

Sands of Fire

A fantasy setting for use with the Game Engine Manual
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Into the Desert

It's hard to believe that I'm about to release this manual. It's been a long road getting here, almost six years now. Sands of Fire originally began a long time ago, as a potential supplement for Dan Lawrence's *Adventure Quest* game series. At the time, I was also working on *AQ: Freezone*. Since Dan was already working on one fantasy game, he didn't feel that he needed another, and so a wealth of material remained in my hands.

About that time, too, I worked on the *Galactic Empires RPG*, which required a new gaming system to accompany it. This is all been said and done, and the *Game Engine Manual* evolved out of that. This setting, Taibaijani, evolved along the same lines.

Along the way, I ran Taibaijani as a Game Master under a number of systems. I had some great play-testers, and a lot came together. In fact, some of the best ideas on the races and the sights within came from play testing. I owe them each a big round of thanks.

About two years ago, the *Game Engine Manual* approached a workable shape. Most of the rules were finished, if not readable, and I sat about work on the game's first setting. I scavenged my notes on Taibaijani, and began this manual as a 'blue-sky' project.

I didn't expect Taibaijani to be so difficult to complete. I also didn't realize how much a part of me the Elemental Sisters had become. Notes conflicted with one-another, and many of notes that didn't weren't completely readable. Even scavenging this small manual on the lands took a good deal of effort. Anyone who knows me will tell you that I'm not the most organized person in the world.

Eventually, though, I sat down and rewrote all the notes and remains into a workable setting manual. The result is finally here. I hope that you'll enjoy it as much as I have. May the sands blow calmly, and the magic flow freely around you.

-Neale Davidson

Required Reading

This guide is not a standalone product, and requires some knowledge of playing role-playing games. While it's hoped that the book is a good enough read on its own, two other books are needed to make the experience complete.

The Game Engine Manual. This book details the basic rules on role-playing with the GEM system. While the source material presented in this book would still be useful, a lot of the details in how things are accomplished would be confusing without it.

Elemental Reign. This supplement details the magic system prevalent in Taibaijani. Elemental magic is fairly common at the low levels, but high-powered magic is extremely rare.

Using the Book

This manual is divided into four main sections, each detailing an aspect of handling a campaign within Taibaijani. Everyone playing within the setting should be familiar with the material presented here. But no one, not even the Game Master, needs to memorize everything.

The Great Orb: The manual begins with a brief tour of Taibaijani and all the known lands. Cultures, histories, and other information fill the pages, detailed life and politics on this world.

World Religion: This brief chapter provides a resource on the world's major religions, and rules on how to create holy characters for those religions.

People of the Sands: Finally, this chapter gives details on the races and peoples of the known world. It is here that players will learn how to create Scorian, Drakkhen, Pteryl, Tebian, and Corbani characters.

Campaigning: This chapter is an aid for the Game Master. It described quirks in running Taibaijani, warns of potential problems, and offers a large section on setting up campaigns and adventures.

The Great Orb

I've have wondered, sometimes, just how much of our world we truly know. Early scholars have estimated this great orb to be nearly 40,000 kilometers around. Yet, we, in all our history, know only enough of our one land, the known world. And it only covers 2000 kilometers from end to end.

But even with this limited sprawl, we thrive on our desert sands. The shattered moon watches over the empires below, and the peoples who comprise them. The twin red suns bring us powerful heat, to warm our scales. Welcome to our world, traveler, allow me to introduce it to you.

The World's Place

What we know of our world sits upon our Great Orb near its equator. From our science, we knew that the Orb circles around our twin suns, and is the fifth child in our universe. A number of important celestial bodies dominate our skies.

Allarid. The larger of the twin suns, Allarid is named for our greatest god and father. In the sky, he is the larger mate to Apolia, and dominates the day.

Apolia. This is the mated sun to Allarid, a smaller, slightly brighter red sun to Allarid. She orbits around him swiftly, performing a celestial dance to please him.

Aranor. Our Orb has one moon, which was shattered by a large comet a few hundred years ago. The moon, Aranor, is a broken husk, orbited by a thin ring of its own fragments.

Hazi-Stone. The first world orbiting the twins is a small gray world. It generally appears low in the sky, and moves around the mated suns five times in a year.

Ocana. A small blue orb circling the twin suns four times a year, Ocana appears dimly in the night sky, barely above the horizon most times.

Hazi-Hakara. This fiery red jewel is often called the 'morning star' because of how brightly it

shines in the sky. She moves through the skies, orbiting her parents twice every year.

Wisphazi. This small white planet is more of an errant stone than a true world. While being the nearest neighbor to our home, it remains a dim speck in the night sky, orbiting her parents a little less than twice a year.

Dao. The sixth planet is a giant, striped with dark brown clouds, and massive. It is as distant from us as we are from our suns. It takes three years to orbit the twin suns.

Terronia. Marked in the northern sky, this constellation consists of six stars, arranged in a circle. It is most prominent during the first season of the year.

Aquene. This constellation consists of ten stars. Five each are sitting in a wave pattern, one slightly above the other. This appears in the northern sky during the first and second parts of the year.

Pyra. A spectacular sight in the night sky. This constellation consists of a bright red star encircled by three other stars. It appears in the northern skies during the hottest time of the year.

Aerona. Eight stars arranged in a curl make up the constellation of Aquene. This appears in the northern night sky during the west season of the year.

Shadira. The cold season is watched over by Shadira's constellation. Three stars form a line beneath a single bright blue star. So worried are the native races about Shadira, that the appearance of the blue star as the first in the night sky is said to be the worst of dark omens.

Measuring Time

The early merchants used the constellations and moon often to mark the passage of time, and therefore they quickly established a calendar based on celestial events. The moon, before it's ravaging, orbited around the orb once every twenty days. It currently is off slightly, closer to twenty-two days now. Each of these twenty days was considered a month's passage. Each month was also broken into four weeks of five days apiece, to mark smaller voyages more easily.

The Orb itself orbits around the twin suns once every ten months, making a year. The merchants marked the passage of each year when compared to the seasons. The first Sultan of Cyrani established the formal calendar for tax reasons early in recorded history. He decided to use the already established calendar of merchant traders, and presented it into a written form for his people.

Month	General Conditions
Terronia	North currents, cool air.
Marid	Shoreline rains, active seas
Aquene	Wet season, dangerous seas, Floods on shore.
Tojin	Longest, calmest days. Excellent gardens.
Pyra	South currents, warm air, Dry wells.
Pyrhault	Very dry, generally hot, Calm seas.
Aerona	Dangerous seas, harsh winds.
Majin	Shoreline rains, active seas
Shadira	Longest, coldest nights. Poor gardens.
Shudder	Desert frost common, Calm seas.

Birth of the World

Allarid, our great father, took the elements of the earth, water, fire, air, and void to create the world. He used the earth to create the moon and ground. He used water to create the oceans, rivers, and oasis. He used the fire to create the suns and stars. He used air to create the sky and wind. Lastly, after years beyond reckoning, he used the element of void to instill some of his creations with the precious gift of life.

Each of the five elemental daughters was allowed one race to nurture in the world. Terronia, the goddess of Earth, chose the Scorian. The goddess of Water, Aquene, chose the Corbani. To Pyra went the Drakkhen. The Pteryl became Aerona's children.

The last daughter, Shadira, was angered, since she felt that none of the remaining life on the world was worthy of her protection. It was her gift that gave the world life, and yet she was forced to chose her protected species last. Enraged, she left the world, refusing to aid it until she returned with a race of her own choosing. It is no coincidence, then, that Shadira's power once again can be felt with the arrival of the humans.

The Geography of the Known World

The known world consists of a huge peninsula jetting off from a larger but barren landmass to

the north. The 'Great Sea' surrounds the remaining three sides of the land.

The East consists of the older empires, such as Cyris and Harkar. Here the deserts are at their most gentle, and occasional rains bring relief to travelers and farmers alike. The coast of this region consists of the most fertile land known

Going to the north, we next encounter the powerful Barrier Mountains, home of the Pteryl. This huge mountain range separates the rocky Drakkhen land of Karagolia from the rest of the world. How the ancient Drakkhen armies managed to travel these peaks to invade Cyris remains a mystery.

Continuing to the east, we reach the driest part of the land. For centuries this area was thought of as uninhabitable, but the arrival of the humans into this land has proven this thought wrong. With advanced irrigation techniques, the humans have managed to carve out their own empire, Taibajani, from these desert wastes.

Leaving the mainland, and continuing east, we discover a number of smaller island chains. This is where the majority of our exotic spices and fruits are grown, though these lands are considered too small individually to support a true empire.

The Old Nations

Civilization first started in the west, where the nation of Cyris was born, and her contributions of music, language, and art became the foundation for modern society. While occasional conflicts have marred its rich history, its proud accomplishments will likely never be erased from our descendants.

History

Our history traces back to the settling of the world's first city, Cyrani. It was here that the first Sultan came to power, and the first written language was established. As the first family houses grew beyond the borders of the young civilization, it spread to the cities of Tebian, Harkar, and eventually become the first true empire, Cyris.

The region has long been associated with knowledge, learning, and magic. The classic

work, *The Magistrum*, was written early in the land's history, and remains the most influential text even written on magic.

Over time, Cyris split because of political reasons, and formed new nations of the old city-states. As religion and other differences grew, so to did the identities of each nation. Eventually, Cyris found herself to be the mother of several nations, not all of which friendly.

While the old empires are at an uneasy piece now, there have been incursions. Cyris, despite having once been conquered by an advance Drakkhen attack, has risen to remain the leader of the old empires.

Culture

The old empires are, for the most part, dominated by Corbani. Their culture and history goes back as far as time has been recorded. They remember clearly the ancient religions, the superstitions, and the lost past.

That history has led to a peculiar arrogance among the lands. Corbani have come to consider themselves the most civilized and scholarly of all the various races. While this is disputably true. They're not so far ahead of any other race to warrant their elitist attitudes. In fact, every other race has made certain contributions that far surpass that a Corbani can do.

As ill hospitable as the old nations may seem, they are also some of the most beautiful places to visit in the known lands. Corbani architecture consists of pressed sandstone and colorful dyes. Giant temples and shrines dot the landscape, each one impressive and inspiring. The older the settlement, the more time and care has gone into preserving and decorating the buildings.

Music and religion are also extremely important to the Corbani. Soft brass flutes can often be heard over distant sands, and the old religious songs of the elemental sisters fill the most tranquil of places.

The Old Nations, then, embrace their history and culture from years before, and are loath to have anything interfere with them. For travelers and merchants, they should know to be on their guard. Even in the most open-minded areas in

the Old Nations, a voiced subversive thought could mean a swift death.

Cyris

Cyris is the oldest civilization known, dating back to our earliest history. It is a large land, covering much of the western coastline, and is home primarily to the Corbani and Tebian races. The land is often considered the capitol of civilization and knowledge.

Cyris has some of the nicest land in the world. It's farming is excellent, and its climate mild for most of the coast. Her people can take some solace in knowing that they're never too far from water.

Cyris, perhaps, is also more passive in its mind set than the rest of the old empires. This isn't to say that they're particularly open-minded, but merely laid-back. They would not approve of many Humans or Tebian among them, but wouldn't dream of taking direct action to show their disapproval. Anyone considered being too radical for the region would get strange stares, curt service, and generally just find the area 'unsettling' to them.

Externally, Cyris has the reputation of being aloof and above the other nations somehow. Perhaps it's the age of the land, or the fact that Cyris spawned the other empires. The arrogance does, however, give rise to distrust and discontent among the neighbors.

Harkar

This empire was founded when it's first leader rebelled against Cyris's religious leaders. He felt that they were not being stern enough in their handling of religious matters. He was a fanatic, and his followers and he fought bitterly to forge a new empire. Harkar became the result.

Harkar is not a forgiving nation. Where other nations may voice disapproval of liberal ideals, Harkar will see them punished by death. It is strongly entrenched in the most harsh and barbaric followings of The Pentad, and sees itself as the true religious leader of the world.

Harkar is on the southern shore of the Known World, and at one time made up the southern half of the Old Cyris empire. Now, it is home mostly to Corbani zealots. Occasionally, members of other races, notably Scorian, pass through

their borders, but Harkar would be loath to call them 'citizens'.

Harkar is in a good location for an Empire, which accounts for its remaining in existence while hating all of her neighbors. Rain floods the northern reaches, crossing over the dry lands to the south. While water may be a relief in other areas of the world, it can be considered dangerous here as the floods cover the desert, washing all in their path.

Not surprisingly, Harkar has many enemies. They have zero tolerance, and do their best to even avoid trade with their neighbors. It's only a matter of time before another land tires of them, and attempts to conquer them.

Anakar

Anakar is now as Cyris once was. The land is ruled by Pagan faith, and is not open in their viewpoint. Anakar isn't as militant as Harkar, but the attitude shows in their laws and culture.

Anakar remains the last of the major empires to employ slaves. They consider any non-Corbani to be a lesser, and point to the race's discovery of religion as proof. Non-Corbani have no rights in Anakar society, and cannot expect any happiness in their lives there. Tebani are often used as 'sexual sacrifices' to Aquene.

Anakar is located on the southern shore of the known world, directly south of Harkar. It was established shortly after Harkar, largely because it found itself cut off from the motherland. It is considered by many to be isolated, and backward.

Anakar owes its continued survival to the fact it's on the extreme southern edge of the known world. It enjoys an uneasy peace with Harkar, but has enraged most other countries in the world at some point. Taibaijani considers itself to be Anakar's largest threat, due to the capturing of many Human merchant vessels as they passed outside of Anakar's waters.

Karaq

Karaq basically consists of nomadic Scorian. The culture there is a simple one, consisting of basic barter and travel from oasis to oasis. The land basically only exists formally to protect Scorian

nomads against the hostilities of Harkar and Anakar.

The climate of Karaq almost never changes, no matter which part of the country one is in, or during whatever time of year. Karaq is dry. The days are exceptionally warm, the nights are exceptionally cold, and there is little water and brush to break the monotony.

Scorians have established a few small cities to defend their way of life, but it remains a very open, and most barren, wasteland. Karaq has its capitol in Locke, where the Caliph rules loosely over the land.

Karaq enjoys peace and quiet for the most part. It's neighbors, though hostile, can't afford a strong incursion into their ranks, and Scorian traders are well received by most other nations in the world.

Maqhaz

The smallest of the old nations, Maqhaz gained its independence by being so remote from her parent land of Cyris. Maqhaz is on the extreme southern area of the Eastern Coast, surrounded by either ocean or Anakar. The country is a slim sliver surrounding the Maqhaz bay, dotted with small shrines and port towns.

Merchants searching out the coast settled the tiny nation. Maqhaz's bay was perfect for a harbor, and the land was fertile enough for some farms. Soon, a few formal ports appeared on the bay, and finally some true cities. Maqhaz was too remote for Cyris to govern effectively, and peacefully gave the new land its independence.

Maqhaz is probably the most accepting of the old-nations, though it takes its religion very seriously. Aquene is worshipped heavily here, as Maqhaz believes that she ensures the land's survival. Indeed, the bay's trade keeps it afloat, and Maqhaz has a formidable navy.

The small nation has pressing concerns with Anakar and Harkar being so close. Maqhaz still trades with those neighbors, but seeks more active and stable trade with Cyris. The nation mostly has good relations with everyone else, but remains ever wary of incoming attacks.

The Drakkhen Lands

To the north of the Barrier Mountains are the Drakkhen lands. These are the young empires, carved through war and perseverance. It is here where honor and power take their strongest form. The birthplace of Allarid's religion will bring no dishonor, and will punish the tainted severely.

History

Much of the Drakkhen history roots from the old Drakkhen Empire. This empire was forged from conquest and oppression, and spanned over the entirety of the northern lands. Drakkhen Su was founded and became a mighty fortress town, and the Empire reigned for several generations, passing from one iron claw to the next.

This was not to last. Karag, the third son of the last Drakkhen Emperor, led his troops into the Old Nations, and managed, for a short time, to hold onto the Cyris capitol. This changed him, and for the first time, Drakkhen were introduced to the arts. When Karag returned, he was dismissed as a tainted warrior, and his lands were stripped from him.

Enraged, Karag began a series of revolts that shattered the old empire. From these ashes came the land of Karagolia, and the teachings of Allarid. Honor replaced strength as the deciding factor in leadership. Courage replaced power.

This was not perfect, however. Former slaves revolted and founded the land of Ardan. Politics and internal strife ripple through the entirety of the empire. The introduction of a human empire near their borders has sent shockwaves through the religious circles.

Culture

The Drakkhen are not a subtle people, and both their history and culture reflects this. Personal honor is extremely important to the Drakkhen lands, though perceptions of that honor can vary widely from town to town. For a traveler, survival is generally only assured by being polite to the natives as much as possible.

First and foremost, Karagolia has the highest amount of influence over these lands. A warrior's spirit and this attitude drive this powerful

country. Their ideals have flooded over into its neighbors, for better or ill. Travelers may, at first, be concerned when dealing with Karagolia's militant attitude, or Conqak's outright hostility. They shouldn't take it too personally, it's just who they are.

Allarid's strongest presence is here, filling the region with honor, justice, law, and codes-of-conduct. Even Ardan, considered by most to be the most laid-back of lands, has a strict legal system, which must be adhered to on pain of death. All of these countries use devout followers of Allarid to dispense justice. Knowing the laws of one land, then, will aid someone in knowing the laws in all of them.

The purely Drakkhen lands have a simple, direct culture. Their music consists of mostly of percussion, and their poems are short verses of history. Their most notable works consist of the original Code of Laws, and the Book of Allarid. The mindset of the Drakkhen is Spartan and functional.

Karagolia

The single largest civilized country in the world, Karagolia rests to the north of the Barrier Mountains, filling in the large expanse of land between east and west rise of that giant mountain chain. It is a harsh land, both in climate and in people. This is the birthplace of the Drakkhen, the most powerful warriors the world has seen.

Karagolia, as one can expect, is not a particularly liberal society. It is the birthplace of both Allarid's faith and the Code of Laws. Each of these has given a structure and strength to their society. The Drakkhens here take laws and honor very seriously, and punish infractions harshly.

As contained Drakkhen in Karagolia are in honor and duty, however, they more than make up for it in their arts and passions. Drakkhen air-dances are enchanting to watch. The steady, powerful rhythms of Karagolia music can power up desires. The Drakkhen here do nothing in half-measures.

Karagolia is a parent country to Ardan and Conqak, and enjoys peaceful relations with each. Karagolia considers Conqak an unsafe threat, though, and is preparing to invade.

Otherwise, Karagolia is not seeking expansion, and is building its trade base with other nations.

Ardan

To the north of Taibaijani, and the east of Karagolia, is the land of Ardan. This land was primarily settled by freed and escaped slaves from the proper empire, and is predominantly Corbani and Tebani.

Ardan is a very passive and laid-back society, perhaps the most open-minded in the world. Magic is at its height here, and the greatest mage tower is located in its capitol. Art and style is very reminiscent of the old nation of Cyris, though Drakkhen influence can be seen everywhere.

Ardan is a wealthy country, having a large plush forest along its shore. It's very near to Cyris in having a pleasurable climate, and that alone attracts visitors and immigrants. Its export of wood ensures its economy. Its alliance with Taibaijani ensures its military. Ardan may be the most desirable place to live.

A committee of elders, consisting of a high-mage, a merchant, a laborer, and a priest of Allarid rule Ardan. The Caliph oversees the decision this panel makes, and has the final authority over the land.

Ardan is allied with Taibaijani, and enjoys the Human Empire's powerful military and exceptional trade. Karagolia remains peaceful relations, enjoying Ardan's wood supply, while returning it with metals. Other countries that would consider conquering the land would have great difficulty doing it. It appears that Ardan will remain healthy for a good long time.

Conqak

Originally started as an offshore prison colony, Conqak has evolved into a dangerous place for the Drakkhen of old. Here, a harsher brand of Drakkhen resides. Strength equates to ruler-ship, and power is brokered at the edge of a sword.

Conqak is a series of small islands, each with only one or two settlements. They enjoy good weather, but the oceans have rendered the islands rocky and useless for farming. As a result, Conqak is very dependent on Karagolia for food

and raw materials. This keeps Conqak from spreading its violence to her neighbors.

Not surprisingly, the strongest and most capable warlords rule Conqak. Each settlement has a strong leader, and the strongest of them becomes the Caliph over the realm. The problem arises quickly that these leaders aren't known for their brains, and spend most of their time infighting rather than working for the betterment of their land.

Conqak is a good example of a failed land, on its way to death. The weak starve, not because there isn't enough food brought it, but because the strongest leaders merely let them starve. The infighting between the settlements drains precious materials. Trading partners are loath to deal, and everyone considers them a potential threat. It's only a matter of time before Karagolia merely invades and deals with them once and for all.

The Wastes

The Wastes are North of the Barrier Mountains. This land is largely uncivilized, though some Drakkhen settlements dot the southern extremes near Karagolia. The Wastes are nothing but hard rock deserts, stretching endlessly to the north.

This isn't to say that The Wastes are without some manner of excitement. Many tales of forgotten races, powerful magic creatures, and haunting nights are attributed to the wastes. Plus, there are those parties that endeavor to cross the massive wastes, hoping to discover what's on the other side of them.

The Wastes could be considered Drakkhen territory, largely because no one else ventures out there. Some Drakkhen merchants, however, will take the volcanic ash to create the expensive and powerful Volcanic Armors. Others go to seek gems. Wealth can clearly be made, if a soul is brave enough to risk their lives, and give up their comforts, to gain it.

The Wastes will likely become more populated over time. If the volcanic earth can be cracked, it makes for excellent farmland. A great amount of work would be needed to bring in water, however, and no empire now has the resources to put in the effort.

The New Lands

Across the eastern arm of the Barrier Mountains lie the Human lands. Strangers to this world, the Humans have none-the-less settled and thrived on the harsh sands to cut out new and powerful empires. It is said that Shadira herself watches over them, keeping her child race from harm.

History

The lands east of the Barrier Mountains were a desolate place. Several times in history, Cyris and Karagolia tried to establish settlements, all of which failed. The lands soon gained a reputation for being cursed. It was as if Shadira herself was saving the lands for something else.

One night, as a Ardan fishing fleet passed near the south-eastern lands, a brilliant light flared upon the horizon. A massive magical gate opened, allowing a few thousand humans to flee from their dying world. The humans quickly constructed a new city, Taibaijani. This was the birth of the New Lands, and the Human presence on the world. Shadira, it seemed, had finally returned.

Relations with the Human settlements were difficult at first. Many of the other empires were frightened of their potential. Harkar, in a desperate move, attacked, and took a hard lesson in the use of gunpowder. Harkar's early defeat gave the humans some breathing room, and they forged their empire.

The Human lands have spread to the island nations of Fiohaji and Hankyo, but do not incur inland much. They have a powerful military force, and have allied themselves with Ardan tightly. They are on good terms with Cyris and Karagolia. In fact, their only real threat seems to be Harkar, and Taibaijani has massed troops along that border in preparation.

Culture

The Humans are an odd lot. Meaning more than just that they are alien to this world, but that their mindset is not like that of the other races. Where most races have adopted a particular set of mannerisms and philosophies, the Humans seem to thrive on their ability to change and adapt.

If there's a rule about humans, it's that no two of them are alike. They can range from the utmost honorable, to the downright despicable. Some can lead armies, others cannot exist without obeying. To write about such a culture would take volumes. To sum up, however, a traveler should trust only those that earn it, while showing respect at all times. There are as many humans who would ignore their word as there are that would keep it. But all of them know how to take offense, and they are no less deadly than the most belligerent Drakkhen.

For the most part, the Humans have seemed to acclimate to the desert way of life. Most have accepted and embraced Allarid, while others worship the Pentad. Their markets are the finest in the world, and their skills in engineering and architecture are incredibly functional, if not artistic. Taibaijani is so advanced, in fact, that Cyris harbors a jealous resentment of the newcomer race.

But the humans are also limited in number compared to the other races, and act accordingly. The lands strive to maintain peace on their borders, though Harkar makes this difficult. They are very open to outside ideas, and are very tolerant of others. Their legal system, however, remains harsh in penalties.

The Human Lands, as they're known, make up an interesting mix. They contain the sharp edges of Drakkhen weapons, the soft arts of Corbani music, and the merchants of the Scorian. They seem to take the elements of everything around them, and combine anew into a workable, thriving culture. They're few in numbers, perhaps, but should never be underestimated.

Taibaijani

Taibaijani is the land of humans, and is the only land where members of that race can be found in abundance. A few Corban and Scorian have made their way into the realm's population, but not in any great numbers. Travelers and merchants from all races are known to stop in Taibaijani cities, though, each contributing some to Taibaijani's changing culture.

The Humans have built a successful and thriving empire in the Far Eastern part of the known world. In the few hundred years since they're

arrival, a number of cities have been created. Each is well fortified and active with busy markets. Shrines to Allarid and the Elemental Daughters can be found in all major settlements.

The land of this impressive country is mostly dry and barren, but rests atop huge underground lakes. Many settlements are made in the middle of the desert, living off of deep wells. The shoreline, though, is rich, and many fruits are grown there. Taibaijani has a warm and dry climate that seldom sees storms.

When the humans were brought into the world, they brought with them their cattle and other food-stocks, the only other mammals in the world. Taibaijani is the sole supplier of the world's leather and poultry. Humans also brought with them the knowledge of gunpowder, a weapon that helped insure the safety of the new land.

Taibaijani is a powerful nation, with only one real enemy, Harkar. Most other nations give a grudging respect to the power, fearing them both for political and superstitious reasons. The land has grown and assured itself quickly, and looks to be a lasting nation in our world.

Fiohaji

Fiohaji began when a merchant shipwrecked into the main island because of one of the more treacherous currents. The merchants there, however, discovered a number of valuable spices and fruits, and soon adopted it as a route on their travels. It wasn't long before workers and loaders settled on the island, and the small nation was born.

Fiohaji consists of three large islands, and several smaller ones several dozen kilometers off of Taibaijani's coast. Humans mostly inhabit it, but members of various other races have come to seek their fortunes as well. It's an interesting mix of peoples living there. Some live in squalor, others in luxury.

Fiohaji is more ruled by the wealthy merchants than by the caliph, and the individual sultans are in power solely through their wealth. It is a disturbingly greedy state, and the faiths of Allarid and the Elemental Daughters are at their weakest here. Travelers should be wary.

Politically, Fiohaji has no real enemies, though now nation trusts their politics. It is a rich nation, but weak, and could be devastated by any nation choosing to attack them. Sadly, such an attack would destroy the only thing in the land worth fighting for, the rare fruits.

Hankyo

Barely able to be called a nation, Hankyo consists of a few islands well out to sea. It was founded by an exploration expedition of humans, seeking to learn about their world. They found a livable island chain, and settled there, unable to continue their voyage.

The settlement is, understandably, small, but one major city serves as a trade point. It collects a large amount of fish from the open sea, and sells it back to the mainland for other needed supplies. Other than fish, and some fruit, Hankyo desperately needs resources.

Hankyo's main trading partner is Taibaijani, with Ardan coming in a close second. Sailing expeditions often leave from Hankyo as well, as explorers seek to find new lands.

Languages

There are not many major languages in the world, and most merchants are well versed in many, if not all, of them.

Cyrani. This language is commonly found wherever the Corbani are. This is a smooth, soft sounding tongue that stresses mostly subtle inflections and quiet transitions between words.

Karagi. Karagi is a harsh, demanding language, consisting of short, sharp structure and deep tones. It is popular among the Drakkhen, and is the official language of Karagolia. The language does not extend much beyond the Barrier Mountains. However, wise merchants visiting the trading city of Taikong would do well to learn it.

Scorian. Scorian, phonetically, is similar to Taijani, consisting of a wide variety of tones and inflections. Scorian is a major language in Karaq, and many merchants pick the language up when dealing in overland trade. Sadly, there are many dialects of Scorian, which can confuse someone

fluent in the language, but used to slang from a different region.

Taijani. Commonly referred to as the human tongue, Taijani is the native language of the humans. Of all the major languages, this one is the most diverse. Inflection and tone are as important as the words themselves. Taijani's influence is spread throughout Taibaijani and into the lands of neighboring countries.

Languages and Characters

Each character will begin with his native language at level ten. In this world, schools and shrines are everywhere, so every character likely knows how to read and write his own language.

If a character wants to be illiterate, he is effectively taking the disadvantage, and will be unable to read or write until he learns his native language again, from scratch. A Game Master should also keep in mind this potent disability, and all the trouble it may cause.

Lastly, many characters can pick up one or more languages if they do any travelling. A Game Master should feel free to give characters a second language at level five, if she so chooses.

Currency

Barter is the most common way to purchase items in most countries, and only merchants seem to have adopted coinage. The merchants found it difficult to barter, because their needs varied so much from port to port. A port on their route may not need fruits, but require something that would be found later on their route. To avoid this, the merchants began fashioning vouchers as a form of currency. The vouchers were originally raw slips of jade, and were eventually fashioned into jade coin.

The jade coin has become the standard form of currency in most nations, and merchants everywhere will accept it in place of bartering. The coin itself is a rounded piece of jade, about three centimeters across, and marked with the symbols of the five Elemental Daughters.

When jade coinage gets too cumbersome for merchants to carry, they resort to using gems as portable currency. The following table gives the value of each main trade gem per kilogram of weight.

Gemstone	Value per Weight
Emerald	50 Jade
Sapphire	100 Jade
Ruby	250 Jade
Diamond	350 Jade
Amethyst	200 Jade

Starting Wealth

When a new character is generated, she's going to require jade and equipment. Typical starting characters should receive about 500 jade to buy their equipment, and the Game Master should price items as he sees necessary. A starting character should be able to get a complete set of basic equipment, rations, and travelling gear without any difficulty.

Wealthy and poor characters, however, can obviously start with a considerably different amount of jade. The Game Master should just use some common sense. She should not give wealthy characters everything they want, and poor characters should start out with more than nothing.

World Religion

The religions of the world are difficult to adequately state into words. Largely this is due to the absolute lack of any early written works on the subject. Early Cyris history reports of the existence of shrines to the Elemental Goddesses as early as the founding of Cyris itself.

Surprisingly, however, the faith in Allarid, the all-father of even the Elemental Daughters, predates the Pentad's religion. The Pentad itself even recognizes Allarid as God with dominion over the sisters, though the book goes on to explain that Allarid created the daughters to serve over the races, and that it's the daughters who need to be worshipped.

Today, though, the old faith in the elemental daughters is slipping to the wayside as more and more worshippers begin to follow Allarid. The conflict between the old and new religion has created a large amount of tension through the desert lands.

The Pentad

The Pentad served to modernize the Pagan faith, and define the roles of the sisters in the world. Followers now have the knowledge of what their goddess controls, and what is expected of them to gain her favor.

Terronia

The oldest daughter, the mistress of earth, is usually depicted as an elder Scorian woman with a near perfect bronze shell. In one pincer, she carries a hoe. The other pincer carries a sphere, presumably the world. She is quiet, reserved, and thoughtful, according to the Pentad. When Shadira became enraged at the sisters, only Terronia asked Shadira to stay. Terronia's mood is nearly constant, remaining at a certain level of inner calm. She is seldom provoked, but the world shakes when she is angry.

Terronia is celebrated as the goddess of nature and agriculture, and is most often worshipped in the Northern Forest by those who tend to it. Her followers are expected to care for the land and sea, keeping it bountiful. While the use of wood

as lumber and the use of fish and other animals of food is allowed, the mass razing of nature will provoke her fury. According to her ethos, the good of nature is always paramount to the wants of the mortals in the world.

Terronia Priest Characters

Followers of Terronia feel a responsibly to ensure nature's survival in the desert wastes. They are taught to cherish life as much as possible, and devote their skills to mending and healing.

Requirements: A priest of Terronia must first learn her religion to its maximum skill before receiving the true powers of her faith. This means that the player must bring the *Religion: Terronia* skill up to level ten.

As the daughter of nature, Terronia demands that her followers care for and respect the balance and harmony of life in the world. She would know what is proper for food, what is needed for housing, and punish or dissuade those who would waste the scarce natural resources.

To this end, priests of Terronia are also expected to learn botany, biology, and any other skills that would benefit nature.

Powers: When a follower of Terronia reaches devout status, her ability to aid nature greatly improves. Any effort made to directly aids nature is made at one die easier than normal. Also, the character recovers an extra point of mana and health every time she sleeps.

Aquene

The mistress of water is usually depicted as a beautiful Corban woman, with gemlike sapphire eyes. She enjoys being the most popular goddess among the Corban people, and her shrines can be found along all coasts. The Pentad depicts her as an unpredictable and almost spoiled child. At times she can seem a peace, with the oceans being calm. At other times she becomes enraged without much provocation, and lashes out violently.

Aquene is commonly seen as the goddess of fertility, and much of her religion is centered on the act of procreation. Celebration of life is most important to her ethos, and large parties of wine

and lechery are held often in her honor. A proper following of the ethos, however, would be a more reserved approach to coupling, and the official ethos follows more the sanctity of marriage, love, and family than what has been committed in the past. Marriages today are carried out in the name of either Allarid (for that faith) or in Aquene, for all faiths.

Aquene Priest Characters

Followers of Aquene are expected to honor life, family, and marriage. As such, they're usually called on to perform wedding ceremonies and fertility rituals, though they're often involved in ensuring the pleasures of procreation as well.

Requirements: A priest of Aquene must first learn her religion to its maximum skill before receiving the true powers of her faith. This means that the player must bring the *Religion: Aquene* skill up to level ten.

True priests of Aquene are generally sorts of midwives and counselors to couples. They'll care for children, offer aid and support, and improve the romantic lives of those they know. They would actively punish those who would callously break their vows, or use the name of their goddess to glorify rape or other such crimes.

Priests of Aquene can also expect to learn any skills that aid in counseling, as well as any healing skills possible. They are expected to hone their skills in any way that could potentially help marriage and families.

Powers: When a follower of Aquene reaches devout status, she becomes more charismatic and comely. Each of these statistics increases by two. She can also automatically detect the mood of anyone she sees with full accuracy. She can also sense the well being of eggs and unborn children.

Pyra

The mistress of fire is commonly depicted as a Drakkhen warrior clad in ceramic armor and carrying a great scimitar in her hand. She, of course, is usually flying, but no Drakkhen can duplicate this feat. She is revered as the ultimate embodiment of courage and passion. The Pentad states that she is the most violent of the lot, solving disputes quickly and with grim efficiency.

She is not particularly murderous, but she no compassion on those who act against her.

Pyra is, simply, the goddess of war. Pyra is also said to have watched over decisive battles, even if the combatants do not profess to believe in her. Her followers often serve as the military arm or guardian of their nations, fighting only when called upon, but performing their fighting task with deadly results once battle begins. A devout follower will almost never retreat from battle once it begins, and will often simply remain fighting until the battle is over, giving himself over the fury of war.

Pyra Priest Characters

Followers of Pyra are warriors, pure and simple. They are deadly killers, devoting themselves to perform their duty to the utmost efficiency and enthusiasm possible. They are the most passionate and emotional of priests.

Requirements: A priest of Pyra must first learn her religion to its maximum skill before receiving the true powers of her faith. This means that the player must bring the *Religion: Pyra* skill up to level ten.

More than that, though, a priest of Pyra must learn the proper use of weapons, and a variety of them as well. Also, the priest must know when to fight, and when not to. Pyra doesn't approve of stupid warriors, just effective ones.

Powers: When a follower of Pyra reaches devout status, she gains some edge in combat. She gains a one-point bonus to strike any foe, and causes one additional point of damage. More than that, though, is that she gains the ability to stay conscious in battle, even with her health expended. She can remain up and fighting until she dies or until the battle is over.

Aerona

The mistress of air is often depicted as an angry, powerful, Pteryl woman with cloud-like wings and diamond eyes. According to the Pentad, she seethes with violent passions. While her power is most necessary for life, her rage is monstrous, coming about with floods, dust storms, tornadoes, and lightning. In this way, she maintains her superiority to most of her sisters. This is not perfect, however, as Shadira refuses to be placed beneath her older sister in power. The

Pentad states that it was Aeronia that first enraged Shadira.

Aeronia is considered by most to be the goddess of weather, and is worshipped mostly by those who have learned to fear natural disasters. Her followers are expected to somehow sense the changes within the weather before they are to occur. Many followers are actually known to be aides to merchants, helping trade by predicting when to sail, and when the seas and sands will be dangerous. Followers are expected to extol the virtues of the weather, and to devote themselves to Aeronia and her praise. A follower's actual behavior seems less important than keeping the goddess appeased.

Aeronia Priest Characters

Followers of Aeronia aren't really too limited in their faith. Aeronia is often simply considered the goddess of power and weather. Her priests spend the majority of their time appeasing her, trying to calm the raging tempest that she is.

Those priests who follow her example, however, do so to gain her strength. They are driven by their emotions, powerfully romantic at one moment, grim in another, and destructive in another. Aeronia priests seek fulfillment by giving themselves over to their emotions completely.

Requirements: A priest of Aeronia must first learn her religion to its maximum skill before receiving the true powers of her faith. This means that the player must bring the *Religion: Aeronia* skill up to level ten.

Powers: A priest of Aquene can automatically enrage or calm a person she sees, so long as such an action is reasonable. Aquene priests can also sense the 'mood' of an area, from changes in the weather, to what omens persist. It's up to the Game Master to determine the nature of these sensations.

Shadira

The youngest of the five sisters, the mistress of void remains a mysterious and dark figure, whose true motives and extent of power remains unknown. Only recently has she even been given a form of a beautiful, raven-haired human woman who pulses with magic. The Pentad makes no true effort to describe her, save that

she is 'a fantastic creature without scale, claws, or wings.' Shadira is believed to recently return to the world, with the coming of the humans, after she departed in rage before the known world had been civilized.

By most, Shadira is considered the ultimate goddess of magic. Most of her followers are reclusive, silent, cunning, and devoted to the study and expansion of magic in the world. Note that this magic can be in any form, from the obvious fireball to the mysterious shadow-weaving magic of void. To the ethos of Shadira, the knowledge and control of magic is the whole of mastery, and the most important aspect of life. In a more general sense, she is believed to reward those who are cunning, intelligent, and curious. Because of this, she is sometimes called the 'goddess of Thieves'.

Shadira Priest Characters

Followers of Shadira are the most powerful magic-users in the world. They are the most knowledgeable scholars, and are among the brightest people in the world. Their devotion and study, however, usually places them as aloof and above society. Coupled with their power, it's not unusual for people to consider them dangerous.

Requirements: A priest of Shadira must first learn her religion to its maximum skill before receiving the true powers of her faith. This means that the player must bring the *Religion: Shadira* skill up to level ten.

In addition, a priest of Shadira must learn the ritual skill to maximum levels, as well as learn each elemental magic skill to level five. Only with this large amount of skill does Shadira grant the follower notice.

Powers: Shadira grants her followers knowledge of magic. Priests who achieve her notice can halve the time it takes to learn spells, and lower the cost of learning spells by one point each. More than that, they can also reduce the cost of any non-trivial Intelligence-based skill by one point.

Holy Scrolls

The Holy Scrolls solidified the faith in Allarid and enabled the faith to take a more scholarly, modern view. No more did tales need to be spread, and possibly exaggerated, from ear to ear, accounts were now in print for all to read. The writing of the Scrolls dramatically boosted the popularity of the faith in Karagolia and then the rest of the known world. Allarid is portrayed as a kind, yet stern, father figure who wishes to have the races of the world mature and grow. He gives aid to those who perform nobly and honorably. This aid usually comes in subtle means, such as a needed success in a skill, or a quick recovery from an illness. Allarid expects his followers to behave rationally and with the desire for peace and happiness, even if they need to fight for such aims.

There are, however, a few laws which Allarid is said to never tolerate. Murder is high among the list, but rape ranks highest of all. Other crimes simply demand restitution. Murder is punishable by quick death. Rape is an abomination, answerable by the cleansing of the entire bloodline for the crime. To Allarid and his followers, rape is the ignoble breaking of will, followed by the immoral stealing of spirit, followed by the illegal abuse of the body, for selfish and evil aims. Families that contained a rapist have been known to commit suicide as a whole rather than face the wrath of an angry Allarid.

The Scrolls also make mention of an otherworldly reward for those that live their life in pursuit of noble goals. When one dies, his spirit is sent throughout the world, improving it in a small fashion, until such time as the spirit is rewarded with another, pleasant, life. Those who fail in most ignoble manner, however, simply cease to exist, unworthy to continue their existence beyond the confines of their own bodies.

Crusaders

While Allarid enjoys a large gathering of followers, it is the Crusaders which speak the best, and most vehemently, of him.

The Crusaders began as a band of Drakkhen priests who wished to teach the neighboring lands of their religion. They were skilled in combat, of course, but were more skilled in

speech and persuasion. They had prepared for the worst, yet they seldom needed to engage in battle. It seemed that the world was ready to hear of a religion based on justice and honor.

The Crusaders now are the high priests of Allarid. At least one can be found in every major city in the east. They seldom engage in any aggression, but do train to defend their followers against the more radical elements of the Pentad. Mostly, however, they serve as judges for the newer lands, dispensing justice as the *Code of Laws* allows.

Allarid Priest Characters

Followers of Allarid act with honor, compassion and justice, in that order. They believe fully in the right of their cause, and seek to spread their beliefs to those who have not heard them.

Requirements: A priest of Allarid must first learn her religion to its maximum skill before receiving the true powers of her faith. This means that the player must bring the *Religion: Allarid* skill up to level ten.

Priests of Allarid are also expected to follow faith and virtue more than any other priests normally would. In is their purpose to defend the weak, uphold justice, seek the truth, and never show dishonor.

Powers: Allarid, more than anyone, seems to care about the safety of his followers. Any attempts to create healing elixirs or use medical skills are one dice easier. A priest of Allarid can heal a character with his touch. Doing so drains a point of mana, and heals 1d6 of damaged Health, or one point of damaged Endurance.

People of the Sands

Taibajani is a varied realm, with different souls coming together to live their lives. Their differences can be in ability, race, honor, knowledge, or wealth. Yet each of them are special and needed in our world. It is they that give our world live.

Races

Our beloved father, Allarid, has placed five races to guard our corner of this orb, each embodying the power of an element. To earth, there is the Scorian. Then to water, there is the Corban. To fire, there is the Drakkhen. To air, there is the Pteryl. Lastly, humans, alien to this world, embody the power of Void. From two of these races, the Drakkhen and Corban, can the new children, the Tebani.

All have these races have carved their way into our world's culture and history. Their importance proves itself in our lives with flute music, warm incense, soft silks, and wondrous magic. These then, our are people, our very being, a myriad of hopes, dreams, desires, and ambitions.

Humans

Outsiders to this world, the Humans are nonetheless part of this world's family. They are strange creatures, devoid of chitin or scale, yet they still thrive and prosper. They seem to adapt faster than any other race, and learn about this world with frightening ability.

Appearance. Since The Arrival, the humans have changed only slightly. They still possess a variety of different skin-tones, hair, and eye-colors, but a trend to bronze skin and dark black or brown hair has been noticed. Their height, as adults, is generally around two meters, with men generally being heavier set and taller than women.

By the time Humans reach their old age, around seventy years, their hair generally fades to a gray-shade, or disappears altogether, which is much more common for men, and their skin becomes leathery underneath the desert sun.

Attitudes and Lifestyles. The humans of Taibajani are well aware of their limited numbers and fragile civilization and have acted accordingly. While remaining honorable, their justice is swift and harsh, and laws are to be followed to the letter. Humans are based heavily around family lines. One gains his starting rank and station in Taibajani from his father. Each child is expected to contribute to the family name and improve the power, wealth, and reputation of the name through their life.

History. Humans, unlike any of the other major races of Taibajani, did not originate in the world, but from a different one whose name has been lost to obscurity. The Exodus and Arrival magically transplanted a large number of humans from their native world to this one. It is believed that around twenty thousand persons found themselves transplanted to the coast of the Eastern Sea, with little in provisions, no shelter, and in a strange and foreign land.

Most of the humans, out of fear and defense, quickly established a major city upon the site of The Arrival, and named the city 'Taibajani'. A select few have wandered the desert sands, establishing small towns and villages. Another large sect of humans took to nomadic lifestyles, trading from city to city, and learning to live off the desert's miracles. Humans can now be found nearly anywhere, though most remain their city of Taibajani.

The Scorian discovered the new city of Taibajani early, and established nervous relations with the new race. Over the generations, the human settlements have enjoyed relative isolationism with the world, enabling the humans to carve out a small empire in the desert sands.

Creating Human Characters

Humans in Taibajani, as alien as they are, are simply the same humans found in the GEM rules. They gain no special advantages, disadvantages, or modifiers for being human.

Corban

Long and snake-like, the Corbani race is the most advanced native race in the world. They are dexterous and intelligent, and were the first to discover writing and magic. Their place in the world is well founded in history.

Appearance. The Corbani are smaller than most of the other races. Their body is a long segmented tail, with two arms and a head placed on the larger end. Their scaled skin ranges anywhere in the earth tones, generally between browns and grays. A Corbani has reptilian yellow eyes, and a forked tongue. Most Corbani also have two penetrating fangs, though none known carry venom.

The males of the Corban are larger and heavier-set, on average, but the females are easily noted with the large hood draping over them. Corbani enter life as hatchling and reach maturity at around six years. Gender differences are not usually notable until that time, when the hood begins to form, and the reproductive organs begin to work. Corbani live to around 70 years.

Attitudes and Lifestyles. The Corban are usually quiet and reserved. They are a thoughtful and rational people. And can be found everywhere, along all of the major trade routes of the world. They tend to be very individualistic, and often seek their own goals and wants first. With the possible exception of the Humans, the Corbani are the most unpredictable of people.

History. The Corbani race possesses the longest written history. Most history of the times before Allarid is preserved solely through Corban writings. The Corban were the first race to establish a society. From this city, the oldest civilization was born. Writing became commonplace, and architecture became an art form. The Corbani's rise lasted a few hundred years before the Drakkhen invasion reverted the empire back to city-state rule. In this time, however, Corban scholars discovered magic, and the use of metals became widespread. While Drakkhen power proved more formidable as the Age of Allarid began, the Corban remained an intellectual and technological power for centuries.

The Corbani have now found themselves in an unusual situation. The humans have come, and introduced technology beyond what Corbani already knew. Gunpowder, in particular, as well as some medical knowledge, has proven to be a thorn in their side. The Corbani, however, knowing a good thing when they see it, have quickly opted to open trade with the newcomer race.

Creating Corban Characters

The Corbani make up the scholars and intellectuals of the world. When creating Corbani characters, a player needs to modify the results she gets from basic player generation.

Statistic Modifiers: The Corbani are lithe and intelligent, and gain a +1 on both Dexterity and Intelligence. Unfortunately, they tend to be fragile, and suffer a -2 on their Endurance.

Abilities: The Corbani are swift on the ground, and move at a rate of thirty meters per round. Their scaled skin can also reduce one point of damage from any piercing or edged attacks.

Disadvantages: The Corbani suffer from cold-based attacks, suffering one additional point of damage when so struck.

Drakkhen

Powerful warriors, the Drakkhen excel in strength and in all matters honorable and warlike. Their massive forms and powerful wings are enough to bring terror to even the eyes of the sturdiest veteran.

Appearance. The Drakkhen are a sturdy, powerful-looking people. They generally have dark green scaled hides. Their hands and feet end in bone white talons. Their sharp heads taped into rear-facing horns. The most striking feature of the Drakkhen, however, is their sharp, large wings, which enable members of the race to fly.

Drakkhen have two genders, male and female, with the males being somewhat heavier-set. Drakkhen begin life as hatchling, born from eggs laid by a Drakkhen female. Drakkhen generally learn to fly by their second year, and full maturity by their fifteenth year. Elder Drakkhen are noticed by the browning of their scales. The Drakkhen race generally has a life span of about 120 years.

Attitudes and Lifestyles. Drakkhen are, at their heart, members of a warrior race. The thrill of battle burns in their blood. Courage and honor are the two most valued traits in a Drakkhen's makeup. Strength and wisdom are equally respected, as they are both attributes of a good warrior.

Drakkhen are a passionate and proud people. Their goal in life is to live and die with honor. It is unthinkable for most Drakkhen to act in a cowardly way, or slight his own honor to gain something else. Some Drakkhen, in times of failure or gross dishonor, have been known to commit suicide rather than live with the knowledge of their deeds.

History. The history of the Drakkhen can read like the military journals of old generals. The rise and fall of each warrior clan can be traced back six thousand years, though most other accomplishments of these clans have been lost to obscurity. What is known, however, is that for several thousand years, the Drakkhen were a fragmented race of warring city-states, striking at each other constantly for precious resources. Even as the Drakkhen moved in on other races, the chaos of the wars prevented the race from maturing out of its barbarian habits.

Finally, one warrior led a courageous attack against the three largest cities of the Drakkhen. Thanks to his faith in Allarid, the cities fell under his banner, and he was able to unite his people for the first time under a dynasty. The next few generations saw Imperial Drakkhen sweep over the lands of Taibaijani. Though failing to conquer much farther, the spread of their faith in Allarid quickly took hold, and the older religions were swept away. The Drakkhen had finally established itself as a truly civilized race.

The Drakkhen race has turned more militant lately, and seeks to expand their borders. Many feel the coming of the humans as a threat. Others simply want to gain more resources for their children, as the needs of the home cities grow past their abilities. Many, however, seek to 'enlighten' the people of Taibaijani of the teachings of Allarid, and bring their religion to a new audience.

Creating Drakkhen Characters

Drakkhen are strong and powerful, the true warrior-race in the world. To make a Drakkhen character, however, a player needs to use the follow modifications.

Statistic Modifiers: Drakkhen are very powerful, and gain two points on their Strength and Endurance. Drakkhen lose two points from Willpower and Charisma.

Abilities. Drakkhen have the racial advantage of flight at 25 meters per round. They also have armored skin that can reduce two points of damage from edged and piercing attacks.

Disadvantages: Drakkhen possess the disadvantage of mild claustrophobia, and suffer two additional points of damage from any cold-based attacks.

Scorian

The Scorian are a nomadic people taken to wandering the deserts in search for food and a way of life apart from the cities. They are herbal masters, and excellent desert scouts.

Appearance. Resembling large, humanoid scorpions, the Scorian remain the most human-like native race in the world. They have a dull set of grayish-green scales, a long, segmented tail, and sharp set of pincers. Their faces are marked with narrow white eyes and a powerful set of mandibles, through which the Scorian eat and speak.

The Scorians begin life as hatchling, laid from the female. The two genders of Scorian are indistinguishable, save for the reproductive organs. As such, there are no cultural differences between males and females in Scorian society. Scorians are considered mature at their thirteenth year. As a Scorian ages, his armored hide becomes more cracked, showing signs of wear. A Scorian lives to around 80 years.

Attitudes and Lifestyles. The desert sands are the home of the Scorian, and the race is well suited to it. The Scorians are basically nomadic, roaming from oasis to oasis and city to city as the winds of fate take them. Usually, the roaming is tempered by their nests, or by the borders of more militant empires.

The Scorians are generally peaceful, though certainly capable of fighting, and act a great deal like the out-world humans. Families tend to stay together through their travels, and trade is a common practice amongst Scorian tribes. Scorians are curious about the world about them, and are generally eager to learn more. Individual Scorian, however, can vary widely from the rule.

History. The Scorians have little in terms of written history. Most of their stories have been passed down from generation to generation, and it is difficult to tell which of these stories is true, and which is merely exaggerated myth. Often times, the stories will contradict each other, other times, the stories will bleed into the acts of the old pagan gods themselves. Attempting to determine the history of the Scorian is a challenge that will stomp sages and historians for generations.

They wander the desert, in search of food, water, and trade. While civilized life appeals to some, many are outright hesitant to head to the cities. They remain close to the Earth, however, and still manage to carve out their lives even in the harshest deserts.

Creating Scorian Characters

The nomadic Scorians are the most human-like characters native to their world. They're still different, however, and their generation require some modifications on new characters.

Statistic Modifiers: Scorian Characters are bulkier than humans, and have a one-point bonus from Strength, and a one-point penalty to Dexterity

Abilities: The Scorians have two built in weapons. The first is their tail that strikes for two dice of piercing damage. The pincers cause one dice of edged damaged. Scorian also have strong armored skin, reducing damage from blunt, piercing, and edged attacks by one points.

Disadvantages: As with most native races, Scorians are susceptible to cold, and suffer two additional points of damage when so struck.

Pteryl

Masters of the air, the large wings of the Pteryl propel them at phenomenal speeds. These loners can be seen soaring through the skies anywhere, sitting above the world from their lofty homes, apart from and above the problems of the word,

Appearance. The Pteryl are tall, limber flyers resembling reptilian birds. Their slender legs taper into talons, as does their hands. The arms of a Pteryl also serve as supports for a Pteryl's tough and thing wings. The Pteryl have elongated heads, which end in a set of smooth, back facing

horns. Pteryl also have a covering of scales ranging in the earth tones from greens to browns to grays.

Both the females and males of the Pteryl are very thin. The males tend to be lighter and taller than the females. A Pteryl starts life as a hatchling, learning to fly by the age of two. Pteryl reach maturity at about ten years and then reach old age at around 70 years. A Pteryl's scaled hide browns over time, but even the eldest Pteryl are not terribly different looking than his younger brethren.

Attitudes and Lifestyles. Soaring high amongst Taibaijan's clouds, the Pteryl have developed into a very independent lot. Many people consider the Pteryl an aloof race, cut off from the rest of the world by their wings and their manner. Some regard the Pteryl as outright arrogant. The truth is that the Pteryl are simply not used to large numbers of people. They are born in relatively small numbers, and their nest is usually their only connection to the world for the first part of their lives. It's seldom that these isolationists ever venture to meet with others, though the occasional Pteryl will let his curiosity get the better of him. Nearly all Pteryl are afraid of crowds of people or closed spaces, as either goes against their very nature. Pteryl are mostly at home in the air.

History. With the strong loner streak running through the Pteryl's veins, it's natural that they have little in the way of racial history. Pteryl don't often associate with each-other, much less with other races. Few things about the Pteryl have been written to history.

While never directly involved with affairs, Pteryl have been known to serve as scouts for Drakkhen armies. Notable Pteryl served as spies, warriors, and the occasional mage. None, however, served the cause of all Pteryl, or moved to establish a racial culture or heritage. As things look now, none likely ever will.

Pteryl can be found now in the same places where they can always be found, aiding the driven, helping the powerful, serving their established allies loyally. The Pteryl are spread evenly, in few numbers, nearly everywhere. They are a people who exist, without a tangible past, but always aiding to determine the future.

Creating Pteryl Characters

The slim and fast Pteryl are best at home in the air. To generate one, a player needs to add a few modifications to the basic character generation.

Statistic Modifiers: Exceedingly light and lithe, the Pteryl gain a two-point bonus on their Dexterity, but suffer two points on their Endurance.

Abilities: The fastest thing in the air, Pteryl fly at a staggering fifty meters per round, but walk at only twenty. Their scaled skin can reduce one point of damage from any piercing or edged attacks.

Disadvantages: Pteryl suffer from greatly cold-based attacks, suffering two additional points of damage when so struck.

Tebani

The Tebani are half-breeds. In this case, a Tebani is spawned from a male Drakkhen and a female Corban. They employ some of the best traits of both races, although to a weaker degree than their parents.

Appearance. Tebani resemble, loosely, a winged Corban. Their bodies taper off into tails, and they have two Drakkhen-style wings located slightly above and behind their arms. Their scales are tough and dark green, but they lack the horns of the Drakkhen parent. Tebani can breed with each other, and with other Corban, but not with Drakkhen. They age and mature as a Corban. Facial features, and the lack of a hood on the females, are notably Drakkhen influenced.

Attitudes and Lifestyles. Tebani are isolated from society, shunned by both Drakkhen and Corban. To the Corban, the Tebani are children of the raped and bloodthirsty. To the Drakkhen, the Tebani are cast-off from an ancient war. There are very few Tebani in the world, and few of those have managed to find a place that would accept them.

History. The Tebani were first birthed in the Barrier Mountains, where Drakkhen and Corbani first met. It is unsure to this day is the first Tebani were born of love or of hate, but their lives were difficult immediately. Each parent race saw them as creatures, and not men, and most were exiled at best, stoned and killed at worst.

When Drakkhen troops moved across the mountains, and took Corbani lands for the first time, Drakkhen and Corbani mating grew. Most of these, sadly, were not by the choice of the mothers. The Tebani's fate was sealed, and to this day they're considered the bastard race of Taibajani.

Creating Tebani Characters

If a player wants to take the challenges offered by this scorned race, she's free to do so. Only a few modifications on basic character generation are needed.

Statistic Modifiers: The Tebani do not modify their statistics when a character is generated.

Abilities: The Tebani are capable of flight, and are surprisingly better at it than their Drakkhen parents. Tebani can fly at a speed of thirty-five meters per round, and can move on the ground at twenty-five meters. Physical attacks against Tebani are reduced by one point, thanks to their tough hides.

Disadvantages: Tebani are susceptible to cold, however, and suffer two additional points of damage when so struck.

Creating Characters

Of course, players in the Sands of Fire setting will most likely be interested in their own characters. What role adventurers will have in Taibajani society is very important. More too, is what Taibajani will have for adventurers.

Of course, the game master will determine what sort of characters that will be allowed in any given campaign, but this section should answer any major questions that players would put forward.

Races

Most of the races in Taibajani can be found nearly everywhere. Drakkhen and Corbani have spread their influence over the entire known lands. Their children, the Tebani, can, of course, be found scattered through their empires.

Pteryl and Scorian wander through all the sands, and can be found in most places in very limited numbers.

Humans, lastly, are generally stilled tied to the country of Taibaijani itself. Occasionally, they've been known to travel to other lands in merchant caravans, and some families have moved into Cyris and Karagolia, but it's still very rare.

If a player wants to randomly select a race, the following table will give a rough population spread based for the whole of the Taibaijani campaign.

2d6 Roll	Race
2,3	Human
4,5	Pteryl
6,7	Corbani
8,9	Drakkhen
10,11	Scorian
12	Tebian

Motivations

Each character has strong motivations for adventuring, but Taibaijani has some common threads that particularly drive men and women to risk themselves for a cause.

Religion. The character has received a powerful calling to her soul. She feels that her beliefs must be spread and defended, and seeks adventure to prove herself and her faith. Priests of Allarid may seek justice. Priests of Pyra may merely seek war.

Honor. This character has had either his or his family's honor slighted. This character seeks redemption, and to either revenge his dishonor or find honor anew in his travels.

Knowledge. Many characters in Taibaijani seek adventure merely to learn more about the world around them. Mages, in particular, seem to use the curiosity as an excuse to adventure, and to gain in their early studies.

Backgrounds

Taibaijani embraces a wide variety of peoples and walks of life. Proud Drakkhen warriors may serve in a party aside a Tebian street rat and a human mage. Character histories can range from the outright mundane, to the highly unusual.

Wealth and Status. Station is important in most countries, and one's wealth makes a large difference in their lives. A street rat adventures because he must. A wealthy son would have a hard time justifying his adventures, when he should be studying etiquette. In general, the richer the character, the more difficult, and more drastic, the reasons for adventuring would become.

Race. Sadly, even Taibaijani has racial problems. While most races are accepting of the others, the Corbani have certain arrogance. The Tebani are scorned. The Humans are feared. If a person is of the wrong race in the wrong land, he could find his life quite difficult.

Wandering. Nomads are not rare to the desert sands, and a child may merely be the son or daughter of a nomadic family. These characters can learn about travel and adventure early in their lives, and may have adventure find them.

Technology, Skills, and Knowledge

Overall, the realm of technology ventures only slightly ahead of Earth's own medieval period. Magic is a scientific study, medicine is somewhat more reliable, and scholars are encouraged. Still, though, most persons barter for goods, scimitars are the weapons of choice, and anything away from the coasts can be called anything but 'civilized'.

For characters, this means that any skills and equipment above Medieval Technology should be considered off-limits. Also, most weapons and gear are of a decidedly Arabic flavor. Scimitars and Cutlasses are common, but long-swords and short-swords would not be.

Weapons and Armor

Weapons tend to be made light and functional. Cutlasses and Scimitars cover the majority of the lands, though the Drakkhen employ Katana in their battles. Leather is almost non-existent, and wood is extremely rare. Metal armors are unheard of, and are generally replaced by ceramic mails.

Cutlass. The cutlass is a curved, thin blade with a long edge. It does decent damage and is relatively affordable. It can be concealed with

some difficulty, but its long blade is longer than most human joints.

Scimitar. This weapon is long and curved. Its large edge can deliver a severe amount of damage, and is often wielded with both hands. The weapon is heavy and would be hard, at the least, to conceal.

Katana. The Katana has a long, slightly curved blade, folded many times over to give it strength. It is also exquisitely honed for a razor's edge. The blade is not as physically strong as a scimitar, and will likely break if handled and used improperly. In the hands of one who knows how, however, the Katana is a superior blade, lighter, just as effective in damage, and slightly more accurate. Only a few persons own a Katana. Even then generally only Drakkhen priests of Allarid ever carry them.

Great Scimitar. A powerful weapon, the great scimitar stands nearly two meters in height, and resembles an over-sized scimitar. The weapon requires two hands, and is difficult to wield, but can inflict terrible damage.

Weapon Name	Accuracy	Damage
Cutlass	-1	2dE
Scimitar	-2	3dE
Katana	-1	3dE
Great Scimitar	-3	4dE

Arquebus. This weapon is the first crude, portable gunpowder-weapon. It is powerful, and incredibly loud, but grossly inaccurate, and pathetic in range. In addition, its power may come and haunt the one who uses it.

The early Arquebus was known to misfire and burn the hands of its user. To simulate this, each '6' that is rolled for its damage, also causes a point of damage to the wielder.

Example: An attacker is firing an Arquebus at a target. He rolls his damage as a seventeen. Two of these dice, however, are '6's', which means that he suffers two points of damage himself from slight over-burn on the weapon.

Brass Bow. The brass bow is a large two-handed contraption that a strong warrior can use to send a brass bolt through the air, piercing its victim. It's a heavy weapon, and not too terribly accurate.

Great Brass Bow. A larger, more powerful brass bow, the great brass bow strikes for larger damage at greater range, but is wildly inaccurate, and seldom used in real battle.

Star Blade. A star blade is a small ceramic disk which has had its edge honed to razor sharpness. They are easy to conceal, being no more than a few centimeters across, but only strike for a small amount of damage over a limited range.

Weapon Name	Accuracy	Range	Damage
Arquebus	-4	25/40/50m	4dP
Brass Bow	-3	20/40/60m	2dP
Great Brass Bow	-4	30/60/90m	3dP
Star Blade	-1	10/20/30m	1dE

Ceramic Bracing. The lightest common form of armor consists of ceramic plates worn over the chest, forearms, and lower legs, for appropriate races. The bracing provides modest protection against physical attacks. It is bulky, however, and will prohibit flying for those races with that ability.

Ceramic Plate. The most common form of armor, Ceramic Plate consists of the bracing, added with additional plates to cover most the larger areas on the body. Most ground-based guards and adventurers have this as their armor of choice. Flight for most characters is utterly impossible in this armor.

Volcanic Bracing. A rare and expensive armor, the rare ash of the high volcanoes the Barrier Mountains has been collected and pressed into solid plates. The result is some of the finest armor in the lands.

Volcanic Plate. The rarest armor in Taibaijani, this is a more complicated and covering form of the Volcanic Bracing. This armor is extremely expensive, but worth the price. Flight for most characters is utterly impossible in this armor.

Armor	Edged	Piercing	Blunt	Fire
Ceramic Bracing	3	3	1	2
Ceramic Plate	6	3	2	2
Volcanic Bracing	5	5	2	5
Volcanic Plate	8	5	3	5

Magic

Characters should refer to the rules in the *Elemental Reign* manual to learn how to gain spells and Elemental Skills. The study of

Taibaijani's magic goes well beyond the scope of this manual. A brief summary, however, should suffice for the curious.

Gain Elemental Skills. Magic in Taibaijani is based around the five elements. Mages attune themselves to learning each of these elements, and how to manipulate them properly to make spells manifest. A mage will spend experience in each of the five elements to master her art.

Learn Spells. A mage will then need to learn individual spells. Again, she needs to spend experience, but this enables her to use magic in a practical manner. The more powerful the spell, in general, the more experience it will cost.

Cast Spells. When needs arise, a mage can use her knowledge, drain her mana, and manifest potentially powerful results. As a swordsman pulls his blade, a mage will use the very reality around her.

Create Spells. Finally, true masters of magic will learn how to create spells and spell-effects of their own. These characters are among the most clever and skilled on the face of Taibaijani.

Rarity of Mages. A Game Master may want to keep the amount of mages in a group to a minimum. Certainly everyone would pick up some magic, but a dedicated mage requires a lot of time and experience. A point could be reached when adventuring might actually interfere with a mage's potential.

Discussing with the Game Master

As with any campaign, it's important for a player to speak to the Game Master, and other players, on how the character will fit into the party, and into the campaign. The Game Master has the right to determine if the background, numbers, or details of a character will fit in. If the character doesn't, the player can easily make modifications, or merely create a new character.

Character Templates

New players may find it difficult to choose the skills they need for a starting character. Other players may want to jump right into the world and begin their careers as adventurers.

This section gives a number of character templates to help those players. To use one, a player simply creates the statistics for the character, and chooses the character's race. Then the player selects an appropriate template, giving the character the skills, advantages, and disadvantages listed below.

Sky Raider

Coming from nowhere onto their prey, the brigands strike with bows and amazing acrobatics to instill fear. Swiftly, then, the move to collect their bounty, and then disappear without another trace.

Role. More villains than true adventurers, the sky-raiders prey on the merchants travelling the desert, stealing their wealth and supplies, the return to hiding. They are hated may many throughout the desert.

Requirements: Obviously, the ability to fly is required for this character. This means that only Drakkhen, Pteryl, or Tebani can be raiders. High dexterity is also a must.

Skills. The raiders only have skills for doing their job, which is to get in, steal, and get out. They spend a lot of their time dodging in the air, however, and are fairly impressive sights to those people not being attacked.

Skill	Rank
Acrobatics	2
Combat: Ranged: Brass Bow	1
Dodging	2
Riding: Airborne	2
Stealth	1

Acolyte of Aquene

Beautiful and pleasant, the acolytes of Aquene speak well for their goddess. They calm the flames of hatred with kind words. They still the storms of battle with soft songs.

Role. The acolyte of Aquene is a learning priest, attempting to console and aid those around her. She is a skilled medic, and her calm manner can sit strangers at ease. She is clearly not suited for combat, however.

Requirements. Most acolytes are Corbani, and they usually have high charisma and high comeliness. More than one male has been

known to swoon to the charms of a Aquene follower.

Skills. Priests of Aquene are taught to care for and aid others. They are also expected to be well first in the rituals and arts of their religion. The acolyte has much of these starting skills, but a great to still learn.

Skill	Rank
Brewing	2
Curing	2
Religion: Aquene	3
Ritual	2
Singing	4

Advantages. Acolytes of Aquene are affable people, and have an easier time getting people to their good side. When meeting new people, they gain a one-die advantage in any needed reaction rolls.

Disadvantages. Acolytes of Aquene are afraid to enter battle and cause harm. While in combat, they are at a one-die penalty in all actions.

Caravan Guard

A common and profitable vocation, the caravan guard sees a lot of work. Merchants are always in need of those willing to brave the desert to defend them and their goods.

Role. Caravan guards are primarily muscle, and given mostly to defense and fighting. As such, they're not spectacular characters, but reliable as fighters.

Requirements. Caravan guards come from all walks of life, and don't require much for the job. So long as someone can swing a blade, or fire a bow, they can be taken on.

Skills. Caravan guards know how to use some weapons, fight, and that's about it. They're not well rounded, but easy to start careers with.

Skill	Rank
Combat: Melee: Cutlass	3
Combat: Ranged : Brass Bow	3
Dodge	2

Prophet of Allarid

Seeking guidance from the father of all, the prophet feels an inward pull to his faith. He is

honorable, and determined to spread the words of his faith to the people around him.

Role. Those who follow Allarid seek to spread his words of honor and justice to those around them. For a more practical purpose, though, a prophet begins with the ability to heal, which is always an asset to a group of risk-takers.

Requirements. Any character can be a prophet of Allarid, though they must strictly follow the ethos of their religion. A strong willpower statistic helps.

Skills. Prophets of Allarid have mostly the same set of skills as devout followers would, though at understandably much lower ranks. They are geared to meditation and healing, and the beginnings of formal religion.

Skill	Rank
Brewing	3
Combat:: Melee: Scimitar	2
Meditation	2
Philosophy	3
Ritual	3

Advantages. These characters have an affinity of Allarid's religion, as if they had the skill already at level ten. It is this affinity that makes them prophets.

Disadvantages. Prophets are compulsory with their honor, unable to break their honor code for any reason. Doing so at any time will give them the Nightmares disadvantage until they make amends.

Street Rat

On the streets of every large city you can find them, the neglected and forgotten. They scavenge for food and clothing, dodging city guards and enduring the abuse of the wealthy. They are the street rats, lives filled with unfortunate adventure.

Role. Frankly, the street rat fills the role of the thief. They steal not out of greed, but necessity. Their skills have been refined, and would aid a party greatly for more valuable treasures.

Requirements. A high dexterity is the best asset for the street rat, since thievery often requires a quick hand. A Tebian, do to their abuse in most

places of this world, can expect to start his adventuring career as a rat.

Skills. A street rat spends much of his time learning to dodge guards and steal meals. More than most people, they know how to steal effectively even before they start their adventures.

Skill	Rank
Acting	2
Begging	4
Combat: Melee: Dagger	2
Pickpocket	2
Survival: Urban	1

Advantages. Street rats are lucky. Every adventure, a street rat gains one point of Karma to save them in their darkest hours.

Disadvantages. A street rat is one of those rare souls who gain no education in their early life, and can be considered illiterate.

Scholar Mage

Often found behind piles of papyrus, the scholar mage spends much of his time studying the ways of magic. Somewhat aloof, they often give the impression that mundane matters shouldn't concern them, since they are preoccupied with the very elements themselves.

Role. Prying a scholar from his papyrus is no easy feat, but once accomplished a scholar is a valued asset. Though initially weak compared to others, mages grow in power and usefulness very quickly, and can perform a variety of functions.

Requirements. Scholars tend to be Intelligence, so a high score in that statistic is recommended. Also, since magic drains mana, a high intellect all around would be well suited for a mage.

Skills. The scholar mage is given over to learning magic. Starting scholars learn the lowest ranks of the elements, a mere step in their path. In addition, a scholar mage gains five experience points to learn elemental spells.

Skill	Rank
Elemental Magic: Air	1
Elemental Magic: Earth	3
Elemental Magic: Fire	2
Elemental Magic: Water	2
Language: Cyrani (or Tajjani)	2
Ritual	2

Scorian Nomad

Lonely and calm, the nomad travels the deserts from one settlement to another, surviving on what he can barter, slowly accumulating wealth, but seeing the entire known world.

Role. The nomad is an explorer, and is very knowledgeable about survival on the desert wastes. Where many parties might get lost with only the stars and their landmarks, the nomad always seems to know where he's headed.

Requirements. Most nomads are Scorian, but that doesn't mean that all nomads are members of the Earth race. Any race can adopt the nomadic way of life.

Skills. Nomads are geared primarily to survival, knowing where to find food, water, and supplies in a very difficult environment.

Skill	Rank
Animal Lore: Desert	2
Combat: Bare Hands	1
Foraging	2
Survival: Desert	4
Tracking	2

Advantages. A nomad always seems to know where he is, and have the direction sense advantage. While a nomad can still get lost, he will have a much easier time finding his way again.

Disadvantages. Nomads have a mild phobia of cities, and act at a one-die penalty on most actions while within one.

Pteryl Scout

Swiftly scanning the terrain, the Pteryl Scout is perhaps the best at discovering the hidden truths on the desert sands. He flies high above, looking for anything or anyone below that is out of the ordinary.

Role. The scout's main role is to fly overhead, and try and spot any possible danger, or rest-sites, ahead of those who hired him. Those who become scouts tend to be very good at this work, and are often employed by parties, empires, and oasis towns worried about brigands.

Requirements. Pteryl scouts are often hired for the natural dexterity and perception. Obviously, the more nimble and better-sighted a Pteryl is, the better a job he'll do.

Skills: Pteryl scouts aren't heavily geared to combat, but more for looking over terrain and tracking. At this, their skills are considerable.

Skill	Rank
Combat: Melee: Scimitar	3
Combat: Ranged: Brass Bow	2
Dodge	2
Tracking	2
Religion: Allarid	1

Advantages: The natural scout is eagle-eyed, and is able to make perception checks at one die less than normal when using normal vision.

Disadvantages: Pteryl are generally moderately skittish in small places, but scouts are worse. In a confined area, Pteryl Scouts have a one-die penalty to perform any action, since they are mildly claustrophobic.

Merchant Rogue

Charming and charismatic, the Merchant Rogue is adept and haggling, getting the best prices, and often outright lying. While they're not trustworthy, they're very good

Role. Merchants buy things, and are dangerously skilled at maintaining monies. By necessity, they're also useful in the speaking roles of the party, since their high-charisma can often work where brute strength can fail.

Requirements. Merchants generally have high charisma, and a high comeliness would also be a bonus. Any race can be a rogue, but Corbani and humans seem to be most fitting to the role.

Skills: The Merchant Rogue is skilled at gambling, haggling, and many other things dedicated to cutting down his expenses. He also has a knack for flirting.

Skill	Rank
Combat: Melee: Cutlass	3
Gaming: Cards	3
Haggling	4
Seduction	1
Swimming	2

Drakkhen Warrior

Roaring down from the skies, the Drakkhen Warriors can instill fear and awe into their foes. They're strong, heavily built, and well versed in the art of the sword. They are trained for combat, but have learned the teachings of Allarid, and serve justice and honor.

Role. Drakkhen Warriors have obvious roles, adding much-needed physical power to any adventuring group. They are honorable, defending their allies while striking against the strongest of their foes.

Requirements. This template is most useful for Drakkhen characters, though any race may take the role of the noble warrior. It's also highly recommended that the Warrior have both a high strength and dexterity.

Skills. Drakkhen warriors get their strongest skill in using their weapons, though they're supposed to be learning the faith of Allarid as well.

Skill	Rank
Combat: Melee: Scimitar	3
Combat: Ranged: Brass Bow	2
Dodge	2
Tracking	2
Religion: Allarid	1

Advantages: Drakkhen warriors have the Resilience advantage, which enables them to stay in combat until dead, even if they have suffered Endurance loss.

Disadvantages: These characters also receive the Restless Spirit disadvantage, and recover mana at half the normal rate. They are also compulsory with their honor, unable to break their honor code for any reason. Doing so at any time will give them the Nightmares disadvantage until they make amends.

Campaigning

Welcome, Game Masters, to the world of Taibaijani. This chapter is a brief guide on how to bring in the feel of the setting into a campaign. It includes adventure suggestions, common creatures, and notes on getting into the feel of the setting.

The most important rule, though, is to not get daunted. A Game Master has the most to learn about any setting. This manual goes a long way to establishing the setting, but it's the Game Master's job to give the setting life. She should take it a step at a time, starting with a small view of the area around the first few adventures, and then grow and expand the setting as he confidence increases.

Getting into the Mindset

Taibaijani is a little unusual, and novice Game Masters might have a little difficulty in getting into the mindset of the setting. Once she has the genre and mood, however, the rest becomes easy.

The Genre. Taibaijani is a land rich in adventure and mystique. It is fantasy, with magic and fantastic creatures add to the flavor of the word. The elves and dwarves have been replaced with Corbani and Scorian, but the strange and unexpected still permeates the life of the setting.

When characters go out adventuring, they can expect to use scimitars, spells, and faith to defeat the brigands and beasts arrayed against them. While the familiar faces of fantasy have changed, the elements still ring true.

The Mood. Taibaijani is a realistic setting, as far as fantasy goes. That is, moments of humor and drama will fill the adventures. Threats should be serious, and taken seriously, but the characters and their players should never feel hopeless in their situation.

The Magic Question

The use of magic in a campaign is probably one of the most difficult decisions a Game Master has to make. Even though *Sands of Fire* was designed for use with the *Elemental Reign* magic

system, that book may not be for everyone. The magic system there is fairly complicated, and requires intelligent players as well as characters. A novice Game Master may find the detailed magic system imposing and difficult to get a grasp upon early.

Disallow Character Magic. While not a suggestion that's highly recommended, it is the easiest. A Game Master may wish to hold off on using the Elemental Magic rules completely, and just not allow it into her campaign. This may take some of Taibaijani's flavor away, but it does make for easier running.

Swap Magic Systems. A Game Master is also free to just use something more basic for magic, or something of her own design. This is, of course, her option. It is highly recommended that any new magic system can be divided up, somehow, among the five elements, in keeping with details about the setting.

Slow Starting. Probably the best way to handle introducing magic is to bring it in a little at a time. Characters could manage to find some texts on their travels. As the Game Master becomes more comfortable, they would start collecting specific magical skills. This way, the Game Master tightly controls how much magic is in the campaign.

Warnings about Characters

A Game Master should also look for potential problems with new characters as they are introduced. Novice and 'dungeon-hack' players will often attempt to exploit the rules to gain super-characters that brute-force their way through situations. One of the Game Master's jobs is to look for potential problems, and nip them before the campaign, and the enjoyment of the game, is ruined.

The Incredible Drakkhen. Something that occurred often during play-tests was the overly strong Drakkhen. While it's possible that a Drakkhen may possess strength greater than ten, it's generally going to be very rare. High strength also enables a character to become very proficient at hand-to-hand fighting. Many players realizing this would take a Drakkhen, and maximize his strength, enabling him to hit in melee more than normal.

Obviously, these players did not have the best interests of the campaign, or of the other players, in mind when they created the character. The easiest way to spot this problem is to check for any ridiculously low statistics, such as Comeliness or Charisma, and demand that points be shifted into those statistics to make the character more balanced, and more believable.

Example: One particular character that was found in testing was a problem. He had strength of eleven, an endurance of nine, and an intelligence and charisma of two. When informed that the character was unbalanced, he demanded to know why. The character was, in all truth, a massively strong rude idiot. He was instructed to lower the powerful statistics and make the others more believable.

Super-Thieves. A similar problem to the Drakkhen, the Corbani bonus to Dexterity may make characters unbalanced. A high Dexterity adds to the ability of a character to dodge and perform various thief-like actions. Again, a Game Master should note if this statistic is inordinately high and near its maximum, and consider bringing the character more in balance.

Warnings about Fun

Taibaijani can be a serious setting at times, and many of its inhabitants can seem without humor. This is far from the truth, and the Game Master shouldn't feel compelled to force the players to have their characters constantly act in a formal, grim manner. Taibaijani isn't that type of world.

In other words, it is a responsibility for the Game Master to keep her campaign running smoothly. It is also her responsibility to have fun, and allow the players to have their fun as well.

Adventures

The desert sands are ripe with adventure. A forgotten settlement waits where an oasis once reached to the surface. Religious and racial turmoil threatens the stability of governments. Magical power corrupts the power-hungry. There is more than enough for a team of courageous adventurers to do.

The Game Master should consider the course of her campaign, and what she wants to

accomplish with each adventure. There needs to be an intriguing conflict, a reason to enter the conflict, and a good reward for a job well done. In this way, Taibaijani is no different than any other setting. What's worked before should work here as well.

Conflicts

Taibaijani has a number of major conflicts that adventuring groups could find themselves wrapped within. A Game Master could wrap several major conflicts within a campaign.

Religious Persecution: This conflict could be the most frightening. Religious fanatics have declared war on those who worship others. The fanatics are driving people from their homes and towns. The characters must somehow overcome these dark tides.

Treachery: A local man of power is making his bid to ascend to lead the town. The party is thrust in the middle as treason rears its ugly presence.

Brigands: Local merchants are being starved out of business due to the constant pillaging being performed by local brigands. The party is needed to dispatch with the vile thieves once and for all.

Survival: Sometimes, the trick is merely to survive. The characters will need to scrounge around for supplies and the basic necessities until they can make their fortunes somehow.

Traditional Hooks

With adventure and excitement everywhere, it doesn't seem like a Game Master would need a lot of work to drag adventurers into an adventure. If only this were true . . .

Still, a Game Master can use her knowledge of characters and their desires to set an adventure in motion. She can draw upon parts of their history to personally involve them in their upcoming quests.

Honor Code: To a priest, honor is everything. A character has been called upon to correct a fault in his family's honor. It is a calling he cannot seem to refuse.

Ancient Treasure: A number of ancient settlements have been discovered deep within Taibaijani's desert. The lure of ancient treasure and mystery beckons.

Noble Calling: The sultan of the adventurer's town has commanded them to perform a task. Normally, they would not be allowed to refuse an order from their town lord.

Legacy: The family line of one of the characters has turned out to be more than anyone ever knew. The character may have a chance to raise his station, provided he's willing to work for it.

Rewards

The end of the adventure will almost always give experience out to those who survived it, but that often isn't enough for characters. A Game Master should think carefully on what reward to offer for a job well done.

Jade: Obviously, jade is a powerful motivator, as well as an excellent reward. After all, jade is needed in the marketplace to buy food and supplies.

Title: Often more useful than jade is the granting of a title. A title raises the station of the character a few notches, and dramatically improves his reputation.

Magic: The granting of spells and research to those who learn the art could be a powerful and welcome boon. New spells and access to learning materials can be worth more than jade to a curious mage.

Honor: Believe it or not, honor alone can mean a lot to a Taibaijani character. Recovering from dishonor, or performing a noble and necessary deed can fill a Taibaijani soul.

Adversaries

Few conflicts can work without the adversaries. These are the antagonists, the opposition that the party must overcome in pursuit of their goals and ambitions. Many times, the adversaries will even be the cause of the conflicts that bring the party to their adventures.

Major Adversary

What makes many adventures interesting is the use of a good major adversary. This is the person who stands foremost against the party. He may not be directly threatening, nor may he even be able to fight them, but he will be in their way constantly through the adventure.

Goal: No adversary acts without a goal in mind for himself. Generally, they will want something for their trouble and effort. The Game Master needs to consider what the adversary hopes to gain in their plans.

Example: Amir Rahn seeks to obtain a lost gem he believes that was stolen from his family years ago. He has decided that this quest is his driving ambition, and will sweep away those that would interfere.

Motivation: After the Game Master has the motivation in mind for the character, she needs to determine the character's driving force. Why the end goal is so important to him may tell volumes about the non-player character himself.

Example: Amir's family was wiped out years ago when they attempted to settle at a newly found oasis. Amir stayed behind to study in Taibaijani. He has felt dishonored by their fate, and wishes to redeem himself by taking possession of the family artifacts, and taking his position as family head.

Conflict: With the mindset of the adversary determined, the Game Master needs to know why he will be in the party's way. This is the basic conflict of the adventure, and serves as the foundation of the adventure's plot.

Example: A collector has hired the party to retrieve artifacts from a lost settlement nearby. He's offered a high price, so long as the party can fight off the Scorab nearby. Unfortunately, the party does not know that they're trying to recover Amir's property.

The Character: Finally, the Game Master can set to work in making the adversary a non-player character. Since this is the major adversary in the adventure, the NPC requires a great deal of write-up. All of his skills and statistics should be determined, as if he were a character himself.

Also, many times, the NPC will be considerably more experienced than the party. The Game Master should feel free to add skills and abilities that make sense for someone of the NPC's station.

Example: To make Amir, we'll assign statistics that make him intelligent, but not too physically adept. We'll then use with the Scholar Mage template for skills, and make him a Corbani. He's been in study for some time, as well, so we'll up his magical skills a few points each, as well as give him a wider arsenal of spells.

Final Notes: When an adversary is created, the Game Master should take great pains to treat him differently than a creature or common thug. The adversary should be capable and handling the party at some level. He may not need to fight, or risk his life in a direct confrontation. Above all, though, the adversary should be interesting.

Example: Amir has decided to let the party brave the Scorab themselves, and then move in to try and barter for the prize, offering his spells as his bid. Of course, if the party accepts this, they might have to contend with the person who originally hired them.

Common Opponents

Sometimes, a group of adventurers will run head long into those an adversary will hire. These are common opponents, or henchmen, and can still prove threatening. A Game Master can use these common opponents whenever she needs to throw a quick combat in the party's path.

Brigands: Unfortunately, even in a world of honor, there are dishonorable men. Brigands lie in wait to steal and plunder from the unaware. They generally carry only cutlasses, star blades, or both, but can be very dangerous in numbers. They would possess a modest dodge still, some stealth, and some skill with their weapons.

Strength	6	Intelligence	4
Endurance	6	Willpower	4
Dexterity	5	Perception	7
Comeliness	4	Charisma	4
Health	17	Mana	15

Guards: Quite the opposite of the dishonorable brigand, the guard lives to serve, and will comply with his leader's orders with a sense of duty. They are more skilled in weapons, and would

likely carry both scimitars and brass bows. They could also have a reasonable dodge skill, as well as some bare-hands combat ability. In general, though, they wouldn't possess too much skill in other areas.

Strength	8	Intelligence	5
Endurance	6	Willpower	5
Dexterity	6	Perception	4
Comeliness	4	Charisma	5
Health	20	Mana	14

Fanatics: In less reasonable areas of the world, the priests have been taught to slay those who dare defy the religious codes of their deity. These fanatics are poorly skilled, and usually resort to daggers and star blades. They would have skills in ritual, and maybe a couple of points to learn some very minor spells.

Strength	4	Intelligence	5
Endurance	4	Willpower	3
Dexterity	6	Perception	5
Comeliness	6	Charisma	7
Health	14	Mana	13

Crusaders: if the foolish commit a serious crime, they may have the Katana of the Crusaders coming for them. Crusaders are followers of Allarid who have given themselves to justice. They are deadly warriors, strong, and highly skilled with several weapons. Most non-flying Crusaders carry ceramic armor, and nearly all use Brass Bows and Scimitars. Out of any given group of them, several could have serious spell-casting abilities.

Strength	6	Intelligence	4
Endurance	6	Willpower	4
Dexterity	5	Perception	7
Comeliness	4	Charisma	4
Health	17	Mana	15

Quick-Mix Opponents

Sometimes, a Game Master will not want to spend a great deal of time creating lackeys and minor opponents for the characters. Instead of calculating fair experience, and building these minor villains from scratch, the Game Master can simply use the stock recipe.

Statistics: Roll 1d6 and divide by half for each statistic, adding four to each result. Then, apply any racial modifiers needed. This won't give a wide spread of statistics for these adversaries, but

they don't require a lot of detail anyway. Write down health and mana as normal.

Example: We're making a pack of Tebian thieves. We take the dice to make statistics, rolling one die for each, halving it, then adding three points. Since they're generic, we'll just copy the statistics from one thief to apply to all of them.

Equipment and Melee Skills: The Game Master should choose the weapons and armor each opponent will have. For each of these, roll 1d6 and divide by three. Use these numbers to state the opponent's skill in that weapon. Also, roll again to determine the character's dodging skill.

Example: Our thieves need some weapons. We give each a silken shirt, to keep them light and poorly armored. We also give each a few star-blades and cutlasses. Rolling the needed skills now, we get a two for cutlass, a three for star-blades, and a one for dodge.

Magic Skills: A Game Master shouldn't give quick-mix opponents too much magic. If the opponent really requires it, the Game Master should first choose some modest spells, and then assign the needed Elemental Skills to cast them.

Example: A few of the thieves have learned some modest amount of magic, and can use the 'Minibolt' spell, which requires two levels of air. The thieves with the spell each have the Elemental Magic: Air skill at level two. They would probably have others, but we don't need them here.

Other Skills: At this point, the quick-mix should be able to fight. If they need to do anything more, in order to fit their roll, simply roll 1d6 and divide by half for any skills desired.

Example: These thieves are particular and now what it is they want when they're stealing. We'll give each an Appraisal, Stealth and Pickpocket skill at level two. Since they're used to being nimble we give them the Acrobatics skill at level one as well.

Beasts of Taibaijani

The world is home to some powerful beasts and creatures. The wise traveler will be familiar with the most dangerous of these foes, and be

prepared to handle them, through violence, or through care.

Hithen

The Hithen is the beast of burden for the desert traveler, found everywhere in the desert and used by nearly everyone when on extended journeys. Most Hithen are fairly tame, though a few wild packs of these large beasts can be found in the wider areas of the desert.

Hithen are not exactly docile, but they do have to be explicitly trained to fight, otherwise, they only manage to defend themselves as best they can. Usually, an untrained Hithen will retreat from a conflict with great haste rather than risk himself. A trained Hithen might stay, depending on the rider. Trained Hithen also have an effective claw skill of four.

Hithen have a very good endurance, and can travel with a rider for a long period without rest, making them excellent in their role as beasts of burden. Combat-oriented minds would likely want to seek elsewhere for mounts, however.

Strength	8	Intelligence	2
Endurance	12	Willpower	7
Dexterity	4	Perception	4
Corneliness	5	Charisma	3
Health	24	Mana	13

Attacks	Claws: 1dE
Defenses	Scales: 4B, 4E, 2P
Move	35m Slither
Skills	Melee: Claw: 2
Number	Herd: 10-60

Scorab

Scorabs are extremely dangerous desert predators, and thankfully small in numbers. Many caravans have suffered tremendous losses to these powerful beasts, and most travelers have dubbed them as the single largest threat to desert travel.

Scorabs live underground, and usually attack their prey at night. Their packs of two to six members will burrow through the soft sand to their victims, rise up, and strike with a terrible ferocity. One of these beasts is a formidable threat to a well-skilled and equipped adventurer. A pack can be devastating. Sadly, the only real

option in dealing with these terrors is to flee or stand. They are difficult to avoid if they are near.

In combat, a Scorab will generally stay to the ground and use its pincers. If threatened, it will also use its powerful rear tail, though it is one die more difficult to effectively hit with it. The tail also takes up all of the Scorab's attacks for that turn. If the tail strikes a victim, he must make an average roll against his Endurance, or be stunned for 1d rounds, and suffer an additional 1d damage from poison. Scorabs will attack nearly anything, but they generally go for the easiest prey in their vicinity.

Strength	6	Intelligence	3
Endurance	10	Willpower	10
Dexterity	4	Perception	4
Comeliness	5	Charisma	5
Health	20	Mana	16

Attacks	Pincers: 2dE Tail: 3dP Poison Tail
Defenses	Scales: 6B, 4E, 2P, 6 Fire
Move	20m Crawl 15m Flight 10m Burrow
Skills	Defense Melee: 4 Melee: Pincer: 3 Melee: Tail : 5
Number	Group: 1-6

Wyndlass

Wyndlass are desert scavengers, usually preying on Hithen carcasses or fallen caravan members. They are a common sight over the sands, but can usually be avoided easily enough. They generally appear in clusters of six to twelve members, and can appear at any time during the day.

A wyndlass can be fairly dangerous when encountered, though they seldom attack a live creature unless provoked. A single wyndlass is a good match for even a skilled fighter, and a full cluster of up to a dozen of the creatures is truly frightening. It's generally advisable to leave the beasts alone when encountered.

If combat begins, however, the wyndlass's primary physical attack is its claws. If adequately threatened, however, it can also produce a dangerous stunning spit, which can stun a victim for a considerable time. This stun spit has a range of ten meters. Victims hit with the spit must succeed an average roll against their Endurance or be stunned for 1d rounds.

Strength	4	Intelligence	2
Endurance	5	Willpower	6
Dexterity	9	Perception	10
Comeliness	5	Charisma	5
Health	18	Mana	18

Attacks	Claws: 1dE Stun Spit
Defenses	Scales: 2B, 2E, 2P
Move	10m Slither 20m Flight
Skills	Dodge: 5 Melee: Claw: 5
Number	Group: 1-6

Wyvern

Powerful desert mounts, the Wyvern strikes hard from the sky with a thundering wing and massive tail. They are the premiere desert predators, able to rip up a caravan when untrained, and opposing armies when guided.

Wyverns can be tamed, but they are dangerous in the wild, and will strike whenever it is hungry. Teams of Drakkhen are needed to overpower and capture a wild Wyvern before making it a suitable mount. Wyverns even have a difficult time being around their own, seeing them as threats to their food source.

When in combat, a Wyvern is a powerful opponent, very strong, and very capable. Their tough armor and powerful physical attacks alone would be harsh enough, but they've also wrapped a toxin in their tail attack. The tail takes up all of the Wyvern's attacks for that turn, but if it strikes a victim, he must make a difficult roll against his Endurance, or be stunned for 1d rounds, and suffer an additional 1d damage from poison.

Strength	12	Intelligence	2
Endurance	10	Willpower	4
Dexterity	10	Perception	6
Comeliness	3	Charisma	3
Health	32	Mana	12

Attacks	Talons: 1dE Tail: 3dP Poison Tail
Defenses	Scales: 3B, 3E, 3P
Move	10m Walk 35m Flight
Skills	Dodge: 5 Melee: Claw: 5 Melee: Talon 4
Number	Lone : 1-2