent fruits every day. At the front is a natural altar on which the sacrifices can be performed. It even forms a natural chimney and fireplace behind the altar.

3) The remainder of the land becomes hyperfcecund, with crops planted there growing ten times as fast as usual, as long as prayers to Setekesh are said as they’re planted and tended.

4) All Conjoining spells that require attunement can be cast within the area.

A grove of this sort gives a +1 Territory bonus to Companies with Territory scores of 1-2. For Companies with Territory 3-4, a +1 temporary bonus to Territory can be added once every four months. For Territory 5+, the bonus can only be used once per year.

For the grove to stay holy, someone must perform the rites of Setekesh in it, properly, once per month. (Anyone with a Student of Setekesh Skill can do this without a roll. For everyone else it’s a Lore roll at Difficulty 4.) The wall of thorns, the weeds at the corners and the central temple must all stay intact, as well. If any one of those elements is completely destroyed, the territory loses its fecundity and attunement. (Those awful thorns retain their aggravating properties until completely uprooted, however.)
then, a spell that lets the chimerae reproduce? In the long run, that’s a monsters, so why not use it to encompass the story of monstrous races? How about, creatures, not just single prodigies. This school is more or less telling the story of will do a better job of dissuading players who don’t want it having it do Killing or Shock to the caster, but I actually think keeping it high Intensity at Intensity 6, which sounds like a good level. I’m a little drawn towards the idea of takes hours to cast (-3) and it requires complex and fi  nicky preparation (-2). Now it’s “Blessing of Fertility” as a nice, innocuous name for generating a race of monsters?) is pretty signifi  cant, verging on major. I’m giving it (+4). It’s permanent (+4), giving us a base Intensity of 11. Impossible! But like most Conjoiner spells, this one (how’s “Blessing of Fertility” as a nice, innocuous name for generating a race of monsters?) takes hours to cast (-3) and it requires complex and finicky preparation (-2). Now it’s at Intensity 6, which sounds like a good level. I’m a little drawn towards the idea of having it do Killing or Shock to the caster, but I actually think keeping it high Intensity will do a better job of dissuading players who don’t want it really bad. There are a few details that need to be addressed — are the offspring themselves fertile, or do they need the spell? That gives me more room for balance and detail. I’ll hold out the promise of a self-replicating monster race, but at the same time put some limits on when they become self-sustaining. Then I’ll hope for the best.

More Spell Building Examples

So far, the Conjoiners do one thing (make creatures) very well. They’re versatile, making big, small, vicious and just plain weird chimerae, but there are a lot of conditions and constraints around them. At this point, I could put a period on the end and be done, but a couple other thoughts occur. One is that it might be nice to include at least one decent combative spell for these guys. Yes, they can create horrific combattant creatures, but making some hideous mutant that you need to train doesn’t help you if a bunch of thugs kick your bedroom window in tonight. So something for quick self-defense would be good. Given the structure of their attunement, it would also be a useful spell for generalist wizards. So that’s a double-dip.

The obvious way to run quick fightin’ for these guys is by creating a group of temporary Unworthy Opponents. To keep it consistent and interesting, the spell — “Petty Defenders,” let’s call it — could enchant any insects and vermin around, making them huge, vicious and obedient. The target, then is 2-10 creatures within 100 feet (+3). It’s an Unworthy Opponent effect, and let’s make it Height in Threat 1 opponents (+2). It lasts for minutes, and I’m inclined to call it Height Minutes because at Intensity 5 it’s looking a little expensive for producing a handful of mooks. Flawing it down seems like a good idea. At first, I thought about having the spell do 1K to each limb, but that seems excessive. The image of the mage exploding in blood as lice and skin mites leap off him, growing to massive size…. mm, tasty, but is it practical to take 5K in order to produce as few as 6 Threat 1 creatures? Let’s make it 1S to each limb (-1) which gives us an Intensity 4 spell. That’s pretty limiting, but for an expert or master sorcerer, you’ve got an adequate chance of whipping up 20 followers in 2-3 rounds and remaining conscious. It’d be nice to give them extra damage if summoned in an attuned area, but I’ll resist the temptation to make it more complicated and intense.

The other thing that would be nice to justify is the existence of big groups of weird creatures, not just single prodigies. This school is more or less telling the story of monsters, so why not use it to encompass the story of monstrous races? How about, then, a spell that lets the chimerae reproduce? In the long run, that’s a big effect, but REIGN is all about big effects and the long run. Let’s do it… as long as it’s hard enough.

The target for the spell is 2-10 creatures (+3) and the effect of making them fertile is pretty significant, verging on major. I’m giving it (+4). It’s permanent (+4), giving us a base Intensity of 11. Impossible! But like most Conjoiner spells, this one (how’s “Blessing of Fertility” as a nice, innocuous name for generating a race of monsters?) takes hours to cast (-3) and it requires complex and finicky preparation (-2). Now it’s at Intensity 6, which sounds like a good level. I’m a little drawn towards the idea of having it do Killing or Shock to the caster, but I actually think keeping it high Intensity will do a better job of dissuading players who don’t want it really bad. There are a few details that need to be addressed — are the offspring themselves fertile, or do they need the spell? That gives me more room for balance and detail. I’ll hold out the promise of a self-replicating monster race, but at the same time put some limits on when they become self-sustaining. Then I’ll hope for the best.
and elaborate Setekesh marriage rite over them in the middle of sanctified land. The marriage rite requires garlands of flowers, along with crowns and rings woven of decorative grasses.

When the spell works, the creatures targeted can breed true. They can mate and produce children, as many as they can manage. Those children, however, are sterile unless they are enchanted with the Blessings of Fertility. Grandchildren of the initially enchanted pair do not need the spell to procreate.

Example: Lalam wants to create a race of water-breathing falcons. Using Blessing of the Rattlesnake, she sacrifices a female carp and a female falcon, producing a female swimming falcon. She does the same thing with a male carp and a male falcon. She then uses Blessings of Fertility on her two amphibious birds. For the rest of their lives, they can lay eggs and produce young swimming falcons. If Lalam then casts Blessings of Fertility on the chicks of the original pair, those chicks can grow up to produce chicks of their own. That third generation hatches fertile and able to make more of its kind without occult intervention.
New Advantage: Conjoined

This variable-cost Advantage indicates that the character has survived the spell Setekesh’s Test and has received some benefit (possibly dubious) from it. The cost of the Advantage depends on what spell followed up the Test and enhanced the character. GMs may wish to limit this Advantage to being taken only at character generation. Alternately, if the character wants to undergo the Test during the course of her adventuring career, she can pay the Advantage cost in XP in order to have the test turn out just how the player likes — no untimely death from smothering, no brain damage, no being overwhelmed by animal instinct. Players who like to gamble can take the spell without the XP and take their chances.

Gift of the Rhino (5 points): If taken at character generation, the character must have a minimum Body of 4 and can’t have Coordination above 4. The character doubles in size, which can cause problems when trying to sneak around, climb slender rope ladders, or fit into human-scaled buildings. These issues can usually be modeled with a Penalty Die or a Difficulty up to 5, though in some cases the GM should just say, “Sorry, he can’t fit through that door.” (That’s something to keep in mind before buying this Advantage or, if you’re GM, before permitting it in your game.) On the other hand, the character can get Bonus Dice or Difficulty reductions when it’s helpful to be twice as tall as everyone else. Giants are hard to miss, so when you want people’s attention — using skills like Inspire or Intimidate, for example — the bonus should kick in. The character’s increased weight prevents any change in movement speed or jumping ability (for example) but that increased reach can have a positive effect in a fight. When attacking with a hand-to-hand weapon, this character’s sets are all timed as if they were 1 higher. On the downside, anyone who takes a round to aim at a giant gets +2d instead of the usual +1. Like I said, giants are hard to miss.

Gift of the Eagle (3 points): The character grows wings, loses a wound box from each arm, each leg, her head and her torso, and can fly at her walking speed +5’. She’s also likely to be mistaken for a Stormtongue, but unlike a fully attuned adept of that school, the lost wound boxes are simply gone, not allocated to her wings.

Gift of the Rattlesnake (5 points): This covers such a broad range of abilities that it’s impossible to sum them up in one paragraph. GMs — go with it. Just keep in mind that this is a fairly expensive Advantage, the equivalent of a full attunement. Like full attunement, it can come with problems as well as benefits. (Someone who gets a turtle’s shell may get something of the turtle’s slowness, too.) If it has no flaws, it should be about as good as getting another point in a Stat.

Claws of the Tiger (3 points): The character does Width Shock +2 Killing with some unarmed attacks — specifically those that utilize enhanced weapons. If a character has lion fangs, he has to make bite attacks to get the damage bonus. If he has ram’s horns, he has to do a head-butt. (Mostly these are Fight attacks.) If the armaments are obvious (and most are) the character can add a Bonus Die to Intimidate rolls, but if he has the Beauty advantage (see page 41), it’s downgraded a level. If the character lacks Beauty, he gets the effects of the Gruesome problem (see page 46) without the added XP when it hinders him.

Hooves of the Horse (2 points): The character can move an additional ten feet per round without rolling. It’s up to the player if the character adopted any other traits from the fast creature with whom he was melded.

Hooves of the Horse (2 points): The character can move an additional ten feet per round without rolling. It’s up to the player if the character adopted any other traits from the fast creature with whom he was melded.

The Hummingbird’s Gift (1 point): Not to put too cute a point on it, but the character becomes teeny-tiny. If taken at character generation, the new character can’t have Body above 2 or Coordination under 2. As a general guideline, the GM should give a bonus die or reduce Difficulty by 5 in any situation where being shin-height is an advantage (hiding, escaping, some forms of entertaining). On the other hand, the GM is also justified in giving penalty dice or increased difficulties when being diminutive is a hindrance (lifting things, jumping, trying to get people to take you seriously). In combat, the character gets no Dodge bonus (just to keep things simple) but neither does he lose any Wound Boxes from shrinkage. Against tall opponents, any hit that would strike the head hits the torso instead, and the character can’t use any weapon that requires two hands from a normal person, except for the shortbow. Longswords, battleaxes and the like have to be handled two-handed by the tiny person, and other weapons not scaled for him may also produce problems (again, it’s GM judgment). On the other hand, a Body of 1 or 2 at that size is disproportionately powerful, so there’s no speed reduction. The character can take long, leaping bounds with little effort.

Gift of the Hound (5 points): With the other Advantages, the character is the dalaq-ta, keeping most of his traits but gaining one extra. When sacrificed through Gift of the Hound, the other creature is the dalaq-ta. Essentially, this Advantage means the character’s mind, motives and memories have been permanently placed in the body of an animal. **Use extreme caution with this Advantage.** Characters who are put in animal bodies can’t go back, usually can’t talk, and there are grossly reduced legal penalties for killing them out of hand. Don’t say I didn’t warn you.
Domain: Darkness, and the spirits that inhabit it.

Method: There is another world, as alien to humanity as the depths of the sea but as close as the nearest shadow. Walkers on the Darkened Path explore that world, exploit it, and offer access in turn to its explorers. It's possible that some of the things in the dark have no interest in the illuminated world, but there are certainly enough eager to experience the light that these sorcerers have no trouble summoning spirits to observe, obey... and consume. Called “shadowbinders,” their powers elude the grasp of normal men, even as much as their servants terrify them.

Associated Skill or Stat: Sense

Society and Beliefs: A secretive branch of sorcery practiced in the Sunless Plains, the Darkened Path is taught by mentor to acolyte in personal, one-on-one lessons. Finding a mentor isn’t always easy, since those with the all-black eyes of a shadowbinder often hide themselves away. Many mentors require great sacrifices of their students, financial or behavioral or even spiritual.

The culture of those on the Darkened Path is one that pursues naked power, full stop. Shadowbinders are almost never altruistic, kindly individuals, unless they’ve had some drastic change of heart after their initiation. The first shadowbinders were selfish and grasping, and they attracted (or molded) those same traits in their students. There are innumerable cliques or “families” of shadowbinders, tracing themselves to common mentors or instructors. Rivalries within and between these groups are the norm. They’re not universally deadly hatreds, but shadowbinders of significant skill are usually murdered at the rate of one or two a year in the Plains. Followers of the Path who are in the military (and there are no small number of them in the Sunless Plains army) tend to rise above these squabbles – or, at least, they keep them on the level of insults, spitting, fistfights and petty personal sabotage.

Required Knowledge: None.

Flawless Shadowbinder Attunement

In addition to being able to cast spells that require attunement whenever she pleases, the shadowbinder’s eyes turn pure, flat, night-sky black. Furthermore, the shadows seem to cling to and caress her, even in a brightly lit room. Whenever anyone makes a Sight roll to spot her, that Sight roll takes a –1d penalty from darkness, unless she’s trying to hide somewhere so bright that the shadows themselves catch the eye (for example, the middle of a snowfield or desert at noon on a cloudless day).

The attunement isn’t universally positive, even when it’s a good one. The shadowbinder takes a –1d penalty to Sight rolls when trying to peer onto a brightly lit scene, as her eyes are now more fit for gazing into the depths.

Nyctopian Vision

Intensity: 2
Casting Time: Instant
Duration: Width in Minutes
Attunement: No

Effect: While this spell is in effect, the caster can use his Eerie sense instead of Sight for the purposes of looking into dark places. Note that this does not work for looking at illuminated sights, even if the sorcerer is blind.

The Wracking Spell

Intensity: 2
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Width in Rounds
Attunement: No

Effect: To cast this spell, one must first prepare a simple human doll in complete darkness. The doll is flung at the spell’s target during invocation and, if the spell works and is not Counterspelled, the doll explodes into a small swarm of biting, fluttering, utterly silent black... things. (The doll doesn’t have to hit its target, and the biting spirits can catch up with it the round the spell is cast, no matter how fast the target moves.) These small and bitter spirits serve as an Area 2 Shock Attack on the single person targeted. Any Dodge Gobble Die can be spent to remove one of these Area Dice. On the round the spell is cast, the spirits’ attack is timed according to the spell’s activation set. After that, they attack last in every round until the spell wears off.

Shadow Refuge

Intensity: 2
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Minutes equal to the Height of the roll, or fewer if the caster so desires
Attunement: Yes

Effect: The caster fades bodily into a patch of shadow and remains there, outside of normal space and time, until the spell ends. While in the shadow, he does not age, act, or perceive time to pass. If the shadow is destroyed (that is, the item casting it is removed or a light placed to chase the darkness away) the caster remains trapped until the area is dark again.

Nyctopian Pledge

Intensity: 3
Casting Time: Nine minutes
Duration: Permanent.
Attunement: No

Effect: This permanent attunement spell is complicated and painful, but at least it’s relatively quick. To become attuned, the acolyte must be in a place where no light falls and where no light has ever fallen. He must go there with a fully attuned shadowbinder, strip naked, and allow the other dark mage to cut and peel a series of strips from his body and limbs (doing 1K to each location) while the caster invokes a spirit of the darkness to enter his body and make it a home.

This spell is most often cast with the aid of a family member, given the extraordinary degree of trust required on the part of the seeker of attunement.

Imperfect Shadowbinder Attunement (1 point Adv.)

A flawed attunement still allows instant access to spells that require attunement, but the spirit within is capricious and cruel to its host. Unless the host is specifically using shadow magic to enhance his vision, he takes a –1d penalty to all Sight rolls, as his inner imp plays with shadows and teases with half-seen forms. Once per week or so, the spirit actually paints a brief, shadowy illusion on the host’s eyes. Typically he just thinks he sees something falling at him, or someone watching from a doorway, or someone lurking behind the curtain in the bedroom. When he goes to look, the spirit inside has a good laugh.

Chapter 9: Shadowbinders
Those six persons are subject to a Morale Attack 6, but the creatures can do no real damage. While distracting, a focused warrior can ignore them enough that he doesn’t even take a penalty on his attack. (If you’re a GM and an NPC is casting this, by no means tell the PCs the creatures can’t physically damage them. Let them react naturally. Similarly, if a PC casts this on a significant enemy who has no way to know what’s going to happen, it’s probably reasonable that a smart person runs, or at least tries to engage the phantoms.)

**Moldering Army**

*Intenity: 4*  
*Casting Time: Nine hours*  
*Duration: Width in Years*  
*Attunement: Yes*  

**Effect:** To create a Moldering Army the sorcerer needs one hundred dead bodies. Before beginning the spell, he has to place a small stone or wood disc with a carved symbol on it somewhere inside each body. When that is done, he can begin the spell. If it succeeds, all hundred of them rise up as zombies, as per the spell Animate Corpse.

Despite being only Intensity Four, the scope of this spell tends to significantly distort the arcane landscape. It can be sensed with the Eerie sense as if it was Intensity Seven.

**Summon the Sinister Swarm**

*Intenity: 4*  
*Casting Time: Combative*  
*Duration: Width in Minutes*  
*Attunement: Yes*  

**Effect:** This spell summons a swarm of about twenty to fifty (call it 3d10 + 20) leaping, hissing, croaking, biting black spirits. They obey their caster, but are really good for nothing other than attacking. They are Threat 2 minions whose Threat cannot be raised. They are vulnerable to Morale Attacks and their bites, claws, bludgeoning strikes and icy injections of
ichor do Width Killing when they attack. These creatures have a major limitation, however: They can only exist in darkness. If the lighting is dim and shadowy, they can attack, but they cannot enter any space that is fully illuminated by a candle’s light or brighter.

**Wave of Darkness**

- **Intensity:** 5
- **Casting Time:** Combative
- **Duration:** Width in minutes
- **Attunement:** No

**Effect:** To prepare Wave of Darkness, the magus must acquire a piece of obsidian weighing at least half a pound. In perfect darkness, he must grind the obsidian into dust. To cast the spell, he flings all the dust into the air and designates an area with roughly a fifty foot diameter. All light within that area is extinguished. No one within the affected area can make a Sight roll, and any actions taken that require vision are at Difficulty 4.

**Stark Terror**

- **Intensity:** 6
- **Casting Time:** Slow 1
- **Duration:** Instant
- **Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** To cast this spell, the sorcerer needs three leaves from any tree that grows only in darkness, bound together at the stems. When invoked, the spell summons a phantom similar to those created by Instant Rout, but in this case it’s singularly huge, extremely loud, and everyone it touches feels an icy, numbing pain. It still does no real damage, but it acts as a Morale Attack 10 on Unworthy Opponents. As with Instant Rout, people who are not subject to Morale Attacks may still run off when confronted with a gibbering amorphous shadow the size of an elephant – even though they suffer no impairment or compulsion under the ORE game mechanics. It vanishes after delivering its single Morale Attack.

**Animate Corpse**

- **Intensity:** 5
- **Casting Time:** Eight minutes
- **Duration:** Permanent, until the destruction of the corpse.
- **Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** To cast this spell, the magician must carve a mask in utter darkness, then press the mask onto the face of a dead human being. When the spell works, the corpse arises, animated by a possessing spirit of darkness. The zombie is a Threat 2 follower (Threat 3 if armed) possessing no skills beyond attacking and parrying. Morale Attacks do not affect it, but any Area Attack of 2d+ is sufficient to destroy it, even if the Area Attack only does Shock damage. Its threat cannot be improved beyond 3, nor can inspiring words or other enchantments make it more functional. It obeys simple orders, but is about as intelligent as a dog.

**Shadow Dive**

- **Intensity:** 5
- **Casting Time:** Combative
- **Duration:** Instant
- **Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** The caster can jump into one patch of shadow (it must be large enough that, if it was a hole, his body could fit through) and emerge instantly from another that’s visible within a hundred paces. (Again, the destination shadow must be of sufficient size.) Using Shadow Dive does a point of Shock to each limb.
### Undead Servant

**Intensity:** 6  
**Casting Time:** Ten minutes  
**Duration:** Permanent, until the destruction of the corpse.  
**Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** This spell requires extensive preparation. The caster must raise a Blackweb vine to maturity in utter darkness. (Blackweb is a plant native to the Sunless Plains, which can survive starlight and moonlight but which visibly withers away from a light as bright as a torch.) While the vine is growing, (a process that takes the three summer months from seedling to mature plant) the caster trains the vines into the shape of a human face. When the vine withers in the fall, the mask is ready and the caster can attempt the spell by pressing the mask onto the face of a human corpse. The vine-mask is destroyed by the spell even if the casting attempt fails.

If the spell succeeds, a darkness spirit animates the dead body and creates a fairly robust animate servant. It cannot speak, but it arises with the Body and Coordination Stats and Skills the body possessed when living. (Esoteric Disciplines and Martial Techniques do not return with the body, however.) It also has the same number of wound boxes (all of them empty). It obeys its creator and can understand what is said to it with near-human intelligence, but unless given orders by its maker it takes no actions on its own initiative. It gets hurt just like a living person and is de-animated if the head or torso fills with Killing damage. It can repair itself with the Vigor pool, as usual.

### Terror’s Truth

**Intensity:** 9  
**Casting Time:** Slow 1  
**Duration:** After the round it appears, it persists for rounds equal to the Width of the casting roll.  
**Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** To cast this spell, the sorcerer needs three leaves from any tree that grows only in darkness, bound together at the stems. When invoked, the spell summons a spirit that looks exactly like the one summoned by Stark Terror, and it produces the same Morale Attack. This one, however, can hit. It attacks once per round with a roll equal to the casting roll. It does Width Killing, Waste Shock and ignores all physical armor. Its blows can be dodged and parried normally.
It's only in the past decade, with the discovery of techniques that make smoke sculptures permanent (or, at least, last for a decade or more) that smoke sculpture art objects have become particularly desirable. Making sculptures for beauty was always done, but given the martial bent of the school, it was generally regarded as secondary to getting on top of walls, restraining prisoners or restricting battlefields. Ironically (given its historic use against them) the most avid aficionados of smokematter art have always been Plainsmen.

More and more outsiders are being allowed to learn the techniques, but the school located in Turningford is very secretive, requires extravagant loyalty oaths to even gain admission, and has close ties to Western Marches military units to deal with any student who treacherously sets up his own academy. The school admits 40 students a year, half of whom are drummed out within nine months. Typically, 30 members of the incoming class are from the Marches, seven are from elsewhere in the Empire, and only three are allowed from foreign countries. Under no circumstances is any Uld, Dindavaran, Maemeck, Wuhra or Opetkan permitted to attend even a single class at the academy.

**Required Knowledge:** None.

### Minor Smoke Form

**Intensity:** 1  
**Casting Time:** Slow 2  
**Duration:** Height in hours  
**Attunement:** No

**Effect:** This spell creates a simple object made of smokemass. The object can't be any larger than roughly a double handful of matter. If drawn out thin, it can't be taller than the caster, or if made into a flat plate it can't have more surface than the dimensions of the caster's torso. Simple items like a six-foot length of rope, a bucket or a spear are easy. More complicated devices (such as a block and tackle, or a saddle) require the character to first succeed at a relevant Expert skill.

**Domain:** This school of enchantment is very narrowly focused. It essentially does one thing: Transform smoke into shapes that are solid but (usually) temporary. It's not symbolic or esoteric or mystical. It's practical.

**Method:** Smoke sculptors cast their enchantments by passing their hands through smoke in gestures that look vague, or even somewhat theatrical to outsiders, but each movement is carefully calculated to communicate to the arcane energies exactly how the magus wants the form to develop. It does not require the precise timing and movement of Flame Dancing (for example). It does require both hands, however.

**Associated Skill or Stat:** Knowledge

**Society and Beliefs:** The smoke sculptors come from the Western Marches and have a long and generally honorable history with the military there. Their techniques have been used successfully in the wars against the Sunless Plains (though the art was in its infancy before Year 1) and against Dindavaran weapons and fortifications.
Chapter 10: Smoke Sculptors

Smoke Arrow

Intensity: 1
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Instant
Attunement: No

Effect: The caster must take a lungful of smoke and breathe it out violently across her frantically weaving fingers to cast this spell. (This spell requires not only hands to cast, but lips and tongue as well, so the caster can't speak while using it.) The missile created only exists for a moment, but it streaks from the caster to the target in that time, impacting with a needle sharp tip. It does Width in Killing damage.

This spell can be parried or dodged, but it cannot be counterspelled.

Bore Gaze

Intensity: 2
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Instant
Attunement: No

Effect: This spell punches a cone-shaped tunnel about a hundred feet long through smoke and haze. The tunnel starts at the caster's face and is about that same size. The end is about ten feet in diameter. As soon as the spell ends, the smoke starts moving normally into the cleared area, but it's good for getting a glimpse through the confusion of a battlefield. If used on smoke that's being enchanted by another smoke sculptor, it's an opposed action, as described on page 15 of Reign.

This also works on fog.

Shovel the Clouds

Intensity: 3
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Instant
Attunement: No

Effect: This spell shifts smoke. It has no effect on smokemass, but big billowing clouds of smoke that haven't yet been enchanted or transformed can be shifted. When the spell is cast, it gives a cloud of smoke the size of a small cabin a shove in a direction of the caster's choosing – right, left, north, west, up – sufficient to move it a quarter mile on a still day. With a light breeze, add or subtract half that, depending on whether you're pushing the smoke with or against the wind. Against a strong wind, it can only hold the cloud still, though going with the wind doubles the movement. Against a gale, this spell does nothing, but if there's a gale there aren't going to be any clouds of smoke around anyhow.

Many smoke sculptors consider this spell essential on the battlefield, since it's a lot easier to move smoke than a big smokemass tower, and having smoke where you want it makes their job a lot simpler. But it's a spell that's leaked out of their careful control and sees some use from people who simply want a clear view – or to deny any enemy sculptors a temptingly placed cloud.

This also works on fog.

Smoke Scythe

Intensity: 4
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Instant
Attunement: No

Effect: Similar to Smoke Arrow, this creates instead a wide, fast-moving, razor-sharp horizontal arc that streaks from the caster to strike at multiple foes up to 100 feet away. It strikes in a line 10 feet across and can slice into between 2-10 people, depending on how tightly grouped they are. This works as an Area 2 Killing attack. It cannot be counterspelled or parried, but can be dodged.

The caster must be standing near a large source of smoke to cast this – at least a large campfire, or a bonfire if it's raining. He also needs something like a shield or a cloak or a large fan which, used in one hand, can displace enough smoke to make the arc.
This is a cozy way to wait out a storm, but given Western March culture, smoke sculptors are more likely to practice warlike applications, such as the following. All of these can be made with the quick version of the spell.

- A ten foot tall wall, one foot thick and 80 feet long. Alternately, one 20 feet tall and 40 feet long. Typically these are braced against something, such as a pair of stout trees, because while the wall is hard as stone it’s light as feathers – concerted effort from a half-dozen men can easily knock it over if not braced. Engineer enchanters with time to prepare often dig a trench or a series of post-holes and then shape the wall to brace in them. This wall can easily be made into a bridge.

- A wall 40 feet long and ten high, with regular triangular back braces that extend ten feet behind it. This version can’t be tipped back, despite its low weight. Even if the attackers tip it forward, the braces are frequent enough that it’s hard for enemy hordes to get around them at charging speeds.

- A rectangular building, ten feet tall, ten wide and 40 feet long. The walls and ceiling are a foot thick and there are as many arrow slits (or breathing holes, or doors and windows) as the caster desires. This is a good one for breaking an advancing enemy line – you put it up quickly with no door, shoot out from inside or strike through spear-holes, and let them try to dig through the equivalent of a foot of stone. The biggest danger is that experienced troops dig in under the edge and tip it over like a lightweight box. Putting a floor on it reduces its width to 30 feet, and still only offers the protection of getting rolled around inside like animals in a cage. Unless, of course, the people inside ballast it with something, which is standard procedure in the Marches. Nevertheless, casters sometimes forget the floor in their haste, or are in an area without a ready supply of heavy stuff. The worst, perhaps, is when you ballast it with heavy rocks and your enemies are able to start rolling you around in it anyways.
• A ladder up to 800 feet tall and three feet wide. This should only be used with at least twenty attachments to something firm and heavy along its length. That big, even steel twists and stone crumbles.

• A 100 foot tall staircase, three feet wide, with inch-thick solid walls rising six feet high on either side of the walking surface. The angle of ascent varies, but needs a horizontal “footprint” of at least thirty feet to be stable. More is preferable. In a siege situation, where the staircase is being built against a high wall, the caster often forms it with a right-angle curve or two to keep defenders from firing down its length, or rolling stones, or simply knocking attackers back the whole way. The lower the stairway is, the more stable it can be made, which is important given how light it is. That’s good when it’s on wheels and you’re pushing it up at the enemy’s gate. It’s bad when the enemy is trying to knock it down.

• A seven-story tower that starts out twenty feet on a side and tapers to ten feet on a side at the top. With a ladder on the interior, a dozen archers can climb to the top seventy feet above the battlefield and fire down – or survey the tides of battle and give signals, for that matter.

• A flat, featureless carpet an inch thick and a hundred feet on a side. It is perfectly smooth, which means it’s as slippery as ice with just a touch of moisture on the top. This works very well for breaking up charges. Alternately, it can be a stripe ten feet wide and a thousand feet long. As a bonus, its featurelessness makes it hard to see – a Sense+Sight roll is required. On a rainy or overcast day, or if it’s obscured by something like, say, a great quantity of regular smoke, the Difficulty of that roll is 6. Staying balanced while walking on it requires a Coordination+Athletics roll if walking. Someone running on it has to make a Coordination+Athletics roll with a Difficulty equal to his Run Skill. Those who fail the roll fall and are downed.

• A carpet an inch thick and 90 feet on a side, with a needle sharp foot-long spike every square foot. This, too, can be made into a strip, in this case one ten feet wide and 800 feet long. Encircling one’s troops with this can make them very hard to attack.

Those are all applications that can be cast quickly. Using the slow version of the spell, the caster can make far more intricate designs, such as filling an area with a forest of smokemass trees strung together with barely-visible, razor-sharp webs. Or a fully-stocked smokemass armory. A smokemass counterweight catapult is a bad idea because it wouldn’t weigh enough to move a stone… but a giant smokemass crossbow would work fine, as would a spring-based catapult that was built locked into the ground.

All these applications require a large bonfire to create. The original caster can remove the object at any time with any Counterspell success.

**Smoke Armor**

**Intensity:** 5  
**Casting Time:** Eight minutes  
**Duration:** Width in hours  
**Attunement:** No

**Effect:** The caster wreathes himself or someone else in smoke while casting the spell and, when it finishes, that person is encased in an almost imperceptibly thin layer of smokemass. It provides AR 3 to all hit locations without restricting movement at all or limiting the senses in any way. Additional layers of Smoke Armor confer no further benefit, and it cannot be used on top of any other supernatural armor. It adds to AR ratings from mundane armor, Esoteric Disciplines, Martial Techniques and the like.
Depending on the will of the caster, smokemass can be as supple as cloth or rope, as rigid as stone, or as springy as a sapling. Once that quality is set, however, it can't be changed.

Smokemass cannot be created in the middle of solid matter, nor can it be created such that it is lifting a solid mass. You can make a staircase and climb up it, but you can't have the staircase lifting you (or, more relevantly perhaps, a load of heavy stones) while you're making it.

There is no theoretical limit to the fineness to which smokemass can be drawn or shaped, so smokemass weapons have spectacularly keen edges and sharp tips. However, due to their extremely low weight, they're no more effective than traditional weapons and, in cases where the weapon's heft is a factor (mauls, greataxes, sling stones) they might have a −1 or −2 penalty to the weapon's usual damage factor.

When the damage is imparted from another source (as with crossbow bolts, shortswords, stilettos) it works just as well as a regular weapon of the same type. Smokemass garrotes, being exceptionally strong and thin, do +2 damage.

Smokemass cannot create or mimic living creatures. At least, it can't yet.

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**Major Smoke Structure**

**Intensity:** 6  
**Casting Time:** Nine hours  
**Duration:** Height in years  
**Attunement:** No  
**Effect:** This is pretty much like Minor Smoke Structure, only bigger and longer-lasting. As a rule of thumb, Major Smoke Structure produces something four times larger than its Minor equivalent. There's no ‘quick’ version of this one because simply moving that quantity of smoke takes a long, long time. It requires either a string of four strategically-located bonfires to cast, or one enormous conflagration – big enough that the caster has to take three points of Shock damage (at random locations) from the heat while casting the spell. Once the structure is complete, the caster cannot instantly unmake it, any more than anyone else can.

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**Smokemass**

The entire purpose of Smoke Sculpture is to turn smoke — commonplace smoke, produced by burning anything at all — into smokemass, temporary matter that has many qualities of a solid. Many, but not all.

First off, smokemass is light. Any quantity of it has roughly the weight of an equivalent mass of loose snow, human hair, or loosely packed feathers. There are exceptions to this, but so far the only way to make smokemass heavy is by permitting it to exist for only a brief, eyelink moment.

Smokemass is not invisible, but neither is it completely opaque. Like the smoke from which it comes, it distorts and darkens what is seen through it. It typically has veins of gray or black winding through it, but resembles glass as much as it resembles anything. Unless a character has seen smokemass before, casually spotting an unmoving smokemass object in ordinary light requires a successful Sense+Sight roll. (Any kind of methodical area search finds it automatically.) Something like a fine web of smokemass would be more difficult to spot, while a large thick wall of it would be obvious – even if the character might not immediately realize what she’s seeing. Furthermore, if it’s raining or dark, something like a wall or tower requires a Sense+Sight roll to detect, even from inches away.

Smokemass is always warm, never cool, never hot. It can be cut or broken, but is exceptionally durable – roughly the same strength as an equivalent quantity of granite or steel.

Depending on the will of the caster, smokemass can be as supple as cloth or rope, as rigid as stone, or as springy as a sapling. Once that quality is set, however, it can’t be changed.

Smokemass cannot be created in the middle of solid matter, nor can it be created such that it is lifting a solid mass. You can make a staircase and climb up it, but you can’t have the staircase lifting you (or, more relevantly perhaps, a load of heavy stones) while you’re making it.

There is no theoretical limit to the fine-ness to which smokemass can be drawn or shaped, so smokemass weapons have spectacularly keen edges and sharp tips. However, due to their extremely low weight, they’re no more effective than traditional weapons and, in cases where the weapon’s heft is a factor (mauls, greataxes, sling stones) they’re less powerful – they might have a −1 or −2 penalty to the weapon’s usual damage factor.

When the damage is imparted from another source (as with crossbow bolts, shortswords, stilettos) it works just as well as a regular weapon of the same type. Smokemass garrotes, being exceptionally strong and thin, do +2 damage.

Smokemass cannot create or mimic living creatures. At least, it can’t yet.
Domain: Resistance, endurance, and their failures in the weak.

Method: The Guardians shape magic through a vocalized meditation on the greatness of Dindakuan. Each spell has a particular chant, which must be spoken in a loud, clear voice. Minor variances in exact wording are tolerable, but understanding of the concepts is essential.

Associated Skill or Stat: Knowledge

Society and Beliefs: The Stonehearts are unreconstructed Dindavarans. They are also religious fanatics, revering the god Dindakuan the Sword-Father. Since Dindakuan is above worship and requires nothing from humanity, the Guardians express their faith by working Dindakuan’s will in the world. To them, the most direct form this takes is seeking to support world conquest by the five noble families.

The Guardians do not seek their own power or prerogatives. No one becomes a Stoneheart but one who is unworthy of ruling the world by Dindakuan’s command. Indeed, the Stonehearts would consider it a tragic and terrible waste if a worthy noble were to join their ranks.

Instead, the Stonehearts occupy a strange social niche in between the exalted nobles and the feckless commoners. Commoners of unusual dedication and drive can join the Guardians and, in doing so, become the greatest of their kind. By the same token, nobles whose hearts have proven weak and unworthy can join these monks in a confession of failure and, by doing so, get a second chance to remedy whatever damage their failings did.

No one has joined the Stonehearts without dedication to their faith and ideals. Some of the spells that don’t require attunement have entered common use (most notably Stone Seal) and the Guardians don’t really care. They consider those minor tricks expendable, and if they demonstrate Dindakuan’s power in some small way, all the better.

In a very few cases, attuned Guardians have become disillusioned and abandoned the faith. Most do so quietly since, to the extent that they can be passionate about anything, Stonehearts are passionate about religious zeal. Occupying a closed system into which other ideas and philosophies rarely intrude, leaving is, for most monks, simply unthinkable.

Required Knowledge: Fluency in Dindavarans, Lore 3 or Expert: Dindavarans Theology 1

Restorative Contemplation

Intensity: 1

Casting Time: Slow 3

Duration: Instant

Attunement: Yes

Effect: This spell affects the caster only. It permits him to make a Vigor roll to recover from Shock damage even if he’s already failed one or if he wasn’t permitted one due to lack of rest and painfully active lifestyle. If the character has already made a successful Vigor roll to regain Shock, even a successful spell does him no further good. This cannot be used to permit re-rolls for other Vigor rolls (such as resisting poison). It should be noted that this is the only way a fully attuned Stoneheart can attempt to recover Shock with Vigor, since they never sleep.
**Chapter 11: Stoneheart Guardians**

**Stone Seal**
- **Intensity:** 1
- **Casting Time:** Four minutes
- **Duration:** Width in days
- **Attunement:** No

**Effect:** This spell requires a rock. Upon completing the spell, you tap the stone against a closed door or gate or window. Until the enchantment wears off, that portal won’t open except to the caster or to someone holding the rock. The door can still be forced, but it endures abuse as if the stone was sealing it at the door’s weakest point. Thus, if cast on the flap of a tent, the flap’s second weakest point would give before the stone-sealed part. A wooden door thus enchanted would behave as if it was barred with the rock. Obviously, a bigger rock seals better and is stronger, but is more of a problem to hide or carry around.

This spell is quite common in Dindavara, fairly accessible throughout Dindavara’s Helusan neighbors, and known as far away as the desert city of Upunzi in Milonda.

**Obdurate Cable**
- **Intensity:** 2
- **Casting Time:** Four minutes
- **Duration:** Height in hours
- **Attunement:** No

**Effect:** When this spell is cast on rope or thread or string, it becomes as inflexible and strong as a piece of granite the exact same shape and thickness. The spell can only affect a single unbroken cable or strand, but that strand can be up to a hundred feet long.

**Watchstone**
- **Intensity:** 2
- **Casting Time:** Four minutes
- **Duration:** Width in days, or until activated
- **Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** This rather peculiar spell enchants a single stone, which can be as small as a pebble or as large as a boulder. Once the spell succeeds, it does not begin until the caster can no longer sense the rock – she walks away from the boulder or drops the pebble as she rides off. The next time any person passes within a bowshot of the stone, the caster knows it. The spell doesn’t provide any detail – it doesn’t tell how many people or how close or what they looked like – but the caster knows the first time someone gets near the watchstone.

**Burden**
- **Intensity:** 3
- **Casting Time:** Combative
- **Duration:** Width in combat rounds
- **Attunement:** No

**Effect:** This spell targets one object the caster can see. It won’t work on living creatures. The caster must be touching an uncarved stone in order to cast Burden. When the spell goes into effect, the targeted object gains weight equal to the weight of the uncarved stone. Thus, you can look at a general’s helmet from across the battlefield, touch a boulder that weighs as much as a horse, and make the general’s helmet gain a horse’s weight. (In these situations, the person underneath the helmet or hat or tiara isn’t automatically crushed. The instinctive sense for magic alerts even the dullest target that something’s happening to his headwear, so even though he might get pulled to the ground and trapped until he undoes his chin-strap, he’s unlikely to be killed outright.)

Oddly enough, the targeted object does not deform under its own weight. If you see someone asleep under a blanket and Burden the blanket, the sleeper may well be unable to escape from it, but the blanket won’t flatten out to crush him. It is, nonetheless, a spell open to great creativity in application. It has been used to collapse siege engines, overbalance ships, and break a leg on a galloping horse by making its horseshoe unexpectedly weighty.
Granite Defiance

Intensity: 3
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Width in hours
Attunement: Yes

Effect: The caster touches one shield, garment or piece of armor. While the spell is in effect, that item gains a +1AR bonus, in addition to any other armor rating it possesses. If cast on something that’s already enchanted, the bonuses do not combine. Instead, the improvement from Granite Defiance replaces the other bonus until Granite Defiance wears off. (This spell has provided a few nasty shocks for people who were certain their Rune Armor would protect them, even against a dinda.) The spell won’t work on flesh, and it requires a separate casting for disconnected pieces of armor. A suit of full plate or a chain shirt would get the effect of the spell at all the covered hit locations, but not the helmet (unless it was enchanted separately). You can’t cast this just once to enchant a pair of boots: Each boot requires a single spell.

Marble Endures

Intensity: 3
Casting Time: Five minutes
Duration: Width in days
Attunement: No

Effect: This spell affects its caster only. While under its protection, she is immune to the harmful effects of natural hot or cold weather. Furthermore, any Killing damage from fire or cold (be it supernatural or ordinary) is reduced to Shock.

Rock Lock

Intensity: 3
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Width in days
Attunement: Yes

Effect: This improved version of Stone Seal functions the same in all ways, except that it requires attunement and casts much quicker.

Chains of the Reticent

Intensity: 4
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Height in rounds, and see below.
Attunement: No

Effect: Target one person within a hundred paces. He takes a –1d penalty to all Body based rolls for the duration of the spell.

The caster knows when the spell is about to fail, and has the option of continuing its duration by freezing, motionless, in order to continue to impede the target. If the caster opts to stand stock still the round the spell wears off, she can continue the effect for additional rounds equal to the Width of the casting roll.

Example: Rei Lin casts Chains of the Reticent on Tud, rolling the minimum 2x4 required to activate it. Tud suffers a –1d penalty on his Body rolls for four rounds, while Rei Lin can continue to act normally.

When the Declare phase of the fifth round arrives, Rei Lin has the option of continuing the spell. If she chooses, she can spend the next round motionless in order to continue giving Tud the penalty. The round after, she can let the spell lapse or stay still. The seventh round, however, the spell is over no matter what, though Rei Lin could try to cast it again.

If Chains of the Reticent is cast on someone who is already enchanted with Chains of the Reticent, the second casting has no additional effect. It doesn’t increase the penalty to –2d and it doesn’t increase the duration of the spell.

Obdurate Twig

Intensity: 4
Casting Time: Six minutes
Duration: Width in days
Attunement: Yes

Effect: This spell is similar to Obdurate Cable, except that it lasts longer and gives the strength and rigidity of granite to wood, instead of rope. The spell can strengthen and petrify about as much wood as would go into constructing a small cabin.
Love, beyond love of god and victory, is an illusion to any heart that pushes noble blood. Romance is a consolation for the inferior. Just as it is folly for a child or a foreigner to try and rule, it is also folly for a warrior to love aught but duty.”

—Wun Xiongfong, First of the Stoneheart Guardians

**Flawless Stone Guardian Attunement (5 point Adv.)**

Being a Stone Guardian is not a responsibility to undertake lightly. It confers advantages above and beyond the ability to cast attuned spells of the school at will, but at the cost of cutting the enchanter off from broad areas of human experience. Or, to hear the Guardians tell it, human weakness.

The permanent attunement ceremony involves a pointed, teardrop-shaped boulder about the size of the sorcerer’s head. At the climax of the spell, he has to drop this on his chest. If the point of it penetrates his sternum and heart (and he lives) the Swordfather has accepted him, and he is recast in a more perfect shape.

The problems of being “more perfect” include the following: Both the Charm and Command Stats drop to 2 (since the character inescapably becomes somewhat cold, distant and often brusque). Three Wound Boxes in the chest are permanently lost and cannot be restored by any means.

The advantages are: The character’s Vigor rises by one point for each lost point of Charm, and his Endurance rises by one for every point of Command sacrificed. (This cannot raise those Skills above 6, however.) The character loses any Craving he might have, and can never gain a new Craving. If he wishes, he can give up his Duty, though he can never replace or restore that, either. The Guardian never sleeps. He is unaffected by all levels of the Beauty advantage. Finally, any hit to location 7 does no damage (since it has struck the indestructible boulder lodged in his torso). Hits to locations 8 and 9 damage his torso as usual.

**Imperfect Stone Guardian Attunement (1 point Adv.)**

The ability to cast Guardian spells without temporary attunement comes at a high cost for those who are not quite fully accepted by their patron. There is no physical transformation, except what you’d expect from someone who just dropped a heavy, pointy boulder on his chest. (Specifically, he permanently loses three Wound Boxes in his torso, and they never come back.) Additionally, Charm and Command each drop by one point, to a minimum of two. (If those Stats were already 2 or lower, of course, there’s no effect.)

**Statue Gripped**

- **Intensity:** 4
- **Casting Time:** Combative
- **Duration:** Width in combat rounds, or until the caster moves
- **Attunement:** No

**Effect:** This spell targets one person within a hundred feet of the caster. When the spell takes effect, the target is paralyzed. He remains locked, immobile, until the spell wears off or until the caster moves. Note that the caster must remain completely still – even the normal, automatic avoidance of blows breaks the spell.

**Weariness**

- **Intensity:** 4
- **Casting Time:** Combative
- **Duration:** Width in minutes
- **Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** This spell only affects “the weak of spirit” – meaning, Unworthy Opponents. The good news is, it targets 10-20 of them within a hundred feet of one another. They can only be targeted when they are not immediately fighting or doing anything active. It can’t be used on them while they’re riding horses or operating a sailboat. But if they’re lounging around a bar or performing guard duty or standing at parade rest, they’re fair game.

When the spell takes effect, the targets fall into a tranquil, dreamless slumber. They instantly wake up if they’re struck or if the caster moves. (As with Statue Gripped, the caster must be completely motionless.) Furthermore, if any of the targets are harmed while wrapped in Weariness, the caster takes the same amount of damage to the same hit location.

**The Barrier Remains**

- **Intensity:** 6
- **Casting Time:** Combative
- **Duration:** See below
- **Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** As long as the caster presses his body against a gate, door, wall or other barrier, that barrier
cannot be breached. This spell can affect an area up to 400 cubic feet, though it has to be a single unit: A wall twenty feet tall, a hundred feet long and two feet thick could be protected, but if it had a door in it the door would remain vulnerable. Alternately, the door could be pressed and the wall would be defenseless – or, at least, as defenseless as a two foot-thick wall ever is.

The braced area can be moved, circumvented or undermined, but it is invulnerable to penetration. Note well that the caster has to be pushing against the targeted bulwark: Just leaning against it or resting his hands on it is insufficient. Every hour spent pushing forces an Endurance roll. If the roll fails, the guardian has collapsed. The first roll is at Difficulty 1. The Difficulty increases by 1 every three hours. Thus, after thirty hours, even the toughest defender is unable to maintain the vigil. There is no way to reset the Difficulty, even with enchantment – towards the end, the effort of holding up the wall is as much magical as physical. Nothing, of course, stops another caster from enchanting the same wall, however. Two tough Guardians can keep this up almost indefinitely.

**I Am Stone**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Intensity: 7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casting Time: Combative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration: Height in rounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attunement: Yes</td>
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**Effect:** While the spell is in effect, the caster looks like a statue when motionless, and like normal flesh when making a burst of action. Due to an inability to make continuous movements, the caster’s base movement rate drops to five feet per round.

If the caster is wearing armor in addition to using this spell, that armor is applied first. Any damage that gets through it then has to get through the Stone Body Warrior effect.

**Dindakuan, Pierce My Heart**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Intensity: 6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casting Time: Nine minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration: Permanent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attunement: No</td>
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</tbody>
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**Effect:** This is the permanent attunement spell for Stoneheart Guardians. There is no known temporary attunement. Why would there be?

To recap, one casts this by finding or sculpting a pointy rock about the size of one’s head, then dropping it on one’s chest. The results are described in the box on page 116.

**Stone Body Warrior**

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<th>Intensity: 7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casting Time: Combative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration: Height in rounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attunement: Yes</td>
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</table>

**Effect:** The caster gains AR 4 against all physical attacks, with one exception. Any strike with exactly the same timing ignores the spell.

Example: Rei Lin casts Stone Body Warrior. The next round, she and Tud swing at each other. She gets a 2x1 with her sword, while Tud gets a 3x4. Tud hits first, but since the spell is already up, her magical AR blocks it. When her action goes off, she becomes supple and is able to strike, before turning into a stone statue again.

The next round, they both attack again, and by chance, they both roll 2x8. Since their attacks are simultaneous, her armor is down and she takes full damage.

The third round, Tud figures it out. He rolls a 3x3 while she rolls a 2x10. He decides to wait and hit when Rei Lin has no armor – even though it means accepting a blow to his own head.

While the spell is in effect, the caster looks like a statue when motionless, and like normal flesh when making a burst of action. Due to an inability to make continuous movements, the caster’s base movement rate drops to five feet per round.

If the caster is wearing armor in addition to using this spell, that armor is applied first. Any damage that gets through it then has to get through the Stone Body Warrior effect.
Matters of Law

Chapter 12: The Sunwise

Domain: Healing, warmth, light and the restorative powers of nature.

Method: From without, the use of Sunwise enchantment looks simple. The magician briefly concentrates, perhaps with a small frown and closed eyes. Maybe she throws sand in the air or rubs it into a wound. Then, with brief sparks of warm yellow light, the miracles occur. But these simple gestures can mask desperate internal struggles as the caster wordlessly persuades (or bullies) an alien spirit that neither uses nor understands human language into doing her bidding.

Associated Skill or Stat: Charm, for the flawlessly attuned. Command, for the imperfectly attuned. The unattuned must use the lower of those two Stats.

Society and Beliefs: The sun over Milonda is fixed in the sky, and the blazing Ruhini desert lies directly underneath it. The restorative power of the great orb is more available there than anywhere else on the two continents, as is contact with the spirits that reside there.

There are no schools for Sunwise healers. To become one requires a pilgrimage into the desert. The Mount of Rays lies directly under its namesake, and every year people climb to its top and lie back, staring at the sun in the hopes that a sun-spirit descends to make its home in their bodies. Some of them go blind. (Some were blind before they made the pilgrimage, figuring they had little to lose and much to gain by acquiring the valued powers of a sun-sorcerer.) Others become inhabited and are able to learn spells from the spirits that reside within them.

This means that there is no temporary attunement spell for this style. It's not available to dabblers and dilettantes.

There is no real society for many of these enchanter. They tend to be loners, either of the angry or the philosophical variety. While the ability to heal oneself simply with sunlight is tempting, the loss of sight (or life, as some perish from the heat during their quest) deters those who aren’t very, very motivated. For more on the Sunwise, see page 29.

Required Knowledge: None, though sculpting or glassblowing can be useful

Radiant Alliance

Intensity: 1
Casting Time: Nine hours
Duration: Permanent
Attunement: No

Effect: This is the permanent Attunement spell for the Sunwise. Since its Intensity is so low, any set is sufficient to activate the spell. However, only sets with Width 3+ achieve perfect attunement. Narrow sets yield imperfect attunement. Failure permanently blinds the caster, if he’s not blind before the attempt. It can only be cast at the summit of the Mount of Rays, and no matter how much water the caster drinks and what measures he takes to stay cool, the spell does 1K to each hit location, in addition to any effects from lying directly in the sun on the hottest place in the world.

Gift of Sunwise Vigor

Intensity: 2
Casting Time: Six minutes
Duration: Height in minutes
Attunement: Yes

Effect: The caster or one person she designates gains a Master Die in Vigor as long as the spell...
Chapter 12: The Sunwise

Lesser Solar Globe

Intensity: 2
Casting Time: Four minutes
Duration: Height in hours
Attunement: Yes

Effect: Casting this spell requires a rock of any description, no smaller than a fist and no larger than a human head. When the spell is in effect, the rock produces a gentle light equal to several torches, but not blinding even if stared at directly. It also radiates warmth like a good-sized campfire, but does not burn even if held to bare skin.

Sunwise Vigor

Intensity: 3
Casting Time: Five minutes
Duration: Height in minutes
Attunement: Yes

Effect: The caster gains a Master Die in Vigor while the spell is in effect. If this would give him multiple special dice, he instead gains one ordinary die.

Example: The High Priestess normally has a 2+MD pool in Vigor. When she casts Sunwise Vigor, her pool becomes 3+MD. One of her followers’ normal Vigor pool is 5d. When that follower casts Sunwise Vigor, his pool becomes 5+MD.

Blinding Beam

Intensity: 4
Casting Time: Combative
Duration: Minutes equal to Width
Attunement: Yes

Effect: To cast Blinding Beam, the sorcerer throws a handful of sand from the Ruhini desert into the air. In the air, it transforms into a brief, cracking whip of golden light that uncoils from its position to unerringly strike one person within a hundred paces in the eyes. That target becomes blind, and for the duration of the spell is unable to make any Sight rolls. Any actions he takes that require sight are made at Difficulty 4.

The tendrils of light are brief but extremely persistent. They are intelligently directed and can turn corners, which means that a target who covers his eyes, buries them in the sand or is otherwise concealed still gets blinded. The only defense is a counterspell.

Sunwise Surgery

Intensity: 3
Casting Time: Eight hours
Duration: Permanent
Attunement: Yes

Effect: There are two effects that Sunwise Surgery can accomplish. The first is to remove all Killing damage from one hit location. The second is to attach and animate a glass and sandstone limb or organ in the place of a natural body part destroyed.

Achieving the first effect requires three handfuls of Ruhini sand and the requisite time. To create a limb such as an arm or leg, the healer must personally succeed at an Expert: Sculptor or Expert: Glassblower roll of Difficulty 3. (Each roll represents six hours of craft time in a decently equipped workshop.) To make an organ is more difficult. In addition to the Sculptor or Glassblower roll (at the same Difficulty) the caster must also make a Lore roll at Difficulty 6, or a Healing roll at Difficulty 3 in order to construct an appropriate part. In either event, making an artificial body part requires 2-20 handfuls of Ruhini sand in addition to the three required to attach it. Furthermore, any hit location affected by such an alteration permanently loses one wound box. (The stone and glass limb is fragile and brittle, providing no armor.) A stone limb can exert as much ‘muscle’ as the lost limb could, however.
**Gift of Sunwise Restoration**

**Intensity:** 4  
**Casting Time:** Combative  
**Duration:** Instant  
**Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** The caster can heal one point of Killing damage on any location she chooses. She can target herself or another person. Casting this spell requires a handful of sand from the Ruhini desert.

**Lesser Radiant Form**

**Intensity:** 4  
**Casting Time:** Eight minutes  
**Duration:** Height in minutes  
**Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** The caster throws a handful of Ruhini sand in the air. As it cascades down on her, it scintillates and glows, transforming her very flesh into a glowing mass. While in Lesser Radiant Form, she is composed of a kind of solidified light. She can still be struck, and injured, but the spell provides AR 4 against all physical attacks. This armor rating replaces any other magical or physical armor, but combines with armor gained from Martial Techniques, Advantages or Esoteric Disciplines.

## Sunwise Restoration

**Intensity:** 5  
**Casting Time:** Combative  
**Duration:** Instant  
**Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** This spell instantly heals one point of Killing damage from any hit location the caster chooses. The caster can only use Sunwise Restoration on herself.

---

**Flawless Sunwise Attunement (5 point Adv.)**

When the meshing between spirit and sorcerer is harmonious, it is immediately visible — even in the darkest night. Every hair on the enchanter’s body is illuminated from within by a warm golden glow. It emits light roughly equivalent to a lamp for a clean-shaven man with short hair, or like several bright torches for anyone with a full beard or long hair. (Body hair glows, too.) Unless exceptional efforts are taken to mask the glow, it gives a −1d penalty to Stealth rolls when attempting to sneak around in the dark, if rolls are even permitted. Sunwise healers are laughably easy to shoot at by night.

The attuned magus gains AR2 against heat or fire damage, even from enchanted sources. He is never subject to heat prostration (though thirst can harm him as usual.)

Because he is well suited to the spirit within him, the fully attuned healer can use Charm to attempt to persuade the spirit to access magic energy for him. The spirit is fully able to maintain itself within the magician.

---

**Imperfect Sunwise Attunement (1 point Adv.)**

An imperfect healer glows just like a well-attuned one. There’s no external way to tell one from the other, though the imperfect tend to be crankier. This is because they are poorly suited to their familiar spirits. They have to force the sun-ghosts within them to obey their will, so they use the Command stat to power their spells.

Furthermore, the mage cannot feed the spirit without suffering. Most typically, the spirit is fed by exposure to the sun. The magician must spend two uninterrupted hours outside in direct sunlight during the summer on Milonda, and 3-6 hours in other circumstances, depending on distance from the Mount of Rays, season, weather and so on. Cloudy winter day in Uldholm? That’s six consecutive hours. Sunny summer in the Empire? Three hours. Truil Waste or the Sunless Plains? Ooh, those are untenable locations, since there’s just not enough direct sunlight to nourish the spirit.

If the spirit can’t get its sunlight, it feeds from its host, in the form of damage. Specifically, the enchanter permanently loses a wound box from one location of the player’s choosing. He keeps losing a box every day until he can get some sunlight. These boxes can’t be restored.
Matters of Law

Chapter 13: Upunzi Visioning

**Domain:** Perception and comprehension

**Method:** The Elders’ magic is entirely intellectual. It relies on a profound mathematical understanding of the way sorcery flows, with gradual mastery of increasingly esoteric algebraic and geometric concepts enabling them to reach far throughout the world, and grasp what they perceive as if it was seen. Currently, all the Elders can do any but the most complex calculations in their heads. Unattuned casters, and Elders performing spells that require hours to cast, often find it handy to have chalk and a blackboard, an abacus or at least a stick to draw in the dirt.

**Associated Skill or Stat:** Knowledge

**Society and Beliefs:** The Elders monopolize this school of magic as much as they’re able – and they are extremely able, since they rule the free city of Upunzi and their gaze is nearly unavoidable. Minor spells of the First or Second Intensity have become common knowledge, but the attunement spell is kept under firm control. No one learns it unless directly taught by one of the fearsome Elders.

There are never more than eleven Elders at one time. In the unlikely event that one dies (and they don’t age, so only accident, illness, starvation and murder can depose one) the remaining ten choose a successor from among their agents and acolytes who’ve been schooled in visioning.

**Required Knowledge:** A visionary can never learn a spell whose Intensity is greater than twice his Knowledge stat or his Student of Esoteric Math Skill, whichever is higher. For the purposes of this calculation, an Expert Die counts as three dice and a Master Die counts as five. Thus someone with 1d+MD in Esoteric Math could learn spells of the Sixth Intensity.

---

**Mind’s Eye, Clarified**

**Intensity:** 1  
**Casting Time:** Three minutes  
**Duration:** Height in minutes  
**Attunement:** No

**Effect:** When successfully cast, the target (which can be the caster or one person he touches) can recall anything he or she has seen, with perfect recall and flawless clarity, until the spell ends. This does not retroactively improve the target’s vision. If it was dark and your eyes were blurry with tears as you chased your wife’s assassin through the library corridor, you won’t get a clear and well-lit vision of the murderer with this spell. But if you read a page of a book in that library just beforehand, you could read it again with the spell, even past the fog of grief and trauma that would (presumably) be associated with it.

This spell does not enhance any aspect of memory other than sight.

---

**The Gaze that Splits the Stones**

**Intensity:** 2  
**Casting Time:** Four minutes  
**Duration:** Width in hours  
**Attunement:** No

**Effect:** While using this spell the caster can, at will, see through solid matter. His gaze can penetrate a number of feet of stone, flesh or cloth equal to the Height of the casting roll. Everything is perceived as if it was lit from all sides with clear, glare-free white light. (The spell doesn’t create this light and anything beheld in darkness remains darkened. In fact, this spell can also be used to see perfectly in the dark, though only out to the distance determined by Height.)

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**Closesight**

**Intensity:** 1  
**Casting Time:** Three minutes  
**Duration:** Width in hours  
**Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** The caster gains an MD in Scrutinize for the duration of the spell.

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**Lust, Beheld**

**Intensity:** 4  
**Casting Time:** Combative  
**Duration:** Height in minutes  
**Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** This spell targets one person that the caster sees. It shows visions of the last three times the target indulged his Craving (see page 38 in REIGN). The shorter the duration, the more rushed and cryptic the visions. While seeing the vision, the caster can see nothing else. The vision is silent.
Matters of Law

Chapter 13: Upunzi Visioning

Shuddersome Touch of the Eye

Intensity: 4  
Casting Time: Seven minutes  
Duration: Permanent  
Attunement: Yes  

Effect: This spell can target the caster or one other person. Thereafter, an Eerie roll lets him feel it if someone is looking at him. It does not matter if the person is watching from concealment or scrying from miles away.

Flawless Visionary Attunement (5 point Adv.)

In addition to being able to cast Upunzi Vision spells that require attunement at will, the would-be Elder undergoes a drastic physical change.

First off, a second mouth, small and filled with wicked fangs, opens in her forehead. This is not the most extreme alteration, however. Her skin turns into dark, leathery green scales. They provide AR 1 against physical attacks. But that’s not the most severe change either; nor is the Elder’s need for human vitreous fluid to survive. Indeed, she can receive sustenance from nothing else.

(Vitreous fluid is the liquid inside your eyeball. The Elders must have it fresh, too.)

Each Elder can live for a month by blinding one eye on one person. (Some like to feel directly with the new mouth while others prefer to have it drained with a metal needle and presented in a cup.) If glutted on multiple eyes, the Elder can live for multiple months. The last time an Elder traveled (to the coronation of an Empress), he devoured both eyes of a dozen condemned criminals, and was therefore able to go without food for two years.

As an interesting aside, even the greatest of the Sunwise have been unable to restore sight to someone blinded by an Elder. Their spirits gave the sense that what was taken was not just the eye, but the very essence of understanding light.

As long as an Elder has access to vitreous fluid, it does not age. The oldest of the Elders has been ruling Upuzi for 450 years. That’s the most extreme change.

Agelessness is a choice prize, but in addition to unwelcome appetites and personal hideousness, there’s an additional cost. Elders are vulnerable to sunlight. Any time an Elder is exposed to direct sunlight, he suffers a 1d Area Killing Attack that ignores armor. This includes light produced by Sunwise spells, though not the glow shed by the sun sorcerers’ bodies.

Beacon for Wisdom’s Stare

Intensity: 5  
Casting Time: Combative  
Duration: Width in years  
Attunement: No  

Effect: This spell can target any person, place or thing that’s within ten paces of the caster and visible. While the spell is in effect, the Difficulty of any spell to detect, see, spy on or examine the future of the target is lowered by 2. Multiple castings of the spell while it’s still in effect do not increase the duration or further lower the Difficulty.

Shadow-Rending Eye

Intensity: 5  
Casting Time: Eight hours  
Duration: Permanent  
Attunement: Yes  

Effect: This spell can target the caster or one other person the caster intimately examines during the lengthy process of the enchantment. At will, the ensorcelled person can project foot-long jets of cold, streaming green fire from his eyes. These produce no damage (though they produce a Morale Attack 3 against the unprepared). While they provide typical (greenish) illumination for everyone around the target (about equal to two bright lamps) the target himself sees anything he looks at clearly, as if beheld under daylight. The flames don’t sharpen his vision, but they do penetrate darkness.

Vision Unbound

Intensity: 5  
Casting Time: Seven minutes  
Duration: Width in hours  
Attunement: Yes  

Effect: The caster can send his gaze roving, independent of his eyes. (His physical eyes become sightless until the spell ends, though the caster can choose to place his point of view on top of them—even if they’re closed.)

The point of the caster’s perspective is invisible and can move one mile per minute. It can see in perfect darkness, similar to the effect of The Gaze that
Splits the Stones. Furthermore, if the casting set is 3x or Wider, the caster can hear what’s happening at the position he beholds. Additional castings can extend the duration of the spell.

**Mendacity’s Visage**

- **Intensity:** 6
- **Casting Time:** Combative
- **Duration:** Instant
- **Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** The caster picks one person within sight range. If he speaks with that person within ten minutes, any Empathy rolls the caster makes gain an MD.

**Significance**

- **Intensity:** 7
- **Casting Time:** Nine minutes
- **Duration:** Height in minutes
- **Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** This spell can target one person, place or object anywhere in the world. The caster’s perspective changes so that he is looking at that object (similar to Vision Unbound). The caster can move his point of view around at the rate of about a bowshot a second. Unlike Vision Unbound, this spell does not permit listening.

**The Doom of Seeming**

- **Intensity:** 9
- **Casting Time:** Thirty minutes
- **Duration:** Height in minutes
- **Attunement:** Yes

**Effect:** This spell affects everything the sorcerer can see (so it is typically cast from the highest point in Upunzi, which is of course the Tower of the Elders’ Palace). While the spell is in effect, all illusions, disguises, concealment and invisibility fail. Hidden spirits become visible (a process that is occasionally quite startling). All flows and concentrations of magic can be seen with the naked eye.

It is important to understand that anyone within the spell’s radius can behold all of this. It’s not just the caster.

**Imperfect Visionary Attunement (1 point Advantage)**

Those who fail to complete the transformation remain outwardly unchanged. They can cast the spells of vision that require attunement whenever they wish. They don’t have unusual appetites, they age, and their skin looks and feels normal. However, they are sensitive to daylight. Every hour spent in bright, direct daylight produces a 1d Area Shock Attack. This damage ignores normal (and even enchanted) armor, but if muffled in very thick clothing the problem’s negated. The clothing, however, restricts like Medium armor without protecting against anything but daylight.

**The Appetite of the Elders**

Given that the eleven immortal rulers of Upunzi need to eat eyes to survive, one might expect some kind of tyrannical lottery (or revolting uprising from the class most likely to be blinded for a snack). But Upunzine society has evolved to meet its elders’ needs—which only add up (after all) to a hundred and thirty-two eyes per year. That seems like a lot, but the Elders have a number of sources.

First off, there are convicts. Loss of one eye, or both, is a far more common punishment in Upunzi than elsewhere. Losing one eye is the penalty for petty theft, housebreaking, and unprovoked assault (for example). Losing both eyes is reserved for crimes like rape, large-scale arson, treason and the like. When the death penalty is inflicted, it’s typically done by blinding the felon (of course) and then setting him loose in the desert with no food, water or clothes.

(It is interesting to note that the Elders serve as judges for criminal cases, so the result of ones’ suit may well depend on how well fed the Elder who tries you is. In years of plenty, Elders often levy alternative punishments, like carrying out unpleasant, dangerous or ethically dubious missions for the Elder.)

This sort of draconian legal system does tend to suppress crime. (As does the Elders’ ability to search out criminals—the city’s slogan is “No One Defies the All-Seeing Eyes.”) But when local criminals aren’t available, they can often be imported from other cities along the caravan routes. Other cities are often just as eager to be rid of troublemakers as Upunzi is to receive (and blind) them. Of course, escorting a caravan of vicious, violent criminals through the desert to a dire fate is a tough job, but (consequently) it’s a well-paying one.

The final food source is rare and deeply disturbing to foreigners. There are some people who volunteer to let an Elder consume one of their eyes. This is regarded (rightly) as an act of tremendous loyalty or extreme desperation, if not both. Among the civil servants of Upunzi, being one-eyed is considered the badge of serious influence. Those who prefer more mundane rewards for giving up depth perception can receive Wealth 4 in exchange... or other significant political favors.
Chapter 14: Company Assets

Assets are to Companies what Advantages are to individuals. Where a PC’s Stats determine his broad and general capabilities, Advantages provide narrow opportunities in specific situation. Similarly, the Qualities of a Company measure its ability to adapt to any situation. But many companies have Assets that give them an edge in particular, circumscribed conditions.

Players who want to purchase Assets for their Companies can buy each Asset as if it was a new point of some Quality. If you want to design custom Assets, here are the guidelines:

If an Asset gives a +2d bonus to a company’s Quality or pool, it should only do it in a very narrow set of circumstances. This could be for one particular type of roll (“only Might rolls made to defend Territory”), or after a certain prerequisite is fulfilled (“after the Company has convinced the targets of some relevant lie”).

If an Asset gives a +3d bonus, it should only be usable one time, and in narrow circumstances.

That’s all there is to it, really. Most of the examples that follow are built along exactly those lines.

Influence Assets

Being a shifty and liquid property already, “the ability to change minds and learn things” lends itself readily to situational edges. Some examples follow.

Sinister Operatives

Agents of this stripe never show up on battlefields, never engage in fair fights and almost never reveal their origin (if they even know it). Sometimes they’re heartless mercenaries. Other times they’re ideological fanatics. Always, they are deniable, devastating, and very, very dirty. You get a +2d bonus when rolling Might+Influence to perform an act of unconventional warfare. This does not come into play when they’re trying to escape, or when they’re trying to avoid detection beforehand.

Epic History

Your Company, or the people in it, have a history of impressive deeds. Perhaps their ancestors were great heroes ages ago, or perhaps they did something mighty just last year. However it went, the people in the Company know they have something to be proud of, and it shows. Your neighbors and rivals may know and respect (or fear) your heritage as well. You get a +2d bonus every time you roll Sovereignty+Treasure to temporarily increase your Influence.

Small Horizon

In your Company, it seems like everybody knows everybody else – and knows their business. Even a huge nation can seem like a claustrophobic small town if its gossip web is sufficiently broad. On the other hand, your Company may just comprise a claustrophobic small town. When rolling Sovereignty+Treasure to improve Influence, the Difficulty is always reduced by 1.

Entangling Alliance

Your Company has become tightly linked with another Company, even though they remain separate and autonomous. It could be through a formal treaty, a political marriage, vassalage to the same master, religious obligations or cultural tradition. Pick one other Company. You have +2 Influence when dealing with them, and they have +2 Influence when dealing with you. This can’t push Influence above 6.

Eloquent Diplomats

Your company has a cadre of professional negotiators who do nothing other than pursue your interests and make your Company look good. It may be an entire corps of elaborately-titled ambassadors, it may be a few bards with pretty smiles and great hair, or it could just be one guy who knows a lot of people in the village. Whoever it is or however it works, it’s easier for you to get others to think your way. You get a +2d bonus to all rolls when rolling Influence+Treasure to alter opinions in another Company.

Mole

Someone owes you, big. That someone is in a sensitive position in another Company. You can take advantage of this debt one time, after which it becomes useless. Either your mole decides you’re even, or he gets discovered afterwards and loses his authority (if not his life), or he simply loses power because the results of his betrayal are perceived as incompetence. Pick one Company and one specific use of Influence. The next time you roll that use of Influence against that Company, add a +3d bonus.
Every army has its strengths and weaknesses, so a straight Might rating with no Assets indicates a superbly balanced force. To give a force a little more flavor, any of the following Assets can be used.

**Irregular Forces**
People who specialize tend to excel, but often at the cost of versatility. Irregular forces are versatile, often at the cost of excellence at any one task. They aren't as good at fighting an entrenched battle as a group of heavy infantry. They're not as mobile as cavalry or as devastating as expert sorcerers or siege engines. But when it comes to dirty deeds and living to tell the tale, they're unparalleled. +2d bonus when rolling Might+Influence to get troops out after an Unconventional Attack. This bonus does not apply to the attack itself or to staying hidden beforehand.

**Shipshape Navy**
Numbers are a major factor in a military conflict – but only if they can be safely delivered to the critical space where the battle occurs. A small army may have a decisive advantage if it's experienced with amphibious assault and has swift, reliable boats to drop it at vulnerable points along the enemy's coast. For ship to ship engagements, the benefits of better boats are too obvious to belabor. +2d bonus to all Might rolls made when your Company is fighting aboard ships or boats.

**Magic Resistant**
The average fighting force of bulk soldiers is highly vulnerable to powerful magic. Often the terror and helplessness of being targeted by rains of acid or flocks of conjured monsters are far more destructive to morale and discipline than the spells themselves are. This is because most soldiers are frightened by magic – and if they've seen a friend reduced to ashes by it, that's a justified fear.

Some fighting forces are less intimidated, however. It may be that they're simply tough, brave and experienced enough to know that the odds of being hit by a massively destructive spell are about the same as being hit by a boulder from a catapult.

It may be they're the soldiers of a sorcerous culture, who have enough magic on their side (or enough counterspell experience) to regard it with proper fear, but no more than is proper. On the other hand, cultures with almost no magic can be surprisingly resistant because they may feel there's no escape from enchantment until the magus is dead.

Whatever the cause, the mechanical effect is the same. Add a +2d bonus to Might rolls when your enemy depends heavily on sorcery.

**Keen**
Is there a nice way to say, "your military forces are enthusiastic about the killing"? It may be simple bloodlust and cruelty, or it could be that grim experience has taught them that when you're ahead, you don't relax. You exploit your advantage. +2d to all rolls when Might is brought to bear against a Company with lower permanent Might.

**Classic Enemy**
There is some group that has, historically and throughout legend, been the enemy of your Company. If you're a nation, it could be the invaders who were thrown out decades ago. If you're a village, it could be the creepy inbred village down the road a ways. Whoever it is, realizing they're behind an attack lights a fire of righteous rage in every defender's heart. Pick one particular other Company, religion, or ethnicity that your followers consider blasphemous, evil, or an especial rival. If you're attacked by members of that group, you have a +3d bonus to the first Might+Territory roll you make in defense.

**Unexpected Deliverance**
At some point, a battle turns unexpectedly, due to an unforeseen factor. (At the very least, unforeseen by the people on the bad side of the Asset.) Whether it's fate, a carefully planned long term strategy, the arrival of an unlooked-for hero, or just dumb luck, it is a very big deal. You can add a +3d bonus to one attack or defense roll. Choose attack or defense when gaining the Asset. It's a one-time thing.
Matters of Law

**Sovereignty Assets**

Loyalty. Honor. Obedience. These intangible principles are the glue that connect the disparate elements of a culture. Naturally, some elements are almost always a bit more disparate than others.

**Mass Appeal**

Something about your Company is very appealing to the ordinary people who support it. This could be ideological, practical, or just a matter of perfect style. When rolling Territory + Treasure to raise Sovereignty, or Sovereignty + Territory to raise Might, reduce any Difficulty by 1.

**Patriotism**

There’s something about your company that inspires loyalty above and beyond self-interest. Members go the extra mile, not because they expect reward, but because contributing is itself rewarding to them. They get involved, not out of obligation, but out of love. +2d to Might + Sovereignty rolls for policing against unconventional attacks.

**Defiant Tradition**

If your Company has a history of repulsing or resisting an invader or an occupying force, it not only means that citizens are more likely to have casual knowledge of general insurgent tactics – it also means they have encouraging stories to tell and have been raised to take pride in their intractability. Defiant cultures aren’t always the easiest to govern, but at least they don’t immediately cave in when times turn bad. +1d bonus to all Sovereignty rolls if your Company is under attack from an outside force.

**Culture of Shame and Gossip**

The group you lead has a streak of self-righteousness running through it, and it’s expressed by a tendency to shame those who transgress the rules (written or unwritten). Naturally, “Keep your mouth shut about other people’s failings” is not one of those rules. +2 bonus when making Might + Sovereignty rolls to police the populace.

**Territory Assets**

Land isn’t just an unrelieved plain of equally valuable farmland. The same elements that make a countryside interesting to they eye can provide variety to the finances of those who dwell there.

**Fortune Smiles**

If economies were easy to control and understand, no one would ever starve. But instead, they’re complex systems buffeted by the effects of other complex systems, making the whole enterprise utterly unpredictable. Sometimes, this produces unlooked-for benefits. +3d to the next roll that incorporates Territory.

**Foundries, Smiths and Armorers**

Getting manpower is one element of military strength, but giving those soldiers something to stab with and something to hide behind is also important. Your Company has the means to equip its troops with the tools of war, and to repair or replace such equipment as gets broken by the stresses of conflict. +2d bonus to Sovereignty + Territory rolls to increase Might.

**Defensible Terrain**

Something in the lands you control is a real pain in the arse for enemies to cross. It could be mountains, a raging river, monster-infested woods, a string of fortresses, a blazing desert, a big long wall – whatever it is, it really softens up anyone who tries to attack through it. +2 bonus to Might + Territory rolls to defend your lands, if the attackers try to come through the defensible area.
### Matters of Law

#### Territory Assets

**Cultural Tradition**

Your Company has a some kind of longstanding artistic history—methods, themes, techniques, iconic heroes—whatever it is, it’s a pool from which artisans and speakers can draw to produce something unique to your people. There are references they can make that remind the people who hear the music, or listen to the speech, or look at the sculpture, that they are Dindavaran (or Pahar, or Imperial, or whatever). Companies without these touchstones have to start every act of persuasion and encouragement from scratch. You get to stand on the shoulders of giants. **Add a +2d bonus when rolling Territory+Treasure to temporarily raise Sovereignty.**

**Treasure Assets**

Unlike many Qualities, Treasure is fairly specific. You either have gleaming arrays of coin, or you don’t. But since Treasure also governs how you arrange and control your money, there are a few Assets that can make your money specialize.

**Unbalanced Economy**

It’s not necessarily bad that your cash flow ebbs predictably. Like the tides, what goes out eventually comes back in. This may be due to yearly loans given to cash-poor nobles before tax time, or a predictable crop, or simply because some facet of your operation’s cash control is seasonally dependent. **Pick six months of the year. You get +2 Treasure during those months. During the other six months, you’re at −1 Treasure.**

**Permanent Underclass**

It’s unpleasant, but having a designated ethnic minority, or family, or group of social outcasts who perform the ugly scutwork duties no one wants can be a very slippery grease for social process. Oppressing these underlings can yield wonderful results, as long as you either don’t care or can drink yourself to sleep at night afterwards. They’ll recover, right? They’re tough. They’re used to it. **Once per year you may permanently decrease Sovereignty by 1 in order to permanently raise Treasure by 1.**

#### Rules of Plunder

Your military forces have some sort of discipline that controls their looting and pillaging. It could be a code of honor, or rigidly enforced laws, or simply an officer corps that gets the goodies first. Whatever it is, it means that your Company is good at making defeated enemies pay for the costs of their own defeat. **On the first Might+Treasure roll made to attack in a single month, change one regular die to an ED.**

#### Predictable Bounty

There’s some time of year when your Company has it good. It could be a harvest festival, it could be when the snow pack melts and the traveling merchants come through to buy supplies, it could be a holiday season or a religious event. Whatever it is, money flows freely and people let down their guard. **Pick one month per year, during which your Company temporarily has +1 Territory, +1 Treasure and −1 Might.**

#### Payoff

Your Company is, at long last, getting the benefit of some lengthy development. For example, a merchant voyage funded years ago finally returns, laden with trade goods. Or perhaps a cabal of conspirators finally infiltrates the halls of power enough to start embezzling like crazy. Or it could be that a treasure map just fell in your lap and you finally got it dug up. Whatever it is, enjoy it because it won’t last long. **Your Company gains a temporary +2 bonus to Treasure this month, and a temporary +2 bonus to Territory next month.**
As a warmaker, there are three things I prize more than any other: Officers without ambition, soldiers free of disease, and enemies who have no patience."

– Ahir the Conqueror, First King of Punga

**Broadcutter’s Path**

The Magistrate of Old Riverrun is the current holder of Broadcutter, a family relic from ancient times. It’s not the most impressive of blades by modern standards: It’s old iron, mantall and weighty. It has no fancy decorations, no powerful enchantments. A jeweled scabbard was produced for it as a wedding present three generations ago, but it actually looks a little effete next to the plain, worn hilt.

Broadcutter isn’t an exceptional weapon, but it is an exceptional symbol. When Danifa was taken, its Rryan asked to be decapitated by Broadcutter. When the Western Marches mobilized against the Pahar uprising, Broadcutter was carried at the front of the column to show their seriousness. But perhaps its greatest fame is its prominent place in the story of Rook and the Fadao twins Shai and Guai.

These techniques are used with Coordination + Sword, and unless otherwise noted must be used with a greatsword. None of them can be part of any multiple action, unless otherwise stated.

**Batter the Blade (1 point):** Rook was known for attacking the enemy’s weapon, rather than defending himself from it. This technique can be part of a multiple action. If the attack hits, the target takes no damage but all his remaining attack or parry sets lose a die. Batter the Blade can only be used against one opponent per round. The Height of the blow does not matter.

**Iron Breaking Blow (2 points):** This is a curious twisting strike intended to auger into flesh while prying off armor. The target of an Iron Breaking Blow takes only Width Shock at the location, but that location loses a point of Armor permanently. This technique can be used with any type of sword and works against any type of permanent armor attached to a location.

**Shield Riving (3 points):** Rook felt that striking to cut through metal or wood was different than striking flesh, and that one who understood the difference could crack shields and breastplates more efficiently. Shield Riving is the fruit of his studies. When used, the target takes no damage, but that location permanently loses Armor equal to the Width of the set.

**The Doom of Swords (4 points):** This is an improved version of Batter the Blade and works the same way, except that the attacker must make a called shot to a location that’s gripping the weapon, and the weapon’s damage bonus is permanently reduced by the Width of the hit. (For the purposes of this, “Width” in the weapon’s damage rating is considered to be two. Width is removed from a weapon last.) This attack doesn’t take the usual –1d called shot penalty. If the damage bonus hits zero, the weapon breaks. (Any weapon of Milondese steel breaks automatically if hit with the Doom of Swords.)

Example: Mark and Tud are fighting. Mark has a greatsword and knows the Doom of Swords. Tud is using a massive big club, which does Width+4 Shock damage. Mark uses the Doom of Swords on it, setting one of his dice to 4 and rolling. He doesn’t get a match for the four, but he does get a 2x9, which he can use as a normal attack to Tud’s stomach. The next round, he tries again, setting the dice for location 6 this time. He doesn’t roll a second six, but he does get a 3x4 match. (Luck is funny stuff.) Since that’s a location that holds the club, he does no damage to Tud, but the club is now manifestly less dangerous. Mark’s 3x hit reduces its damage bonus from Width+4 to Width+1. The next round he does it again, gets a match for his 6 and with a 2x6, damages the club further. Since reducing the damage by two doesn’t really work when it’s Width+1, the
Chapter 15: Martial Techniques

Club is reduced to doing only a single point of Shock damage when it hits. Tud’s better off using his fists.

Buried in the Canyon (5 points): Just as Shield Riving teaches how best to cleave the inanimate, Buried in the Canyon demonstrates the lessons on bone and sinew. The target permanently loses a wound box at the hit location. That location permanently loses two points of Armor. All adjoining locations take a point of Killing damage and permanently lose a point of Armor. Typically, the person who got hit then cries. Exceptionally strong willed individuals have been known to remain composed, however.

The Black Thirst

The polearm fighters of the Sunless Plains are characterized by a curious nihilistic flair and by a taste for death (both their own and their enemies’) chased with flamboyant recklessness. “The Black Thirst” refers to an exhilarated, ecstatic state of bloody viciousness in which one’s own safety not only ceases to be a concern, but actually loses coherence as a concept.

Those who cultivate this battle-madness practice it with Coordination + Polearm.

Reckless Abandon (1 point): By flinging himself heedlessly into the fray, the warrior adds +2d to his attack. However, if anyone declares a physical attack on him on a round in which he uses Reckless Abandon, that enemy gets a +1d bonus (even if the attack is made with Fight or a missile weapon). The enemy gets this advantage even if he stated his attack before Reckless Abandon was declared. Reckless Abandon cannot be used as part of a multiple action.

The Strength of Madness (2 points): The typical man of the Sunless Plains is a slender specimen, often with an unhealthy complexion. They’re not known for physical prowess. Unless, of course, they’re attacking with bloody froth spraying from their mouths where they bit through their own lips in excitement. That doesn’t happen every time the Strength of Madness is invoked, but people who fight them get used to seeing it.

Anyone struck by a blow backed with the Strength of Madness loses two dice from sets instead of one. This technique doesn’t work on Unworthy Opponents.

Passionate Assault (3 points): A Passionate Assault adds a +3d bonus to the attacker’s Polearm pool (or offsets up to three dice of penalties). The next person who strikes that Plainsman does two extra points of damage (Shock or Killing, according to the weapon used), as long as he strikes the round that Passionate Assault was used, or the round after. Passionate Assault cannot be combined with any defensive maneuver.

Black Slaking (4 points): Every time the character kills someone, he adds 1 Killing damage to all his polearm attacks for the remainder of the combat. It’s cumulative. If he kills someone on the first round, he gets a +1 damage bonus on the second round. If he kills two people that round, he gets a +3 damage bonus thereafter and so on. This bonus can never exceed +10.

Dying to Kill (5 points): The mad warrior adds +4d to her next attack and produces a Morale Attack equal to 4+ her Command Stat. All attacks that hit her the round she declared she’s Dying to Kill do an additional point of damage (Shock or Killing, depending on the weapon).

Guai’s Path

The Dindavaran’s have ambiguous feelings about Guai Fadao, a famed warrior predating the first Hai Riyan. On one hand, he was indisputably a fine and focussed student of the blade. He reinvented Dindavaran dueling tactics against weapons of superior reach. On the other hand, he lied, violated hospitality and soiled his family name over a woman, and a foreign woman at that. His legacy persists as a cautionary tale and a set of bladework techniques.

Used with Coordination + Weapon: Sword, these techniques only work if the warrior is holding a short sword (typically a bodinda) in each hand.
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Wood does not become smoke without fire, and a boy does not become a man without conflict.

—Saying common to both Danifa and the Western Marches.

Cling Like a Lover (1 point): Guai’s Path emphasizes getting close to an opponent and remaining inches away, where the mobility of the short weapon is a great benefit and reach is irrelevant. When using Cling Like a Lover, attack sets reduced to x1 Width still hit.

Long Running Strike (2 points): This technique uses more of the blade in a strike, whether cut or thrust. When using Long Running Strike, the short sword does damage like a long sword. If it’s used with a Milondese short sword, it hits like a Milondese long sword. Used with a bodinda, that weapon hits like a dinda.

Share the Corpse’s Breath (3 points): Like the first technique, this emphasizes closeness – so near, in fact, that the warrior is supposed to feel his enemy’s breath upon his face. Where Cling Like a Lover enhances attack, Share the Corpse’s Breath combines defense and attack.

Share the Corpse’s Breath is used with a combined Parry/Attack. First off, there is no multiple action penalty for combining one Parry and one strike. If the Parry goes off first and the blow is against the person parried, the attack ignores 1AR.

Desperate Sacrifice (4 points): When the swordsman states that he’s using Desperate Sacrifice during the Declare phase of combat, it immediately starts an extra round outside the normal order of combat. No one else acts during this round, not even to defend. The round does not count towards preparation time for weapons, spells or other activities that have Slow ratings. The swordsman cannot move or do anything other than throw one of his swords at one target. This throw cannot be part of a multiple action. Then the rest of the round occurs, during which the swordsman cannot attack. He can take other actions, however (such as drawing a backup sword so that he can use Guai’s Path again).

There Is No (5 points): Outsiders find the name of this technique puzzling, if they ever hear it. Those educated in the system know it stands for “There is no defense, there is no attack.” There Is No eradicates the difference between striking and parrying. There Is No must be used as a combined Parry/Attack with the short swords. There is no multiple action penalty for taking these two actions, though additional actions accrue penalties as usual. Any Gobble Die from parrying applied with There Is No also does a point of Killing damage to the location indicated by the Gobble Die’s Height. This damage ignores up to three points of Armor.

Hell’s Hooks

A cargo hook (or “tuk” in Ob-lob language) is a simple tool, in common use for hauling and lifting loads too small to bother with a crane but too big to simply tuck under an arm. A handle, metal or wood, rests in the middle of the grip. At a right angle to the handle is a finger-length metal strut, sticking between the second and third fingers, terminating in a hook about the radius of a fist. This can be stuck in bales of hay or straw, inserted under belts or rope bindings, and generally used to give a solid grip where otherwise fingers would need to go.

The first use of a cargo hook as a weapon is lost in the ancient mists of history, but surely it followed its use as a tool by less than a year. When a typical hook is used as a weapon, it does WS+1K and can be used with the Fight Skill.

Over the years, however, sailors refined their techniques for scratching, grabbing and piercing...
people with the hooks, and as they did they modified the tool to make it increasingly deadly. Christened a “tukuywuyuk” in their native tongue, the weaponized tools are also known as hell-hooks. A hell-hook is forearm-length, heavier (even though they’re made from steel instead of iron when possible) and has a hook double the diameter of the tool. Furthermore, this hook boasts sharpened edges along its interior and along the first ninety degrees of its exterior, starting from the tip. Now it doesn’t just hook, it can catch and cut. These weapons are quite likely to damage any cargo lifted with them or cut any bindings they catch, but they do WK+1S when used for their intended purpose.

The fighting techniques called “Hell’s Hooks” can be used with either a cargo hook or a hell-hook. Either way, the attacks enhanced must be made with Coordination+Weapon: Hook, and they must be used with a hook in each hand.

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**Hell Fishing (1 point)**

One of the most common moves arose from the accustomed gesture of hooking and lifting or pulling. When it’s a sharp point going into someone’s calf or bicep, the pain can be dazzling.

If a hook is used as part of a successful Trip or Disarm, the target takes weapon damage in addition to the normal effects of the maneuver.

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**Cruel Cartage (2 points)**

If getting a hook in the arm or leg sounds bad, it’s nothing compared to getting one in the ribs or thighs, and then being lifted and dropped.

The hooks can be used with the Slam maneuver. The attacker can choose, during the Declare phase, to either use this technique to ignore the Slam’s Difficulty and weight restriction, or to try and beat them, doing the hooks’ weapon damage in addition to the Slam’s effects.

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**Clicking Swift (3 points)**

Now the hook fighter has gotten confident and experienced enough to use both hands in a complimentary way, either simultaneous or alternating, prepping one to strike while the other is swinging, or hitting high and low with both at the same time.

When the hook fighter makes two attacks, instead of the usual -1d Multiple Action penalty, he gets a +1d bonus. This cannot be combined with movement, a third attack, Dodge or Parry.

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**The Pull (4 points)**

If a strike misses going out, the Ob-lob using The Pull is adept at catching his target as he pulls his weapon back in for another try. If he misses lashing out, he turns the hook and tries to hit something coming back.

Any miss is treated as a 2x5 Feint maneuver.

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**Entangled to Shreds (5 points)**

The ultimate expression of this style is a receptiveness to all opportunities. To one using Entangled to Shreds, there is no mistake that can’t be turned into an opportunity, and many successes that can be modified into a greater success.

In addition to all the advantages of Hell Fishing, an Ob-lob using Entangled to Shreds can, to a limited extent, change the effects of her strike after seeing her result. This happens at the end of the Roll phase. Specifically, if she gets a set of x1-2 Height, she may make it a Trip. If it’s of x3-6 Height, she can make it a Disarm. If it’s a x10 Height set, she can do a Disfiguring Strike instead of normal damage.
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Roloneepo
Fighting on a moving ship is challenging, and the more it's moving, the harder it is to move upward, keep your footing, and resist sliding or falling down. These difficulties are compounded if the deck is wet, cluttered, or fouled with tangling lines. But some clever sailors practiced accepting the movements of the sea, and viewing crowded objects as an opportunity instead of an obstacle. This was the genesis of “roloneepo,” which is a conjoined word that means, “kicking sailor” in the fodandutikanitandu language.

A roloneepo fighter staggers, seeming to lurch randomly into any nearby wall, table, railing or curtain. He then uses these props to haul himself up, conceal a strike, move away from an opponent or interpose something between himself and his foe. It’s frustrating to fight someone who seems to flow like water – until he grabs a railing and swings both feet up into your gut.

Roloneepo is used with Coordination + Unarmed Strike. Despite the name, it can be used with punches as well as kicks.

Sailor Foot (1 point)
On sea, the sailor instinctively times his attacks to blend with the motion of the ocean's swells, adding force just when his attacker is off balance. If there's anything nearby to climb on or swing from, roloneepo shows how to direct the energy of the movement into a strike. If there's something to jump off of, push off of, or temporarily support oneself with while both legs move, the sailor can take advantage.

Furthermore, since most sailors work barefoot when the temperature allows it, their feet are usually gnarled and tough. If they're shod, their kicks become even more vicious.

The sailor never takes a penalty for fighting on a moving surface or for combining the Climb skill with his Unarmed Strike roll. Kicks do +1S if the attacker has sturdy shoes on.

Watch His Step (2 points)
Trips and foot-sweeps are common in many fighting styles. Roloneepo just does them with extra assertiveness.

Whenever the sailor succeeds at a Called Shot to locations 1 or 2, he does the damage for his strike and gets all the effects of a Trip.

Motion of the Ocean (3 points)
When dodging and weaving, the Ob-lob astutely uses any ship movement or local objects to his greatest benefit. Seemingly erratic and random, his staggering and jumps always incorporate a sly attack.

When combining an attack with a Dodge maneuver, the Ob-lob can’t be targeted by the Aim maneuver. Any Called Shot is resolved as if its Height was 1 less (that is, an attack to location 4 hits location 3, a hit to location 10 hits the torso and not the head, while a hit to location 1 misses entirely). These benefits take place even if the character rolls no sets.

Hit to Block (4 points)
Beyond adding aggression to avoidance, there lies the trick of using aggression for avoidance. Now the Ob-lob blocks attacks, with tremendous strength and leverage.

When making a combined attack and Parry, all sets can be used for both. That is, if more than one Gobble Die is used to ruin an attack, it’s also treated as a simultaneous attack against the person blocked. Single Gobble Dice used to ruin sets aren’t given this advantage.
Spider Kick (5 points)

The sailor grabs a rope or simply leans back against a convenient wall, table or stable person in order to plant a foot in his opponent’s belly – and then walk up his torso with a series of follow-up kicks.

The character makes a Called Shot attack against location 7, with usual penalties. This can be part of a multiple action, if the appropriate penalties are applied. If the character makes his hit on location 7, he simultaneously makes hits at locations 8, 9 and 10. These attacks do damage as if their Width was one less than the 7 set, but 1x sets still do damage.

Example: Molokutai executes a lovely Spider Kick against an aggressive fellow sailor. She leans back against the ship’s rail and does it. Her Coordination+Unarmed Strike pool is 8. She takes a die out for her multiple action, sets one to 7 and rolls the remaining 6d. Getting 1,3,4,6,6,7,0, she hits with a 2x7. If it’s not blocked or ruined, she does 2S to her opponent’s torso for the 2x7 (she’s barefoot) and then another 2S (a 1x8 and 1x9) to the chest and 15 to the head.

Later, the guy comes back for more punishment, she’s got shoes on and rolls a 2,2,4,5,7,7,8. Now her 3x7 does 4S to the torso, and he immediately takes a 2x hit to each of his locations 8, 9 and 10. That’s a total of 10S to the chest and 35 to the head. He’s gasping and barely conscious.

Pick Your Point (2 Points): Any time you make a single Spear attack, not combining it with any other Skill or making multiple attacks, you gain a +1d bonus, exactly as if you’d aimed. (Note that this means anything that would keep you from aiming precludes the bonus.)

Hold the Line (3 Points): Any time you make a multiple action Parry/Attack, instead of a -1d penalty you get a +1d bonus. However, you can’t use Hold the Line if you move, or if you add any other Skill to the roll. You can only use Hold the Line for one block and one strike.

Stabbing Serpent Tongue (4 Points): If you have at least one comrade parrying for you, you can focus on your attacks and use Stabbing Serpent Tongue. Instead of a penalty for multiple actions, you roll your Spear pool at +1d and can use every set that turns up as an attack. Like Hold the Line, this can’t be combined with other Skills.

Infinite Cohesion (5 Points): If you’re fighting in the middle of warriors who are also armed with shield and spear, and who have trained in the same formation drills, you get a +1d bonus to your Spear pool for every five comrades, to a maximum of +4. Furthermore, if those fellow warriors are Followers, their pool gets an extra die.

Spearman Squad

Developed in the Ruhini desert city-states, these ancient practices have either traveled to nearly all the known world, or have been discovered or developed there independently. They are used with Coordination+Spear.

Steady Shaft (1 Point): You can use a spear one-handed. Steady Shaft combines with all the other techniques in the path.
Just as you can generate a character in a single roll, complete with all relevant abilities and a string of life experiences, so can a Company be produced with a single cast of d10s.

In many ways, it’s just like One Roll character generation: You roll, you pick out the matches and you look on the charts to see what your 2x3 and your 4x4 netted you. Then you look at all the dice that fell outside of sets (Waste Dice for those of you hip to the jargon) and compare them with a separate chart. In this case, it’s the chart for “Singular Social Elements.”

As with One Roll characters, getting one result on a set chart gives you everything that precedes it. That is, if you roll 3x1, you don’t just get the benefits of “Paid Network of Informants.” You get that and the result from 2x1, “Gossipy Old Folks.”

The primary difference is that you can roll a variable number of dice. With One Roll characters, you rolled 11d10. With One Roll Company Generation, you pick how many dice you want depending on how big the company is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of Company</th>
<th>Number of Dice Rolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small, local and only marginally effectual</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local, but meaningful on that scale</td>
<td>5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regionally influential</td>
<td>7-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerful in a region, or a tiny nation</td>
<td>10-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vast enterprise, or a small nation</td>
<td>13-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A big country</td>
<td>16-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An enormous country, an empire even</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every company starts out with a single point of Sovereignty, for free. If you roll a 6x or higher set (which can easily happen if you’re generating an enormous company) keep it as a 5x and re-roll the other dice.

When you roll a set with your dice, you consult one of the following tables to see what it means. For example, if I roll six dice and get 2,2,2,4,4,5, that means I got two 4s and three 2s. In the notation, that's 3x2 and 2x4. Consulting the x2 chart, I see that my company contains some courtly types. With 3x, it’s Open Ears (and Doors) for the Riff-Raff, which gives me an extra point of Influence. I also get the benefits of the preceding entry, and 2x2 yields Access to Bored, Jaded Sybarites with its attendant +1 Influence and +2 bonus to rolls for temporarily improving the culture.

Nice. The 2x4 result tells me I control some unspecified number of Pleasant Copses, which give me +1 Treasure and a +2 bonus to all Might rolls when the engagement happens at sea.

**What Sets Mean**

- **x1:** Spies, Gossips and Rumormongers
  - **2x1** Gossipy Old Folks: In a small Company, this just means you know some people who have nothing better to do than chat about other people’s business – often with you. In a larger Company, this indicates a broader network of communication. Nothing formal, but word gets around quick, and you listen. **+1 Influence, and the Culture of Shame and Gossip Asset.**

- **3x1** Paid Network of Informants: What is says. There are people on your coin keeping an ear open for matters of interest. **+1 Influence**

- **4x1** Elite Secret Agents: Heluso and Milonda have no conceptual equivalent of “James Bond” which is why your operatives often operate against unprepared targets. **+1 Influence**

- **5x1** Traitor: You have someone in place, ready to backstab someone who trusts him as soon as you give the word. (Who is the betrayer? How have you secured his services? Can you trust him?) The Company gains the Asset Mole.
x2: Courtiers, Courtesans and Diplomats

2x2 Access to Bored, Jaded Sybarites: For some reason, the educated and beautiful and cruel people find you less tedious than others, so it amuses them or, (if your Company is big) benefits them to help you. If you’re Company is really big, they may be too scared to do anything else. +1 Influence, and the Cultural Tradition Asset.

3x2 Open Ears (and Doors) for the Ruff-Raff: You’ve helped criminals get off the hook (or, possibly, are in the position to continue doing so). They, in turn, come to you with news they think might interest you. +1 Influence

4x2 Good Roads, Fast Horses: The benefits of having messengers who can get from one town to the next can be surprising. Or, if you’re in a region where most of the roads are bad and the going is tough, the people helping you know the best fords and can find paths through the rough spots. +1 Influence

5x2 Elaborately Titled Diplomatic Corps: You employ paid negotiators to represent you. They’re icily dignified, relentlessly polite, and endlessly composed. Their official sashes look real impressive, too. The Company gains the Eloquent Diplomats Asset.

x3: Ore-Laden Mountains


3x3 Bountiful Peaks: In addition to the hills, there are genuine mountains, complete with snowmelt that sends rivers to irrigate your farms and mass to break up the weather in a favorable way. +1 Treasure

4x3 Towering Crags: The mountains seem endless, and their ability to produce ore strikes seems endless as well. +1 Treasure

5x3 Implacable Sky Walls: Some of those mountains are really quite nasty and severe, even in the mild season. The Company has the Asset Defensible Terrain.

x4: Lush Woodlands

2x4 Pleasant Copses: In addition to the fruit and the timber and the shade, these particular trees grow straight and strong and tall. Just right for masts and ship planks. +1 Treasure, and the Shipshape Navy Asset.

3x4 Extensive Woods: Really, you have all the lumber you need. +1 Treasure

4x4 Vast Tracts of Timber: In actual fact, you probably have all the lumber you’ll ever need. +1 Treasure

5x4 Deep Dark Forests: Which is not to say the woods are always pleasant. There are some disturbing things and disturbed citizens in there. The Company gains the Magic Resistant Asset.

x5: Warrior Class and Martial Culture

2x5 Storied Warrior Family: It might just be one scarred veteran sitting in the place of honor at the village smithy, or it could be a sprawling family tree of soldiers, with every new sprout hoping to blossom into the center of a ballad. +1 Might, plus the Defiant Tradition Asset.

3x5 Traditional Soldier Caste: More than just one tough family, there is some entire sub-group in your Company – a guild, an ethnic minority, a brotherhood chosen at birth – who are extensively trained to fight. +1 Might

4x5 Code of Death Before Dishonor: It’s not that your troops never cower, surrender, or break and run. But they never live it down if they do. +1 Might

5x5 Elite Soldier-Sorcerers: You employ people who are acquainted with both blades and incantations. They may not be exceptionally good at either, but they possess a versatility that just can’t be found in those who concentrate on one or the other. The Company has the Irregular Forces Asset.

x6: Tactical Knowledge and Experience

2x6 Broad Appreciation for Board Games: The people in your Company, for no good official or intended reason, have an unusually refined grasp of tactics. +1 Might, and the Rules of Plunder Asset.

3x6 Wide Reading of a Classical Strategic Treatise: Perhaps they brushed up on General Stead’s “Precepts” or “A Playwright Turned Soldier” or the words of Piu Danifa in order to get an edge in all those boardgames. +1 Might

4x6 Established War College: Playtime is over. Now the study is concentrated, formal, and in deadly earnest. +1 Might

5x6 Peerless Tactical Secrets: Your officers haven’t just been studying the past. They’ve been planning out the future of warfare. The Company has the Keen Asset.

x7: Generous Farmland

2x7 Nice Bit in the River Valley: Farmland isn’t glamorous, it doesn’t stir the blood like tales of heroes past, but the gentle beauty of giving land next to water can birth an enduring desire to protect long after martial ardor has flagged in the face of brutality. +1 Territory and the Patriotism Asset.
3x7 **Pleasant Fruiting Trees:** Lumber, food, a place to tie your horse... the livin’ is easy, boss. **+1 Territory**

4x7 **We Call It “The Grain Sea”:** It gets a lot less attention from the bards and historians, but having a net crop surplus to export or store for lean years is actually more likely to keep a king on his throne than superlative skill with the battleaxe. **+1 Territory**

5x7 **Bounteous Harvest:** Some times, the good weather comes during a year when the locusts are dormant. If happenstance keeps cattle illnesses low as well, it’s a time of extraordinary bounty. That, in turn, keeps people content, lowers prices for everything, and sends more merchants along the road to carry news, goods, and gossip. **This Company has the Asset Fortune Smiles.**

**x8: Artisans and Governors**

2x8 **High-Quality Smithing:** Whether you’re a single village or a sprawling empire, good craftsmanship makes a difference. **+1 Territory, and the Foundries, Smiths and Armorers Asset**

3x8 **Tidy Bureaucracy:** Having someone nitpicking over the location of every misplaced seed bag, someone assiduously assessing taxes and someone checking roads and bridges for repair is boring. Annoying, even. Until you need taxes, bridges and seeds. **+1 Territory**

4x8 **Artistic Renaissance:** No one knows why these happen. Sometimes they’re not even sure what to do with a spontaneous, explosive improvement of creativity and technique. But typically someone thinks of something. **+1 Territory**

5x8 **Oppression:** For one reason or another, the Company has a group of persons from whom it can take without giving nearly fair measure in return. It could be conscripts, prisoners, an ethnic or religious minority – even an entire gender. Whoever it is, it’s culturally tolerable to treat them like garbage, and they have little recourse. **The Company gains the Permanent Underclass Asset.**

**x9: Religion**

2x9 **Expectation of Piety:** In your Company, religion isn’t just tolerated, it’s expected. Maybe it’s a single, unifying church or a plurality of faiths, but people follow a higher standard than mere self-interest. As long as your Company respects that, the citizens tend to be a little better behaved than if they were depraved agnostics or devil worshippers. **+1 Sovereignty, and pick a rival faith as the focus for the Asset Classic Enemy.**

3x9 **Culture of Worship:** Religion isn’t just a part of day-to-day life, it’s a central part. It’s possible to get along as an unbeliever, but not easy. **+1 Sovereignty**

4x9 **Church Acknowledges the Crown:** Lucky for you that powerful church has anointed your leadership with the chrism of their approval. (Why is that, exactly? Are you exceptionally faithful? Have them fooled? Bought off cynical church elders well schooled in realpolitik? Or is it just lucky happenstance?) **+1 Sovereignty**

5x9 **High Holy Days:** Whatever the dominant religion of your Company is, it’s not content to just be terribly important to the day-to-day conduct of the citizens’ business. Once per year, it has to be the only order of business. **The Company gains the Predictable Bounty Asset.**

**x10: Traditional Cultural Identity**

2x10 **Recent Happiness:** Something good has happened to the nation, and not too long ago. What was it? Whatever it was, the people are feeling particularly cheerful and productive as a result. This Company gains the Payoff Asset and every PC leading it permanently gains **+1 Wealth.**

3x10 **Just Courts:** The people adjudicating disputes are fair, impartial and unbiased. They can’t be bent, bought, or bullied. How’d you manage that? **+1 Sovereignty**

4x10 **Justified Pride:** Even if your Company isn’t great and magnificent now, they were at one time. They haven’t forgotten and they don’t let anyone else forget either. **The Company has the Epic History Asset.**

5x10 **Culture of Obedience:** However it happened, your Company places a high value on knuckling under to authority (at least, to Company authority). Whether this is due to training or a quirk of history or plain ol’ social mores, people in charge (that is, the PCs) get the benefit of the doubt. **+1 Sovereignty**
**One Roll Companies**

**Dice Outside of Sets**

If some of your dice turn up outside of sets (as they almost certainly will), consult the following chart to see what you got instead of splendid farmland or a cultishly docile populace.

1. **Oracle**: You have the services of a person or persons who have uncanny ways of learning important information. It could be a lone prophet with a crystal ball, a group of Ob-lob scrying experts, or just someone so smart and on top of things that his deductions look like magic. +1 Influence

2. **Advantageous Marriage**: Ooh, who’s the lucky spouse? Someone in your Company (preferably a PC) recently made a high-profile and popular marriage with someone involved in another Company. The two Companies haven’t quite joined, but they’re now close enough to peer in one another’s windows. The Company gains the Entangling Alliance Asset.

3. **Loan Operation**: A large part of your capital (and the capital of others) is tied up in loans lent at interest and the redemption of those loans. Not glamorous, but lucrative. +1 Treasure

4. **Exotic Crop**: You grow or produce or have access to some time-sensitive herb, product or resource. This Company gains the Unbalanced Economy Asset.

5. **Murderous Thugs With No Moral Center**: For whatever reason, you can have a gang of, for lack of a better word, “evildoers” perform their wicked acts on your behalf. Who are these scum? How’d you wind up holding their leash? The Company has the Asset Sinister Operatives.

6. **An Underappreciated But Scrappy Officer Who Will Take Charge When All Seems Doomed And Save The Day, Only To Lose His Life In The Process**: As players, you have to pretend not to know about this guy’s destiny. He’s some eager-beaver second-in-command type who constantly has to be criticized for his crazy ideas and untenable plans. Only when the pressure is on, he’s going to step up and prove his quality. (Some options for this are: He halts a rout with an inspiring one-man charge the other direction; he leads a badly-outnumbered suicide mission to hold the bridge and prevent the enemy from flanking; he runs for days without stopping for rest or water in order to deliver the crucial message before expiring.) The Company has the Asset Unexpected Deliverance.

7. **Splendid Roads to Market**: Every merchant likes being able to get his apples delivered before they go mucky, especially when he doesn’t have to worry about spending hours pulling rocks out of his horses’ hooves afterwards. +1 Territory

8. **Coast**: Land next to the ocean, or an inland sea or river, is often quite productive. Besides fish and the possibility of freshwater irrigation, it’s a great way to transport goods and information. +1 Territory

9. **Charismatic Elite**: There is an upper class in your Company, whether they’re formally recognized or just acknowledged through unspoken respect. Furthermore, they’re not followed grudgingly or out of fear. They’re accorded genuine appreciation and admiration. (Hey, could this actually be the PCs?) The Company has the Mass Appeal Asset.

10. **Culture of Inquisitiveness**: The people in your Company tend to be curious, intellectually spry, and sometimes actually quite nosy. They’re always interested in learning a new skill, hearing tales of distant lands, and finding out who’s visiting the brewer’s wife while her husband is off overseeing the hops harvest. The Company has the Small Horizon Asset.
Dindavara is a nation known for honor and steel and humorless devotion to the warrior ideal. Like many stereotypes, there's a lot of evidence to support the assumptions. But as with all stereotypes, there are ignored subtleties and exceptions. Dindavara has its rebels against the strictures of approved noble society, and underneath the attractive (but brittle) crust of the five families is a tough and moving mass of practical peasants. As the power of Uldholm grows, its ideas cast a lengthening shadow on its neighbor to the north. Uldholm's most powerful idea, of course, is that what you do matters more than your accidents of birth. This is an idea that is as seductive to some stifled peasants as it is threatening to the very few among the gentry who do anything other than dismiss it as patent nonsense.

### Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>2x1</th>
<th>3x4</th>
<th>4x7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rough Laborer</td>
<td>+1 BODY, +1 Expert</td>
<td>Wit: +ED Perform, +ED Lie, +1 Fascinate</td>
<td>+2 Vigor, +2 Athletics</td>
<td>Minor Diplomat: +ED Lie, +ED Intimidate, +1 Inspire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Village Troublemaker</td>
<td>+2 Run, +2 Lie, +1 Stealth</td>
<td>Backup Entertainer: +1 Graces, +2 Inspire, +1 Dodge, First level of a Performance path</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cunning Rascal</td>
<td>+2 Stealth, +1 Lie, +2 Expert</td>
<td>Lead Entertainer: Levels two and three in the Performance path</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Character</td>
<td>+1 Wealth, +2 Lore, +2 Athletics</td>
<td>Religious Education: +1 KNOWLEDGE, +2 Eerie, +2 Counterspell, +1 Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minor Entrepreneur</td>
<td>+1 COMMAND, +2 Haggle, +1 Possession, +1 Plead, +1 Language</td>
<td>Under Vows: +1 Followers, +1 Sorcery, +1 Lore, +1 Status, +1 Spells</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shrewd Bargainer</td>
<td>+1 Wealth, +1 Haggle, +2 Ride, +1 Plead</td>
<td>Honored Monk: +1 Followers, +1 Lore, +1 Wealth, +2 Spells</td>
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<tr>
<td>Envious Dealmaker</td>
<td>+1 Wealth, +ED Haggle, +2 Possession</td>
<td>Revered Priest: +1 Followers, +1 Language, +1 Graces, +2 Inspire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional Financier</td>
<td>+1 Wealth, +1 Intimate, +1 Inspire, +2 Direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Groom</td>
<td>+1 COORDINATION, +1 Dodge, +1 Spear, +3 Ride</td>
<td>Court Brat: +1 CHARM, +2 Lie, +1 Graces, +1 Haggle, +1 Fascinate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gentleman’s Companion</td>
<td>+1 Lore, +1 Jest, +1 Lie, +1 Vigor, +1 Language</td>
<td>Person of Mild Status: +1 Plead, +1 Steal, +1 Fascinate, +2 Patron</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Confidential Messenger</td>
<td>+2 Animal Companion, First level of a Dodge technique, +2 Hearing</td>
<td>Courtier: Beauty 3, +1 Lie, +1 Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master of Horses</td>
<td>+1 Dodge, +1 Language, +1 Animal Companion, +ED Ride</td>
<td>Court Authority: +ED Fascinate, +2 Language, First level of a Fascinate path</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Charmer</td>
<td>+1 CHARM, +2 Perform, +1 Lie, +1 Language, +1 Fascinate</td>
<td>Foreign Traveler: +1 KNOWLEDGE, +2 Language, +ED Graces, +1 Lore</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3x7</td>
<td>Petty Translator: +1 Language, +2 Listen, +1 Stealth, +1 Lie</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4x10</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5x10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **Trained Athlete.** Many Dindavaran authorities have an almost cultish devotion to physical excellence, and it has trickled down to the commoners. Indeed, the field of sport is the one place where the two classes are allowed to compete full-strength, as absolute equals. It is one of the few places a peasant can earn a lord’s respect. +2 Athletics, First two levels of an Athletics path

2. **Legacy.** Gentry of the five families disdain personal wealth, but very few of them set it aside when they get it. On the other side, peasants value it very much, and often make profit off that aforementioned disdain. +2 Wealth, +3 Possession

3. **Horrendous Initiation.** There are secretive cults, criminal gangs, treasonous movements, political cabals and selective military academies that all demand proof of dedication. Just what was yours? +1 COORDINATION

4. **Cultured.** Perhaps your parents forced you to practice the nong for hours on end because they believed it was good for you, or perhaps dance was your rebellion against their militancy. You could just as easily be a villager trained to perform, too: +3 Perform, +2 Languages

5. **Center of a Movement.** There was a cause, and you were its leader. What was your cause? Who followed? Who resisted? Who are your allies and enemies? Are they secret or is their support overt?: +3 Followers, +2 Patron

6. **Mountain Raised.** You’ve spent a lot of time running up and down hills in the crisp cool air: +3 Climb, +2 Vigor

7. **Sentenced to Hard Labor.** What was your crime? Did you do it, were you framed or were you taking the fall for someone else? What kind of work did they make you do? How did people react once you’d served your sentence and were free?: +1 BODY

8. **Won an Archery Contest.** It’s usually the landed who practice with the warbow, but it’s ordinary people who use archery to put fresh meat on the dinner table. Sometimes, a skilled common archer gets inducted into a lord’s private guard: +2+ED Bow, First level of a Bow path

9. **The Family Way.** You learned sorcery from your parents, as they learned it from their parents and so on, as long as anyone can remember. What kind of magic does your family practice? Is it a closely guarded secret, or do you lord it over everyone? When, why and how did this family tradition begin?: +2 Sorcery, +3 Spells

10. **Saved Lives.** Nothing gives confidence quite like seizing control during turmoil and making the right decisions. You trust yourself because you’ve been proven: +1 COMMAND

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He expressed great amazement at my reaction, saying, “Surely you could not have prepared for such an unorthodox attack!” I replied that I had been preparing since my first day at the academy.

—Master Puit of the Eight Open Eyes
One Roll Dindavarans

Example

Starting with 11 random numbers (in my case, the serial number on my washing machine) and putting them in order, we get 1,1,2,2,2,8,9,9,9,9,0. In other words, the sets are 2x1, 3x2, 4x9. The loose dice are 8 and 10.

2x1 Rough Laborer: +1 BODY, +1 Expert _______, +2 Vigor, +2 Athletics

3x2 Shrewd Bargainer: +1 COMMAND, +2 Haggle, +1 Possession, +1 Plead, +1 Language, +1 Wealth, +1 Haggle, +2 Ride, +1 Plead

4x9 Master Smith: +1 BODY, +2+ED Expert Blacksmith, +1 Eerie, Secret of the Dinda, +1 Sorcery, Blacksmith ED promoted to MD

Saved Lives: +1 COMMAND

Won an Archery Contest: +2+ED Bow, First level of a Bow path

This seems like a fairly straightforward progression. The character – let’s give him a nice Dindavaran name like Dao – starts out at the bottom rung of the social ladder. He’s born into a family of laboring serfs, but he distinguishes himself. He apprentices as a fletcher and bowyer (I’ll put that in as his Expert skill with Laborer) and in the process studies how to use the weapons he’s supposed to make. A natural shot, he captures the attention of a local Banner Chief when he wins an archery contest, even though competing against the children of nobility. The Banner Chief suggests Dao’s talents might serve better as a smith, and he begins that profession. He serves a long apprenticeship, becoming trusted and skilled enough to learn the secret of forging Dinda swords. He also starts to follow the spiritual beliefs of Dindavaran smiths, but then something goes wrong. A sorcerous assassin infiltrates the court, and while Dao suspects, his station is too low to make an accusation stick. Then the assassin strikes, as the commencement of an elaborate plot to exterminate the lord’s entire family. Thanks to Dao, the defenders of the lord’s winter residence bunker down and repel a group of mercenaries (after Dao himself shoots the assassin through the back of the head). In gratitude, the lord’s widow releases Dao from his obligations, awards him the title of ‘Master’ and gives him a monetary reward. He travels to the capital and works as an independent smith, armorer and merchant. As the game dawns, he’s a bit down on his luck, but possesses skills that can earn him an eager welcome in many companies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body 4</th>
<th>Command 4</th>
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<tr>
<td>Athletics 2</td>
<td>Haggle 1</td>
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<td>Vigor 2</td>
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<td>Sorcery 1</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordination 2</th>
<th>Charm 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bow 2+ED</td>
<td>Plead 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ride 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possession 1: You’d expect a weapon, but he’s taking it as a tiny smithy out in the middle of nowhere – his private retreat. Probably all he has left, now.

Wealth 1

Secret of the Dinda

Martial Technique: Goddess in the Clouds
The Empire isn’t one country, it’s five, and it isn’t one culture, it’s every known culture on two continents, mixed together in a seething stew. The five flavors of Center, Pahar, Deerwood, the Marches and the Plains predominate, but The Empire is also home to rogue Maemeck criminals colluding against their country, curious Wuhra trying to make their fortunes far from historical rivalries, Dindavaran nobles keeping a wary eye on a powerful neighbor while Dindavaran peasants seek freedom, respect, or an audience before which they can pretend to be honored scions of the Meiren or Xuedei clans. There are women from Upunzi, forever watching and acting as if they are watched, and there are Ob-lobs uneasy at being so far from the sea. Opetkan magicians work deceptions on the unwary, while Opetkan soldiers rent their brutality to the highest bidders. There are Ulds and Confederates, pugnaciously seeking their betterment in the lands of their historical conquerors, and even a few Truils make it over the mountains to see the wide world beyond.

Underneath all that, seething and scheming and using, are the Imperials themselves. From the rich and powerful down to the sleazy and ignored, they are always looking for the next turn of fortune, or the next opportunity for the bold, the clever or the unscrupulous.

The Golden Monk said, “Ambition breeds discontent and envy. The path to wisdom is found on the quest for new reasons and ways to admire and enjoy what you have already attained.”

The Empress replied, “That’s no counsel to give a conqueror,” and sent him away.

—From “Dialogues of the Golden Monk”

**One Roll Imperials**

The Empire isn’t one country, it’s five, and it isn’t one culture, it’s every known culture on two continents, mixed together in a seething stew. The five flavors of Center, Pahar, Deerwood, the Marches and the Plains predominate, but The Empire is also home to rogue Maemeck criminals colluding against their country, curious Wuhra trying to make their fortunes far from historical rivalries, Dindavaran nobles keeping a wary eye on a powerful neighbor while Dindavaran peasants seek freedom, respect, or an audience before which they can pretend to be honored scions of the Meiren or Xuedei clans. There are women from Upunzi, forever watching and acting as if they are watched, and there are Ob-lobs uneasy at being so far from the sea. Opetkan magicians work deceptions on the unwary, while Opetkan soldiers rent their brutality to the highest bidders. There are Ulds and Confederates, pugnaciously seeking their betterment in the lands of their historical conquerors, and even a few Truils make it over the mountains to see the wide world beyond.

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—From “Dialogues of the Golden Monk”

**Background**

| 2x1 | Visited the Western Marches: +1 BODY, +1 Athletics, +2 Vigor, +2 Endurance |
| 3x1 | Have Relatives in Turningford: +1 Graces, +2 Vigor, +1 Athletics, +1 Endurance |
| 4x1 | Competed at Greendale: +1 Fight, +1 Athletics, First two levels of an Athletics path |
| 5x1 | Western Marcher, Born and Raised: +1 Fight, +1 Run, +1 Expert: Throw, +ED Endurance |
| 2x2 | Toured the Sunless Plains: +1 CHARM, +1 Graces, +2 Listen, +1 Lie, +1 Stealth |
| 3x2 | Guest of the Shadows: +1 Listen, +3 Weapon, First level of a Martial path |
| 4x2 | Lengthy and Entangling Plains History: +1 SENSE |
| 5x2 | Native of the Dark: Second and third levels of Martial path |
| 2x3 | Have Been Seen at Center’s Court: +1 SENSE, +1 Graces, +1 Lie, +1 Lore, +1 Haggle, +1 Dodge |
| 3x3 | Business Trips to the Palace: First two levels of a Haggle path, +2 Haggle |
| 4x3 | Center is a Second Home: +1 Haggle, +1 Lie, Third level of Haggle path |
| 5x3 | You Are Central: +1 Lie, Fourth level of Haggle path |
| 2x4 | Pahar Guest: +1 KNOWLEDGE, +1 Graces, +2 Counterspell, +2 Eerie |
| 3x4 | Student of Pahar Culture: +1 Sorcery, +1 Counterspell, +1 Language, +2 Spells |
| 4x4 | Pahar Resident (or Former Resident): +1 Sorcery, +1 Eerie, +1 Language, +2 Spells |
| 5x4 | Of Pure Pahar Descent: +1 Haggle, +1 Plead, +1 Lore, +1 Language, First level of an Esoteric Discipline |
| 2x5 | Gone Hunting in Deerwood: +1 COORDINATION, +1 Graces, +1 Athletics, +1 Direction, +2 Student: Wilderness |
| 3x5 | Barkwater Connoisseur: +1 Lore, +1 Run, +1 Ride, +1 Bow, +1 Direction |
| 4x5 | Comfortable Naked: +2 Sight, +1 Language, +1 Direction, Upgrade Student die to Expert |
| 5x5 | Loyal to Deerwood: Upgrade Student ED to Master |
### One Roll Imperials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2x6</td>
<td>Occult Dabbler</td>
<td>+1 KNOWLEDGE, +1 Graces, +2 Sorcery, +1 Eerie, +1 Spells</td>
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<tr>
<td>3x6</td>
<td>Concerted Student</td>
<td>+ED Sorcery, +1 Counterspell, +2 Spells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x6</td>
<td>Serious Adept</td>
<td>Upgrade Sorcery ED to MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x6</td>
<td>Magus</td>
<td>+1 Eerie, +1 Counterspell, +3 Spells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x7</td>
<td>Mildly Dishonest</td>
<td>+1 COORDINATION, +1 Graces, +2 Stealth, +1 Lie, +1 Climb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x7</td>
<td>Successful Burglar</td>
<td>+ED Stealth, +2 Climb, First level of a Stealth path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x7</td>
<td>Spy</td>
<td>Upgrade Stealth ED to MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x7</td>
<td>Conspirator</td>
<td>+2 Run, +1 Dodge, Second level of Stealth path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x8</td>
<td>Ornamental Layabout</td>
<td>+1 CHARM, +1 Graces, +1 Fascinate, +3 Beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x8</td>
<td>Ne’er Do Well</td>
<td>Promote Graces die to an ED, +2 Plead, +2 Fascinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x8</td>
<td>Court Gadabout</td>
<td>+1 Language, +1 Lore, +2 Wealth, +1 Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>5x8</td>
<td>Imperial Parasite</td>
<td>First two levels of a Graces path, +2 Patron</td>
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<tr>
<td>2x9</td>
<td>Warmaker</td>
<td>+1 BODY, +1 Graces, +2 Parry, +2 Fight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x9</td>
<td>Battlefield Leader</td>
<td>+2 Tactics, +1 Fight, +1 Parry, +1 Endurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x9</td>
<td>Captain</td>
<td>+1 Tactics, +1 Inspire, First two levels of a Parry path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x9</td>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>+1 Tactics, +1 Inspire, First two levels of a Tactics path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x10</td>
<td>Minor Functionary</td>
<td>+1 COMMAND, +1 Graces, +3 Inspire, +1 Intimidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x10</td>
<td>Bureaucrat</td>
<td>+1 Intimidate, First two levels of an Inspire path, +1 Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x10</td>
<td>Instrument of the Apparatus</td>
<td>+2 Followers, Third level of an Inspire path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x10</td>
<td>Imperial Official</td>
<td>+1 Followers, Fourth level of Inspire path</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Events

1. **Peculiar Diet Regimen:** They told you it was good for you. They were right, extreme though it was. Now, other food doesn’t even taste right. Just what is it you eat so diligently?
   
   +4 Vigor, +1 Endurance

2. **Targeted by an Assassin:** What did you do to merit the attentions of a professional? Do you even know? Did they ever catch the guy? Did you kill him? If not, how’d you escape?
   
   +1 SENSE

3. **Partook in Merchant Endeavor:** Did you set up the deal, stumble onto it by luck, or were you brought in by a friend as a favor? What were you selling, or buying, or facilitating the transacting of?
   
   +3 Haggle, +1 Wealth, +1 Possession

4. **Underwent Religious Conversion:** What religion did you start to follow? Is it a big one or a tiny sect? Are you still faithful, or have you become disillusioned?
   
   What were you before and how did they take it when you left the church?
   
   +1 KNOWLEDGE

5. **Attended Elite Athletic Academy:** Morning runs, hourlong stretching sessions, tightly monitored behavior to prevent ‘impure acts’ – all to make you a superior competitor. Did it succeed? Did you make any particular friends or enemies at school?
   
   +1 COORDINATION

6. **Joined an Occult Conspiracy:** Certainly the Empire is ripe with them. What’s yours called? What are its goals? How much do you really know? Does the cabal survive, or has it fallen apart? If it’s gone, what destroyed it?
   
   +3 Sorcery, +2 Spells

7. **Dangerous Liaison:** What made the romance so perilous? What made it worth risking the danger?
   
   +4 Stealth, +1 Listen

8. **Lengthy Foreign Journey:** You’ve spent a lot of time somewhere else, somewhere distant and interesting. Where was it? Why were you there? What stories do you have to recount?
   
   +3 Fascinate, +2 Languages

9. **Acrimonious Divorce and Family Feud:** Sometimes those dangerous liaisons go too far and become dangerous marriages, which lead, in turn, to dangerous divorces. Or shallow graves, but that’s not really pertinent. Is it?
   
   +3 Dodge, +2 Fight

10. **Successful Political Agitator:** What was your cause? How’d you rally people to your banner? Are you popular, despised, or some combination of the two?
    
    +3 Followers, +2 Inspire
Example: Slias Mozam

Rolling 3,3x4,5,7,3x8,9,10, my character has this background

3x4 Student of Pahar Culture: +1 KNOWLEDGE, +1 Graces, +3 Counterspell, +2 Eerie, +1 Sorcery, +1 Language, +2 Spells

3x8 Ne’er Do Well: +1 CHARM, +1 Graces, +1 Fascinate, +3 Beauty, Promote Graces die to an ED, +2 Plead, +2 Fascinate

3 Partook in Merchant Endeavor: +3 Haggle, +1 Wealth, +1 Possession

5 Attended Elite Athletic Academy: +1 COORDINATION

7 Dangerous Liaison: +4 Stealth, +1 Listen

9 Acrimonious Divorce and Family Feud: +3 Dodge, +2 Fight

10 Successful Political Agitator: +3 Followers, +2 Inspire

Slias really could have turned out much worse, considering how spoiled rotten she was growing up. A pudgy, dumpy child she was nevertheless cheerful and clever. When her parents sent her to Vimglidden’s Academy for Young Girls, they didn’t really understand that they were committing her to rising at dawn, running for miles, a peculiar Dindavaran diet, and lots of shouting. Once she recovered from the shock and awe of her first taste of discipline (she was twelve) she numbly obeyed, lost great slabs of weight and suddenly became gorgeous.

As soon as she graduated she badgered her parents into sending her to Center, where she spent some happy years gadding about, drinking, telling stories, making friends with courtiers and, eventually, marrying a handsome foreign merchant named Dold. Unfortunately for him, Slias had a wandering eye. Unfortunately for her, her husband found out and wasn’t the type to forgive and forget. After having her lover beaten so severely that the poor man fled to Opetka, Dold decamped with most of his property.

Adept at the Pahar skill of loud complaining, Slias recast herself as the victim and began agitating the Empress for reform of the divorce laws. That turned out to be a bigger job than she anticipated, but once she was involved there was no way to back down without disgrace. So she pushed and prevailed, stripping the laws of their “unjust punishments.” Her crusade got her a lot of quiet support, much of it anonymous. It was enough for her to hire a staff, but now that the crusade is over, her finances are thin and she’s looking for a new project – hopefully something that can support her entourage.

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Body 2

Command 2

Fight 2

Haggle 3

Sorcery 1

Inspire 2

Knowledge 3

Sense 2

Lang.: Pahar MD

Eerie 2

Lang.: Imperial 1

Listen 1

Counterspell 3

Coordinaton 3

Charm 3

Dodge 3

Fascinate 3

Stealth 4

Graces 1+ED

Spells 2: Blossom Freshness, Spark, Water Stride

Plead 2

Beauty 3

Wealth 1

Possession 1: A small sailboat named “Regret”

Followers 3: She has 15 Threat 2 followers. They’re minor court servants, stewards, pages, messengers and the like. They’re unarmed, but she’s spent enough time talking to them, enthralling them with her wiles and flirting with the men that they’re highly motivated to obey and support her.
**One Roll Ob-lobs**

Start with two in every Stat, roll 11d10, use the sets as life experiences and the waste dice as events. If this is unfamiliar, look at page 50 in REIGN.

### Background

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Stats</th>
<th>Background Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2x1</td>
<td>Happy Family: +1 CHARM, +2 Vigor, +2 Endurance, Lucky</td>
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<tr>
<td>3x1</td>
<td>Cosseted Childhood: +ED Vigor, +ED Endurance, First Level of an Esoteric Discipline</td>
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<tr>
<td>4x1</td>
<td>Indulged Youth: Second and Third Levels of the Esoteric Discipline</td>
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<td>5x1</td>
<td>Spoiled, Frankly: +1 Wealth, +2 Possession, +2 Animal Companion</td>
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<tr>
<td>2x2</td>
<td>Truant: +1 COORDINATION, +1 Lie, +3 Stealth, +1 Climb</td>
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<tr>
<td>3x2</td>
<td>Roguish: First Level of a Stealth Esoteric Discipline, +1 Lie, +1 Climb, +2 Hearing</td>
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<tr>
<td>4x2</td>
<td>Lawbreaker: Second and Third Levels of the Stealth Discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x2</td>
<td>Convicted Criminal: Fourth Level of the Stealth Discipline, upgrade one Stealth die to an ED</td>
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<tr>
<td>2x3</td>
<td>Ship Stitcher: +1 KNOWLEDGE, +3 Healing, +1 Lore, +1 Scrutinize</td>
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<tr>
<td>3x3</td>
<td>Medicine Mixer: +2 Healing, +3 Expert Herbologist</td>
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<tr>
<td>4x3</td>
<td>Cure Merchant: Upgrade one Healing die to an ED, +1+ED Scrutinize, +1 Possession</td>
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<tr>
<td>5x3</td>
<td>Doctor of Healing: Upgrade Healing ED to MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>2x4</td>
<td>Ship's Officer: +1 COMMAND, +1 Expert Sailor, +1 Sight, +2 Direction, +1 Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>3x4</td>
<td>Pilot: +1 Endurance, +1 Expert Sailor, +1+ED Direction</td>
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<tr>
<td>4x4</td>
<td>First Mate: +5 Intimidate</td>
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<tr>
<td>5x4</td>
<td>Captain: +3 Inspire, +ED Tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x5</td>
<td>O' Tar: +1 BODY, +1 Expert Sailor, +2 Fight, +1 Parry, +1 Climb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x5</td>
<td>Rigging Ape: +1 Expert Sailor, +ED Fight, +1 Parry, +1 Endurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>4x5</td>
<td>Pirate/'Marine': Upgrade Fight ED to MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x5</td>
<td>Salt-Crusted Fishbrother: +ED Parry, +ED Climb, Thick Headed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x6</td>
<td>Sailor: +1 BODY, +ED Expert Sailor, +1 Climb, +1 Athletics, +1 Perform (Devil’s Comb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x6</td>
<td>Smuggler/'Importer': +2 Stealth, +1 Plead, +1 Jest, +1 Lie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x6</td>
<td>Responsible Cargo Convoyer: +3 Possession (Small Boat), +2 Followers (5 Threat 3 Sailors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x6</td>
<td>Sea Seller: +2 Possession (Upgrade Boat), +1 Followers (Sailors), +1 Direction, +1 Wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x7</td>
<td>Temple Dweller: +1 KNOWLEDGE, +1 Patron, +1 Eerie, +1 Counterspell, +1 Lore, +1 Inspire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x7</td>
<td>Learned of the Faith: +ED Lore, +ED Counterspell, +1 Eerie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x7</td>
<td>Intimate of the Spiral: +1 Followers, +1 Lore, +1 Eerie, +1 Language, +1 Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x7</td>
<td>Holy One: +1 Counterspell, +2 Student of Religion, +2 Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x8</td>
<td>Fortune Teller: +1 SENSE, +1 Eerie, +1 Counterspell, +1 Sorcery, +2 Spells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x8</td>
<td>Seer: +1 Counterspell, +ED Sorcery, +2 Spells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x8</td>
<td>Diviner: +2 Sorcery, +2 Spells, +1 Eerie</td>
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<tr>
<td>5x8</td>
<td>Oracle: Upgrade Sorcery ED to MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>2x9</td>
<td>Booth Hawker: +1 COMMAND, +3 Haggle, +2 Empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>3x9</td>
<td>Peddler: +1 Wealth, +1 Graces, +1 Language, +1 Lie, +1 Plead</td>
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<tr>
<td>4x9</td>
<td>Merchant: +1 Wealth, +1 Lie, +1 Language, +1 Haggle, +1 Fascinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x9</td>
<td>Moneylender: +1 Wealth, +2 Status, +1 Fascinate, +1 Haggle</td>
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<tr>
<td>2x10</td>
<td>Family Elder: First Two Levels of the Hell Hooks Martial Path, +2 Weapon (Hooks), +1 Graces, +1 Status, +1 Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x10</td>
<td>Respected Citizen: +2 Weapon (Hooks), +1 Graces, +1 Status, +1 Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4x10</td>
<td>Surdomohaikutano: +1 Followers, +1 Status, +1 Graces, +2 Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5x10</td>
<td>Fount of Ob-lob Wisdom: Upgrade Inspire ED to MD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Events

1. **Pet from Exotic Lands:** Where'd you get it? How, or from whom? Is it one animal, or a menagerie? 
   +4 Animal Companion, +1 Expert Animal Trainer

2. **Prodigious Lover:** Do you have good relations with your former paramours, or do they hate you, or is it a mixed bag? Are you a romantic who can’t commit and keeps looking for the next ‘true love,’ or are you a deceitful scum, or are you just someone with a lot of physical affection to spread around? 
   +3 Beauty, +2 Fascinate
3 Escaped Slave of a Foreign Doctor:
How’d you get caught?  How’d you get free?
What did your master have you do?  What was your relationship like? +3 Heal, +2 Run

4 Heavily Favored: Someone important likes you. No, really likes you. Why?  Your qualities? Are you two related?  Or is it some kind of misunderstanding? +4 Patron, +1 Perform

5 (Ex) Thug: First off, do you still kick the puke out of people on a regular basis, or is that all behind you?  Why did/do you embark on a career of violence?  Who taught you the tricks of Sailor Kicking?  First Two Levels of the Roloneepo Martial Path, +2 Weapon: Unarmed Strike

6 I Own a Boat! That’s no small matter in Ob-lob culture. Do you have a crew?  Can you sail it?  If so, what do you do with your craft?  If you don’t, just why do you have such an expensive vessel? +5 Possession (Boat)

7 The Wizard Was SO Angry! Ooh, that can’t be good. What did you do to merit the wrath of an enchanter?  Was it worth it?  Do you think there’s a way to make amends, or is this one of those ‘vendetta to the death’ deals? +2 Eerie, +3 Counterspell, Problem: Enemy

8 Wind-Teller: Are you a formally recognized wizard, or just someone who has a knack and doesn’t advertise it?  Why do you have a fair degree of skill but only minor spells? +3 Sorcery, Four Spells of the First Intensity

9 Beheld Death Unafraid: What nearly killed you?  How’d you escape?  Why were you so courageous?  Leather Hard

10 Mistakenly Educated: You weren’t supposed to learn what you learned. Why not?  Why’d you learn it anyhow?  Was there trouble, or did everything end with people happy and satisfied?  From whom did you learn, and were there other students? +1 Lore, +2 Student of (you pick), +2 Language

---

Example

I roll 1,3,3,4,5,5,7,8,9,10 or 2x3, 3x5, 2x8, 1,4,7,10. Let’s see what kind of life that got us.

2x3  Ship Stitcher: +1 KNOWLEDGE, +3 Healing, +1 Lore, +1 Scrutinize

Okay, served on a ship sewing up people’s gashed limbs, setting broken bones and squeezing lime juice into the mouth of scurvy victims.

3x5  Rigging Ape: +1 BODY, +2 Expert Sailor, +2+ED Fight, +2 Parry, +1 Endurance, +1 Climb

Also a plain ol’ sailor for a while, climbing and swearing and pulling lines and getting into grog-house brawls.

2x8  Fortune Teller: +1 SENSE, +1 Eerie, +1 Counterspell, +1 Sorcery, +2 Spells

…and a sorcerer too, if not a particularly impressive one. Still, I’d want someone like this on my ship, wouldn’t you?  Even without a lot of leadership potential... perhaps the events will take care of that.

1  Pet from Exotic Lands: +4 Animal Companion, +1 Expert Animal Trainer

4  Heavily Favored: +4 Patron, +1 Perform

7  The Wizard Was SO Angry! +2 Eerie, +3 Counterspell, Problem: Enemy

10 Mistakenly Educated: +1 Lore, +2 Student of (you pick), +2 Language

All right, I’m starting to get a pretty good picture of what happened with this guy. No, you know what?  Let’s make her a woman. Short, peppery little bundle of nerves and scars and sharp bones. Her name is Surutu Kokadamurinsapantuheyno, and just from that I know that she comes from a traditionally stuck up family, but her name indicates modesty and humility.
So I figure Surutu’s parents were sick of the airs put on by the Kokadamurinsapantuheyno family and gave her a short name to remind her that she’s not so superior.

Surutu starts the game flat broke with nearly nothing to her name, so it looks like her parents’ strategy had some fallout. Or perhaps it just stacked on to Surutu’s eventful life. In any event, she probably got her start aboard ship, working like a devil and eating wormy bread. The ship she served on at first was more of a coastal cruiser (what those bigots from the Confederacy and Opetka would call a “pirate”), heavily armed and making sure that Ob-lob got their due of what travels the oceans (meaning ‘all your cargo if you put up a fight’). After doing her share of fighting in these engagements, she got hurt and learned some basic stuff from the ship’s medic, eventually becoming his aide. Seeing that people with special skills got special treatment, she decided to become an enchanter.

Here we get into ‘mistakenly educated.’ She misrepresented herself as a more skilled doctor than she was, in order to get a job tending to a magician’s hypochondriac daughter. The daughter’s primary illness was “not enough attention from daddy” and having a private companion – especially one as colorful as Surutu – was a great source of cheer to her. The wizard and the daughter were both Confederate, and Surutu managed to pick up quite a bit of learning (directly from the daughter and by spying on the sorcerer) including the spell Water Stride before being discovered.

Running off to the first Ob-lob ship she could find, she fled over the sea, but the magician’s wrath pursued her. Conjuring a storm with Uldish magic, he sank her ship, but Surutu survived and managed to save her captain as well. A prominent member of the Gursanzotulevomurfofan family, he settled in one of the desert port cities and flourished. He is now the primary surdomohaikutano in the Milondese port of Kiqwani. Surutu keeps in touch.

Surutu’s wanderlust drove her on, and while traveling throughout Milonda she fell in love with a Pahar soldier of fortune she met in the Wuhra plains. He was an expert animal trainer, trying to import dunimu to his homeland. Though he never returned her feelings and was, indeed, totally indifferent to them, she stuck with him long enough to pick up some skills before tragedy struck. Captured by a mad priest of Setekesh, her love was sacrificed to create a talking hawk with human intelligence. She killed the priest in revenge and took the hawk with her. It remembers nothing of the human man’s life, but she still calls it by her old lover’s name, and still sees little flashes of his old nature and personality from the bird.

**Surutu Kokadamurinsapantuheyno**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body 3</th>
<th>Command 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+2 Expert Sailor</td>
<td>+1 Expert Animal Trainer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2 ED Fight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2 Parry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1 Endurance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>+1 Sorcery</td>
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**Knowledge 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+3 Eerie</td>
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<tr>
<td>+1 Scrutinize</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordination 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+1 Climb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1 Perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Devil’s Comb)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Charm 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patron:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surdomohaikutano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohinazda Gursanzo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Enemy:** The wizard Riser Sands

**Animal Companion:** Talking Hawk

**Spell:** Water Stride
Start with two in every Stat, roll 11d10, use the sets as life experiences and the waste dice as events. If this is unfamiliar, look at page 50 in REIGN.

**BACKGROUND**

2x1 Beggar: At some point you were responsible for taking care of yourself, without the resources or support one might expect. How'd you overcome that (if you have)? +1 SENSE, +2 Plead, +1 Vigor, +1 Scrutinize, +1 Endurance

3x1 Masterless Hireling: You spent some time unemployed, or self-employed. Apparently, it wasn’t easy. What were you doing? +2 Expert _________, +2 Endurance, Hard Headed

4x1 Desert Scavenger: Rather than count on some employer, you went into business for yourself, scratching what you could out of the desert’s dubious ‘bounty.’

5x1 Master of the Dunes: You now possess the talents necessary to explore and harvest the sands. +3 Student: Desert Plants and Animals, +1 Endurance, +1 Vigor

2x2 Bag Snatcher: Did you steal from need, or just the need to alleviate some boredom? +1 COORDINATION, +2 Stealth, +2 Dodge, +1 Run

3x2 Home Breaker: What led you up from crimes of opportunity to premeditated thefts? +1+ED Stealth, +2 Climb

4x2 Cat Burglar: Successful criminals aren’t terribly common. How have you evaded the clutches of the law? (Or, if you didn’t, how did you survive, escape or talk your way out of it?) +1+ED Climb, +1 Stealth, +1 Wealth

5x2 Commissioned Retriever: Instead of bothering with the uncertainties of going into a house, seeing what’s there and later seeing what you can get paid for it, you now get hired, half in advance, to remove items of particular value to your clients. Of course, you may still see something else of interest while you’re on the job… +2 Patron, +3 Possession

2x3 Spearman: This could mean you were in a city’s army, that you were trained with it as a matter of tradition, or simply that you spent part of your young adulthood fending off alligators on the family farm. +1 BODY, +3 Fight, +2 Parry

3x3 Archer: You weren’t just some dogbody soldier on the city walls, showering arrows indiscriminately at the enemy. You were a chariot archer, moving fast and picking off hapless infantry at will. +2 Expert: Chariot Pilot, +2 Weapon: Bow, Ruhini Archer

4x3 Banner Master: The banner master is the squad leader, both for walking troops and wheeled ones. With banner signals, he directs his group of up to twenty soldiers. +3 Tactics, +1 Parry, +1 Weapon: Bow

5x3 Commander at Arms: At the fringes of the fray, a commander at arms watches the greater battle, signals to the banner masters, and confers with the general or other commanders to determine the course of action. +3 Strategy, +1 Intimidate, +1 Status

2x4 Market Scribe: The many illiterates of the Ruhini routinely pay scholars with even less ready cash than themselves to read, write and translate on their behalf. At one time, that was your task. +1 KNOWLEDGE, +3 Language(s), +2 Lore

3x4 Bookworker: Above the market scribblers are independent scholars whose work is underwritten by a patron (or who, for whatever reason, don’t require support). +1 Language, +ED Lore, +1 Sorcery, +1 Spells

4x4 Lawyer: The legal system of the seven cities is elaborate, and when the issue falls in between two cities’ laws, it becomes doubly elaborate. Some make their living navigating those murky legal waters. +2 Student: Law, +1 Lore, +1 Sorcery, +1 Spells

5x4 Sage: With enough time, experience and expertise, one can become an admired teacher, with people traveling from all the cities with their tough questions. Upgrade Lore ED to MD.
2x5 Tool of the Elders: Many people fall prey to the machinations of the undying enchanters, seemingly omniscient and steeped in centuries of guile. They become spies or informers, restlessly roving for facts to present to their masters. How'd they get you? What did they threaten, or promise? How have you made yourself useful? +1 KNOWLEDGE, +2 Hearing, +1 Sorcery, +1 Spells, +1 Student: Esoteric Math

3x5 Upunzine Apprentice: One of the Elders, or a small group of them, have seen something in you they like. Or at least something they wish to control. They have given you a taste of the deeper mysteries of their magic, not just the scraps. What did they see? What did you pay? +1 Student: Esoteric Math, +1 Sorcery, +2 Spells, +1 Eerie

4x5 Elder’s Favorite: Which of your qualities has so charmed an Elder that she or he has made you a particular pet? +ED Sorcery, +3 Patron

5x5 Failed Elder: Oh, how have the mighty fallen. You almost made it, almost lived forever, almost got a city to call your own. What’s happened since? Whenever you step in, a particular hammer on your spiritual foot? +1 Status, +1 Student: Esoteric Math, Flawed Upunzine Attunement, +2 Spells

4x6 Courtesan/Gigolo: There’s an old Mwa saying that women who sell their bodies feel shame, while a man who is gets paid for his sex feels pride. What’s your opinion? +1 Perform, +1 Graces, +3 Beauty

5x6 Indispensable Political Functionary: The highest evolution of the sponge is one who leeches, not off an individual, but off an entire society. Often these individuals aren’t malicious. In fact, many were just so personable that no one had the heart to fire them. Upgrade Fascinate ED to MD.

2x7 Stableworker: Currying, shoeing, foaling and (of course) mucking, ’twas a stablehand’s life for you! Did you labor in the stalls because you love horses? Or do you hate horses because you labored in the stalls? +1 COORDINATION, +3 Expert: Animal Trainer, +1 Ride, +1 Animal Companion

3x7 Charioteer: The esteemed position of charioteer means you drive (or used to drive) a war chariot towards enemy troops while the archer at your side picked them off like helpless flies. Got any good war stories? +2 Expert: Chariot Pilot, +2 Ride, +1 Animal Companion

4x7 Dune Rider: Are you a dashing messenger between cities, entrusted with valuable news, cargo and passengers? Or are you a scurvy dune dog who preys on the caravans? +3 Expert: Sand Raft Pilot, +2 Animal Companion

5x7 Caravan Leader: You’re an expert at moving people and objects across the desert, either on the road or off it, at maximum speed. +4 Possession, Upgrade one Ride or Pilot die to ED.

2x8 Wandering Hawker: You sell something. What is it? Do you stay in one city and stroll the streets extolling your wares? Or do you travel between the cities, selling something specialized that doesn’t have enough demand in any one place for you to afford settling? +1 COMMAND, +3 Haggle, +1 Wealth, +1 Plead

3x8 Shopkeeper: You have a storefront where you do your business. What is it you sell, and who buys it? +1 Wealth, +1 Possession, +ED Haggle, +1 Plead

4x8 Industrious Merchant: No longer a solitary entrepreneur, you now have workers to attend to the tedious or unpleasant aspects of business. How do you treat them? +1 Wealth, +1 Followers, +1 Possession, +1 Graces, +1 Inspire

5x8 Merchant of the Confederation: Now you’ve reached the apex. The Ruhini Merchant Confederation has accepted you, offering you the benefits of their support and expecting the benefits of yours. Who do you hate most in your new family? +1 Status, +1 Followers, +1 Possession, +1 Language, +1 Empathy

2x9 Business: It’s not an official position with steady pay or anything, but you see yourself as the guardian of your neighborhood – no, scratch that. When you’re honest with yourself, you know you’re the heart and soul of the group, holding them together, mediating disputes and offering wise advice. Even if it’s not always appreciated at the time. 1 COMMAND, +2 Inspire, +1 Patron, +2 Intimidate

3x9 Negotiator: You’ve found a job where your skills at cajolery and verbal bullying can translate into actual coin. For whom are you cutting your myriad deals? +1 Graces, +ED Inspire, +2 Language(s)
One Roll in the Ruhini

4x9 Orator: You now work largely for yourself and, of course, for the good of those wise enough to accept your leadership. What are you leading them towards? What do you ask of them? +1 Followers, First two levels of an Inspire path, +1 Inspire

5x9 Diplomatic Envoy: You speak for one of the seven cities, or to one on behalf of another nation. You’re not a full Ambassador, but you can certainly see it from here. Promote Inspire ED to MD. +Promote Inspire ED to MD.

2x10 Flirt: Everybody likes a party, but some are better at it than others. You know how to have fun. You know how to make fun for others. And, when needed, you know how to make fun of others. +1 CHARMM, +1+ED Lie, +1 Wealth, +1 Fascinate

3x10 Sybarite: Living for pleasure is nice work if you can get it. How’d you get it? +2 Jest, +1 Status, +1 Graces, +1 Student: Drugs and Poisons

4x10 Grandly Debauched: The plebeian pleasures of bottle, bed and breakfast buffet have begun to pall for you. You seek further stimulation, and find it in the compelling social duels between yourself and others of the leisure class. +1 Animal Companion, +1 Lie, +ED Jest, +1 Status

5x10 Utterly Jaded: Not just another biting fish in the pond, you’re a cruising social shark. Nothing shocks you, but neither does anything amuse you. You’re in a rut, everything is boring and used-up, but how can you shake yourself out of it? How can you feel something again? +1 Lie, +1 Graces, +2 Empathy, +1 Followers

6x9 Everybody’s Friend: You’re pleasant to be around. Odds are, someone you know is secretly in love with you. +1 CHARMM

7x9 Horse Trainer’s Get: One parent, or both, worked with horses, and not the dumb cart-dragging brutes either. You can ride, and ride well. +3 Ride, +2 Expert: Vehicle Repair

8x9 Barkeep: Sometimes you want to go where everybody pays you for liquor. +3 Empathy, +2 Possession (which is your tavern, of course)

9x9 Religious Demagogue: Which creed, in particular, do you decry from street corners and/or your pulpit? Is the glaze on your eyes genuine fervor, or the residue of hypocrisy? +3 Inspire, +2 Followers

10x9 Pampered Artisan: You’re skilled at making impractically long fingernails beautiful. This gets you admitted to many fine homes, where you are alternately showered with affection and ignored like a piece of furniture. +1 Patron, +3 Expert: Fingernail Artisan, +1 Hearing, +1 Status (Yes, this result costs 6 not 5, but “Fingernail Artisan” is unlikely to get dice on the table as often as Dodge and we all know it.)

Events

1 Built to Last: Anything from hardy parentage to hard living could yield unusual robustness. Where’d you get yours? +3 Vigor, +2 Endurance

2 Miserable Bitch/Wretched Whoreson!: Perhaps you’re not literally either of the aforementioned, but someone called you those names with ill intent, and he or she didn’t stop with words. Who was spraying you with spit and invective? Why? What did you do? +3 Run, +2 Dodge

3 General’s Child: Is your military parent still alive? Were the two of you close, or was the General a distant and forbidding figure of discipline? Did you develop tactical insights on a parent’s knee? Or is it a natural gift that led your parent to greatness? +3 Strategy, +2 Tactics

4 Dilettante: Well, some people just have widespread interests. You’re one. +1 Lore, +1 Student: __________, +1 Language, +1 Expert: __________, +1 Perform

5 Sunwise: Ooh, what dire and desperate series of events landed you on the Mount of Rays? What’s the nature of the conflict between you and your passenger spirit? Imperfect Sunwise Attunement, +2 Sorcery, +2 Spells
**Example**

I roll 0,3,4,7,4,1,1,8,6,7, so my background results are 3x1, 2x4 and 2x7. The events are 3,6,8,10. I arrange these in the following order.

**3 General’s Child.** But I never knew my father. During a civil upheaval in his Wuhra homeland, he was on the losing side. My mother took me to her homeland—the distant city of Kininguvu—but she never let me forget who my father had been. (+3 Strategy, +2 Tactics)

**6 Everybody’s Friend.** Why did my dad marry a foreign woman with no prospects? I dunno. People say I look like her though. (+1 CHARM)

**2x7 Stable Worker.** That wasn’t much fun, but mom and I had to get by. (+1 COORDINATION, +2 Expert: Animal Trainer, +1 Ride, +1 Animal Companion)

**2x4 Market Scribe.** Mucking stables by day and being mercilessly mama-taught by night, I eventually improved myself to the point that I could get a thinking job. That was about the time my mother passed away, but at least she died content. (+1 KNOWLEDGE, +3 Languages, +2 Lore)

**3x1 Masterless Hireling.** I might have contented myself with transcription and translation all my days, but I had a touch of wanderlust and I fell in with a handsome caravan master. Unfortunately, once we were out in the desert, it turned out that the caravan was a sham, and he was actually a bandit. I refused to stay with a criminal, but by that point was all the way down in Upunzi. (+1 SENSE, +2 Plead, +1 Vigor, +3 Endurance, +1 Scrutinize, +2 Expert, Hard Headed)

**10 Pampered Artisan.** In Upunzi, I studied the art of fingernail sculpting, eventually catching the eye of one of the Elders. When I spurned his repulsive embrace, though, I felt it wise to flee as far as possible, which wound up being Punga, on the Wuhra border. (+1 Patron, +1 Status, +3 Expert: Finger Sculptor, +1 Hearing)

**8 Barkeep.** I sank all my money into a tavern, which seems to be attracting an odd clientele. There’s one while-bearded guy who only orders cheap wine and keeps trying to interest people in his ‘treasure map.’ If business doesn’t pick up, I might ask him about that myself.
Nothing is perfect, nor is any man. Here follow two small pieces of supplement that I didn't miss until the layout was complete. Folding them into the layout would have meant redoing every page past the "N" stuff in the Encyclopedia. Rather than start 80+% over, I opted to stick them here at the end.

**Suuldru**

Suuldru are described on page 177. They have the following Stats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Roll Height</th>
<th>Number of Wound Boxes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>7-9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right Claw</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Claw</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right Wing</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
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<td>Body 3-5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td>2-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swim MD</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grab 2-3</td>
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<td>Hear 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fight 2-4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sight 3</td>
<td></td>
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Trainability: 2-4

Tricks: 3-6

Special: AR1 on hit locations 5, 6 and 10

Move: 10' per round in the water, plus an additional 5' for each point of Width in a Swim set.

Attacks: Claws do W+1K
The great Nuhou family of the Wu-hra Empire worships no god, saying they have no need of such things nor any sign that prayer does any good. They believe that time moves in a circle, and that each one of us, in the course of an unknown number of generations, is his own ancestor, that the forgotten nations of the past are also the yet-unborn countries that will arise and forget us.

Moreover, the Nuhou believe that this cycling of time occurs on a personal level as well. Each of us is reborn again and again, but each of us is always reborn as himself. The moment you die, you are born and live life again with the same parents, the same friends and foes, the same loves and hates, all culminating in the same death.

Over a century ago, before the Wu-hra unified, a theologian of Mwa debated with a philosopher of the Nuhou before the ruler of Punga, who said he would accept the faith of the most persuasive speaker, and align his city-state with the people who espoused that faith. Mwa’s theologian began by decrying the Wu-hra philosophy, saying that it denied free will. The philosopher rebutted the point by saying that his knowledge of Empress Serenity's free choices years past did not rob her of her freedom. “We can all choose,” he said, “But we inevitably choose as we always have. This is why it is critical to be true to yourself, to create the happiest and most honorable life you can, to be someone you can bear to be with at all times and look upon in the mirror. We must live each of our infinite lives as if it was the first, because when you choose cowardice, or are humiliated, or suffer from a foolish error, you are dooming yourself to that same pain over and over, forever. We follow no god nor need one, for we build our own heaven and our own hell here, from the bricks of each day in our lives.”

The ruler aligned himself with the Wu-hra family, who were thereby made great and had much access to the Ruhini and its treasures. When the ruler died, his heir ejected the foreigners, but not without great battles and many deaths. They were driven out, but they took with them knowledge of the Ruhini and its peoples, and the Wu-hra have made many attacks since then, guided by maps made by the Nuhou.