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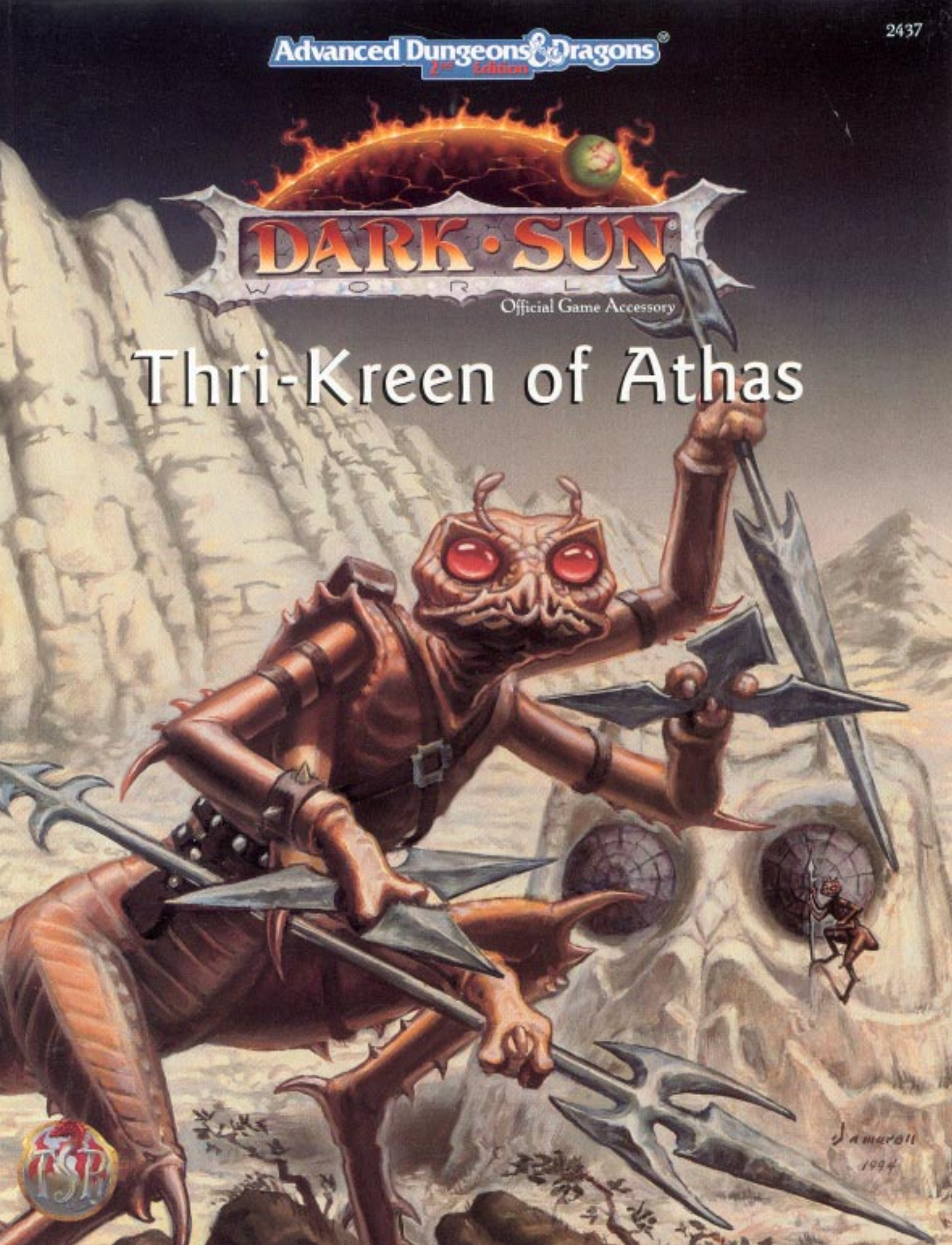
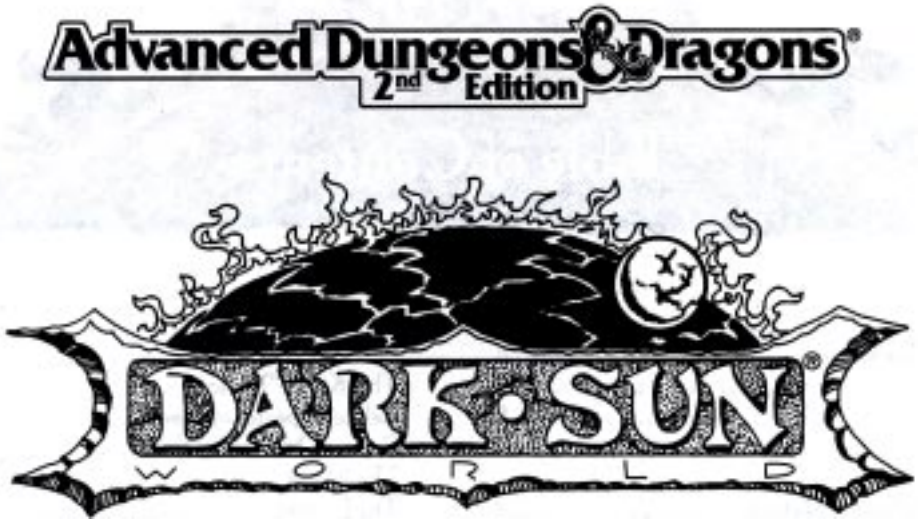
Thri-Kreen of Athas





Official Game Accessory

Thri-Kreen of Athas

by Tim Beach and Dori Hein

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Note: Occasional references are made to other products. While these are not generally required for play, they often expand on specific topics. References include: PHB, *Player's Handbook* (#2101); DMG, *DUNGON MASTER*® Guide (2100); Rules *Book* (boxed set: #2400); *Dragon Kings* (hardbound: #2408); *Complete Psionics Handbook* (PHBR 5: #2117); *Complete Gladiator's Handbook* (#2419); Sourcebooks *Earth, Air, Fire, and Water* (#2422); *The Will and the Way* (#2431); *Elves of Athas* (#2423); *Dune Trader* (#2407); Adventure *DRAGON'S CROWN*® (#2416). Other *PHBR* - series of interest include: *Complete Fighter's Handbook* (#2110); *Complete Priest's Handbook* (#2113); *Complete Ranger's Handbook* (#2136); *Complete Druid's Handbook* (#2150); and *Complete Book of Humanoids* (#2135).

Introduction

We are now in the Brown Times, the age of our kind, when the world is dry. The kreen are matchless in the dry times.

Long ago, were the Blue Times, when the world was new, and there was water everywhere, so much water that it appeared blue. The kreen of the Blue Time lived on pieces of land that floated in the water. It is said that early kreen had great, gossamer wings, which they used to fly between the pieces of land. They knew nothing of tools and building, but even then they hunted. In that age were only kreen and animals, and a few plants, on the pieces of land.

Then, so slowly that no one could notice until it had already happened, the water went away. The pieces of land grew roots, and the roots grew together, until land covered most of the world, and water stood in only a few places. Plants grew in profusion over the new land. This was the Green Time.

During the Green Time, more animals were born, and hunting was good. The kreen, able to travel to more of the world, discovered wondrous animals, kinds they could not have imagined. During the Green Time, the kreen, much to their surprise, met mammals who could talk. Not quite kreen, they became known as dra-trin, the sleepers-like-people. Now we call them dra, and we reserve the term term for those who are more similar to kreen. The dra were small, but they, over time, gave rise to larger dra, and the many kinds of dra filled their part of the world.

To resist the many races of dra, the kreen had to learn new skills. It was during the Green Time that kreen learned the way of fighting with the mind, and with weapons. The kreen fought, and they built, and they learned to change themselves to become better warriors and hunters. They survived.

Then came the beginning of the Brown Time, when dra turned on dra, and they used terrible forces on one another. These killed many plants and animals, and the world withered and turned brown. Hunting became poor, but the kreen were wise and skilled, and they could find prey where no others could. And thekreen became more numerous and more powerful, and formed great nations. The kreen of these before-times built cities, and they made beings of power as well. Many kreen were found in the world. Some stayed in the north, while others went south, to live among the dra who were left, to work with them and share knowledge with them.

In the now-times, still part of the Brown Time, there are still many kreen in the world. In the south, the dra turned against the kreen offer of peace, and the nations of the kreen fell. The kreen of the south, where you live, run free, caring for little but the hunt, living near the dra. And to the north? Well, you would be surprised at the kreen of the north . . .

—the history of the kreen,
as told by Klik-Cheka'da
zik-trin'ta, tohr-kreen scout

Though his perspective is skewed toward the kreen point of view, Klik's telling of history is essentially a true one. Long ago, the planet of Athas was covered with water, the non-kreen races call this time the Blue Age, and during that time the halflings had a great and powerful civilization. However, most people do not realize that kreen—the mantis people, usually called by their more specific names, *thri-kreen* and *tohr-kreen*– lived during that age as well.

During the Blue Age, the kreen were primitive, their development stunted by their environment. The Blue Age ended and the waters retreated, largely due to the actions of the ancient halflings. Plants grew, and all manner of life spread across the surface of Athas. The kreen met the halflings, as well as many of the races that sprang from the halflings, among them dwarves, elves, humans, and giants. The kreen evolved, they developed weapons and a civilization. They honed their mental powers, and many became masters of the Way.

Then came the Time of Magic, the age of Rajaat and of the Cleansing Wars he launched to eliminate the offshoots of the halfling race. The kreen did not study magic, nor were they a part of the Cleansing Wars. Because they were not descended from halflings, Rajaat saw the kreen as little more than animals.

At the end of the Cleansing Wars, Rajaat was imprisoned by his champions, who then became the Sorcerer Kings of those lands later called the Tyr Region. For a time, during the Cleansing Wars, the kreen lived in peace with some of the non-kreen peoples, but the ascension of the Sorcerer Kings ended that peace. The kreen of the Tyr Region became the nomadic hunters known as thri-kreen, the mantis warriors.

Introduction

Learning About Thri-Kreen

This sourcebook describes thri-kreen in great detail, from their mindset to their abilities; including rules and clarifications for fitting them into a campaign, and tips for role-playing this unique player character race. This is the story of the mantis warriors as told by a tohr-kreen explorer from the far north, Klik-Chaka'da, the "teacher of the Way and the Worship."

Chapter One describes the thri-kreen mindset, what they think and even how they think, the things that set them apart from other intelligent life.

Chapter Two details kreen physiology, describing how their bodies are put together, how they grow, and how they function in the harsh deserts of Athas.

Chapter Three is in many ways the heart of the book; it collects all the game information about thri-kreen combat, magic and psionics use, proficiencies, and weapons, along with much that is new.

Chapter Four offers details about thri-kreen society, how they live in the wild and how they occupy their time. This chapter is for the role-player who wants to add depth and detail to a thri-kreen character.

Chapter Five describes special social structures of the thri-kreen: the hunting pack; the rarer raiding pack; and several unusual packs. The focus then shifts to the mysterious lands of the far north, and the related races: the six settled tohr-kreen species (Jeral, J'ez, J'hol, To'ksa, Tondi, T'keech), the savage trin, and the cold and manipulative zik-chil.

Chapter Seven covers player character options for thri-kreen: classes, kits, and combinations, with six new kits especially for thri-kreen.

The last section of the book presents a special adventure, *A Taste of Fear,* for thri-kreen characters-and playable with their non-kreen friends as well.

Prepare to encounter the exotic, the *Thri-Kreen of Athas.*



Introduction



Definitions

Before entering the world of the thri-kreen, a few terms need to be defined. Although a glossary will be presented later (see pages 6-7), several terms are so important that they should be highlighted at this time.

First, *kreen* means "people" or "person," specifically the "mantis people."

• The literal translation of *thri-kreen* is "wanderer-person." Thus, thri-kreen are nomadic insect people.

• *Tohr-kreen* means "settled-person." The tohr-kreen, are settled insect people who live in towns and other settlements.

Other important terms include *chakak,* "psionicist;" *tikchak,* the hunt mentality, or "hunt-mind;" and *tokchak,* the clutch mentality, or "egg-mind." The last two define much of the thri-kreen's mindset, and are frequently used. The most common thri-kreen weapons are the *chatkcha,* a three-bladed throwing wedge, and the *gythka,* a two-bladed fighting staff.

The Kreen

Physically, thri-kreen and tohr-kreen are the same, except that tohr-kreen might grow to be slightly larger because of a more civilized environment and a better diet. Besides the two different cultural categories of kreen, the southern thri-kreen and the northern tohr-kreen, six physically distinct subspecies exist.

Thri-kreen: The Tyr Region has only two kreen subspecies: the more civilized Jeral and the comparatively barbaric To'ksa. All player character kreen are assumed to be of these species. While only about 25% of thri-kreen are Jeral, these are more likely to become adventurers; the net effect is that the number of adventurers of the two species are roughly equal. The mental and physical differences between Jeral and To'ksa are detailed in Chapters One and Two.

Tohr-kreen: The thri-kreen are as they have been described DARK SUN® sources such as the campaign set. However, the "tohr-kreen" of the MC12, *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix* are really specially augmented tohr-kreen scouts, more correctly called *zik-tin'ta.* While zik-trin'ta are technically tohr-kreen because they come from the lands of the tohr-kreen, they are physically unlike thri-kreen, having been surgically and genetically altered to be both faster and more powerful. In most DARK SUN sources before 1995, the term "tohr-kreen" refers to the zik-trin'ta scouts, as they were the only tohr-kreen known in the Tyr Region. Chapter Five of this book describes the true tohr-kreen, the settled kreen of the north.

Thus, throughout the rest of this book, the term *"tohr-kreen "* refers to a kreen who is physically like a thri-kreen, but who comes from a more civilized and sedentary culture. When the text refers to the augmented kreen, the more correct term *zik-trin'ta* is used. Perhaps the best example is the sourcebook's narrator, Klik-Chaka'da, who is a zik-trin'ta, an explorer from the lands of the tohr-kreen. Other tohr-kreen, the J'ez, the J'hol, the T'keech, and the Tondi, are pictured and briefly described on the poster map.

Pronunciation

The structure of the kreen's mouth is different from the structure of a human's mouth. Kreen have no lips and their tongue is different; there are some sounds they cannot reproduce effectively. They cannot make the sounds represented by the letters *p, b, f, v, m.* However, they use other sounds not readily imitated by humanoids. These sounds, and their symbols, are given below.

qh	*click* (the tongue-click that a human can make by moving the tongue from the roof of the mouth to impact on the floor of the mouth)
•	*pop* (a sound which can be roughly imitated by a human who places a thumb in the mouth, and then brings it out rapidly)
xh	*grind* (a grinding, growling sort of sound)
m m	*hum* (an open-mouthed hum with a bit of a buzz)
'	*glottal stop* (a slight, almost soundless pause between syllables, produced by closing the glottis at the back of the human throat)

These sounds and how they are used in thri-kreen language are further described in Chapter Four, in the section "Language and Communication."



Glossary

Following are several thri-kreen words, listed alphabetically, and their approximate translations in the Common human language. Note that many words are composed of other words, and note how many words are related to different types of hunting and searching. Particularly important words appear in *italic* lettering.

Thri-kreen word	Translation
ak	combat
ch	yellow
cha	knowledge
chak	holds knowledge, or holder of knowledge; the mind
chaka	mind power, the Way; psionics
chakak	mind-warrior (psionicist)
chak'sa	mind's home; head
chat	hold knowledge; to remember, one who remembers
chatkcha	rememberer-who-ends-knowledge; the thri-kreen missile weapon that ends knowledge (kills), and "remembers" how to return to the thrower; killer-that-remembers
chil	knowledge of biochemical science
cho	lost or unusual knowledge
chtik	yellow earth; also a region known to non-kreen as the Yellow Hills
Chtik-tek	the hunting pack that ranges the Yellow Hills area
chu	detailed information
chuchaka	someone with detailed knowledge of the Way; a skilled psionicist
da	reverence: the way of priests
dasl	crystal; specificalIy thri-kreen crystal, made by combining venom, herbs, and sand; implies reverence (compare to *da)*
dej	circle
dra	mammal-person of unspecified gender; usual shorthand for mammal people; has also come to mean sleeper or to sleep
dra-trin	sleepers-like-people; old name for mammal people; seldom used because trin implies insectoid/mantis nature
draj	male sleeper-person; male human, dwarf, elf, mul, halfling, or half-giant
dras	female sleeper-person; female human, dwarf, elf, mul, halfling, or half-giant
dre	death; to die; compare to "dra"
dul	move; mover
g	blood; family; of the same blood
g'tok	egg-family; clutch
g'tok-dra	a clutch with sleepers; any group of humanoids
g'tok-hoz	clutchleader
g'tokmma'ak	clutchmate
gak	blood of combat; food which fortifies one for combat, or a slang term for someone with the "heart of a warrior"
gyth	blood or ichor, compare to g'
gythka	bloodseeker; the polearm of the thri-kreen
gyth'sa	the organ that produces blood; home of blood
gythtik	the blood hunt, a vendetta
haaz	(tohr-kreen) leader, compare to the thri-kreen term "hoz"
haazik	(tohr-kreen) leader-priest or "leader-of-change;" in northern tohr-kreen society, priests devoted to the tohr-kreen "Haazi" (emperor, more or less), something like a human Templar of the Tablelands
hak	lost; to lose
hoz	leader
ik	priest
iksed	priest of water
ikriik	priest of fire
ikthok	priest of earth
ik-kos	priest of air
J'ez	a subspecies of kreen, unknown in the Tyr Region, with black chitin, organized and militant
J'hol	a subspecies of kreen, unknown in the Tyr Region, with red chitin, fiery and merciless
jalath'gak	huge flying insect, used as a draft beast after the wings have been clipped
jav	to crack; one who cracks
Jeral	a subspecies of kreen, found in the Tyr Region, with yellow chitin and less developed antennae, the most cultured of the kreen
jidz	chitin (also shell)
k	to end; one who ends
ka	to seek; seeker
kak	warrior, seeks combat (seek+tcombat)
kalak	seeker/finder one skilled in reconnaissance
kaluk	(tohr-kreen) pack, with connotations of "nation;" compare to the thri-kreen term "kek"
kano	seeks day, akin to seek heat; cold; the name for the thri-kreen's cold "hell"
kcha	to end knowledge; to kill; killer

Glossary



Thri-kreen word	Translation
kek	a raiding pack; compare to tek and to kak
kik	to raid; raider, akin to "thief"
kil	learning (compare to *klik,* "teacher")
kiltektet	learning-pack-who-enlightens; the pack that learns and then takes the knowledge to others; a member of that pack
klik	teacher
ko	breaker, to break, as in "to put a hole in;" also a thri-kreen weapon designed to put holes in chitin
kos	air
kos-r-iik	sky-fire; the sun
koskcha	air-killer, general term for a flying predator
kreen	people; person (sapient insect-person with mantis qualities)
kyor	vengeance, avenger
kyorkcha	avenging killer, a tohr-kreen weapon
la	finder, to find
laj	to catch
lajav	catcher-cracker, a thri-kreen weapon constructed like a crab leg cracker
lak	to find for combat, reconnaissance as if a military scout; or: to find and fight
lakta-cho	finder of lost knowledge; implies knowledge is of a combat skill or technique
mma'ak	close friend; prospective clutchmate; sometimes shorthand for clutchmate; compare to "ak;" this implies someone who fights at one's side
na	night; each night
no	day
qhari	bringer to bring
qhan-cho	bringer of lost or unknown knowledge; compare to lakta-cho
riik	fire
sa	home (not necessarily a single place, this may be a wide area)
si	grows; one who grows or causes growth; compare to "zi"
si'tsa	(tohr kreen) grows-home; a builder
sed	water
T'keech	a subspecies of kreen, unknown in the Tyr Region, with green chitin, simple (in the sense of pure) and unsophisticated
ta	retriever, to retrieve; one who returns something
tek	a pack of thri-kreen; specifically a hunting pack; compare to tik
tek-hoz	packleader

Thri-kreen word	Translation
tekchakak	psionicist for a pack
tekmma'ak	packmate
tet	to enlighten; one who enlightens; similar to "missionary"
tho	life; experience
thok	egg of all life; earth (compare to *tok,* "egg," and *tho,* "life")
thri	nomad; nomadic; implies hunter
thri-kreen	nomad people
thri- trin	savage nomadic almost-people (see trin)
tik	hunter, to hunt; compare to "ik," "priest"
tik-dul	hunt-move; a dance-like ritual emulating the movements common in the hunt
tik-tik	hunts hunters; a guardian
tikchak	hunt-mind; the hunter mentality
tikik	hunter-priest, connotations of protection; slang for druid
To'ksa	a subspecies of kreen, the most numerous type in the Tyr Region, with yellow chitin and long antennae, of barbaric culture
tohr	settled; similar to "civilized"
tohr-kreen	settled people
tok	egg
tokchak	egg-mind; the clutch mentality
Tondi	a subspecies of kreen, unknown in the Tyr Region, with purple chitin, reclusive
trin	near-person (insectoid); usually mantis in nature; slang for the brutish thri-trin, who have two arms and four legs.
zer	meat
zerka	meat-seeker, a thri-kreen weapon much like a harpoon
zi	to change; to molt; one who effects change or goes through change; one who molts
zik	to change radically; one who effects or goes through such change; compare to "ik," "priest;" "zik" also has pseudo-religious connotations
zik-chil	"priest-of-change;" pale tohr-kreen, cold and manipulative, creators of zik-trin, revered and feared by the tohr-kreen
zik-thok	changes-earth; the herb that catalyzes thri-kreen venom to allow production of dasl
zik-trin	an altered near-person (the tohr-kreen monster)
zik-trin'ts	an altered near-person who acts as a scout/retriever of information
zik-trin'ak	an altered near-person who is a combat specialist

Chapter I: Psychological Nature

The thri-kreen of the Tablelands have a rather primitive view of the world, but their mentality is still similar to that of the kreen of the north. Much of our common behavior stems from our insect nature. Among the thri-kreen of the Tablelands, the constant struggle for survival greatly influences their beliefs and practices. Of course, the racial memory of our kind gives all kreen common ground and insures that certain values are upheld. Of paramount importance among all kreen of all lands is the clutch.

It was interesting to observe the interaction of thri-kreen with members of the non-kreen races in the Tablelands. The southern thri-kreen are also exposed to magic, a great rarity among our kind. For the less informed, magic is a manipulative talent, much like chaka, which the non-kreen call psionics. *Magic relies more heavily on external forces, however, and requires many accoutrements unnecessary to chakak*

—from the journals of Klik-Chaka'da, zik-trin'ta explorer

This chapter describes the thri-kreen mindset: the ideas, beliefs, and practices that make a thri-kreen a thri-kreen. These include general categories: the clutch; the hunt; the thri-kreen's general mentality; their relations with other races; and their reactions to magic and psionics.

Without a doubt, the most important aspect of the thri-kreen psychological nature is reverence for the clutch and for clutchmates. This shapes kreen behavior at all times, even when not among clutchmates.

Clutch, Pack, and Nation

First, most humans and other non-kreen have a skewed view of the clutch mentality, and often confuse packs with clutches. Clutch mentality is hereafter referred to by its thri-kreen name, *tokchak* (literally "egg-mind").

Many non-kreen mistake tokchak for more basic instincts, referring to thri-kreen as "hive" beings. While the reverence and need for the clutch is admittedly mostly instinctual among thri-kreen, the modes of behavior encouraged by tokchak require thought; tokchak also does not have the level of sub-psionic mental and pheromonal communication found in true hive beings. Thri-kreen are not at all like such insectoid creatures as antloids.

"Clutch" has three meanings, as used by thri-kreen. First, a clutch is all of the eggs laid by a single kreen at the same time—as many as 30 eggs. Second, it is all thri-kreen who hatch from a single clutch of eggs; this is sometimes called a "birth clutch." Third, a clutch is a thri-kreen and any other intelligent beings accepted by that thri-kreen as clutchmates.

A clutch of eggs is called a *tok* ("egg" or "eggs") in the thri-kreen language. A clutch of living thri-kreen and other clutchmates is called *g'tok,* or "egg-family."

A thri-kreen can belong to several clutches at once, and usually belongs to at least two: the birth clutch, and a clutch formed later in life by taking new clutchmates. The difference between clutches is somewhat important to a thri-kreen; while all clutchmates are considered equal, the birth clutch is considered special (sort of first among equals).

A "pack" *(tek* in thri-kreen) is a group of thri-kreen that consists of several clutches. All the clutches of a single pack are interrelated; that is, each clutch has at least one member who is also a member of another clutch of the same pack. See the accompanying pack and clutch diagram for an example.

A lone thri-kreen seeks to find new clutchmates (see "Tokchak" under "Mentality and World View," in this chapter). To be accepted as a clutchmate, another being must be trusted, liked, and respected by the thri-kreen. The decision is relatively subjective, and the thri-kreen might judge prospective clutchmates in other ways as well. If the various individual criteria are met, the thri-kreen accepts the prospect as a clutchmate. Often, if another being fights at the side of and defends the thri-kreen, the other will be considered a clutchmate almost immediately.

No one is ever accepted into a birth clutch. Instead, the first clutchmate accepted beyond the birth clutch is the first of a new clutch for the thri-kreen. Later, others can be accepted into this new clutch—if approved by all the clutchmates of that clutch. Approval is sometimes verbal, sometimes assumed; a thri-kreen who accepts a clutchmate and later accepts a second may either ask the first clutchmate to accept the new one, or might just observe until the first clutchmate has apparently accepted the second. In clutches with non-kreen members, it is



usually easier for the thri-kreen to observe than try to explain to the non-kreen why the questions are being asked, and exactly what they mean.

A thri-kreen can still accept new clutchmates who are not approved by a clutch; these individuals are the beginnings of other clutches. A thri-kreen who has traveled for many years might have several clutches, some with several members, some that include only the thri-kreen and one other clutchmate. In some cases, a thri-kreen's clutchmate might even be a member of two or more of the thri-kreen's clutches, if accepted by all the members of more than one clutch.

Note that a thri-kreen who accepts a new clutchmate does not necessarily inform the new clutchmate of this fact. Another thri-kreen simply knows when such a bond is formed; when thri-kreen accept each other as clutchmates, they do so at almost the same time, as if linked psychically.

This is largely a function of pheromones: A thri-kreen accepting another as a clutchmate releases a special pheromone that tells the other (subliminally) that the clutchmate bond is being formed. If the other agrees, he or she also releases the pheromone, automatically. If not another, negative pheromone is released, and the bonding does not occur, in either direction. Because a thri-kreen clutchmate knows, a thri-kreen expects other clutchmates to know as well—and because the new non-kreen clutchmate cannot release pheromones, a refusal cannot be received, so the thri-kreen expects to be accepted as a clutchmate by the other as well. This can lead to confusion.

Certain more worldly thri-kreen, who know more about non-kreen psychology, often inform the prospective non-kreen clutchmate that they are being considered; a wise prospect, one who expresses feelings of honor at receiving this compliment, can then be accepted as a clutchmate.

The duties, responsibilities, and privileges of a clutchmate are many. A clutchmate can depend on a great deal of support from other clutchmates, and is expected to give the same kind of support to them.

The Great Race for Ka'cha

A tale told to thri-kreen larvae.

{Note: Translations of thri-kreen terms are given in brackets.}

"Gather around, young ones, and listen to the tale of Ka'cha *{knowledge seeker}.* Yes, I'm sure you do know Ka'cha, little 1arva—there are many people named Ka'cha now. But this is the tale of the first Ka'cha, or at least the most important, Ka'cha of the Kiltektet—and the tale of the Great Race to save him.

Many years ago, before the time of your mother's mother, lived a thri-kreen named Ka'cha. Many say he was the first of the Kiltektet, the pack that searches for learning and brings enlightenment to others.

True to his name, Ka'cha sought knowledge. He was fortunate enough to be taught by a tohr-kreen, Klik, when young. Klik raised a small clutch of thri-kreen larva, teaching them to revere knowledge and truth; Ka'cha was one of these thri-kreen, part of the clutch that eventually grew to become the Kiltektet.

Ka'cha and another of the Kiltektet, Ka'tho *{experience seeker),* had promised to become mates, but decided to wander for a few years first before returning to their home and have young, which they would raise to follow the Kiltektet way. When they reached the age of wandering, Ka'cha and Ka'tho set out on their respective searches.

Ka'cha met others on his journeys, and bonded with them, accepting a handfu1 as his new clutchmates. Some of his clutchmates were not even kreen, but understood and accepted our ways. Among Ka'cha's traveling clutchmates was Drasna, a somewhat short, slender non-kreen, who had been clutchmate to many of the Kiltektet pack

For years, Ka'cha traveled the world with his clutch, exploring strange places and meeting many new races. Eventually, he decided the time had come for him to return to Ka'tho and make sure the Kiltektet continued. His clutch asked him to stay with them for a time to complete one last task. As their clutchleader, he could have ordered them to go on without him, but as their clutchmate, Ka'cha wanted to please them before going on a journey that was not their own, so did not deny them a final adventure.

This last adventure was the clutch's greatest, and marked Ka'cha's finest hour. The clutch defeated many enemies, but eventually encountered a fiend from beyond. Though they fought valiantly, they could do little to harm the fiend. It slew one of Ka'cha's clutchmates, Tik-tik, and turned to the rest of the clutch. Ka'cha knew he could not defeat the creature, with its hated magic, but he hoped he could delay it while the others regrouped and brought out a powerful magical weapon.

Ka'cha leapt on the monster, slashing and biting, but to no avail; the fiend was invulnerable to Ka'cha's claws. Finally, the non-kreen Drasna brought the magical weapon forward and slew the fiend-but not quickly enough. Just before it died, the fiend whipped around its scorpion-like tail and stabbed Ka'cha, breaking through his shell and injecting him with vile poison.

Ka'cha died.

His clutchmates were in shock. Ka'cha had fought a hopeless battle to save them, and he had saved them-yet they had failed to save him, failed to protect their clutchleader and clutchmate. How could such a noble leader die so needlessly, when only a few seconds delay kept his clutchmate from his aid?

The clutchmates took the bodies with them. Tik-tik's body was broken beyond repair, but Ka'cha's barely showed sign of injury—just a shattered and discolored place on his thorax. The next day, Ka'tho arrived in the same place, also traveling to where she was to meet Ka'cha. Ka'tho and Drasna recognized one another, and Drasna told Ka'tho the awful news. Ka'tho said, "It must not be so. The clutches of Ka'cha need him. Your traveling clutch, our Kiltektet clutch, and the clutch that he and I were to produce—all need Ka'cha's wisdom and power." Drasna agreed.

The clutchmates had one hope: the tohr-kreen Klik was a powerful ik *{priest},* as well as a skilled chakak *{psionicist}.* Perhaps he could restore life to Ka'cha. Ka'tho, a chakak herself, contacted Klik, and asked him if it was possible to restore Ka'cha. Klik replied that it was, but that it had to happen within

10 days, and Klik was many hundreds of miles away, over rough terrain; the clutch would have to race against time if they hoped to restore Ka'cha. The clutch agreed, and they set a meeting place with Klik.

The clutch quickly gathered as much food and water as they could, and began the race. They set a grueling pace, taking almost no time to hunt, barely stopping to rest. The non-kreen could not keep up, except for Drasna, who would not let her oldest and dearest clutchmate pass without making every effort. Miraculously, Drasna kept up, and she and the thri-kreen clutchmates traveled through salt flats, mountains, and badlands, traveling 10 days almost without pause. They faced many trials, defending Ka'cha's body from elves and other raiders, fighting horrible monsters, and resisting hunger and thirst. On the 10th day, they reached the meeting place, hungry, thirsty, and even tired. Even the strongest of the thri-kreen felt the desire to do the unthinkable—to sleep.

They had given everything to save their clutchmate, but was it enough? Hours passed, as the thri-kreen guarded Ka'cha's body. Where was Klik? Had he run into trouble? Finally, one of the scouts spotted a dust trail in the distance: a lone kreen approached. As the kreen drew close, they saw it was Klik, and they let hope return. Klik approached, and explained that what he was about to try was difficult, and did not always succeed. The clutchmates gave Klik what little food and water they had, so Klik would have the strength for the trials.

Klik began a ceremony, and chanted over Ka'cha's body, imploring the elements to restore Ka'cha to life. After many hours—as the last day of hope came to an end-a light appeared in Ka'cha's eyes, as fire was restored in him. Air helped him, and he began to breath again. The earth gave him strength, and the water made his blood flow again. Ka'cha lived.

The clutchmates had given of themselves to save their clutchmate, considering his life more important than their own, just as Ka'cha had considered the lives of his clutchmates more important than his own. Ka'cha looked upon his clutchmates, and was glad.

Ka'cha and Ka'tho went on to mate, and produced several



large clutches, who spread the way of the Kiltektet over the and. They spread the story of the Great Race to reassure others that clutchmates were still ready to sacrifice for clutchmates, and so all was well with the world.

Ka'cha probably would have ordered his clutchmates to abandon him, feeling that best for the clutch, rather than risking several lives to restore only one. Fortunately for Ka'cha, he was dead; his clutchsecond, who became leader upon Ka'cha's death, decided it was in the best interest of the clutch to help Ka'cha, and ordered the clutch to do so; they naturally followed the orders of their clutchleader.

Even though *The Great Race* is told to almost all young thri-kreen at one time or another, it does not truly give the thri-kreen a message so much as it reinforces the message of the thri-kreen racial memory, the message ingrained in the inner fiber of every thri-kreen, forever: the clutch is all. The bond between clutchmates is like friendship, like brotherhood, yet stronger than most such bonds.



Belonging to a clutch determines the thri-kreen's place in the universe, and gives the thri-kreen a set of parameters within which he or she must operate. The requirements of a clutch transcend alignment. Thri-kreen might be good or evil, lawful or chaotic, but the thri-kreen still behaves the same way toward clutch and clutchmates. Regardless of the thri-kreen's true alignment, behavior toward clutch and clutchmates is essentially lawful good. This is one of the reasons why other races consider thri-kreen unpredictable, whether they are truly chaotic or not; a thri-kreen that behaves one way with clutchmates might behave in a strikingly different manner with others.

The duties of a clutchmate are simple at the basic level: help the clutch. This is enough for the thri-kreen, and serves as a guideline throughout life. Thri-kreen seldom think about the details of the duties. Many of the details are not even spoken; the thri-kreen simply understands the duties and would never think of shirking them. A thri-kreen finds it difficult to express the "rules" of clutch behavior; when such things must be explained (as to a non-kreen clutchmate), the thri-kreen sometimes tells the story of the Great Race.

The Law of the Clutch

If a thri-kreen were to describe the duties of a clutchmate, they would include the following

- Protect and aid the clutch and other clutchmates.
- Practice the hunt and other skills needed for survival.
- In all cases when aid of any kind is required or requested, give first consideration to clutchmates, then to packmates, then to other kreen, then to other intelligent life, then to prey.
- Follow the orders of the clutchleader.
- For the good of the clutch, challenge the clutchleader who becomes weak, and be ready to assume leadership of the clutch from a weak leader.
- Offer advice to the clutchleader, in case there is knowledge the leader does not possess.
- Accept the results of a challenge without argument. There is no shame in being a clutchsecond, or even in being the weakest member of a clutch. Just as somebody must be the most powerful in a clutch, so must somebody be weakest. It is enough to belong to the clutch.

Breaking the Ties

Generally, the only way to leave a clutch is through death. This is the only way a thri-kreen ever leaves a clutch of thri-kreen; they do not quit a clutch. Other people can stop being clutchmates to a thri-kreen, either by their own choice (if they understand tokchak, or more likely, by the thri-kreen's choice.

Sometimes a thri-kreen will accept a human or other non-kreen as a clutchmate. Later, the thri-kreen might realize the non-kreen was not quite what was expected from initial impressions. This may result from initial confusion on the non-kreen's part about what is expected of a clutchmate; or confusion because the non-kreen did not know he or she was being considered, because the thri-kreen did not know to inform the non-kreen of that fact. In such a case, the thri-kreen can release the clutch bond; if the other knew about it, the thri-kreen tells the other, in a matter-of-fact manner, that the other is no longer a clutchmate. No explanation should be required, but a thri-kreen will be brutally honest if pressed. This type of bond-breaking is done without malice or grudge, at least on the thri-kreen's part. Most thri-kreen understand non-kreen well enough to know that sometimes mistakes are made regarding them. An unsatisfactory clutchbonding is such a mistake, and can be corrected by breaking the bond.

Since thri-kreen never bond with other kreen by mistake, breaking a bond rarely occurs. When thri-kreen decide they do not get along (usually because they have different goals and plans) the two just go their separate ways, with the clutch-bond intact. If they run into each other again, they try to avoid one another, but honor the clutch-bond if it comes up.

It is rare, though possible, for thri-kreen to sever a bond formally; it requires one to inform the other, and requires the other to agree. This is sometimes done amiably, if the thri-kreen simply have different goals, but can escalate into a fight if one of the thri-kreen takes insult at being asked to break such an important bond. In such cases, the one asked to break the bond fights to deny the implication that he or she is a poor clutchmate.

On some occasions, a clutchmate might do something so reprehensible that the thri-kreen immediately expels the other from as a clutchmate, and seek revenge. There is no room in the thri-kreen philosophy for the clutchmate who goes bad.



An accepted clutchmate who betrays the clutch receives death, as quickly and as brutally as the thri-kreen can give it. If there are more than one thri-kreen in the group, they all attack the betrayer. There is a word in the thri-kreen language, *g'tokxhko•;* it means, literally, "clutch-breaker," with some rather unpleasant connotations. It is such a vile insult, the worst that can be given by (or to) a thri-kreen, that it is seldom even thought, let alone spoken. The thri-kreen would rather just kill the clutch-breaker as quickly as possible and go on with things. Once a clutch-breaker has been destroyed, the thri-kreen never speak of that individual again; it is as if the clutch-breaker never existed.

Clutch Leadership

As previously stated, a clutch is organized along a strict hierarchy based on dominance; each clutch member knows who is more powerful and who is less powerful. In most cases, determination of clutch hierarchy is peaceful; most thri-kreen can tell who is more or less powerful and aggressive, and give or take orders accordingly. Most positions in the hierarchy are determined by someone giving an order or making a suggestion, and others following it; the one whose suggestions are followed the most is the clutchleader, while the clutchsecond is the one followed next most frequently, and so forth, to the thri-kreen who takes the dominance (and orders) of all other clutch members. When hierarchy is determined in this manner, it relies partly on the thri-kreen's charisma; however, the other thri-kreen in a clutch also judge a potential leader's intelligence, aggressiveness, and strength before taking an order. Thus, a non-charismatic warrior who the clutch recognizes as a strong and cunning hunter will be accepted as leader more readily than a charismatic, but weak, individual.

A thri-kreen unhappy with his or her place in the order—either a clutchsecond unhappy with the leader, or someone lower trying to move up a little for the good of the clutch—can make a dominance challenge. The two contenders fight until one surrenders or dies. After the fight, no bad will exists between the contestants; once the issue of dominance is resolved, they both go about their business with the full security of knowing just where they stand in the clutch. For the "rules" of challenge, refer the section in Chapter Four called "The Challenge."

Clutch Hierarchy

The clutch hierarchy system does not mean thri-kreen shirk their duties. If humans were organized in such a way, and the leader issued an order, the order would likely be passed down by each person to the next lowest person in the order, until the person in the lowest position ended up doing everything. This does not happen in a thri-kreen clutch.

When a clutchleader issues an order, the order is usually given to a specific thri-kreen, normally the best suited to the task, someone the clutchleader wants to test for ability, or someone whom the leader wants to gain experience. If no one specific is named, the clutchsecond or the thri-kreen best able to perform the task voluntarily takes it.

Pack and Nation

As previously discussed, a pack is composed of several clutches. The nation—at least in the Tyr Region—is a collection of pack with no real cohesion; the term "nation" is simply used as a convenience (primarily by humans and other non-kreen) to describe thri-kreen who roam the same region and do similar things. The thri-kreen of Tyr do not consider themselves to be organized into nations of any kind.

Thri-kreen do recognize the existence of pack, and they tend to use the name of the pack to identifv themselves, as in "Lakta-Cho of the Chtik-tek," which means roughly, "Finder-of-lost-knowledge, of the Yellow-Hills-hunting-pack."

A pack generally has members of only one species of thri-kreen; a typical pack consists of either Jeral or To'ksa, only. Each pack has a leader, a packsecond, a council clutch, and its own local customs: packmates are expected to treat other packmates a certain way.

The pack leader is the most powerful clutchleader, but not necessarily the leader of the most powerful clutch. For example, the leader of a clutch of three might be more powerful than the leader of a clutch of 30; if so, the leader of three is also the leader of the pack—assuming he or she wishes it, and all challenges are accepted and conducted properly. All the clutch leaders of a pack make up a clutch of their own; this clutch of clutchleaders serves as an informal council when the packleader wants advice

before making an important decision.

Pack leadership is always determined by challenge, never simply according to who gives and takes orders. When a clutch joins a pack, its leader challenges other clutchleaders to find his or her correct place in the hierarchy. The challenges can start with any other clutchleader, but most clutchleaders know instinctively where they might fit in.

A pack can have any number of clutches, and any number of members. Most packs have between 30 and 100 members, and as many clutches as those comprise; the great majority of packs have between two and 12 clutches, and fewer than 50 members. Larger packs are seldom practical, given the hunting conditions throughout the Tyr Region; if a pack grows too large, it splits, with the packleader taking several clutches one way, and the packsecond taking the rest of the clutches in another direction.

Though a clutch might have non-kreen members, a thri-kreen pack hardly ever collectively considers a non-kreen to be part of the pack. A pack might, for a time, accept the leadership of some powerful human or humanoid, but this is a rare and unstable arrangement. Though a thri-keen pack never truly accepts a non-kreen leader, at least one thri-kreen has created a pack with non-kreen members: see Krikik's Pack of about 50 escaped slaves, led by the thri-kreen druid Krikik, in the accessory *Slave Tribes* (#2404).

The duties of a packmate are similar to those of a clutchmate, but not so binding. While a thri-kreen feels an irresistible biological and psychological compulsion to treat clutchmates in a certain way, the urge to treat packmates likewise is not nearly so strong. The thri-kreen reveres packmates, because they are clutchmates of clutchmates, or are perhaps "related" through more clutches. The packmate is therefore worthy of respect. While the packmate might not be a clutchmate, the packmate is automatically worthy of consideration for that status. Packmates are generally treated as clutchmates when possible, though a thri-kreen is not compelled to favor a packmate; he or she can forego that treatment for a time if it is inconvenient, or if it interferes with duties to clutch or clutchmate.

Some thri-kreen, when away from other thri-kreen, take an intermediary step with members of other races. Before accepting an individual as a clutchmate, the thri-kreen accepts that person as a packmate. Though such a status is unofficial, and carries no real compulsion, for some thri-kreen it is a comfortable step on the way to accepting a non-kreen completely, as a clutchmate.

Since there are no true nations of thri-kreen in the Tyr Region, these thri-kreen have no such status as "nationmate." The thri-kreen and tohr-kreen of the North do have real nations; these are based on race, so the more correct word for kreen of the same nation, but not of the same pack, is essentially "racemate." Thri-kreen in the Tyr Region also recognize racemates. Racemates receive no special privileges from their other racemates, beyond a simple recognition as a sapient being and a potentially kindred spirit —but one that might compete for hunting territory, or more directly, for prey.

The Hunt

Like the clutch, the hunt shapes the thri-kreen lifestyle. Not only do the thri-kreen hunt to survive, but they carry the mindset of the hunt *(tikchak,* or "hunter-mind") into other aspects of their lives. Much of a thir-kreen's normal day is spent preparing for the hunt, hunting, and preserving food and doing other things in response to the hunt.

Preparation for the Hunt

Though thri-kreen are hatched with keen hunting instincts, they also spend many hours honing their skills. As explained more thoroughly in Chapter Four, young thri-kreen play games; though these might seem to be simply diversions, all thri-kreen games are related to hunting, and are used to further sharpen hunting skills. In addition to spending time in hunt-based games with the children, many adult thri-kreen spend time practicing directly for the hunt without the entertainment value of a real hunt, working to improve tracking, stalking, running, and hiding skills.

Thri-kreen also spend a significant amount of time making and repairing weapons for the hunt, and caring for their claws and mandibles. Thrik-kreen understand the importance of using the right tools, and while most of them prefer to use their claws and mandibles in the hunt, they realize that some prey is better hunted using gythka or chatkcha.



The Prey

Thri-kreen can eat nearly any living animal of Athas. They prefer non-kreen, reptiles, birds, and other non-insects, but can eat insects and other arthropods if other game is scarce. In times of great need, thri-kreen can even stomach kank flesh, if it is relatively fresh and the thri-kreen is very, very hungry. Thri-kreen greatly prefer herbivores to carnivores, but can eat predators as well.

Favored prey includes erdlus, erdlands, crodlu, inix, mekillots, and driks. When they can find them, thri-kreen can also kill larger, more dangerous animals, like so-ut, hatori, bulettes, and sink worms. Thri-kreen never eat plants, though they sometimes (rarely) harvest herbs to help flavor or preserve meats, to use as medicine, or to make chatkcha crystal.

Thri-kreen view nearly any unintelligent creature as potential prey. This is one reason thri-kreen do not ride other animals. Besides the thri-kreen's poor construction for riding and a natural speed that makes it silly for a thri-kreen to tide any creature, a thri-kreen riding a mount is considered something like a human child playing with food.

While thri-kreen have a well-known taste for elves, they prefer to hunt unintelligent prey, and *thri-kreen seldom hunt other intelligent creatures for food.* Elves and other intelligent species are cunning opponents; while this might make for an exciting challenge, it does not make for a ready meal, so hunting for elves and other sapients is not really conducive to the continued existence of the thri-kreen species.

Considering the number of thri-kreen in the Tyr Region and their adaptation to the harsh wildlands, if elves were actually a staple of the thri-kreen diet, then there would be few elves left in the Tyr Region. As much as elves might believe otherwise, the thri-kreen's speed, combat skill, and ability to do without sleep, would allow thri-kreen to drive elves to extinction—if the thri-kreen wanted to hunt them. Thri-kreen are relentless in their pursuits, once aroused.

Again, thri-kreen hunt other sapients only in times of need, and some thri-kreen never hunt sapients at all. See "When Prey Is Scarce" later in this chapter for the thri-kreen's other options, and see the Kiltektet kit in Chapter Six for details of the "civilized" thri-kreen. If a thri-kreen is forced to hunt and eat sapients, however, elves are often the first choice, partly because of the challenge they present, partly because they are the most direct competition for the thri-kreen ecological niche, and partly because of the pheromonal scent the elves release when running or frightened. Eating elves also prevents these demihumans from killing the other prey the thri-kreen might hunt for themselves.

Despite their inclination toward eating unintelligent prey, thti-kreen do not feel bad in any way about eating other sapient beings, nor is it necessarily considered an evil act for them. They do it to survive, and according to their social code, other sapients not part of the clutch are unworthy of notice. Only thri-kreen and their close relatives are considered people, except for the few other sapients who are accepted as clutchmates; other lifeforms simply do not matter much to the insect mind of the thri-kreen.

Hunting

Thri-kreen have developed all manner of hunting skills. They are adept at stalking small groups practice lying in wait among rock formations or plants, to surprise prey. They are especially skilled at running down prey. Thri-kreen can follow prey for days if necessary, coveting more ground in a day than nearly any other creature, waiting for the prey to fall asleep before attacking, if necessary. Thri-kreen speed and stamina are probably their greatest hunting assets. Hunting is serious business to the thri-kreen; the pack hunts and the prey dies.

When thri-kreen attack prey, they attack quickly and without mercy, striving to surprise their prey, to disorganize prey that think at all, and to take the prey down as fast as possible, before thri-kreen are injured and before any of the prey escape. If thri-kreen attack a herd of unintelligent animals, the thri-kreen usually attack from one side, killing as many as needed and letting others escape to breed more prey for later. If attacking sapient beings, or in times of need, thri-kreen try to attack from all sides, surrounding prey and keeping it from escaping.

If fighting especially dangerous prey, including intelligent beings, thri-kreen close as quickly as possible, and in numbers as large as possible, to further disorganize prey, and to get as many claws and mandibles into the prey as possible; if enough

thri-kreen attack, the prey cannot possibly fight them all, but must concentrate on only a few while the others attack. A rapid closing with intelligent prey keeps the prey from successfully counter-attacking with missile weapons. The pack tactic of rotating attack is common; when thri-kreen on one side are counter-attacked by the prey, thri-kreen on the other side move in to attack, often from behind.

A few thri-kreen have learned how to set snares or create other traps, but this is done only rarely. They are too nomadic to settle long enough to set, and later check, traps. Besides, thri-kreen prefer fresh meat, and the prevailing climate of Athas often kills trapped creatures, reducing them to carrion by the time the thri-kreen return to check the trap.

After the Hunt

Immediately after a hunt is finished—that is, once prey has been killed—the thri-kreen settle down to eat. They eat huddled around the kill, tearing off chunks and eating their fill. If food is scarce, clutches in a pack eat according to the dominance order of the clutchleaders; within the clutch, they follow the dominance order of the clutch. Young thri-kreen are not given preferential treatment; the pragmatic thri-kreen understand that the children are the future of the race, but also know that food must be caught for the pack to survive at all, and adults are the best at catching prey. There is no selfishness in the feeding; a thri-kreen who brought down a beast without help has no special rights regarding that beast-all hunting is done for clutch, not for self.

After the thri-kreen eat, they move on to other things. If they can make use of any part of the carcass, such as bones or chitin, they preserve those parts. However, since thri-kreen are largely self-sufficient (occasionally using bones or chitin for tools, rarely for weapons, and never for armor) they use little of their prey, other than the meat. Sinews and large bones are useful for making sledges, as are large pieces of skin. Specific prey animals have body parts desired for specific purposes; for example, a single scale from a greater hatori might serve as a sledge if ropes are attached to it.

In addition to their ability to make some useful tools, thri-kreen are adept at making medicinal preparations from animal parts. While, some preparations absolutely require plants of certain types, in most cases thri-kreen can substitute animal parts, mostly from smaller insects and reptiles. See the notes in Chapter Three about the herbalism proficiency.

Any meat that is left over after feeding is cut into strips and laid out to dry. If salt or certain spices are available, these may be added to the meat to preserve it. However, unless prey is plentiful (a condition all but unknown on Athas), it is rarely necessary to take any special precautions in drying the meat, because it will not last long enough to spoil. Thri-kreen do not use fire and smoke to preserve their meat; as far as thri-kreen are concerned, the sun and wind do a good enough job.

Once the meat dries, it is bundled into pack and placed on a sledge or travois, so the thri-kreen can take it with them in case prey is scarce in the next day or two. Meat bundles can be used as bait for particularly large, carnivorous prey, or to encourage an unpalatable predator (such as a silt horror) to ignore a thri-kreen in favor of the easier meal.

Whatever the thri-kreen do not use is left for scavengers, and to dry in the sun.

When Prey is Scarce

If prey is difficult to find, thri-kreen range over a wider area looking for signs. Pack might travel into new areas, but they run the risk of infringing on the territory of an already existing pack of thri-kreen. They eat preserved meat as long as it lasts. If unintelligent animals are scarce for a long period, then thri-kreen might turn to raiding caravans and to sapient prey. Even then, such pursuits might be only temporary, until the thri-kreen pack finds better hunting.

Some thri-kreen, if forced to hunt sapients to survive, leave the pack and travel to a nearby human settlement, such as a city. Since most thri-kreen go to cities only after turning to raiding and eating sapients, many thri-kreen in cities are exceptionally savage, giving thri-kreen a bad reputation among other intelligent races. Those who run arenas in the human cities quickly learn not to lock a hungry thri-kreen in pens with elves; if a thri-kreen has been driven to enter a city, that thri-kreen has likely already developed a taste for elves and other non-kreen. Prey is always available in cities, from vermin to beggars, in the alleys



and underground areas (not many city-dwellers enjoy running into a hungry thri-kreen in a dark alley). Thri-kreen who travel to a city are usually told from the beginning that they are not to hunt sapients within city limits; those who ignore such warnings might end up being hunted by templars or captured and sold to an arena.

Thri-kreen in cities might be found eating prepared food in taverns or inns, if they can figure out how money work, obtain some, and use it to buy the food. However, despite a well-known eatery in Tyr that caters to and is popular among thri-kreen (The *Hungry, Hungry Halfling,* run by a halfling thief and a thri-kreen fighter named K'kikrik, few thri-kreen like prepared food enough to make a habit of eating it. They like fresh meat and the hunt far too much.

If all else fails, thri-kreen in the wild sometimes turn to carrion-eating, and in extreme cases might turn on other thri-kreen. Occasional outbreaks of this type, which especially work to reduce the number of the young, are a natural control on the thri-kreen population; too many thri-kreen in an area would overhunt and destroy all the prey.

Eventually, competing thri-kreen come into conflict, and a fight to the death for territorial rights ensues. In especially dire situations, the clutches within a pack might choose sides and war among themselves. The losers feed the winners. However, no matter how desperate a famine gets, clutchmate never battles clutchmate for food.

Clutch members are eaten only if one of them dies and the survival of the rest is at stake; then the practicality of the thri-kreen mind demands the fallen member be eaten by survivors— the fallen clutchmate has done one last favor for the clutch, giving his or her body to them.

Overall, the special cases are rare. A thri-kreen prefers fresh meat from an unintelligent mammal or reptile. Dried food is next, then city food, then the flesh of sapients, then carrion, then other thri-kreen.

Other Types of Hunt

Thri-kreen hunt primarily to survive, but the mindset of the hunt (tikchak) is so strong that it also shapes other aspects of their lives.

Combat: Combat is seen as an aspect of the hunt, and those who fall in battle against thri-kreen are considered "spoils of war." Thri-kreen warriors fight as individuals; although they often cooperate, the concept of military drill and massed formations is foreign to them. Tactics for large groups are detailed in Chapter Three.

Trade:Tmde is also considered an aspect of the hunt. When thri-kreen meet with others for trade-a rather rare occurrence —thri-kreen are good, if ritualistic, traders. The buyer is considered the hunter, while the seller is considered the prey. Money is a foreign concept to them; they do not use it. Chapter Four discusses thri-kreen trading in detail.

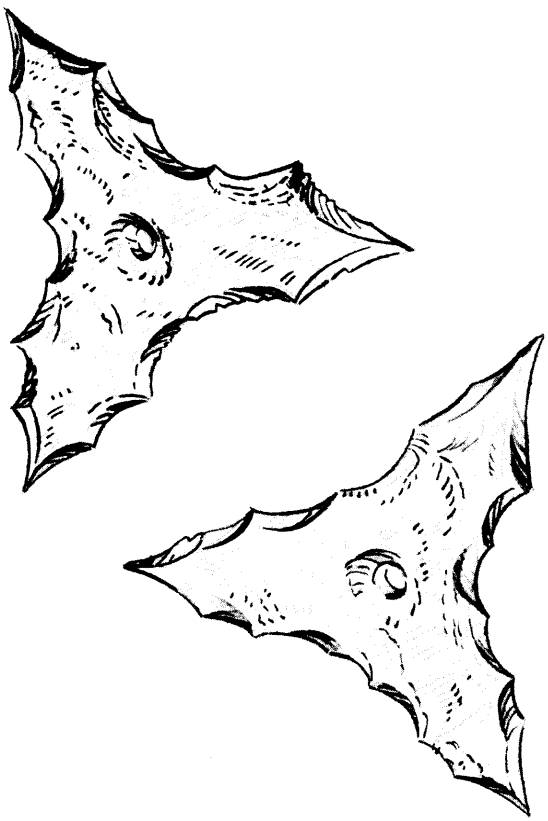
Knowledge: Thri-kreen also engage in other types of hunts or searches, including philosophical, intellectual, and spiritual hunts, for enlightenment or information. Two of the more popular name roots among thri-kreen are *ka,* which means "seeker" or "to seek," and *tik,* which means "hunter" or "to hunt;" there are many words in the thri-kreen language for "hunt" and similar concepts, such as "search," "find," "stalk," "seek," and so forth.

In this type of hunt, thri-kreen are just as relentless as they are during hunts for food. Though it might strike non-kreen as odd, adventuring thri-kreen are often on some sort of quest for knowledge or enlightenment. The Kiltektet pack member, described in Chapter Six, epitomizes this type of thri-kreen hunter.

Mentality and World View

Greatly influenced by *tokchak* (the clutch mentality) and the need for and persistence of the hunt, thri-kreen have an overall mentality quite different from that of non-kreen species. Besides those characteristics already covered, thri-kreen have evolved other abilities to help them survive.

Cunning and wisdom have been granted in part by their racial memory. For thri-kreen, Wisdom translates directly into cunning needed for hunting; the enhanced Wisdom score is a direct evolutionary result of the ingrained thri-kreen fascination with the hunt. Only a halfling might have a higher maximum Wisdom as a starting character. Thri-kreen do not gain Wisdom as they age, so older non-kreen sometimes have higher Wisdom scores than the wisest of thri-kreen.



Thri-kreen have little use for memorization, and little aptitude for magic, thus simple intelligence is relatively unimportant. Their insect nature makes them largely incomprehensible to others, and makes them easy to dislike.

A thri-kreen's maximum adjusted Charisma score is 16; this reflects the oddness of their mindset in comparison to other character races. The lower Charisma also results from their pragmatic insect nature; they do not seem as friendly, because they are not. Being clutchmates transcends friendship, but has nothing to do with Charisma.

Tokchak: Clutch-Mind

As indicated, the clutch mentality shapes the thri-kreen's entire outlook on life. Tokchak dictates how the thri-kreen lives, even without a clutch. A thri-kreen without a clutch seeks to form one. The thri-kreen is compelled to find his or her place in the clutch; knowing where one falls in a hierarchy is important to a thri-kreen; not knowing this results in insecurity and possibly psychological problems.

Tokchak also affects the thri-kreen in somewhat more subtle ways. For example, thri-kreen mate for life; mating is a sort of advanced form of the clutchmate bond, and the bond is impossible to break. Also, because they give to the clutch, thri-kreen tend to share things; they have little need to own or possess physical things, and they share what they find with others. A thri-kreen has no real need for money, so has no reason to keep it; when treasure is split, the thri-kreen would rather have one of the tasty eggs found recently, or maybe a pretty gem, than the heavy, useless, inedible and relatively unpretty coins.

Thri-kreen often give away coins to their non-kreen clutchmates. This mentality makes them completely incomprehensible- and more than a little suspicious—to elves ("No, what do you really want? I mean, really?". Within the clutch, when an item is needed, it is freely given. What needs the thri-kreen might have for money outside the society of clutch and pack is handled by barter. See Chapter Four, "Trade," for more details.

The Individual

Thri-kreen do not like to be called "bugs" and do not like being referred to as "it." A thri-kreen is a person *(kreen* means "person" after all), with a life, a history, a place, and a gender. These things are important to the thri-kreen, just as they are to other sapient beings.

The individual thri-kreen establishes a place through the hunt and through tokchak. The thri-kreen is a person to whom freedom and individuality are important, but who willingly accepts the great responsibility of being a clutchmate.

Birth, Life, and Death

Thri-kreen are pragmatic about the cycle of life. They lay eggs, and if the eggs are destroyed before they hatch, that is the way of things; the answer is to lay more eggs. Life is the hunt, and the clutch. Death is the natural end to things, after the thri-kreen



has hunted and has given to the clutch. Thri-kreen do not fear death, because they know it cannot be avoided, and there is no sense in fearing that which is inevitable. However, neither do thri-kreen welcome death, for it is the end of their usefulness to the clutch.

Thri-kreen do not really believe in an afterlife, but have a rudimentary belief in reincarnation. Eggs are usually laid in the final resting place of old thri-kreen; the thri-kreen believe the young inherit the characteristics, and sometimes even the minds, of their ancestors. Considering the thri-kreen racial memory, there may be more than a little truth to this belief. Infant thri-kreen in some areas are shown the belongings of thri-kreen among whose remains they hatch; if the larvae show an inclination for any of the possessions, they are considered reincarnations of the thri-kreen to whom the things belonged.

Though debates still rage on, most tohr-kreen sages believe that larvae do carry the minds and personalities of parents or other ancestors into their new lives. If the DM wants to use this interpretation of reincarnation in the game, it might mean that the racial memory of the thri-kreen has also brought memories of specific events to the thri-kreen.

Thus, a "reincarnated" thri-kreen might recognize an object hundreds of years old, or remember an obscure fact about a battle that took place a decade before he or she was born. The DM can use such memories to pass on clues and adventure hook to the players.

The World

A thri-kreen sees the world in terms of the clutch and the hunt. The world is the place that gave birth to and supports the clutch; it is also the environment for the hunt. Thri-kreen respect their world, and are ecologically mindful, taking care to not overhunt (if possible), and to avoid harming plants. Further, a thri-kreen will never poison a water supply; even evil thri-kreen have too much respect for the ecology to do something so heinous.

Outside their natural environment, thri-kreen often find the world to be a confusing place, with intelligent non-kreen competing for their food, great cities squatting where prey used to roam, wizards summoning and controlling unnatural energies, and more. The clutch and the hunt allow the thri-kreen to categorize the things they find (clutchmate or prey, etc.), and gives them a set of parameters within which they can operate. Their world view might seem narrow or alien to some, but it work, and they survive.

Thri-kreen also have a fascination with the number three: a pack is considered better off when it consists of exactly three clutches; agreements are made to last three days or three years; and of course, the chatkcha and the head of the gythka both have three blades.

Thri-Kreen and Other Races

Thri-kreen relations with other races are influenced by *tokchak* (clutch-mind) and *tikchak* (hunt-mind). Those of other races who approach large groups of thri-kreen can speak with them and interact them, as long as food has not been scarce, in which case the curious often become prey. As is the way of tokchak, those of other races are seen as not-quite-people, unless they prove worthy in some way.

In fact, thri-kreen test members of other races. If the thri-kreen are the majority, the tests are mainly to see if the other is worthy of acknowledgement as a person; if so, the other might further be considered as a potential clutchmate, and tested for that status. However, if a thri-kreen is among members of another races, the tests determine if the others are worthy of becoming clutchmates, and the place and ranking of the thri-kreen in their group.

The tests are subtle, almost unconsciously performed by the thri-kreen: The thri-kreen observes the other, mentally noting if the other is honest and seems willing to defend the clutch. Strength, intelligence, and cunning are judged, as are various special abilities, such as psionics or spellcasting skills.

A lone thri-kreen may try to exert control on the group, perhaps bullying others in many ways, because this is the quickest way for the thri-kreen to determine his or her place in the group dominance order. If others accept the bullying, the thri-kreen figures that he or she is leader of the pack; if someone stands up to and wins a challenge against the thri-kreen, the thri-kreen accepts a lower place in the dominance order and does what the "superior" says.

Sleep

Regardless of the other interactions between thri-kreen and members of other races, the issue of sleep is somewhat important. Thri-kreen do not sleep; all other intelligent beings do. Thri-kreen recognize sleep; they often use it against their prey when hunting, because attacking sleeping animals more likely to be quickly successful.

Thri-kreen regard sleeping as a weakness. They cannot seem to entirely grasp why any intelligent being would want to sleep; rather than seeing it as a need, they often see sleep as simply a bad habit. Those who indulge in such useless lying around are regarded as lazy, which makes them seem unworthy of being proper clutchmates.

A thri-kreen often grows impatient with sleepers, waiting anxiously for them to wake up. Thri-kreen are active through the night; those who need to restore psionic power or regain spells take care of such business, but otherwise hunt, scout, and guard. Thri-kreen usually hunt during the day and settle somewhat at night, as the conditions are less conducive to hunting; the dark hours are when thri-kreen tell stories and talk to others. Though a thri-kreen might be perfectly willing to stop in one place for the night, he or she probably wants to talk with companions.

In groups of non-kreen, most thri-kreen eventually learn to tolerate sleep, and can overlook this odd habit in otherwise worthwhile people. An advanced thri-kreen may eventually come to recognize sleep as a need in non-kreen. Some thri-kreen are fascinated by sleepers, and watch them closely. This can be quite discomforting. for the human or elf who wakes to see a thri-kreen looking down, only a foot or two away.

When among non-kreen, more experienced thri-kreen are aware of the threat their carnivorous nature presents; though no other intelligent creatures eat thri-kreen, thri-kreen are known to eat members of other races. Whether the thri-kreen has ever developed such tastes, or has inclination to, he or she usually understands the value of the threat, and the power it can provide over members of other races, when determining dominance order. Those susceptible to such a threat are not worthy of being clutchleaders.

If a thri-kreen accepts others as clutchmates, packmates, or at least people, there are still many potential problems with the relationship, not the least of which is the common lack of understanding among non-kreen of tokchak. However, some tribes of humans and other non-kreen comprehend tikchak, and this may provide common ground. However, to others, thri-kreen often seem overly preoccupied with gathering food, hunting, and maintaining stock of travel food.

Dwarves, Muls, and Humans

These non-kreen races are generally viewed favorably by thri-kreen, and are the most easily accepted as people, as packmates, and as clutchmates.

Dwarves are consistent, and as long as their focus is compatible with the goals of the thri-kreen, they make good clutchmates, despite being very slow.

Muls are strong warriors with great stamina; if anyone could be as formidable a hunter, it would be a mul. Muls are generally the only beings who can join a pack composed only of thri-kreen. While rare, it is not unknown for an escaped mul slave to join a thri-kreen pack and live the life of the hunter.

Humans are also quite acceptable, being adaptable enough to understand tokchak and tikchak. In fact, there are tribes of humans who live as hunters, accepting their own brand of tikchak as a way of life. While thri-kreen get along well with human hunters on an individual basis, pack and tribe sometimes come into conflict. A wise and well-led tribe of human hunters soon learns where the thri-kreen hunt, and what they hunt, then chooses a different area, or at least different prey. In contrast, human city dwellers are nearly incomprehensible, with their concern for money, lack of understanding of tikchak, and their preconceptions about thri-kreen. Even so, many city dwelling humans can eventually adapt enough to learn thri-kreen ways.

While a thri-kreen can usually assess a dwarf quickly, and muls with a little more time, it often takes much longer to figure out what to do with a human, especially one who doesn't understand tikchak.



Halflings

Since the home environment of halflings is radically different from that of thri-kreen, and uncomfortable to thri-kreen as well (thri-kreen have difficulty climbing, and do not do well in humid, forested areas), thri-kreen seldom interact with halflings. Since halflings are the only race that might eat thri-kreen, and have given them trouble in the past, tradition tells thri-kreen that halflings are to be avoided.

Still, once thri-kreen and halflings meet, their can common reverence for tikchak often makes them quick friends. Halflings make fine clutchmates, except for their slow rate of movement compared to thri-kreen.

Half-Giants

Half-giants are something of a mystery to thri-kreen. While formidable in a fight, half-giants need copious amounts of water to survive. They are also not terribly dexterous or cunning. Still, while a half-giant does not keep up well enough to be accepted into a pack of rapidly-traveling thri-kreen, a half-giant might make an acceptable member, provided that he or she can be taught to be a good clutchmate.

Elves

Thri-kreen have problems relating to elves; they are the most difficult with which to deal. Though thri-kreen do not consider elves as a race to be enemies, elves do feel that way about thri-kreen.

Elves consider thri-kreen their greatest enemy; they even have a profession in their tribes, the thri-kreen slayer, whose life is dedicated to eradicating thri-kreen. Thri-kreen have no such equivalent in their packs and clutches. While some might argue it does not exist because all thri-kreen are "elf slayers," this simply is not true; thri-kreen eat sapients only in times of need, and some go their entire lives without eating an elf

Still elves hate thri-kreen. From the elven view, the hatred is probably valid; seeing one's friends eaten by a creature is likely to give one a poor impression of the entire race. The majority of elves have little reason to believe that most thri-kreen simply are not like that.

To make the situation worse, thri-kreen really do enjoy the taste of elf flesh; once they taste it, they tend to want more. Because elves fear thri-kreen as much as they hate them, and the elves' fear-scent is attractive to thri-kreen, this is a problem. A thri-kreen might be perfectly willing to meet with and talk to an elf, but an elf who runs into a thri-kreen almost immediately produces the fear-scent, creating an instictive reaction of hunger in the thri-kreen.

To a thri-kreen who has tasted elf flesh, this hunger creates an urge to kill the elf. In a thri-kreen who has not tasted elf, the hunger seems unnatural and can make the thri-kreen uncomfortable. Since elven merchant caravans and nomadic tribes also compete for the same prey, and occasionally water, as the thri-kreen, difficulties are to be expected.

This is rather a shame, because elves and thri-kreen have a similar mentality: a love of freedom and running, hunting and taking, and strong racial unity and a disregard of other races. This similarity is another problem; neither race trusts easily, and tends to wait for others to make the first move. When a thri-kreen and an elf are together, each waits for the other to show they can be trusted, neither willing to make a beginning.

Miscellaneous Races

The numerous other intelligent races of Athas—aarakocra, belgoi, gith, and so forth—are seldom encountered, at least peacefully, and are almost never accepted as clutchmates. The thri-kreen know gith and belgoi as competitors and prey, and the natural inclinations of those races make them unwilling to prove the thri-kreen wrong. The case is similar with most other intelligent races, such as anakores, braxats, ettercaps,yuan-ti, and so forth.

The bird people, aarakocra and kenku, are so seldom encountered by thri-kreen that they are viewed simply as large birds—that is, as prey. If a bird person talk to a thri-kreen, the thri-kreen will be surprised, and might be willing to respond. However, the thri-kreen mentality is so different, they seldom find any common ground for commerce or communication.

Thri-Kreen Magic and Psionics

Thri-kreen have special view of magic and psionics. They have been a psionic race for thousands of years, but have never been adept at using preserver or defiler magic. Thri-kreen are good with psionics, and have developed several special techniques and preferences. Thri-kreen also have a few relative disadvantages with psionics, such as when they try to use telepathic powers with non-kreen.

The thri-kreen body and mind are not built to channel wizard magic; though they can use scrolls and other magical items just like other races, thri-kreen cannot cast wizard spells themselves, ever. If a wizard were reincarnated into the body of a thri-kreen, he or she could no longer cast wizard spells.

Life Without Wizards

Thri-kreen society has no wizards, and thri-kreen like it that way. Because they are in touch with their environment and respect ecology, thri-kreen tend to dislike defilers and attack them in preference to many other enemies. Preservers, while not disliked by thri-kreen, are not needed by them either. Thri-kreen are quite well adapted to life in the desert, and they get along just fine with psionics and with the magic of druids and elemental priests.

Since they are unaccustomed to wizard magic, thri-kreen may be briefly startled by unfamiliar spell effects. Thri-kreen are knowledgeable about priest magic, so they are not unaccustomed to the idea that spellcasters can cause impressive effects: thri-kreen are not awed by magic. For example, a thri-kreen unused to wizardly magic would not be familiar with a fireball spell, and might be briefly startled by its shape, size, and explosive effect. However, a thri-kreen who has seen a flame *strike* spell, or another equally impressive clerical spell, would not be awed by the *fireball* or the person who cast it. For clarifications regarding specific spells or magical items, see the section in Chapter Three called "Magic and Psionics."

Psionic Powers

About 50% of all thri-kreen in the Tyr Region have at least one wild talent. The profession of chakak (psionicist) is also common, and thri-kreen have developed their own methods for teaching the Way. Psionics use is acceptable in challenges for dominance order within the clutch. Psionics are used without reserve; they are simply another natural ability for the clutch, and are used by the thri-kreen as needed.

Within the pack, the disciplines of Telepathy and Clairsentience are common, their main usefulness lies in communicating within the clutch, coordinating attacks, and finding prey; they support tokchak and tikchak. Telepathy also governs psionic defenses. However, many adventuring thri-kreen chakak also develop Psychometabolism, and some Psychokinesis, which are the primary disciplines used by thri-kreen in combat. Telepathy is of limited usefulness in combat with non-kreen because of the differences in kreen and non-kreen minds (see the notes on contact in Chapter Three).

Regardless of a thri-kreen chakak's primary discipline, Psychometabolism usually the second discipline; these can augment a thri-kreen's natural fighting abilities to almost frightening levels. Some common Psychometabolic abilities include **reduction** and **chameleon power** for their applications in surprise, and **adrenalin control** and **accelerate** for their direct effect in melee.

Thri-kreen find some psionic powers reprehensible, and will not use them; they also tend to dislike anyone who does. In particular, the devotion **pheromone discharge** is considered by all thri-kreen to be incredibly offensive. While thri-kreen are not especially comfortable with people who use the devotion **insect mind,** they do recognize that devotion's usefulness in bridging the gap between cultures and races.

Special notes on psionic powers for thri-kreen are given in Chapter Three.

Chapter 2: Physical Nature

In my travels beyond the great cliff, I encountered several packs of thri-kreen. There are two distinct subspecies of thri-kreen in the so-called Tyr Region; these are offshoots of the Jeral and To'ksa found in the north. While each species has unique details, both share many characteristics, and are physically quite similar to the tohr-kreen and the other related species of the north.

—from the journals of Klik-Chaka 'da

The most obvious and important facet of thri-kreen existence is their insect nature. This gives them a physiology unlike that of the intelligent non-kreen species, such as halflings, humans, elves, dwarves, and others. This provides them with several special abilities, as well as a few disadvantages.

Unless aided by magic (orpsionics), standard insect physiology is insufficient to keep an insect alive if its size is greatly increased. The insect's chitin would be too heavy for it to support, and the creature's internal systems could no longer provide oxygen and other necessary nutrients to the insect's muscles and organs. Thri-kreen are not magical creatures, but they have evolved greatly from their lesser insect brethren, and have developed a physiology sufficient to support their great size. They differ in many ways from standard insects, as described in the following text.

General Physiology

Thri-kreen are large, both in comparison to normal insects and in comparison to most other intelligent Athasian races. While a typical (real-world) mantis might grow to 3 or 4 inches in length, an adult thri-kreen stands 7 feet tall, plus or minus a few inches. From the top of the head to the tip of the abdomen, an thri-kreen measures some 11 feet long, with the slight variance of a few inches. Most adult thri-kreen weigh between 450 and 470 pounds.

All adult thri-kreen, regardless of gender, are nearly identical in height and weight. They have few at cells and never become overweight; since their muscles are hidden by their exoskeleton, a strong thri-kreen does not look much different from a weak one. This similarity makes it difficult for members of other races to tell apart individual thri-kreen of the same species, unless the thri-kreen are decorated, scarred, clothed, or equipped in a distinctive way.

Despite their great size, thri-kreen are quite dexterous. The adjusted Dexterity for a thri-kreen player character ranges from a minimum of 17 to a maximum of 22. While the most agile halflings and elves are equal to the most agile thri-kreen, the average thri-kreen is more dexterous than an average member of any other race.

Skeleton and Muscles

Like other insects, the thri-kreen has an exoskeleton, rather than an internal skeleton like that of a human. Also like other insects, the thri-kreen has three body segments: the head, the thorax, and the abdomen.

Each segment is held together by the thri-kreen's muscles and skeleton. The thri-kreen's skeleton is a chitinous exoskeleton, bolstered by internal strips of cartilage, like those found in certain other arthropods (like crabs). A strip of cartilage runs the length of the thri-kreen's thorax and serves as an anchor for various internal organs. Other strips run through the different segments of the thri-kreen's arms and legs, helping support muscles. The strips themselves attach to the thri-kreen's chitin.

A thri-kreen's chitin is tough enough to give them a natural Armor Class of 8. It is relatively lightweight, weighing about the same as bone. Spikes and other protrusions are often seen on the thri-kreen's chitin; while these look dangerous, they are of little use in combat. The thri-kreen's chitin helps retain moisture, while allowing heat to easily radiate from the thri-kreen's body.

Thri-kreen chitin is less brittle and more flexible than most bone, at least as long as it is part of a living thri-kreen. However, it is as flexible as a humanoid internal skeleton only at the joints; for example, a thri-kreen cannot shrug or curl into a ball.

A thri-kreen's muscles rest along the inside of the chitin segments, and attach by tendons to other chitin segments. Unlike the humanoid structure, in which a major muscle (such as the biceps) flexes, lessening the angle between two bones and pulling them together, a thri-kreen flexing of major muscles *increases* the angle between chitin segments. This gives a thri-kreen a strong "backhand," so they usually attack in that fash-



ion. Like humanoids, thri-kreen have lesser muscles that can pull the chitin segments in the other direction.

Jeral vs. To'ksa: Chitin

While both Jeral and To'ksa thri-kreen have chitin of a sandy yellow color, their exoskeletons differ. With the Jeral, the chitin is the outermost layer of the thri-kreen's body; this can be polished to a glossy sheen. To'ksa have a leathery sheathing over the exoskeleton and the joints between the chitin plates; this creates a rather dull finish. Neither is noticeably more efficient at retaining moisture than the other, but Jeral tend to favor decorative chitin working while the To'ka prefer body painting.

The Body

A thri-kreen's body is divided into three distinct segments, each housing vital organs. This section describes those segments, the organs, and the limbs of a thri-kreen.

The Head

The thri-kreen's head houses the brain and most of the sensory organs, including the eyes and the antennae. The head is also the location of the thri-kreen's mouth, which gives access to the insect's breathing, digestive, and vocal systems.

Antennae: A thri-kreen's antennae are used to smell and hear. Though thri-kreen detect pheromones with their antennae, this is not their sole means of communication, as it is for some Athasian insects. With the antennae, thri-kreen read the pheromone discharges of kreen and other insects; this allows communication of basic emotions and desires, such as hunger, anger, sexual desire, contentment, and so forth.

While a thri-kreen's antennae can also pick up scents from other sources, thri-kreen are no more or less vulnerable to scent-based attack than others (except against ranike sap; see Chapter Three). The taste for elf flesh seems to be rooted in the thri-kreen antennae, and it is believed that the scents of a frightened or running elf are appealing to a thri-kreen. While this par-



tially explains the well-known thri-kreen taste for elf flesh, the fact is little known, and elves who know it do not rest any easier.

The antennae sound receivers are also sensitive to minute changes in air pressure, informing a thri-kreen about his or her surroundings. If the thri-kreen's sight is impaired, as by darkness or blindness, this pressure detection can roughly locate of nearby objects and creatures. The thri-kreen's method of hearing makes them no more or less vulnerable to sound-based attack than other types of creatures.

Eyesight: The thri-kreen's eyes are often referred to as multi-faceted, this is not precisely true. The thri-kreen eye consists of a sphere inside a tough egg-shaped outer shell. The shell is a translucent black (like obsidian), and it covers and protects the thri-kreen's actual sight receptors. On the interior sphere, which can rotate within the shell, are three eyespots (which function as mammalian eyes) and numerous secondary eye-like motion detectors. When light strikes the eye at a certain angle, the motion detectors and eyespots can be seen through the protective shell, giving the thri-kreen's eyes a multi-faceted appearance.

When the thri-kreen discharges pheromones (from the abdomen), chemicals are also released into the eye shell, changing the reflected color of the eye. Lighter colors represent pleasant feelings, darker colors denote unpleasant emotions, and bright colors mark passion or strong feeling.

Despite these differences in structure, thri-kreen eyesight is, for all practical purposes and miscellaneous effects, the same as mammalian eyesight.

Mandibles/mouth: The thri-kreen's mandibles and mouth are typical for insects. Thri-kreen have no lips or real teeth. Their main mandibles (jaw segments) open and close horizontally, rather than vertically. Another lower jaw segment, located between the main mandibles, closes upward; this segment is not used to bite, but starts food on its way down the thri-kreen's esophagus. Besides these parts, the thri-kreen mouth has small inner mandibles that manipulate food during eating (see the poster).

A thri-kreen also has a tongue; a rough, dry piece of flesh that can reach only a short distance past the inner mandibles. The tongue holds the thri-kreen's taste buds, which have a range similar to those of humanoids. The scent receptors of the antennae also help enhance taste.

Neck: The thri-kreen's head is connected to the thorax by a flexible neck. A thri-kreen can turn his or her head 90 degrees to each side, and can look both forward and backwards at the same time when the head is so turned.

Jeral vs. To'ksa:
Upper Body Notes

Breathing Holes: The breathing holes of a Jeral are located on the sides of the prothorax, between the arms on each side. A Jeral often wears cloth over this area to help prevent sand and dust out of the breathing holes.

To'ka breathing holes are located in the head. One pair of breathing holes is located between the eyes, while another pair is located lower on the face, just above the mandibles.

Antennae: Jeral have vestigial antennae, little more than nubs; their scent receptors are surrounded by sound receivers, something like eardrums.

To'ksa have antennae about 18 to 24 inches long, with scent receptors along the length; sound receivers are clustered around the bases of the antennae.

The Jeral, with their less-developed antennae, seem to have little desire for elf flesh, while it is difficult for To'ka to curb such desires once they have tasted elf.

Neck: The To'ksa's neck is longer than that of a Jeral.

The Thorax

The thorax is the segment to which the thri-kreen's limbs are attached; it also houses most of the internal organs (see poster for the thri-kreen's internal structure). While the thorax is a single segment, it is often considered to have two parts. The upper portion, the prothorax, holds the thri-kreen's lungs and heart, and is the segment to which the thri-kreen's four arms are attached.

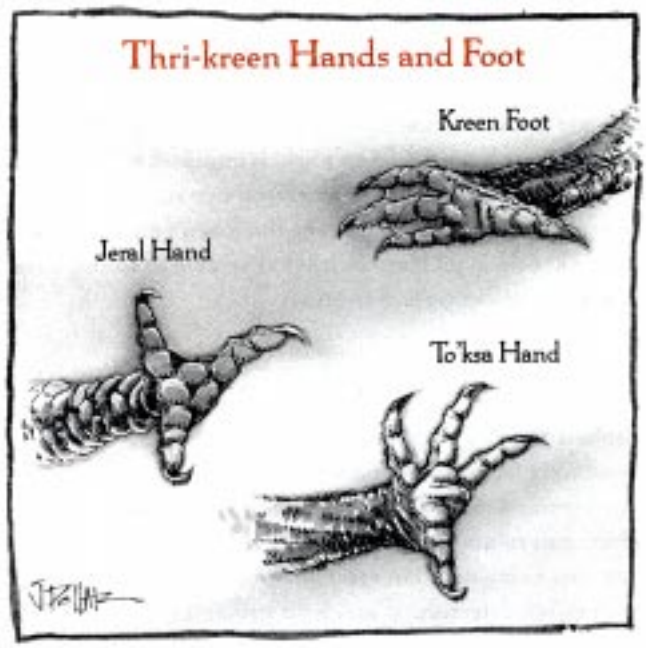
Protothorax: The lungs of the thri-kreen are similar to those of a mammal; one lung lies on each side of the cartilage strip that bisects the thorax, and both attach to the long esophagus. A thri-kreen technically has two hearts, but they work so closely in tandem, they are usually considered a single organ. Like the lungs, the hearts are divided by the cartilage strip. They lie along the strip and along the lungs; together they produce a heartbeat with a four-beat cadence. Each heart pumps in blood from the veins at the bottom, oxygenates it during the trip past the lungs, and expels "fresh" blood into the arteries at the top. Each heart has its own set of arteries and veins, which interacts little with the system of the other heart.

The prothorax also holds various smaller organs and glands, including the thri-kreen's poison glands, which are located at the top of the prothorax. The paralytic poison produced has several uses, and is further detailed in Chapter Three.

The prothorax can rotate almost 90 degrees on the lower thorax; combined with the flexibility of the neck, this can allow a thri-kreen to look 180 degrees from the orientation of the lower body. The prothorax can bend as much as 45 degrees forward or backwards as well. This allows the thri-kreen to stand "upright," with the prothorax perpendicular to the abdomen, or to bend the thorax to almost the same plane as the abdomen. The latter position decreases the thri-kreen's height to about three or four feet, but is uncomfortable and can be maintained for only a few minutes at a time.

Lower Thorax: The lower thorax is well buffered by strong muscles and other tissue to absorb the shock of leaps, for the thri-kreen's powerful legs are attached here. Arteries, veins, and the digestive tract pass through the lower thorax, but most of that portion of the body is taken up by the *gyth'sa,* a large, spongy organ that produces the thri-kreen's blood. Those who have studied thri-kreen anatomy for the purposes of killing them recognize this organ's importance; it is often mistaken for the thri-kreen's heart, and stabbing it is both easier and more effective than hitting one of the thri-kreen's true hearts.

The blood produced is thick, and dark yellow in color. Other important components of the blood, such as the thri-kreen equivalent of platelets and the disease-fighting white cells, are produced by other organs in the lower thorax.



The lower thorax attaches to the abdomen with a somewhat flexible joint that allows the thri-kreen to raise or lower the abdomen slightly (perhaps 15 degrees), or to "wag" the abdomen a like amount.

Limbs

Thri-kreen, though they are much like mantises, have no wings. However, some species related to the thri-kreen that do have wings are detailed in Chapter Five.

Arms and Legs: A thri-kreen has four arms and two legs, unlike less evolved mantises such as trin, which have two arms and four legs. The joints attaching these limbs to the thri-kreen's body are fairly flexible, much like the humanoid equivalents of shoulders and hips, allowing a fair degree of rotation. As shown on the poster, thri-kreen have no real shoulders.



Hands: Because their hands are enclosed in chitin, thri-kreen do not have a great deal of touch-sensitivity in the hands. They can detect heat and cold, and can tell rough surfaces from smooth ones, but most differences in texture are lost on them. To a thri-kreen, burlap feels about the same as silk.

Feet: Thri-kreen feet have four toes, three that point forward and one that points backwards; a strong membrane stretches between the forward toes, allowing the thri-kreen great mobility in sand.

The Abdomen

A thri-kreen's abdomen, like the rest of the body, is protected by segments of chitin; these look something like bands circling the thri-kreen's abdomen at intervals. Some species, such as To'ksa, have a non-protective shell of chitin that may be vestigial wing casings.

Organs: The thri-kreen's abdomen holds digestive and reproductive organs, as well as the glands that produce pheromones. The primary digestive organs (stomach and intestines) are located near the front of the abdomen, while the thri-kreen's excretory system and reproductive organs are located near the back. A female's reproductive organs are located on the top of the abdomen, while the male's are beneath; both are protected by chitinous plates. Gender differences are not readily noticeable to members of other races.

Pheronomes: A thri-kreen exudes pheromones through pores along the sides of the abdomen. While the thri-kreen can voluntarily control this with effort, most releases of pheromones are unconscious and indicate the thri-kreen's mood to other insects. Thri-kreen pheromones are odorless to most humanoids, and cannot be detected except perhaps as a vague feeling, such as mild hunger or unease; even in such cases, the source is not obvious.

Jeral vs. To'ksa: Limbs and Abdomen

Hands: Jeral and To'ksa differ in the structure of their hands. A Jeral thri-kreen has *three* digits on each hand, while a To'ksa has four (see diagram). As illustrated, these hands are unlike their humanoid equivalents. A Jeral's hand has three thumbs, each fully opposable to the other digits on that hand; this allows the Jeral to grip objects in many ways, including between any two digits of the same hand, or between two digits and the third.

A To'ksa's hand has one fully-opposable thumb, the lower digit; the upper digits are "fingers," though the outer two fingers have almost as much flexibility as a thumb. It is difficult, however, for the To'ksa to grip objects with just the outer fingers of the same hand.

Many tohr-kreen sages believe the shapes of thri-kreen weapons were based on the shape of the hands, the gythka on the To'ksa hand, and the chatkcha on the Jeral hand; this implies that Jeral developed the chatkcha, To'ksa developed the gythka, and the two subspecies traded secrets.

Abdomen: A Jeral has a smaller abdomen than a To'ksa. A To'ksa also has a large shell over the abdomen and running its length.. Tohr-kreen sages believe this to be a vestigial wing-coveting, since it attaches to the lower thorax. This shell has no special protective value; it is spiked, however, and therefore an uncomfortable ride for any non-shelled being carried by a To'ksa.

Healing

Because damage to a thri-kreen usually indicates damage to the thri-kreen's chitin, thri-kreen healing is also different from that of other beings. A thri-kreen's internal injuries heal at about the same rate as similar injuries done to humanoids. With a thri-kreen, platelets reaching a wound become exposed to air and cause the blood to not only clot, but harden; the hardening blood develops into chitin in a relatively short time, usually within a day.

A thri-kreen who receives a deep wound might develop a lump of chitin beneath the outer shell; this might be re-absorbed by the body over a period of a year or more, depending on its size. Such a growth seldom interferes with the thri-kreen in any way.

New chitin is usually of a slightly lighter color than the surrounding material, usually making scars more evident on a thri-kreen than on a humanoid. Wounds do not always heal smoothly; the new chitin is often rough and exudes past the surface of uninjured chitin. Care must be taken if the thri-kreen wants a wound to heal smoothly; sandstone and other rough materials can be used to smooth the area. Thri-kreen usually wear their scars with some pride, and an old thri-kreen often has chitin laced with scars and covered with knobs and other protrusions.

Besides damage to chitin, a thri-kreen can suffer other injuries as well. A broken chitin segment must be set, like a broken bone in a human, and eventually heals. Removing a segment of a thri-kreen's arm is like severing a humanoid's arm.

Healing magic works the same on thri-kreen as on other beings, as does the healing proficiency (but note the restrictions on herbalism in Chapter Three). For example, a *cure light wounds* spell seals a wound and stops *it from bleeding; when* used on a thri-kreen subject, the spell creates a new layer of chitin that is not soft or tender. Similarly, *cure blindness or deaf ness* can affect a thri-kreen's eyes or antennae to restore the appropriate sense.

Vulnerabilities

Not all of a thri-kreen's adaptations are completely advantageous. For example a thri-kreen's ability to detect pheromones also makes him or her vulnerable to smoke produced by ranike sap. Thri-kreen and other related species find the odor repugnant and can approach only with difficulty. Ranike trees grow high in the Ringing Mountains.

The thri-kreen cannot swim. They cannot float without support, and their arms, legs, and hands are not built to propel them through water. If the water reaches their breathing holes, they drown much more quickly than a human. For this reason, thri-kreen tend to dislike and distrust accumulations of water larger than a small pool.

That thri-kreen have fully adapted to life in arid climates actually works against them in other areas. A thri-kreen who spends an extended period in a humid region, such as the Forest Ridge, can develop lung infections and chitin-rot (see Chapter Three for details).

Reproduction

In many ways, a thri-kreen matures at age four. At this time, the thri-kreen has only four molts left. Physical development is finished, except for the growth associated with the molts, and the thri-kreen is fertile. Thri-kreen between the ages of four and twenty-five can breed successfully. Thri-kreen often choose mates early in life, any time after reaching age three (the young adult stage), and often before they reach sexual maturity. Young thri-kreen choose their own mates. A thri-kreen will mate only with a clutchmate. Dangerous recessive traits were eliminated from thri-kreen many centuries ago, so inbreeding is not a problem.

Mating usually occurs in latter part of the year, during the time of the ascending sun; eggs are laid about 30 days later. A female thri-kreen lays many eggs at one time, normally between 10 and 30. The eggs are about six inches in diameter, and dun in color, the female digs a chamber and places the eggs inside, then covers them with sand.

Jeral vs. To'ksa: Mating

Jeral thri-kreen are monogamous; once they have chosen mates, they never betray that bond. On rare occasions, a Jeral whose chosen mate has died might bond with another Jeral whose mate has died. However, when one member of a pair dies, the other usually goes on alone. Because of the high mortality rate among thri-kreen, Jeral pairs who actually survive to consummate a bond are uncommon.

To'ksa do not choose mates until mature enough to breed. Once they have chosen, they are monogamous, but the death of one mate releases the other to find a new mate, which they usually do.

A thri-kreen pack will halt for several days to allow a member (or members) to lay eggs; pack members scout the area and set up a defensive perimeter. This is the only time when a female thri-kreen is treated any differently socially than a male thri-kreen. The thri-kreen realize the importance of producing eggs.

Most pack have regular egg-laying grounds, often the same grounds where thri-kreen dead are laid to rest. In allowing the eggs to develop and hatch in what is essentially a graveyard, the



thri-kreen believe the young will take on the characteristics of the strong and wise old thri-kreen laid to rest there. In addition, the carapaces of the dead thri-kreen serve as shelter for the young, and the carcasses attract carrion-eaters that serve as food for hungry, newly-hatched larvae. After the eggs are buried, the thri-kreen move on.

Some eggs are eaten by predators; to the practical thri-kreen, this is just nature's way of insuring that too many thri-kreen do no overrun the region. About 60 days later, usually right around the time of the highest sun, surviving eggs hatch, and the hatchling thri-kreen move about, feeding on small animals and learning to use their hunting instincts.

Because of predators and generally harsh conditions, some clutches never hatch, while others are destroyed soon after hatching. Note that the given clutch mortality rates are average; some clutches are destroyed completely, while others lose only a fraction of their members. Thus, a new clutch of thri-kreen might have less than a half-dozen members, while the rare clutch that hatches in an excellent environment might reach adulthood with 20 or more members.

Jeral vs. To'ksa: Care of Young

Packs of Jeral almost always direct their wanderings so they arrive in the hatching area within a few days after the time of hatching the thri-kreen larva try to frighten them away at first, but soon recognize them as friends. The parents of the clutch, or others if one or more parent has died in the intervening time, stay near the larvae for the first two years, defending them if necessary, and helping teach them the skills they need for survival. Generally speaking, the mortality rate is somewhere around 60% between laying and the end of the first year. Eventually, the survivors join the adult pack. Unlike To'ksa, Jeral never eat young Jeral.

To'ksa are less concerned with their offspring. Once the eggs have been laid, the pack moves on. The larvae are left to fend for themselves, and eventually die or develop into another pack. In some cases, they come into conflict with their parental pack; other times they find their parental pack and join it. There is a 90% mortality rate among To'ksa between egg laying and the end of the first year. In times of famine, To'ksa have been known to eat young To'ksa, sometimes even those produced by their own pack. The To'ksa have little sense of family unity, though pack and clutch are still important to them.

Stages of Life

Thri-kreen live short lives; they are mature adults at the age of five, and are considered of venerable age when they reach 25 years. Two (or more) complete generations of thri-kreen can be hatched and die during the lifetime of a member of one of the major intelligent non-kreen races of Athas.

Due to their short lifespans, thri-kreen grow and change very rapidly when young. Within six years of his or her hatching, a thri-kreen grows from one foot to approximately 11 feet in length.

A developing thri-kreen can be raised in one of two ways: to become simple hunter, or to follow a special vocation, such as warrior, priest, or *chakak* (psionicist). Those raised to a vocation develop more slowly at first, but while the simple hunter's abilities plateau after a few years, one who follows the other path can continue to increase in power for a lifetime. Basically, a thri-kreen can be raised as a hunter, and follow the published "monster" statistics for thri-kreen, or can be raised as a PC or NPC.

A "monster" thri-kreen develops evenly, as shown in the "Hit Dice" column on Table 2.1; such a thri-kreen reaches maximum ability after five years, upon reaching 6+3 Hit Dice.

A thri-kreen character, on the other hand, develops more slowly, but can continue to gain power after becoming a mature adult. The development of thri-kreen characters can be found in the "Level" column of Table 2.1. When a thri-kreen is at the larva or child stage, the character's level is 0; the character has 1d6 hit points at this time. A thri-kreen PC starts an adventuring career when he or she has reached six years of age, after passing through all molts and achieving full growth.

A multi-class thri-kreen character has reached 2nd level in the class that requires the least experience for advancement upon reaching the adult stage. A multi-class thri-kreen has reached 2nd level in all classes upon reaching the mature adult stage, and begins play at 2nd/2nd or 2nd/2nd/2nd level.

A thri-kreen uses either the "Level" column or the "Hit Dice" column to determine hit points. Once the choice is made, the lifepath of the thri-kreen has been determined forever.

Note that a thri-kreen player character gains special abilities according to level, not according to age or age category, like "monster" thri-kreen. A thri-kreen character gains the ability to leap at 3rd level, venom and a free proficiency with chatkcha at 5th level, and the dodge ability at 7th level. A multi-class thri-kreen character acquires these abilities when reaching the required level in at least one of his or her character classes. See Chapter Three or details on the various special abilities.

Larva

Upon hatching, a thri-kreen larva is curled to fit within an egg, and has a soft shell (AC 10). The chitin hardens somewhat in the first few hours of the thri-kreen's life, to AC 9 after 12 hours; by the end of the thri-kreen's first day, the larva is just as difficult to injure as an adult, with AC 8, and full Dexterity bonuses.

The term "larva" is somewhat misleading, because it conjures images of the larvae of other insects, usually worm-like creatures quite different from the adult forms. A thri-kreen larva looks much like an adult, but in many ways resembles more primitive mantids as well.

A thri-kreen larva has four legs, two attached to the prothorax and two attached to the lower thorax. The larva can run as soon as hatching is finished, and scampers quickly about on these legs while tying to survive the critical first hours of life. The larva has only two arms; these terminate in grasping claws much like those of primitive mantids, rather than in the manipulative fingers of the adult thri-kreen. The claws are relatively weak, and are smooth, rather than spiked like those of a primitive mantis.

As shown on Table 2.1, young thri-kreen cause little damage with claws and bite. A larva or child thri-kreen has grasping claws, as shown in the stages of life diagram on the poster, these cause damage by squeezing an opponent (or part of the opponent). An opponent that survives being grabbed can escape by making a successful Strength check, provided the victim has leverage and some way to pry the thri-kreen's claws apart. A larva makes only three attack per round, two claws and one bite.

One great aid to the thri-kreen's rapid development, probably a survival trait evolved because of the thri-kreen lifestyle and short lifespan, is the thri-kreen's "racial memory." When hatched, a thri-kreen already knows many things, which the larva "remembers" from the experience of ancestors. While some of this knowledge is mental, some is also physical: a hatchling thri-kreen "remembers" the thri-kreen language, but also has finely



Table 2.1: Thri-Kreen Stages of Growth

	Age	Size	Move	Claw/Bite	Level	H D	THAC0	X P	Abilities
Larva	0-1	T (1'-3' long)	9	1/1	0	1+3	19	65	*
Child	1-2	S (3'-5' long)	9	1/1	0	2+3	17	120	
Young	2-3	M (5'-7' long)	18	1d3/1d3	1	3+3	17	175	leap
Young Adult	3-4	M (7'-9' long)	18	1d3/1d3	1	4+3	15	270	
Adult	4-5	L (9'-10' long)	18	1d4/1d4+1	2	5+3	15	975	**
Mature Adult	5-6	L (10'-11' long)	18	1d4/1d4+1	2	6+3	13	1,400	dodge
Wandering Age	6-25	L(11'long)	18	1d4/1d4+1	3+	6+3	13	1,400	***
Venerable	25+	L(11'long)	15	1d4/1d4+1	3+	6	13	1,400	

* Tokchak (racial memory), tikchak (hunting), antennae, speed, constant activity, water use; pheronomes.
** Venom and chatkcha
*** A few weeks or days before death, racial abilities can degrade dramatically

developed hunting instincts, including quick and correct actions.

From the time of hatching, a thri-kreen already has many of the race's special abilities (as fully detailed in Chapter Three). These include the hunting ability, use of antennae, lack of need for sleep, spell immunities, and greatly reduced need for water. The abilities to leap, produce venom, wield the chatkcha, and dodge are all acquired later.

Though well-adapted for hunting, once a young thri-kreen has been brought into a pack, the adults take care of hunting. The young are taught how to prepare and preserve hunted food.

The larva grows rapidly during the first year, molting twice and more than doubling in length during that time. The second molt occurs at the end of the first year and marks the thri-kreen's transition into the child stage.

Child

Structurally, a thri-kreen child is almost identical to a larva, but is larger. While probably wiser and stronger, the thri-kreen child has no special abilities other than those possessed by larvae, with one exception: the thri-kreen's middle pair of limbs are becoming more useful.

As mentioned, a larva's middle limbs are legs. This is the same with the child, but the child thri-kreen begins experimenting with lifting those limbs and using them to move things. The claws at the end of these limbs are rough versions of the hands of the adult, but are clumsy; they are barely able to grasp objects, and cannot wield them with any finesse. The middle limbs can be used for combat in a rudimentary fashion: in the same time it would take a thri-kreen larva to attack with two claws (or an adult to attack with four claws), a child can attack with three claws, the two upper claws and one of the lower claws, in a sort of kick.

During the year as a child, the thri-kreen learns to walk and run on two legs, and to manipulate things roughly with the middle pair of arms. When the thri-kreen molts at the end of the year, entering the "young" age category, the limbs alter significantly, and fully functional, clawed hands emerge from the grasping claws and rough hands of the child.

Young

The young thri-kreen is a smaller version of the adult, almost identical in shape if not size. The young thri-kreen is still proportionately slender in comparison to adults. During this year of life, the thri-kreen learns to use its claws to attack and to manipulate tools and weapons. If adult thri-kreen are nearby, they often provide the young with chatkcha or small gythka, so the young can get used to handling them (for more information on these weapons, see Chapter Three). Though the young might use the small gythka and practice with the chatkcha, they are not yet agile enough to properly handle the latter. Young thri-kreen

rely primarily on their natural weapons. A young thri-kreen can also move at the same rate as an adult.

A thri-kreen raised solely as a hunter learns how to leap at this age, as metabolic changes bring that part of the racial memory to prominence. The young thri-kreen develops the ability within 10 days after the transition from "child" to "young." The ability to leap is same as for full adults, as much as 20 feet straight up or 50 feet straight forward. As the thri-kreen continues to grow, his or her greater leg strength is balanced by greater size and body weight.

A thri-kreen who becomes a specialized individual (warrior, priest, or chakak) begins practicing his or her profession at this stage of life.

Young Adult

The young adult is little different from the young thri-kreen, except in size. The transition to young adulthood brings no extra abilities. A young adult continues to learn the use of tools and weapons, however, and usually begins to access skills. If the thri-kreen has older mentors, they teach the young adult the requirements of the pack. Thri-kreen following player character specialties continue to develop the necessary skills.

At the end of the year as a young adult, the thri-kreen "fills out," becoming broader of body in the manner of the mature thri-kreen. The claws also grow during this molt. This mark the thri-kreen's transition into the "adult" stage.

Adult

Most of the thri-kreen's abilities have developed by this age. The thri-kreen is sexually mature and is considered an adult in all social ways. Mating often takes place during this stage of the thri-kreen's life, before the thri-kreen enters the "wandering age," as described later.

Within a few days after becoming an adult, a thri-kreen raised as a hunter develops the ability to produce venom when he or she bites. As discussed in the next section, the thri-kreen also gains the ability to produce crystal for chatkcha; this is due to racial memory prompted by the production of the enzymes that make up the thri-kreen's venom. Within 60 days after the molt which ushers in the transition to adulthood, the thri-kreen has usually produced a chatkcha and learned how to wield it; this is proven to other pack members in a special ceremony (described in Chapter Four,"The Chatkcha Ceremony"). This marks the thri-kreen's full acceptance into a pack.

The thri-kreen who has taken the other path (that is, a PC or special NPC) does not begin producing venom at this age. While the thri-kreen is recognized as an adult, recognition as a member of a pack does not come until the chatkcha ceremony. It is possible for the individual to become proficient with the chatkcha early and go through the ceremony, though such a thri-kreen has to use a non-crystal chatkcha, or one produced by another thri-kreen. Such thri-kreen cannot use venom early; venom production is a result of physical development and cannot be rushed.

However, most thri-kreen do not learn to wield the chatkcha early, because they know the skill will eventually come to them in time. Most thri-kreen warriors, priests, and chakak wait until they begin producing venom to learn to the use of the chatkcha and to go through the ceremony. Other thri-kreen realize the special individual who does learn the chatkcha early is simply following a different path that usually entails wandering and seeking; there is no social stigma to pursuing such a path and joining the pack later.

Mature Adult

The mature adult thri-kreen is bigger than the adult, a year older, and hopefully wiser. In terms of abilities, the mature adult is almost identical to the adult. In this period a thri-kreen hones the use of his or her abilities to a fine edge. Typically, thri-kreen reproduce during this year of their life.

In the thri-kreen raised as a hunter, another part of the racial memory is triggered by metabolic changes, and the hunter develops the ability to dodge. A s with other such abilities, the dodging skill develops within 10 days after the molt that heralds the transition into the mature adult stage. Also, as with other special abilities, thri-kreen special individuals must wait for this ability to manifest itself

During this sixth year of the thri-kreen's life, the thri-kreen's last two molts occur. These bring few changes, except in size.



Molting

Molting is the rather painful process of shedding old chitin and growing its replacement. The thri-kreen molts twice each year for the first six years of life, a total of 12 times before reaching full growth. Between molting, a thri-kreen grows little, perhaps as much as an inch or two total as chitin plates are stretched to their limits before the next molt

A thri-kreen instinctively knows when molting time approaches, and enters a frenzy of eating to take in enough nutrients to fuel the change. During molting, a thri-kreen must take in about twice as much liquid as usual, at least one-quarter gallon each day for good growth and strong chitin.

A molt takes about eight days to complete. During molting, the thri-kreen sheds portions of shell and grows quickly. Only part of the chitin is lost at a time; for example, a thti-kreen might shed one or two of the rings of chitin about the abdomen: The abdomen grows in the exposed areas and blood oozes over it, eventually hardening into new chitin. Later, other parts of the chitin are lost and replaced in the same way. Thri-kreen, especially larvae and children, often eat the pieces of chitin they shed, restoring some nutrients to their bodies.

While molting, the thri-kreen grows half the amount required to reach the size of the next age category. For example, a larva is one foot long at hatching, and reaches three feet when entering the "child" age category. The larva grows one foot during the first molt, six months after hatching; six months later, the larva molts again, growing another foot, and entering the next age category in the process. Note that the proportionate growth in a young thri-kreen is great; during the first three or four molts of a thri-kreen's life, observers can actually see growth if they watch closely.

During molting, a thri-kreen is relatively helpless, and makes efforts to stay out of harm's way. The thri-kreen does not travel or hunt. Armor Class becomes 9; Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity scores are halved. Base speed is reduced by two-thirds— exceeding that rate during molting causes 1 hit point of damage per round of faster movement. Theses penalties begin on the first day of the eight-day molting process, and end on the last day.

All members of a clutch molt at approximately the same time, with a variation of only 1 d6 days between the time when molting starts. This means there is a certain amount of time during which the entire clutch is incapacitated. A fortunate clutch is aided by other thri-kreen who stand guard; these are generally thri-kreen of the same pack, and are sometimes members of a clutch that hatched a few days before or after the molting clutch.

Molting is followed by another frenzy of hunting and eating as the thri-kreen takes in the nutrients necessary to fill out the new chitin with muscle and other flesh.

Wandering Age

Between the ages of six and 25, the thri-kreen goes through few physical changes, except those due to injury or disease. While other species suffer loss of ability periodically throughout their lives, thri-kreen decline only later. The thri-kreen is finished growing and molting, so travel is safe; most thri-kreen who plan on producing young have done so, and feel no compulsion to spend time breeding, laying eggs, or watching over young. It is during these years that most thri-kreen wander, either as part of nomadic hunting or raiding pack, or on their own.

It is at the age of six—or sometime thereafter—that character thri-kreen begin to seek adventure, often mixing with members of other races, sometimes traveling to the permanent settlements of humans or dwarves. Racial memories of special abilities finally begin to be triggered in thri-kreen who will become warriors, priests, or chakak. It is at this time that special individuals develop the ability to leap, unless they are pursuing more than one specialized occupation, which means they must wait still longer for the ability to be triggered.

Thri-kreen of wandering age are, in many ways, the epitome of the species. They are concerned only with the hunt, or with the pursuit of their professions, and have few ties or responsibilities other than those associated with the clutch.



The End of Life

Barring accident or other tragedy, the typical thri-kreen lives at least 25 years; some live for longer, though only rarely have there been reports of thri-kreen living longer than 35 years. It is when a thri-kreen reaches the age of 25 (venerable age) that he or she declines somewhat in ability, slowing down somewhat and becoming slightly weaker and less agile; the thri-kreen's base movement rate drops to 15, and he or she receives penalties of -1 to Strength and -1 to Dexterity. In addition, the thri-kreen's chitin begins to lighten in hue, first at the joints and gradually spreading to the more rigid sections.

A thri-kreen who is 25 years or older is considered a venerable elder by the pack. Most thri-kreen of this age stop wandering over large territories, and confine themselves to smaller regions. Often, venerable thri-kreen live near egg-laying grounds, so they can help teach larvae and young the thri-kreen way.

Since most egg-laying grounds are also near (or within) burial grounds, a venerable thri-kreen seldom has far to go when ready to die. Until that time, the thri-kreen elder remains vital and active, but when the time to die naturally approaches, the thri-kreen can sense it, and goes on a last hunt. Thri-kreen prefer to die as they lived, hunting, wanting nothing more than to expire in battle, or after having killed prey. Thri-kreen packs who find expired elders usually take the corpse to the nearest burial ground, where it feeds other predators or young thri-kreen. If there is a priest among the thri-kreen, or if the dead elder was a priest, then the appropriate elemental rites are conducted: shallow burial for earth, cremation for fire, exposure for air, and (if possible) sinking or at least dowsing for water. Eventually, the thri-kreen exoskeleton bleaches white and becomes brittle; some time later, it returns to the elements that gave rise to it.



Venom and Crystal

An adult thri-kreen (5+3 Hit dice) or a player character of a similar power (5th level) develops the ability to produce enzymes that act as a paralyzing agent when entering the body of an opponent. The development of the ability is related to the thri-kreen racial memory, which determines exactly when the power becomes active. Once the thri-kreen's venom-producing gland has been activated, another part of the racial memory is brought to prominence: the knowledge of how to use the venom to make a special crystal called *dasl.*

The Venom

The enzymes for the thri-kreen's venom are produced in a small organ in the upper thorax; ducts lead from there to the thri-kreen's mouth. The enzymes are secreted onto the mandibles, which deliver the poison to an opponent on a successful bite. The venom becomes active within one minute of its delivery, and paralyzes almost any kind of creature-except for thri-kreen and members of closely-related species.

Though rumors occasionally circulate that males are vulnerable to the venom of females, this is untrue; thri-kreen are completely immune to thri-kreen venom. It should be noted that races related to thri-kreen have venomous bites as well, and the poison is somewhat different. Still the thri-kreen are immune to the poisons of related creatures like tohr-kreen, trin, zik-trin'ta, and zik-chil, just as those beings are immune to the poisonous bite of the thri-kreen.

The thri-kreen's venom is useful in combat and in hunting. A thri-kreen uses the venom without reservation; it allows him or her to quickly paralyze prey, then move on to capture or kill more prey, increasing the amount acquired for the clutch. The production of the venomous enzymes is prompted by the adrenalin surges created by combat and other stressful events. The combat effects of the venom are further discussed in the next chapter.

The thri-kreen might voluntarily give up the use of venom for a time to produce dasl.

Dasl

As mentioned, the production of venom makes it possible for a thri-kreen to produce a crystalline substance called dasl. This material is used primarily to produce chatkcha, the "throwing wedges" used by the thri-kreen. Dasl is important to the thri-kreen culture; they regard the substance with an almost religious reverence, largely because it is produced directly by them, so is like a part of the thri-kreen. Dasl is also useful, particularly in making chatkcha for use in the ceremony of adulthood; dasl is used almost exclusively for chatkcha.

Dasl: Secret of the Thri-Kreen

Thri-kreen know that other races cannot make dasl, and closely guard the secret of the substance's origin. They allow others to believe the thri-kreen simply find it in out-of-the-way places known only to thri-kreen. This can give a thri-kreen a secret advantage as a slave: as long as the thri-kreen can get the common herb required for the preparation, he or she can make a chatkcha in 10 days. Thri-kreen also revere dasl, especially for its use in making chatkcha for adulthood ceremonies. It is private, almost sacred, thing about which other people need not know.

The crystal is made using sand and the thri-kreen's venomous saliva. The thri-kreen chews a common herb (called *fejik* by humanoids, but known as *zik-thok* by thri-kreen; the herb is found almost anywhere on Athas where there is plant life, and is used as an inexpensive food seasoning by some humanoids). The plant serves as a catalyst. When the venom and plant juice are spit onto sand, the sand bonds together into an opaque, crystalline substance, much like cloudy glass. For approximately a day, this substance is soft enough to be shaped by a thri-kreen using claws or simple tools.

Dasl weighs approximately the same amount as a similar volume of stone, but is quite similar to steel in terms of holding an edge, breakage, and so forth. Therefore, dasl chatkcha (and other weapons) are sturdier than those made of stone, bone, or wood. It might seem that a thri-kreen would want to produce

many weapons made of dasl; this is basically true, but there are three reasons why dasl is uncommon.

First, dasl's production is a racial secret.

Second, the fabrication of dasl prevents the thri-kreen from using venom. Chewing zik-thok paralyzes the venom glands for one full day. Conversely, a venomous bite depletes stores of the enzymes; a thri-kreen must wait at least 12 hours after biting before being able to create dasl. Making a chatkcha requires enough venom that a thri-kreen cannot use the poisonous bite for 10 days; a thri-kreen who carries several chatkcha is considered a formidable warrior, to have survived many days without venom. The slow process of creating weapons, makes most thri-kreen consider carefully before committing too much time to making dasl.

Finally, dasl is not suitable for all types of weapons or equipment. Besides the reverence it is given, which makes it too important to be used for common objects, it cannot handle the physical stress put on large or oddly-shaped items; see the next section for details.

Making Weapons of Dasl

A chatkcha can be produced by a thri-kreen who devotes venom to the task for 10 days. These days need not be consecutive; part of the catalyzed venom is used to bond pieces of dasl together. The venom can also be used to repair a broken dasl item, at the cost of being unable to use venom for the next day.

As the thri-kreen makes a dasl chatkcha, racial memories of how to use it are triggered as well. While chatkcha can be made of other materials, the dasl ones are the most personal and the most prized, both for their revered substance and their sturdiness. Like dasl itself, the crystal chatkcha are considered almost a part of the thri-kreen; dasl is made for chatkcha, and the shape of the chatkcha is ideal for dasl.

The crystal is sometimes used to make a head for a gythka; this requires 20 days for the standard gythka shape. Thus, to make both heads for a gythka takes 40 days. Dasl is seldom used for any purpose other than making chatkcha or gythka, because of its cultural importance, the secrecy around it, its elimination of the thri-kreen's venomous bite, and its general unsuitability for other purposes.

The crystal's lattice structure is stable in small, three-pronged items like chatkcha and the heads of gythka. However, the structure is unstable if used for other constructions. A dasl breastplate, for example, if a thri-kreen could be persuaded to make such a thing, would break into smaller pieces when struck. A dasl long sword would break the first time it was used, because the crystalline structure would not support the length of the weapon compared to its width.

Just for clarification, dasl can be used for chatkcha, kyorkcha, and gythka; short, wide-bladed knives, such as most punching and throwing daggers; heads for arrows, spears, axes, and similar items; and short spikes for such things as morning stars. Remember also that dasl is coveted; since it is as strong as steel, but weighs half as much, those who know about it desire it—especially if it is used in "normal" weapons, other than chatkcha. A thri-kreen who walks around with several weapons made with dasl is asking for trouble, in the same way as a human who walk around with several metal weapons.

PC Kreen and Dasl

While some players might want all their character's equipment to be made of dasl, there are many ways for a DM to discourage the practice. In addition to the deterrents already mentioned, the DM should seldom just give a dasl item to a PC (except, perhaps, the PC's first chatkcha as an heirloom); the DM should carefully monitor the creation of dasl and venom production.

The making of dasl weapons for other PCs should be discouraged. Besides the unsuitability of dasl for most weapons, thri-kreen are seldom inclined to make weapons other than those used by their race. They would make other weapons only under rare and extreme circumstances, such as the threat of death for the thri-kreen's clutch if the thri-kreen refuses; never simply as a favor to a friend. Like ignoring a clutchmate or deciding to stop hunting, this simply is not done by a thri-kreen. Dasl is too important to the thri-kreen to give it away, even to a clutchmate.

There is an exception: a thri-kreen can sometimes make a dasl chatkcha for another, so the other can take the test of adulthood. This may be extended, in rare circumstances, to allow a thri-kreen to make a single dasl chatkcha for a non-kreen clutchmate.

Chapter 3: Combat & Special Abilities

While all kreen of the north have abilities unique to our race, the thri-kreen of the south have these same gifts as well. They make dasl; they are capable of great speed; and they are formidable combatants. The thri-kreen are also born hunters. This innate ability has been lost by the settled tohr-kreen and must be learned anew by each individual, but to the thri-kreen, stalking is as natural as walking. Generally speaking, thri-kreen are aggressive, a survival skill in the harsh southern lands where non-kreen races are so common.

—from the journals of Klik-Chaka'da

Thri-kreen are supremely adapted to life on Athas. They have several special abilities that help them to survive, some related to their insect biology and mentality, some due to their racial memory. Some of the abilities have been mentioned briefly, but all are more fully described in the following text, which is intended to answer most questions about how these abilities function in play and what their limitations are.

Included in this chapter are a summary of thri-kreen basic and developed abilities; notes on magical spells, magical items, and psionics; and information about proficiencies, weapons, and combat skills. Character kits are detailed in Chapter Six.

Basic Abilities

This section discusses several of the abilities which a thri-kreen has upon hatching. These are the basic thri-kreen survival traits and disadvantages.

Tokchak and Racial Memory

Many of the thri-kreen's survival traits come from racial memory. This is the memory of generations of kreen, passed on to the young when they are conceived. The racial memory is something like a set of programmed instincts; it guides a thri-kreen in growing, learning, and reacting. As far as precise memories, the racial memory is sketchy at best; seldom does the racial memory give the thri-kreen actual pictures of events. When this does happen, since the racial memory of the thri-kreen depends on the individual's direct ancestors, certain memories may be different for different individuals, because their ancestors saw things from different perspectives.

All thri-kreen access information and general abilities through racial memory. Among the more important gifts of racial memory are *tokchak* (the clutch mentality) and *tikchak* (hunting ability and the hunt mentality). Other "natural" abilities are also gained when racial memories are triggered: leaping, dodging, venom (and the ability to make dasl), and the use of the chatkcha.

In addition, the racial memory imparts cunning and wisdom, and a knowledge of the thri-kreen language. Basic knowledge of kreen writing can be triggered by the sight of such writing. The thri-kreen also gains a basic knowledge of and feel for kreen legends and religion. Any thri-kreen with psionics can reach 3rd level without instruction, due to racial memory. The thri-kreen might also remember specific past events that happened to thri-kreen ancestors.

Some racial memories are triggered only by specific events, rather than becoming available at certain times. For example, knowledge of Dej, Kano, and the afterlife is rarely gained without a trigger. Likewise, seeing the Chak'sa, a site in the Hinterlands, stimulates memories of the Great One (an ancient kreen leader) and of avangions. See Chapter Four for more information about these memories, and Chapter Five for details about the Chak'sa and its associated memories.

Normally, the information contained in racial memory is unavailable until triggered by a certain age or event. However, certain methods can reach some of it. The **hypnosis** proficiency from *The Complete Psionics Handbook* can pull bits of information from a thri-kreen; the subject under hypnosis can relate such information to the hypnotist, but does not remember it upon awakening. Such hypnosis is usually done only by another kreen.

Similarly, by using the Telepathic science **probe,** an individual might glean information from a thri-kreen's racial memory. Neither hypnosis or psionic probing brings much information to the surface at one time, nor does either method automatically allow the subject thri-kreen to remember the information.

A more reliable method for making such memories useful to the thri-kreen is the Metapsionic science, **psychic surgery.** If this science is used successfully on a thri-kreen for the purpose

of bringing racial memories to prominence, a flood of information enters the thri-kreen's mind. This use of psychic surgery is like using psychic surgery to cure psychic ailments, and requires a simple power check. The information gained by the thri-kreen subject is random (and up to the DM), but might include specific knowledge about the Chak'sa, Dej, and Kano, and about kreen legends. It might also give the thri-kreen knowledge of kreen writing.

Psychic surgery can also be used to unleash a specific element from the racial memory; the surgeon requires an exact power score on the psionic ability check. For example, the surgeon could give a 3rd-level thri-kreen the ability to use the chatkcha. This would also give the thri-kreen knowledge of how to make dasl, but not the ability to do so; the production of venom is tied to the thri-kreen's physical development, and cannot be aided by psychic surgery. The ability to dodge or leap could likewise be granted early to a thri-kreen who is the subject of a successful psychic surgeon.

Tikchak (Hunting)

Thri-kreen are born hunters; the larva's racial memory gives the thri-kreen instincts and skills for the hunt; in essence, the thri-kreen is born with the hunting nonweapon proficiency. The proficiency score for the thri-kreen is equal to the character's Wisdom (a+1 bonus); the score can be improved by spending more proficiency slots on hunting. The thri-kreen knows what animals make the best prey, where they might be found, and some of the best ways to catch them.

The hunting proficiency allows them to stalk prey: A successful check means the hunter has approached to within 100+1d100yards of an animal. Another check must be made for each 20 yards closed beyond this. If the stalking is successful, the hunter automatically surprises normal game. When hunting, a thri-kreen is almost silent, and blends in with desert rock and sands; he or she has almost no odor, other than pheromones, which can normally be detected only by other insects.





A favorite hunting tactic is for the thri-kreen to lie in wait for prey to approach, then spring out and attack, either running or leaping at the prey (see the leap ability under "Developed Abilities" later in this chapter). When waiting for prey to approach, the thri-kreen must have sufficient cover, and must make a successful hunting proficiency check to remain hidden after the prospective prey approaches within 20 feet (or more or less, depending on exact conditions).

When attacking normal prey, a thri-kreen making a successful hunting check automatically attacks with surprise. When attacking characters, either from concealment or after stalking, a successful hunting check means the characters suffer a -2 penalty to their surprise rolls.

Two of the best hunting tools a thri-kreen has are speed and stamina. Since a thri-kreen never sleeps, he or she can follow prey for days without rest if necessary; usually, the thri-kreen's speed is sufficient to overtake the prey before it tires. If thri-kreen simply try to outlast and outrun prey, use movement rates (including jogging and running rules) and normal combat rules to determine what happens.

Antennae

The thri-kreen's sensitive antennae, which detect tiny changes in air pressure, reduce melee combat penalties due to darkness, blindness, or invisibility by 1 point (or 5%, as appropriate). Thus, a thri-kreen fighting in total darkness receives a –3 penalty to attack rolls, instead of the standard –4. The adjustment applies to attack rolls, and saving throws, movement check and Armor Class, as detailed in Chapter 13 of the *DMG*. Ranged activities, like missile fire, do not get this benefit

Armor Class

The tough chitin exoskeleton, larger than human size, and high Dexterity of the thri-kreen give them an Armor Class rating of 5. Breaking this down for player character thri-kreen, this means that the base Armor Class of the thri-kreen chitin is actually AC 8. The minimum Dexterity of 17 brings the overall Armor Class of the typical player character thri-kreen to AC 5, the rating for the "monster" thri-kreen.

Speed

Few natural animals on Athas can move as fast as a thri-kreen. A thri-kreen's natural (walking) movement rate is 18. This translates to a real speed of about 6 miles per hour, giving the thri-kreen the ability to walk one mile in about 10 minutes (one game turn).

If moving at increased speeds (according to the running rules in the *Player's Handbook)* a thri-kreen's maximum running speed at five times the normal rate is 90; in real-world terms, about 30 miles per hour, or one mile in about two minutes. This rate represents a short burst of speed, of course, and should be used sparingly.

Constant Activity

Thri-kreen never need sleep. Though they may rest occasionally, they are constantly active and alert, unless magical or psionic means are used against them. Falling asleep because of magical or psionic attack can be traumatic for a thri-kreen.

While members of other races sleep in order to recover spells or psionic power, thri-kreen do not. Instead, the thri-kreen devotes this time to rest and meditation; basically, a thri-kreen can rest anywhere he or she can sit or stand comfortably. Though recovery time keeps the thri-kreen from more desirable activities, like hunting or scouting, thri-kreen with psionic or clerical powers understand and accept this.

To regain psionic power, the thri-kreen must avoid hard exertion; the thri-kreen regains PSPs as described in *The Complete Psionics Handbook*. In essence, a thri-kreen chakak regains PSPs at the "sleeping" rate when the thri-kreen stops moving and meditates. The thri-kreen is still conscious and aware of the surroundings, so does not suffer penalties on surprise or initiative rolls, nor is the thri-kreen helpless if attacked.

To regain spells, the thri-kreen must first meditate for at least four hours; this meditation is exactly like that used to regain PSPs, and does not harm the thri-kreen's alertness. A multiclass (or wild psionic) thri-kreen can use the meditation for regaining PSPs as rest before recovering spells. For example, a thri-kreen ikthok/chakak (earth priest/psionicist) could medi-



tate for four hours, regain as many as 48 PSPs, then immediately begin memorizing spells. This last takes the standard amount of time as for other spell users, as the thri-kreen calls upon the mystic energies from the elements or from the spirits of certain areas.

Another benefit of the thri-kreen's constant activity is the ability to travel vast distances overland in a single day. For overland movement, a thri-kreen has 36 movement points available for a 10-hour marching day, meaning the thri-kreen can travel as far as 36 miles across clear terrain (salt flats) in 10 hours; rougher terrain reduces the distance covered. The thri-kreen can also make a forced march, increasing available movement to 45 miles in a 10-hour period.

In addition, thri-kreen can travel for as long as 20 hours each day, taking short breaks every so often to rest, look around, eat, and drink. Combined with their great speed, this allows the thri-kreen to travel as far as 90 miles in a single day-and they can do this every day -though traveling that fast does not allow hunting. Compare this to a maximum of 60 miles for a mul in one day, or 48 miles for a lone elf; other intelligent races travel lesser distances.

Water Use

An active adult thri-kreen requires little water to survive, about one gallon per week (non-kreen require about one gallon per day). The thri-kreen can take in water over the course of an entire week, at a rate of l/7 gall on (or more) per day, or can drink most of the allotment at once and supplement it with just a little moisture each day for the rest of the week. A thri-kreen can glean enough water to survive from the animals that he or she hunts.

For example, a thri-kreen could survive by drinking a gallon of water one day, then taking only liquid found in kills for the rest of the week; at the end of the week, the thri-kreen would not be dehydrated. Further, after a severe shortage, a thri-kreen can rehydrate by drinking a day's allotment of water (l/7 gallon) over the course of a day. Young thri-kreen and larva need more, as does a thri-kreen undergoing the molting process.



Developed Abilities

This section deals with abilities that the thri-kreen develops later in life. What abilities are gained and at which age (or level in the case of thri-kreen player characters) are listed on Table 2.1 in Chapter Two.

Leaping

Player characters acquire this ability when they reach 3rd level, other thri-kreen develop it at 2 to 3 years of age. A thri-kreen can leap forward as far as 50 feet, or straight upward as far as 20 feet. Backward leaps are not possible. As long as the landing area is open and fairly level, the thri-kreen lands safely.

Clearance: A thri-kreen needs some clearance when leaping the arc of the leap is about two feet per 10 feet leapt. While a thri-kreen can reduce his or her height by about three feet by bending forward, this is difficult to coordinate with a leap, and requires a successful Dexterity check.

Landing: The thri-kreen can make a simple landing on most surfaces, from sand to stone -as long as the landing area is wide enough to hold the thri-kreen's body. The thri-kreen might still land in smaller areas, but this requires a successful Dexterity check, possibly with penalties. These are at the DM's discretion, based on the exact conditions.

The thri-kreen can land on an incline if there is something to grasp, but generally cannot end a leap hanging by the arms from a precarious position. No thri-kreen cannot support his or her full body weight with arms alone, unless the character's "maximum press" score is greater than the character's weight. In a typical "leap-and-grasp," a successful Dexterity check is required to grasp the target, a successful Strength check is required to hang on, and the thri-kreen takes 2d4 hit points of damage from the wrenching. Most thri-kreen would not even try such a stunt.

Leap to Attack: A creature that a thri-kreen leaps to attack who had not noticed the thri-kreen must check for surprise. Any 1eap of l0 feet or more counts as a charge. At the end of the leap, the thri-kreen can attack with natural or melee weapons. A gythka in the hands of a thri-kreen inflicts double damage on a successful charging attack

Optional Leaping Rules

Leap Limitation: A thri-kreen is not built to simply leap onto an opponent, using sheer size and weight (to knock an opponent prone, for example). A thri-kreen trying this makes a single attack roll for the leap. If successful, the opponent takes 2d6 damage, and the thri-kree takes 1d6 damage. If the non-lethal combat system is being used, this can be combined with an overbearing attack

Death from Above: A thri-kreen can leap down from a height up to 20 feet without penalty. For a leap over 20 but less than 50 feet vertically, the thri-kreen has a –2 attack penalty. For leaps from above 50 feet, the thri-kreen has a +2 initiative penalty and a –5 attack roll penalty. A hit inflicts falling damage on the creature struck. A miss from above 20 feet inflicts full falling damage on the thri-kreen, while a hit inflicts half damage. The DM can further adjust these modifiers for special circumstances.

Set vs. Leap: Note that all leaping attacks make the thri-kreen vulnerable to spears or similar weapons set against a charge. When a leap is not used as an attack, it counts as the thri-kreen's only action for that round, unless unusual factors (such as a *haste* spell) apply.

Venom

An adult thri-kreen can deliver a bite with a paralyzing poison. While, the bite attack itself is discussed later, the venom effects are defined here. A successful bite requires the victim to save vs. paralyzation. A failed saving throw means that the creature is paralyzed for a period of time based on its size: Tiny and Small creatures are paralyzed for 2d10 rounds; Man-sized beings are affected for 2d8 rounds; Large creatures are paralyzed for 1d8 rounds; Huge or Gargantuan creatures are affected for but one round.

Thri-kreen venom is induced by stress or combat-related adrenaline surges. There is *no* limit to the number of times a thri-kreen can use venom during a single encounter. In combat, all the venom produced is pumped to the mandibles for release. This might cause a thri-kreen to appear to drool during and after combat or other stress.

After combat, the venom is depleted; the excess drains away

and evaporates. The glands require about 12 hours to fully replenish their supply when not prodded by combat-induced adrenalin rushes. A thri-kreen who engages in combat again before this time has passed must wait for the stress to induces production; it takes four rounds for venom to reach effective levels, that is, the thri-kreen who has already used venom in combat previously in the day can use venom in a later encounter on the fifth round of stress.

Thri-kreen are immune to their own venom, as well as to that of related creatures (tohr-kreen, trin, zik-trin, and tik-chil). The reverse relationships are also true: all of these are unaffected by thri-kreen venom.

Dodging Missiles

A PC thri-kreen develops a dodging ability at 7th level: a roll of 9 or better on 1d20 against all missiles fired by a single opponent. Dodging must be declared at the start of a round, before initiative is rolled; it takes place during the whole round, even before the thri-kreen's initiative comes up. The thri-kreen can dodge any and all missiles from one attacker, one dodge roll is made for each missile. If the dodge succeeds, the missile misses; if the dodge fails, then the attacker rolls to see if the attack hits. Optionally, if the attacker is able to to fire or throw two or more missiles at the *same time* (not just in the same round), the DM may give the thri-kreen additional penalties (for example, a -1 to the dodge roll for each extra missile fired beyond the first).

Only physical missiles can be dodged, not magical effects. Enchanted missiles, such as an arrow +1 can be dodged, but the missile's magical bonus modifies the dodge roll. For example, an arrow +1 can be dodged on a roll of 10 or better.

Dodging requires the entire round, regardless of the number of missiles dodged. No attack can be made in the same round that the thri-kreen dodges, although movement at up to half the normal rate is allowed. A thri-kreen cannot leap and dodge in the same round.

Disadvantages

The thri-kreen's greatest disadvantage is a large body. Sheer size makes it difficult for a thri-kreen to hide or to enter tight places. Many weapons inflict more damage upon a thri-kreen than upon smaller creatures; a thri-kreen of age four or older (adult) is a large creature, and takes appropriate weapon damage.

Size also prevents thri-kreen from supporting their bodies using arms alone, unless a thri-kreen's "maximum press" figure from the Strength table in the *Player; Handbook* exceeds the total body weight. The thri-kreen must otherwise support or brace his or her body if the arms are used to try to climb or even to maintain a hanging position.

Thri-kreen cannot swim. They sink easily, and their limbs are too thin and oddly-jointed to be used for propulsion or support. Further, their size and trouble handling their own weight make them difficult to pull out of deep water once they fall in, and they are usually poor sailors. Luckily, they live on an arid world and seldom face this problem.

Thri-kreen find the odor of ranike smoke repugnant; see the special notes about ranike in this chapter.

Thri-kreen are almost totally carnivorous. While among themselves thri-kreen would not consider this a disadvantage, a thri-kreen can rarely eat plant material without becoming physically ill. The mere taste of a plant usually makes them sicken. Only a few herbs, spices, and fruits with magical effects (potions) can be safely eaten.

A thri-kreen who spends too long in a humid region can suffer from lung infections and *chitin rot.* Details are given elsewhere in this chapter.

Thri-kreen seldom ride other animals; in fact, this is almost unknown outside gladiatorial training. Doing so requires a feat of acrobatic skill, and most thri-kreen consider it akin to playing with one's food. Further, thri-kreen would rather run freely and under their own power. This attitude extends to riding in wagons or other vehicles, though thri-kreen might do this under the right circumstances (for example, kreen gladiators have been known to drive chariots). The disadvantage is slight, as thri-kreen are faster than most of the beasts of burden on Athas.

Thri-kreen themselves do not willingly serve as mounts, but will carry a clutch-mate if necessary. This usually requires a rude travois made of two gythka joined in a "V" and skins stretched between them. To'ksa thri-kreen have spikes on their abdomen shell; riding them is uncomfortable.



Ranike Smoke and Thri-Kreen

A ranike tree, found only high in mountainous regions such as the Ringing Mountains, grows to be about six feet tall. While it is difficult to extract sap from the gnarled trunk, an adult specimen can yield enough to make a hardened ball two inches in diameter, extracting this much sap takes 2d4 hours. Such a ball of sap burns for 1d4+2 hours; its smoke permeates a roughly circular area with a radius of 60 feet (barring strong winds).

While humanoids consider the smell somewhat pleasant, thri-kreen find it repulsive (much like a human encountering a skunk). Voluntarily entering an area permeated by the smoke requires the thri-kreen to make a successful Wisdom check. Moreover, each round spent in the area, the thri-kreen must make a successful saving throw against poison, or suffer a –2 penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and to any Dexterity bonuses to Armor Class. The penalties end one round after the thri-kreen leaves the area.

Lung Infection and Chitin-Rot

As noted elsewhere, climates other than the arid deserts and scrub lands of Athas are particularly hard on the thri-kreen. While excessive cold makes them sluggish (their bodies are designed to shed heat), they have the most serious trouble with humid conditions.

Lung Infection: For each day a thri-kreen spends in a humid region, such as the Forest Ridge, the thri-kreen has a 5% chance (non-cumulative) of catching a *lung infection,* something like pneumonia. The disease can be cured by a *cure* disease spell, or by a preparation made by a character with the healing and herbalism (kreen) nroficiencies. Otherwise, the disease lasts as long as the thri-kreen stays in the humid area, plus ld4 week after returning to an arid-region. While suffering the effects of the disease. the thri-kreen's movement rate is reduced by one-third, no bonuses for high Dexterity or Strength are received, and the thri-kreen takes a –2 penalty on all attack rolls.

Chitin-Rot: For each day spent in a moist or humid area, such as Forest Ridge, a thri-kreen risk contracting a nasty fungal condition known as chitin-rot. The chitin becomes dull and streaked with gray; and itches painfully.

The base chance is 2%, cumulative each day of exposure (2% on the first day, 4% on the second, etc.). Chitin-rot can be cured with a *cure disease* spell. It also clears up within about a week (2d4 days) after the thri-kreen returns to an arid region. Besides making the thri-kreen's chitin itch (negating any bonuses for high Dexterity), chitin-rot also gives the thri-kreen a +2 penalty to Armor Class for as long as the disease lasts.

Wounds and Chitin

Several special types of wounds can be suffered by thri-kreen due to their exoskeleton. Most of these are inflicted by weapons specially designed to penetrate or break chitin. The most important effects are:

Penetration: Some weapons, like the ko• and certain gythka, are designed to penetrate chitin. In addition to normal damage, a piercing hit inflicts a +1 AC penalty (to a maximum AC of 10) on the thri-kreen. Natural healing of the wound takes 1d4 week. The AC penalty disappears when the wound is healed, though the new chitin may be tender for a week or more beyond this.

Breaks: The lajav weapon actually crack in two the exoskeleton of a limb. This is much like a compound fracture in a human, only much more serious. The limb is useless until healed, and must be properly set, or permanent penalties will result. If the limb is a leg, the movement rate has a –3 penalty; if an arm, then all attacks involving that arm (melee and missile) are at a -1 penalty. Natural healing time for a properly set break is 2d4 week.

Optional Great Injury: Optionally, any *great injury* (cumulative 75%+ of total hit points, or a single piercing or slashing attack that inflicts 20 or more points of damage) can be considered a penetration.

Magical and Psionic Healing: The special penalties inflicted by these wounds are eliminated only when all of the hit points damage inflicted with that wound have been healed (a side record must be kept of these hit points). In the case of a break, the first application of healing magic or psionics sets the break, but restores no hit points. When all hit points lost to a penetrating wound or break are healed, the special penalty (lost limb or AC) is eliminated.

Proficiencies

Animal Handling (jalath'gak): Same as standard animal handling, but this specialty is usually found only among kreen. It is most common for those with this proficiency to also have psionic means to influence or control the creature.

Artistic Ability: The thri-kreen use this mostly for the art of body painting, in which colorful designs and symbols for good fortune or good hunting are painted onto the chitin of another thri-kreen with pigments made from animal-, plant-, or clay-based dyes.

A chitinworker with artistic ability has a -1 bonus to the chitinworking roll, if the work is of a decorative nature.

Chitinworking: Spending a single slot on this proficiency allows the chitinworker to make designs in a kreen's chitin. Patterns and pictures can be etched and later colored, gems or other tiny objects can be added, and rings can be placed into holes in the chitin. Placement of gems and so forth requires the chitinworker to break through the chitin, place the object in the wound, and maintain a watch while new chitin grows around it. A chitinworker can also shape the chitin that grows after a wound, eliminating ugly knobs and spines, or causing artistic projections to form. Too-elaborate constructions will break away from the subject's body rather easily, so chitinworkers tend to stick to simple decoration.

To'ksa prefer body painting to chitinworking, see the above proficiency, artistic ability

Heraldry (thri-kreen): This proficiency allows the character to identify specific thri-kreen packs by their distinctive dress, equipment design, chitinworking, body painting, and other visible signs. At the DM' s option, it may also cover related kreen races, once the character is exposed to them.

Herbalism (kreen): This proficiency duplicates the effects of the standard herbalism proficiency, except that animal parts are used instead of herbs and fungi. Glands, organs, scales, and so forth are used to reproduce the effects of medicinal herbs. Because the components come from creatures rather than plants, kreen can ingested the product if required. A character with standard herbalism can learn this specialty by expending another proficiency slot, and vice versa.

Hunting: Thri-kreen have a -1 bonus to their rolls with this proficiency (in effect, they use base Wisdom instead of the usual "Wisdom -1" for the proficiency roll).

Hypnotism: This proficiency, detailed in the *Complete Psionics Handbook,* is effective on kreen only when used by kreen. A kreen cannot use it effectively on a non-kreen. Zik-trin are immune to this proficiency.

Language (modern): Despite similarities between the thri-kreen language and the tohr-kreen language, there is not enough crossover to allow communication unless a character spends a proficiency slot to learn the second language.

Psioncraft: This proficiency operates in every way as spellcraft, but with respect to psionics. Its use is restricted to psionicist characters, and reflects disciplined study rather than racial memory.

Reading/Writing (kreen): Proficiency in reading kreen gives automatic success in reading the kreen language (kreen racial memory normally allows understanding with a successful Intelligence check). Writing the kreen language requires a proficiency slot and either meditative access to the racial memory or access to a mentor able to teach it. There is no difference between the written forms of tohr-kreen and thri-kreen.

Sign Language (Jeral or To'ksa): Thri-kreen sign language is difficult for non-kreen to master, as it includes multiple limbs. A non-kreen who uses sign language to communicate with a To'ksa thri-kreen has a +2 penalty to the proficiency roll (and vice versa). For Jeral thri-kreen, the penalty is +3. Jeral and To'ksa have a +1 penalty when they try to use sign language with each other.

Spellcraft: Thri-kreen cannot start the game with the spellcraft nonweapon proficiency under normal circumstances. They can take the proficiency only if approved by the DM. This would at least require some role-playing story that explains why someone raised in a non-magical society would have knowledge of magic.

Survival: A thri-kreen of the Tyr Region must start with one of the desert-like terrains: sandy wastes, stony barrens, scrub plains, or rocky badlands, as his or her home terrain.

Swimming: Thri-kreen cannot take this proficiency.



Weaponsmithing (thri-kreen): Standard weaponsmithing does not allow non-kreen to make thri-kreen weapons, which are designed for kreen. Non-kreen weaponsmiths are seldom exposed to thri-kreen, so have nowhere to learn how to make such weapons.

Thri-kreen weaponsmithing costs only two slots, but has the same ability score modifier (Intelligence –3) and restrictions as normal weaponsmithing. It allows the character to make: chatkcha, gythka, knives, ko•, lajav, and zerka. Exposure to tohr-kreen weapons allows the smith to learn how to make kyorkcha.

A thri-kreen character exposed to non-kreen culture and spending three slots for weaponsmithing can know either normal weaponsmithing or thri-kreen weaponsmithing plus up to 10 k non-kreen weapons. The combination of full normal weaponsmithing and weaponsmithing (kreen) costs a total of four proficiency slots.

Thri-kreen automatically learn how to make dasl chatkcha when they begin producing venom. To make gythka and other weapons, and to make chatkcha out of any other material, a thri-kreen must have the weaponsmithing proficiency.

Chatkcha (and Kyorkcha)

The single most important weapon to the thri-kreen is the *chatkcha,* or throwing wedge. It is the only weapon whose use is learned by the thri-kreen through racial memory. Skill with the chatkcha is a mark of adulthood among thri-kreen; the weapon itself symbolizes adulthood. The chatkcha's precise form depends on the substance used to make it. Note that "chatkcha" is pronounced *chaht-kcha,* with the "k" and "ch" sounds run together, rather than *chah-tk-cha* or another variant.

The tohr-kreen have their own version of this weapon, the *kyorkcha.* A few have appeared in the Tyr Region. "Kyorkcha" is pronounced *kyor-kcha* rather *kyor-kcha* than, *ky-or-kcha,* or some other variant.

Chatkcha Construction

Chatkcha can be made from hardwood, stone, bone, metal, or dasl. Dasl is the preferred medium. A dasl chatkcha has a central hole; at equal spaces around the hole, three leaf-shaped blades protrude. Metal and wooden chatkcha are roughly the same shape as dasl ones. Bone and stone chatkcha must be built differently, or fly apart too easily when used; they have a central hole as well, but the three blades are wider and almost rectangular in shape.

Thri-kreen pride themselves on the quality of their chatkcha, and put many hours into them, so they are not just functional, but are beautiful as well. More artistic thri-kreen etch scenes of hunting and battle onto the flat parts of the weapon. The more ornate dasl chatkcha become heirlooms of the maker and, when that thri-kreen dies, of the clutch and pack. Some packs have chatkcha that have been handed down for generations, and through their etchings, tell some of the history of the pack. Thri-kreen are sometimes so attached to dasl chatkcha that if the weapons are lost or stolen, they will go on a quest to retrieve the chatkcha. Heirloom chatkcha are protected with the thri-kreen's life. Chatkcha of materials other than dasl are never heirlooms.

The Kyorkcha

An invention of the tohr-kreen of the north, the lcyorkcha is a more dangerous variant of the chatkcha. It consists of a curved blade, much like a boomerang, with several protrusions along the edge, as well as spikes that jut out near each end. The kyorkcha, like the chatkcha, has a hole in the middle.

The kyorkcha can be made of dasl, or of stone, bone, hardwood, or metal. A kyorkcha's average damage is greater than that of the chatkcha, with a range of 1 d8+2 points of damage versus the chatkcha's ld6+2 (against creatures of man-size or smaller

Most kyorkcha are edged on both front and back, though some are made with a blunt back edge; these are used to knock out foes or prey. Only a blunt kyorkcha can be used in this way. (A proficient user suffers a -1 attack roll penalty. On a successful hit, the chance for a knockout is 3% per point of damage caused. Only 25% of the damage of a knockout attack is real; the rest is temporary. A thri-kreen cannot be instantly knocked out, but might fall unconscious if he or she takes enough damage.)

The kyorkcha is held like the chatkcha, with a digit on either side of the kyorkcha's leading prong, and the third digit at the center of the weapon's trailing edge. The details of throwing are similar to those of the chatkcha.

Chatkcha Proficiency

The chatkcha was created by thri-kreen and is used primarily by them. Upon reaching adulthood (or 5th level if a player character), a thri-kreen gains a free proficiency with the chatkcha.

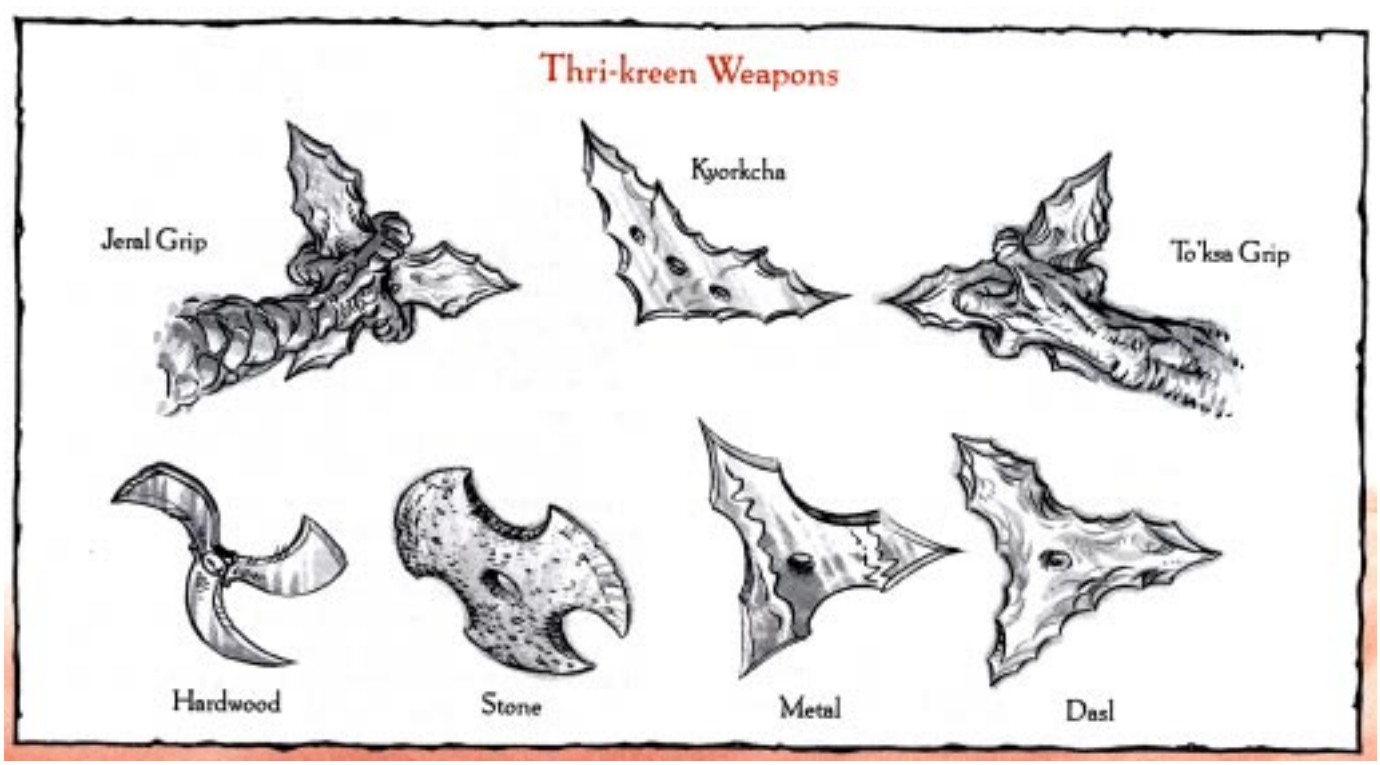
A typical thti-kreen can throw up to two chatkcha in a round. This takes up the thri-kreen's allowed actions for that round. The thri-kreen can throw chatkcha with any of his or her hands, and can hold other objects in unused hands.

The thri-kreen hand, especially the three-thumbed hand of the Jeral, is ideal for gripping the chatkcha. A Jeral grips the weapon with one thumb between each blade, while a To'ksa curls the middle finger under and against the chatkcha, and uses the other three digits to grip the weapon in the Jeral manner (see diagram).

To throw the chatkcha, the thri-kreen holds it to the side, with palm facing up. The throw is a full arm movement with a wrist flip at the end; a thri-kreen who does not have room for a full arm movement (just a forehand or backhand wrist flip) can throw the chatkcha only 10 feet. Thri-kreen usually throw two chatkcha at the same time; some throw both from the same side of the body, while others use either the upper or lower pair of arms. Throwing styles tend to be the same within a pack; this, like harness and decoration, distinguishes one pack from another.

A thri-kreen who takes proficiency in the chatkcha early (before 5th level must spend one proficiency slot, and receives no replacement slot at 5th level. Taking chatkcha proficiency early gives no other benefits to the thri-kreen; for example, he or she must still wait until 5th level to be able to produce venom and dasl.

The chatkcha and the kyorkcha are considered related weapons in regards to non-proficiency penalties. Thus, a character proficient in one suffers only half the normal non-proficiency penalty (rounded up) when using the other. While a thri-kreen receives a free proficiency with the chatkcha, the character must devote a proficiency slot to kyorkcha in order to use it without penalty,





Chatkcha Use

Because chatkcha (and kyorkcha are hurled weapons, damage bonuses for high Strength apply. Because they are so perfectly balanced or flight, they suffer the same penalties as arrows or bolts due to wind, despite their greater weight. A proper throw has several traits.

- The weapon spins when thrown. If thrown parallel to the ground,it will return to the thrower, provided it missed the target and was not otherwise stopped.
- The chatkcha returns along approximately the same trajectory it traveled on the way to the target. This happens at the end of the round, so a single chatkcha cannot be thrown more than once per round.
- If thrown upward or downward, the chatkcha does not return (actually, an upward throw returns by falling, and can caught if the thri-kreen is in the right place and makes a successful Dexterity check).
- Catching a returning chatkcha (or kyorkcha) is second nature to a proficient thri-kreen. A proper catch is made by inserting a finger into the central hole, then wrapping the others around the weapon; the catching finger is then withdrawn smoothly so the weapon is again ready to be thrown.
- If the thri-kreen is distracted (such as by moving, or by being attacked), the catch requires a successful Dexterity check.
- A thri-kreen can wield a chatkcha (but not a kyorkcha) as a melee weapon, with the same restrictions as for other melee weapons. The grip on the weapon is the same, and damage is as indicated on the weapons table.

Non-Kreen Throwers

Humans and similar races can cannot achieve the same skill with a chatkcha as thri-kreen. Humanoid throws have the following traits:

- Humanoids have a base throw rate of only one chatkcha (or kyorkcha) per round. The range and damage for these attacks are unchanged.
- Making the weapon return requires a second proficiency slot ("advanced chatkcha" (or "advanced kyorkcha"). This need not be done when the initial slot is spent for weapon proficiency, and is independent of specialization, which costs a third slot.

Note that a non-kreen gladiator can take a free specialitation in chatkcha or kyorkcha but must still spend a slot to get the weapon to return.

Special Maneuvers

A thri-kreen (not a humanoid) might throw a chatkcha to return along a different trajectory. Such stunts include throws that:

- Return to the thri-kreen during normal movement;
- Return to the thri-kreen in mid-air during a leap;
- Return to another thri-kreen;
- Intentionally miss in order to impress or intimidate others.

A special maneuver is possible with only one chatkcha per round. If the chatkcha a is to return to another thri-kreen, both the thrower and the recipient must make a successful Dexterity check for a transfer. The thri-kreen can also throw one chatkcha, leap or move half his or her movement rate, and then be in position to catch a return flight; this requires a successful Dexterity check when the chatkcha is thrown, to get it to go to the right place, and a successful Dexterity check to catch it when it returns. (These maneuvers also can be performed with a kyorkcha.)

Maneuvers and Specialization: A thri-kreen specializing in chatkcha or kyorkcha can perform the listed special maneuvers without a Dexterity check. In addition, the thri-kreen can throw a single chatkcha backwards, in lieu of all other attacks. (The thri-kreen is flexible enough to look backwards, and must do so; the thri-kreen's arms and fingers are flexible enough to throw in the awkward position.)

A backwards throw requires a thri-kreen specialized in chatkcha. Range is decreased (short/medium/long ranges are 10/20/30yard) and no attack or damage bonuses due to specialization apply.

A humanoid who specializes with chatkcha (or kyorkcha) gains the ability to use special maneuvers. However, the specialized humanoid must still make Dexterity checks for success. A humanoid cannot make a backwards throw.

• While a thri-kreen hand is covered with chitin, a humanoid's hand must be protected by a heavy leather gauntlet at least. If catching with an unprotected hand, a humanoid must make a successful Dexterity check, or take 1d2 points of damage from the chatkcha (1d3 from a kyorkcha).

• If not expecting a chatkcha's return, a humanoid might be struck by the weapon. In this case, the DM makes an attack roll using the thrower's THAC0 and Armor Class. A hit causes normal damage.

• A humanoid can also wield a chatkcha in melee.

At the DM's option, the humanoid can eventually learn to safely catch the chatkcha or kyorkcha without wearing gloves or making a successful Dexterity check. Over time, the humanoid might learn how to catch the weapon by the central hole, as the thri-kreen does. It is recommended that a humanoid's difficulty in catching the weapon last at least for one full level of experience.

Specialization

Specialization in chatkcha increases the rate of fire allowed, as given on Table 3.1. The rates are different for kreen and non-kreen. As with other races, specialization with the chatkcha is limited to single-class fighters (and gladiators).

Table 3.1: Specialist Attacks per Round with Chatkcha (or Kyorkcha)

Level	Thri-Kreen	Non-Kreen
1-6	3/1	3/2
7-12	4/1	2/1
13+	5/1	5/2

Other Thri-Kreen Weapons

Thri-kreen make and use a variety of weapons. Chief among them are the gythka and the chatkcha, which are the weapons most used (by far) by thri-kreen. Thri-kreen sometimes use non-kreen weapons as well, if they have traveled outside the pack; for example, a thri-kreen gladiator might return to a pack with knowledge of several human weapons. For the most part, however, thri-kreen prefer their racial weapons, especially the gythka and chatkcha. Other racial weapons include the ko• (breaker), the lajav (cracker), and the zerka (meatseeker). While not as common as the gythka and chatkcha, these weapons are found in many pack.

Thri-kreen use bone, stone, and wood to make weapons, just as members of other races; they use dasl for chatkcha and occasionally for other weapons. Thri-kreen rarely learn the skills necessary to work metal, for several reasons: first, metal is very rare, and knowledge of metalworking is restricted in some places; second, their culture does not often use fire; third, the materials needed to work metal are not easily transported, so would inhibit a thri-kreen's mobility; and finally, thri-kreen have little use for metal. No thri-kreen pack in the Tyr Region has ever had a thri-kreen blackmith.

Gythka

The gythka is a polearm with a three-bladed head at each end. It can be used as a thrusting or throwing weapon, and can be wielded as a quarterstaff or set against a charge as well. Thri-kreen sometimes make a child's version of the gythka to help train young thri-kreen in the weapon's use.

There are a few variations on the gythka (see diagram). Gythka are usually made with heads of stone or bone; some are made with dasl. A common configuration attaches a chatkcha to one end of the shaft, with a standard gythka head at the other end. The chatkcha is usually set with one blade pointing parallel to the staff; on occasion, it is set with a blade perpendicular to the shaft. This configuration, when swung properly, can better pierce the chitin of an insect or another thri-kreen.

Piercing Attack: This special attack is a *called shot;* while it need not be aimed specifically, the gythka must be swung properly. The wielder suffers a +1 initiative penalty and a -4 attack roll penalty A successful attack opens a hole in the opponent's chitin; each such hit a inflicts normal damage, plus a +1 Armor Class penalty (to a maximum base of Armor Class 10 before magical, psionic, and Dexterity adjustments). Healing time is 1d4 week, unless accelerated by magic or psionics.

Ko•

The ko• (breaker) is basically a rock, pointed at one end and rounded on the other. The ko• is a hand-held melee weapon



Table 3.2: Weapons List

Item	Cost[1]	Weight	Size	Type	Speed Factor	Damage S-M	Damage L	ROF	Range S	Range M	Range L
Bite	—	—	—	S/P	2	1d4+1	1d4+1				
Chatkcha, Hand-Held	1 cp	—	S	S/P	4	1d6	1d4				
Chatkcha, Thrown	1 cp	—	S	S	4	1d6+2	1d4+1	2[2]	3	6	9
Claw	—	—	—	S	1	1d4	1d4				
Gythka, Hand-held	6 cp	12	L	P/B	9	2d4	1d10				
Thrown	6 cp	12	L	P/B	8	1d6+2	1d8+2	1	1	2	3
Child's	3 cp	6	M	P/B	7	1d6	1d8				
Ko•	1 cp	3	S	P/B	3	1d4	1d3				
Kyorkc ha	1 sp	1	S	S/B	6	1d8+2	1d6+2	2[2]	3	6	9
Lajav	3 cp	4	L	B	8	1d6	1d6				
Zerka	4 cp	3	L	P	7	2d4	1d10	1	1	2	3

[1]Costs are given for comparison; thri-kreen do not use money. Prices are for standard materials, and metal versions of the weapons cost 100 times as much.
[2]Non-kreen can throw only one per round (ROF 1).

designed to break the chitin of an enemy. The thri-kreen holds a ko• with the rounded end in the palm and the pointed end out. Ko• are wielded in opposite pairs, with standard restrictions and penalties for characters using more than one weapon. Both ko• in a pair are swung at the same time, aiming to catch a portion of the thri-kreen's body between them, and an attack roll must be made for each one. If only one hits, damage is as listed; if both hit, the damage is as listed, and the victim of the strike suffers a piercing attack automatically, as a hole is punched in the chitin.

Piercing Attack: A thri-kreen or other creature with an exoskeleton suffers a penalty of +1 AC when hit with a pair of ko•. This can make the victim's base AC as poor as 10. Normal healing takes 1d4 week.

Lajav

The lajav (cracker) is a vicious weapon, designed for use against creatures with chitin. It consists of two short, thick rods (usually made of bone or hardwood) connected by a stiff hinge of sorts (something like nunchuks). Only one lajav is wielded at a time, using both arms on one side.

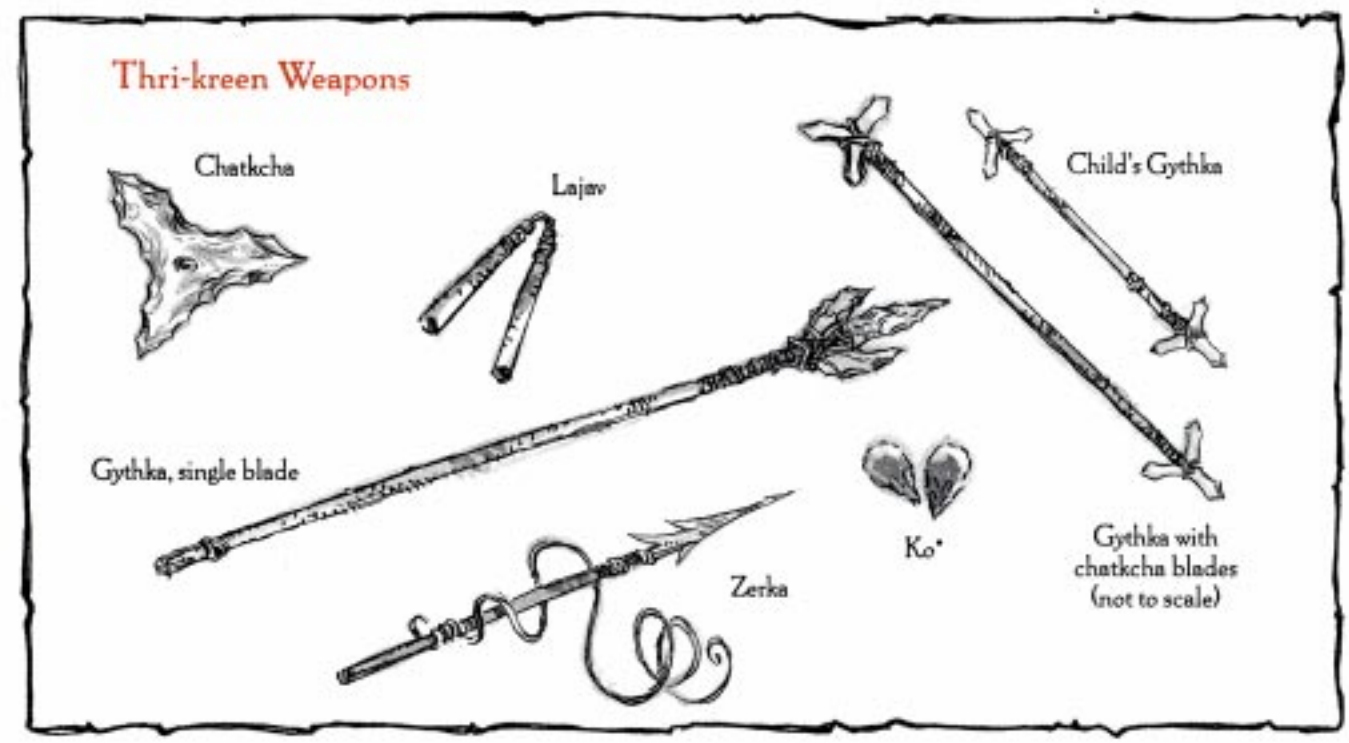
The lajav is wielded in the upper primary hand for a normal attack roll. If the attack hits, the listed damage is caused. The thri-kreen then makes another attack roll, for the lower arm on the same side, to catch the other end of the lajav. If this roll is successful, the listed damage is caused again as the limb is crushed between the two rods of the lajav. The victim must then make a saving throw vs. paralyzation, or the limb is broken, and cannot be used. Normal healing time is 2d4 weeks.

Because the lajav has a poor speed factor, a thri-kreen wielding one often carries shields in the off-side hands to fend off the attack of quicker opponents.

Zerka

The zerka (meat-seeker) is a short, viciously barbed javelin. While usually wielded as a melee weapon, it can be equipped with a line and thrown, like a short harpoon. Once the zerka hits, the victim needs a successful open doors to pull out the weapon. Failure inflicts a point of damage. Success inflicts a second (normal) damage roll as the weapon is pulled out.

If the zerka is equipped with a line, the creature hit cannot run far without further injuring itself. The wielder can use the line to pull down or dismount a struck opponent of equal or smaller size. In this case, both attacker and victim make Strength check. If the attacker succeeds and the victim fails, the



victim falls (a fall from a mount causes 1d3 points of damage; a fall from a standing position renders the victim prone). If both succeed, the zerka pulls free, inflicting normal damage. In all other cases, nothing happens.

A zerka can be carefully extracted without causing more damage after combat is over.

Humanoid Weapons

Besides their unique weapons, thri-kreen favor certain human and humanoid weapons. These include forearm axes, knives, nets, puchiks, and wrist razors. These cause normal damage and effects. Knives are described in the *Player's Handbook,* nets in *The Complete Fighter's; Handbook,* and wrist razors in the DARK SUN *Rules Book* Puchiks and forearm axes are described in *The Complete Gleiator's Handbook* Weapons from other sources (such as bolas and variations of the spiked buckler) might be used as well, if the DM chooses to add them to the campaign. Gladiator thri-kreen are the most likely to use these other weapons.

Combat Skills

Whether armed or unarmed, a thri-kreen is a formidable combatant. While their abilities have made them favorites as gladiators in the human-dominated Tyr Region, those same abilities have also made them feared opponents throughout the wilds of Athas.

Natural Weapons

The natural inclination of an unarmed thri-kreen is to attack with claws and bite. As the natural attack of the thri-kreen, they are comfortable, and from a certain point of view, the thri-kreen appears almost graceful when attacking. Little can stand against an unarmed thri-kreen, but hard materials can be rough on claws and mandibles. Optionally, the DM may allow natural attack to be improved.

A thri-kreen suffers no penalties to attack rolls when using natural weapons. A thri-kreen can never make more than four



claw and one bite attack in a round, even if a high level warrior, unless extraordinary means are employed (such as a *haste* spell or the psionic Metabolic devotion **accelerate** from *The WiII and the Way)* or if optional specialization is allowed for natural weapons. The thri-kreen's claws are considered slashing (S weapons, while the mandibles are slashing/piercing (S/P). These natural weapons are subject to breakage.

Important Note: Strength bonuses do not apply to natural attack.

Breakage: If claw and bite attack are employed against a hard material-steel (or plate armor), stone, the hard shell of a cha'thrang, or similar—the thri-kreen might break a claw or mandible. An attack that inflicts maximum damage against such a surface has a 1-in-20 chance to break the claw or mandible. If this happens, the thri-kreen takes 1d2 hit points of damage, and damage from the claw or bite is reduced by 1 hit point (to a minimum of 1) until it heals in 2d4 days.

Non-Lethal Attack

Any thri-kreen can use its natural weapons for non-lethal weapon attack, according to the standard rules of the PHB and DMG (–4 attack penalty damage is 50% normal, and half of the damage is temporary).

Unarmed Combat

While the thri-kreen is a dangerous opponent with natural weapons, "standard" unarmed combat--that employed by humanoids—is difficult for the thri-kreen to use. Similarly, it is difficult for others to use such attack upon a thri-kreen.

Punching and Wrestling

Unlike a humanoid, a thri-kreen (even a gladiator) does not automatically know how to punch and wrestle. The typical impulse for a thri-kreen is to use natural weapons. If special unarmed skills are desired, and the character has access to some sort of training, a thri-kreen can spend a weapon proficiency slot to learn punching or wrestling (which cost one slot each).

Few save an occasional gladiator are inclined to do so. A thri-kreen gladiator who learns how to punch or wrestle receives the gladiator bonus for such attack. A thri-kreen who learns how to punch must wear a protective gauntlet on hand(s) used for punching

Punching Against a *Thri-Kreen:* A thri-kreen can use its natural weapons in defense, as outlined in the PHB and DMG (striking first, with a +4 bonus to each attack and damage roll). Thri-kreen take punching damage normally. Note that a thri-kreen's size and monstrous nature prevent an instant knockout, though the accumulation of temporary damage would render one unconscious at 0 hit points.

Natural Attack Specialization (Optional)

Specialization in natural attack (claw or bite) is available only to gladiators or single-class fighters, and only if the DM approves (and the DM should consider the impact of this carefully before allowing it).

Bite Specialization: This is just like any other melee weapon specialization. The thri-kreen receives the number of attacks listed by level with the bite, +1 attack bonus, and a +2 bonus to damage. The extra attack apply only to the bite, so a 7th-level thri-kreen fighter with bite specialization can make two bite attack per round, in addition to the normally allowed attacks with claws and weapons.

Claw Specialization:The thri-kreen receives the +1 bonus to attack rolls and +2 bonus to damage rolls. In addition, the thri-kreen receives one additional claw attack per round. When the thri-kreen warrior reaches 10th level, this improves to two extra claw attacks per round.

Gladiators: Note that only a thri-kreen gladiator can specialize in both bite and claw. This combination allows a maximum of eight or nine attack per round (six claws and two or three bites) at 13th level and higher.

Table 3.3: Specialist Attack per Round with Bite or Claw

Level	Bite	Claw
1-6	3/2	5/1
7-9	2/1	5/1
10-12	2/1	6/1
13+	5/2	6/1

Wrestling a Thri-Kreen: Likewise, the thri-kreen can use its natural weapons against a wrestling attack, even after the first round. In general, wrestling attacks are not effective against a thri-kreen because of its size, strength, and physical construction (for example, a throw is nearly impossible because of the thri-kreen's weight and balance). Optionally, the DM may allow a special wrestling style that takes advantage of the specific weaknesses of thri-kreen joints and limbs. A thri-kreen's chitin is the equivalent of scale mail against a wrestling attack.

Overbearing Attacks

An overbearing attack can be used by or against a thri-kreen with no special adjustments. Use the procedures outlined in the PHB and DMG.

Thri-Kreen and Martial Arts

While a thri-kreen cannot use humanoid martial arts at all, the DM might allow special techniques to thri-kreen gladiators as detailed in *The Complete Gladiator*. These would be specially taught and much harder to come by than humanoid martial arts techniques.

Basic Armed Attack

The most common thri-kreen melee weapon is the gythka, but the thri-kreen can learn to use any weapon designed for humanoids. Wrist razors are the most popular humanoid weapons among thri-kreen gladiators, because wrist razors are so similar to normal claws. Thri-kreen with high Strength ability scores add attack and damage bonuses to weapon attack.

Weapon Size

Since most of the thri-kreen's bulk is in its lower body and abdomen, a thri-kreen is considered man-sized when determining which weapons it can wield.

- A thri-kreen can wield a small or medium weapon in one hand.
- To wield a large weapon, a thri-kreen must use two hands. A large weapon like a gythka is typically wielded cross-body, with one left hand and one right hand; generally one hand is high, while the other is low, giving the thri-kreen maximum weapon mobility.
- A thri-kreen wielding a large weapon with two hands on the same side suffers a –2 penalty to attack rolls; the weapon's mobility is limited by the thri-kreen's joints.
- A thri-kreen cannot successfully wield more than one weapon of large size at one time.

Number of Armed Attacks

A thri-kreen can attack once with one weapon without penalty. The thri-kreen can also attack with a bite at the same time.

- A thri-kreen warrior of sufficient level can make multiple attack with one weapon. Extra attack due to level apply only to weapon attack, never to the bite or another natural attack.
- No matter how many weapon attack the warrior makes, an attack with the bite is allowed, as well.

Handedness

A thri-kreen can use any hand equally well, so long as only one weapon is being used. Handedness has no effect on natural attack (claws) or single weapon attack.

- A thri-kreen has a slight inclination toward either the right or left side. This comes into play only if the thri-kreen wields more than one weapon (see "Attacking with Two Weapons" and "Ambidextry").
- The thri-kreen's upper arms and hands are dominant over the lower arms and hands. This matters little to the thri-kreen who wields a single weapon, except as a preference: a thri-kreen who wields a weapon one-handed usually uses an upper hand.

Expanded Armed Attack

Many factors can affect the number of armed attacks a thri-kreen can make, such as specialization, number of weapons used, and special combat styles from *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*.

Weapon Specialization

Specialization with a weapon works in the standard way for a thri-kreen (bonus attacks, +1 to attacks, +2 to damage). The number of attack possible in a single round are based on the thri-kreen's level, as noted in the PHB under weapon specialization. Only gladiators and single-class fighters can specialize.



Attacking with Two Weapons

A thri-kreen attacking with two weapons suffers the attack roll penalties outlined in the PHB: –2 with the main weapon and –4 with the secondary weapon. As with humanoid races, using a second weapon allows the thri-kreen to make one extra attack per round. The thri-kreen's secondary weapon must be smaller than the primary weapon, with two exceptions: daggers and wrist razors can both be used as pairs.

• The two weapons used by a thri-kreen must be medium size or smaller.

• A claw attack can be used instead of a second weapon, and can be considered either a primary attack or a secondary attack (the player decides which attack is primary and which is secondary).

• A thri-kreen who wields two weapons must use both in the upper hands or both in the lower hands; they cannot be used in both hands of one side.

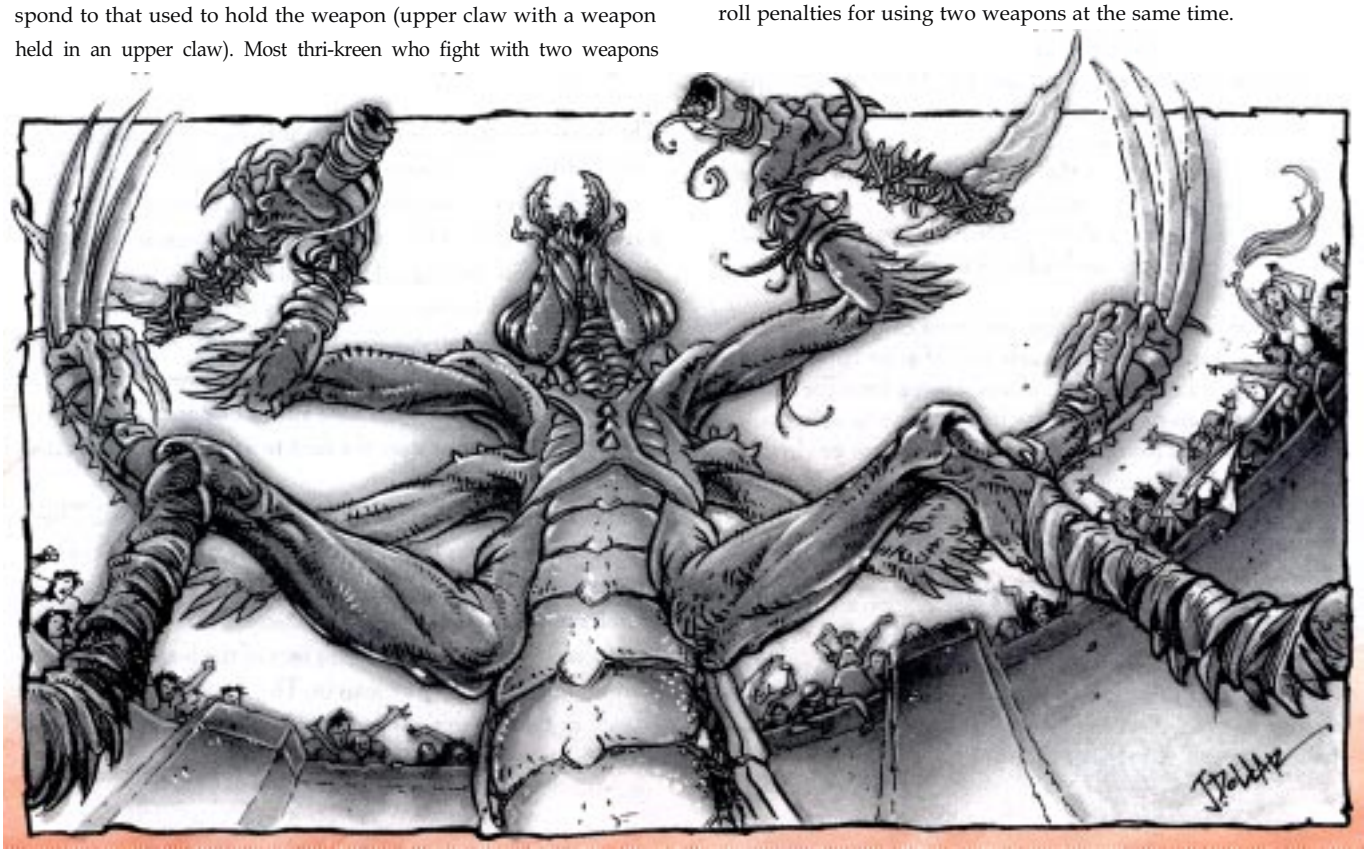
• If a thri-kreen uses a weapon and a claw, the claw must correspond to that used to hold the weapon (upper claw with a weapon held in an upper claw). Most thri-kreen who fight with two weapons use them in the upper hands, but this is a matter of preference only.

• Bite attacks can be used normally by a thri-kreen who attack with two weapons.

• A thri-kreen ranger can attack with two weapons without penalty (class ability).

Ambidextry

As detailed in *The Complete fighter's Handbook,* this proficiency allows a character to fight equally well with any hand. Thri-kreen are naturally ambidextrous in regards to natural weapon attack, and can use a weapon equally well in any hand. However, the coordination of multiple weapons is another matter, and a thri-kreen does have an inclination toward either the right or left side that becomes apparent when the thri-kreen tries to wield two weapons at the same time. If the thri-kreen spends a single proficiency slot on ambidextry, penalties for using the "secondary" hand are reduced from –4 to –2. If paired with two-weapon style specialization (see following text), ambidextry removes all attack roll penalties for using two weapons at the same time.



Two-weapon style specialization

This one-slot weapon proficiency, detailed in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook,* lessens penalties for fighting with two weapons, from –2 (primary) and –4 (secondary) to 0 and –2. If the character is also ambidextrous, there are no penalties to attack rolls. This sty1es specialization also allows the user to wield two weapons of the same size. These weapons must be small or medium in size, and are usually wielded in the upper pair of claws. Optionally, a second slot devoted to this specialization might allow the use of more than two weapons (see the following optional rule).

Using More Than Two Weapons (Optional)

If the DM allows, a thri-kreen can devote a second slot to two-weapon style specialization. This allows the thri-kreen to use four weapons at the same time, but is effective only if the thri-kreen has also devoted a proficiency slot to ambidextry (otherwise, the thri-kreen cannot coordinate all the attacks effectively). Note that a thri-kreen attacking in this manner gets *three* extra attacks per round. The DM should think carefully about game balance before allowing a thri-kreen this level of ability and specialization.

This is the only way a thri-kreen can attack with more than two weapons in a round.

- The weapons wielded with the lower arms must be small, but the weapons wielded with the upper arms can be small or medium.
- A thri-kreen wielding four weapons cannot use more than two types of weapons; each pair of arms (upper and lower) can wield only one type of weapon at a time. For example, a thri-kreen could use the upper arms to swing two impalers and the lower arms for wrist razors, or could use wrist razors on all four arms. The thri-kreen attacking with four arms could not wield a pair of wrist razors plus a quabone and an impaler, or even three wrist razors and an impaler.
- Claw attacks can be substituted for weapon attack by a thri-kreen with ambidextry and two slots devoted to two-weapon style specialization. Claw attacks must be substituted in pairs. Thus, a thri-kreen might attack with two impalers and two claws, or one impaler and one claw, but not one impaler and three claws.

Other Style Specializations

Three other styles are listed in *The Complete Fighter's Handbook:* Single Weapon, Weapon and Shield, and Two Hander styles. A thri-kreen select any of them according to the rules in that book.

Shields and Armor

A slight disadvantage for thri-kreen is that they never wear armor; nobody makes armor to fit them, and they would find it unnatural and uncomfortable as well. Thri-kreen do not miss armor use, their natural Dexterity and chitin provide good enough protection.

Though thri-kreen do not wear armor, they can use shields. A thri-kreen can carry one or two small shields, usually employing the lower, weaker pair of arms. As detailed in the *Player; Handbook,* each small shield protects the thri-kreen from up to two frontal attack.

Mass Combat

Thri-kreen attacking unintelligent prey surround the prey and attack with a pack strategy. Some thri-kreen move in from one side, and when the prey turns to face them, others move in from the other side. They use hit and run tactics to weaken a powerful opponent before moving in for the kill all at once.

Despite what seems to humanoids to be a chaotic nature, thri-kreen attacks are organized and efficient. A favored tactic against intelligent prey is to form two rough lines. The first line throws chatkcha; once these have struck or begun their return, the second line leaps over the first to attack in melee, using gythka or natural attack.

Thri-kreen coordinate their psionic abilities as well. Those with distance powers (often Psychokinetic) are part of the missile line; after throwing their chatkcha, they stay back and use psionics to wreak havoc among the enemy. Those with melee talents (often Psychometabolic) are part of the leaping line; they activate their powers, then leap in. Thri-kreen without psionic talents, or those with the Clairsentient talents join the line for which they are best suited.

Pack tactics are sometimes used against intelligent opponents (typically by To'ksa), but thri-kreen more often seek to demoralize and disorganize intelligent opponents. They leap about and keep chatkcha in the air, using swift attacks and retreats, as well as psionics, to add to the confusion. Since many of the more civilized thri-kreen do not eat intelligent prey, a common thri-kreen goal when facing intelligent opponents is to get them to run away and leave any food they were carrying. Raiding packs are an exception to this: they attack, slay, and often feast.

Magic and Psionics

For the most part, magic and psionics work normally with respect to thri-kreen, whether they use psionics and (clerical) magic against others or others use magic or psionics against them. However, the thri-kreen physiology and psychology protect them from some spell effects, and necessitates adjustments in other spells, as well as in some psionic abilities.

Spell Use

Thri-kreen are unaffected by some spells; other spells may have slightly different effects when used on thri-kreen. Unless stated otherwise, spells have normal effects (see "Spell Adjustments").

In all cases, the final decision about how spells work (including any combinations) are up to the DM. For example: If, in the rounds before casting a *charm person* spell, a wizard uses the psionic devotions insect mind and pheromone discharge (both from *Dragon Kings),* the spell might be somewhat effective, with possible saving throw adjustments or a shortened duration.

Magical Item Use

A major disadvantage suffered by thri-kreen is their inability to wear and operate many magical items. Magical items meant to be handled, such as wands or bags, are usable. Potions work normally for thri-kreen. Items meant to be read by any class, like books or cards, can be used. Gems and jewelry can be used, though a brooch must be attached to a piece of clothing to be



worn. A phylactery must be wrapped a few more times than for a human. *Wings* of flying can be used, but still have a weight limit, restricting the amount a thri-kreen can carry while using them. Any item that magically adjusts to fit the wearer can be used. If a *rod of resurrection* is somehow found on Athas (rare at best), it costs 4 charges to resurrect a thri-kreen, in addition to any class charges.

Magical Item Restrictions: The following items are normally constructed for humanoids and cannot be worn by thri-kreen: *rings,* which slip off because thri-kreen do not have soft flesh on their fingers for rings to grip; *armor and helms* because they are shaped wrong, and thri-kreen do not wear them anyway; *girdles, cloaks, robes,* and *hats* because they are the wrong size and shape for thri-kreen; and *boots, slippers, gauntlets, and gloves,* because thri-kreen extremities are shaped differently from those of other humanoids. Also, the structure of the thri-kreen mouth prevents use of musical *horns* or *pipes.* The various magical eye cusps (such as eyes *of the* eagle) do not fit thri-kreen.

Special "thri-kreen" versions of items might be created. However, since there are no thri-kreen wizards, and wizards of other races are rarely inclined to make items to fit them, few of these exist. Items specially enchanted by a high-level thri-kreen priest are scarcely less rare.

Specially made rings might be possible in a modified bracelet form; but a thri-kreen can still wear only two of them, no matter what they look like (any more causes all to cease functioning). Girdles, cloak, robes, and hats might be sized and shaped correctly. Boots, slippers, gauntlets, and gloves might be fitted to thri-kreen, but footwear is an extremely foreign concept to thri-kreen, so these are very rare at best. Most other restricted items would require too many alterations for them to remain effective.

Psionics Use

Not all psionic powers work equally well for thri-kreen. Psionic "contact" becomes more difficult for a thri-kreen when used on forms of life that are radically different from the thri-kreen. Some psionic powers are useless, for the most part, while others have unique applications for thri-kreen (see "Psionic Adjustments" section for more details).

In addition to Telepathic and Clairsentient disciplines, thri-kreen favor Psychometabolic powers, especially the devotions **reduction** and **chameleon power** for surprise, and **adrenalin control** and **accelerate** for combat.

Psionically Empowered Items

Thri-kreen suffer no special impairment when using psionically empowered items. Experienced thri-kreen chakak often turn to empowering items as a means to help the clutch. It is not unusual for a thri-kreen pack to have one or more psionically empowered items.

Spell Adjustments

- Thri-kreen are not "normal" insects for the purpose of determining how spells work (but *see repel insects).*.
- *Charm person* (and *charm person or mammal*) does not work on thri-kreen because of their size and insect-like nature. Further, the spell lacks pheromones and is instinctively resisted by the thri-kreen's clutch-mind. *Charm monster* has normal effects. (The thri-kreen refer to these spells as "g'tok-mma'ak" or "clutchmate" because it turns someone into an artificial clutchmate.)
- *Hold person* does not work on them because they are too large and too unlike other humanoids. *Hold monster* works normally.
- *sleep* has no effect on a thri-kreen older than the "young" age category. Other sleep effects might create psychological trauma.

  This is a terrifying experience for a thri-kreen. They normally lose consciousness only when near death, as from poison, disease, or loss of hit points. The effects of such an experience vary, and the player might experiment with some sort of psychological effect or neurosis, such as a mild phobia of wizards or members of the caster's race.
- *Barkskin* is useful to a thri-kreen only during molting, or if the chitin has been damaged.
- *Command* spells used to order "sleep" have little to great effect depending on whether the kreen has experienced sleep. In thri-kreen language the words for "die" and "sleep" are very similar (see "Glossary" in Chapter One).
- *Cure deafness* can restore a thri-kreen's antenna-based motion-detection abilities, if they have been somehow impaired.



• *Darkness/fog cloud/obscurement* and similar spells will often bring the thri-kreen's antennae into play (reduce vision-related penalties to attack rolls by 1).

• *Detect poison* gives a positive result on a thri-kreen with active venom glands, but not on a younger one.

• *Enthrall* is effective upon thri-kreen only if the appropriate thri-kreen pheronomes are also discharged (this is automatic for a thri-kreen caster).

• *Magical stone* exists in a variant form for thri-kreen priests of Athas. This special version of the first level priest spell enchants up to two dasl chatkcha to strike creatures normally vulnerable to weapons of +1 enchantment, once each.

• *Raise dead, reincarnation,* and *resurrection* act normally on a thri-kreen of Athas, with adjustments for the *reincarnation* spell as explained in the DARK SUN campaign rules.

• *Regenerate works* normally on a thri-kreen. If used on a molting thri-kreen, it also finishes the molt in 2d4 rounds.

• *Repel insects* requires a thri-kreen to make a successful saving throw vs. spell to enter the area. A thri-kreen that fails can force the barrier, taking 1d6 points of damage.

Psionic Adjustments

TELEPATHY

• **Probe** (science) can be used with psychic surgery (Metapsionic science) to recover elements of racial memory. The procedure can be hazardous and is not undertaken lightly.

• **Contact** (devotion) requires the insectoid thri-kreen to use different adjustments, based on life orders, see table. The Tekchakak kit has a special table (see the kit details in Chapter Six).

Life Order	Contact Score Modifier
Insect	- 1
Other Arthropod	- 2
Fish	- 3
Reptile, Amphibian	- 4
Bird	- 5
Mammal	- 6
Monster	- 7
Plant	- 8

• **Insect mind** (devotion, see *Dragon Kings)* allows non-kreen to use the thri-kreen table for the contact devotion. Optionally, the DM may allow a special devotion, mammal mind, which allows thri-kreen to use the standard humanoid contact table.

• **Taste link** (devotion) allows detection of pheromones through the link. Even if the linked creature does not recognize pheromones, the thri-kreen can interpret them.

PSYCHOMETABOLISM

• **Animal affinity** (science) rarely benefits the thri-kreen.

• **Complete healing** (science) can reduce the time required to molt to one day.

• **Metamorphosis** (science) is restricted by the base mass of the thri-kreen; changing into a normal-size dwarf, for example, is not possible.

• **Body weaponry** (devotion) seldom benefits the thri-kreen.

• **Carapace** (devotion, see *Dragon Kings)* cannot be used safely; it pulls away most of the thri-kreen's chitin, leaving nothing to support the thri-kreen's internal organs. Unless a *regenerate* spell or complete healing Psychometabolic science is used, the thri-kreen dies in 2d4 rounds (from suffocation as the unsupported muscles crush the lungs and hearts).

• **Cause sleep** (devotion, see *The Will and the Way).* Thri-kreen are vulnerable to psionic-induced sleep. The user receives a –4 penalty to the power score.

• **Flesh armor** (devotion) is useful only if the thri-kreen makes a good roll on the power check; the minimum possible AC is 5. On a power roll of 20, spurs and twisted knobs sprout from the chitin. The thri-kreen loses 2 points of Charisma until these can be broken off (taking time, but causing no harm).

• **Pheromone discharge** (devotion, *see Dragon Kings) is* considered highly offensive by most thri-kreen.

PSYCHOKINESIS

• **Molecular rearrangement** (devotion) can temper thri-kreen claws (not mandibles) to receive a +1 damage bonus per claw. Each claw takes four hours. This does not affect attack rolls.

METAPSIONICS

• **Psychic surgery** can be used along with probe (Telepathic science) in attempts to retrieve elements of a thri-kreen's racial memory. This procedure can be hazardous.

• **Hivemind** (devotion) is usually possessed by the strongest chakak in a pack. The chakak, through tokchak, takes PSPs from all thri-kreen of the pack within range, to benefit the pack. A thri-kreen of lesser status in the pack will not use this devotion in the presence of a thri-kreen of greater status without permission. It is not used in dominance fights by either party.

Chapter 4: Thri-Kreen Society

Our own young engaged in games of stalk, and we ate as we wanted to, drinking water from our skins and leaving the fresh water near the circle for the larvae, though we would fill the skins the next morning. The surviving hunters, including those who had not hunted crodlu that day, gathered in tik-dul, the hunt-dance, to celebrate and to prepare for the next hunt. A pair of kreen began making the tik-dul rhythm, striking crodlu bones on gythka shafts. The rest of the kreen talked and made tools and art. I traded a pretty stone to Grej, and she painted the back of my thorax with the symbol for good hunting. Tolth selected guards and scouts for the night, and decided to scout herself as well. We talked and practiced weapons until first light, when we ate again and prepared for the hunt.

—from an account by Klik-Chaka'da, transcribed from the tale of Chark-G'th gaal, a Jeral thri-kreen of the Tyr Region

Thri-kreen lead relatively simple lives, spending most of their time in the hunt or related activities. This chapter describes thri-kreen life, including the beliefs that guide it, and the customs followed by thri-kreen.

Guiding Principles

Thri-kreen have their racial memory to guide them through life, and this of course influences their society a great deal. Besides tikchak (hunt-mind), which is thoroughly discussed elsewhere, the thri-kreen also have tokchak (clutch-mind), religion, and a set of myths and legends to guide them. Tokchak's effects on the individual have been discussed, but its effects on overall society deserves more attention.

Democratic Tyranny

The clutch form of government is odd from a non-kreen perspective, a study in seeming contradictions. It is a democracy, because every clutchmate can voice an opinion, and they all matter; all thri-kreen have rights and responsibilities. However, the dominance order means that some clutchmates are more equal than others, so the democracy is not complete.

Clutch government is also a tyranny, because the word of the clutchleader is obeyed without question or fail. Yet, the leader does not issue orders without thought, and any clutchmate can become clutchleader if powerful enough.

The clutch also has elements of anarchy, for each member is free, and there are no real laws governing their actions. Still, the biological compulsions of tokchak dictate certain behaviors, such as the dominance order and mutual protection of clutchmates.

The best description of the clutch system of "government" might be "democratic tyranny:" while everyone is essentially equal, the leader's orders are followed implicitly. This also reflects the individual's dichotomy; while many individual thri-kreen are chaotic, they act in a lawful manner in regards to the clutch. Most thri-kreen are chaotic, and few are lawful. The majority of thri-kreen are neutral in reference to good and evil, though quite a few are good, and some are evil. Even the most chaotic and evil thri-kreen is still lawful in regards to the clutch and good in regards to clutchmates.

The Challenge

Thri-kreen indulge in three types of challenge by combat. The first and most common is the challenge for a higher place in a clutch's dominance order; this is also used to determine pack leadership. The second is challenge combat between leaders or champions of thri-kreen packs who are opposed for some reason. The third is cha11enge combat between a thri-kreen pack and an army or other group of another race or collection of other races.

Dominance Challenge

The first type of challenge is used within a clutch, including the clutch of clutchleaders that governs a pack, to determine dominance order of clutches within the pack.

Dominance challenges take place rather often, and while a matter of interest to the thri-kreen of a clutch, are not unusual enough to warrant great attention from those not directly involved. To be official, a challenge must be issued formally, at least between thri-kreen; thri-kreen assume, usually correctly, that non-kreen do not know enough about tokchak to either issue a challenge correctly, or know what to do when issued one, so a dominance challenge between a thri-kreen and a non-kreen usually just moves into a combat with little speaking.



A thri-kreen, to formally begin the challenge with another thri-kreen, says something simple and to the point, like "I challenge you" or, if appropriate, "I challenge you for leadership of the clutch." The challenged individual can voluntarily step down and allow the other to move up a step in the dominance hierarchy; this is usually done when a clutchleader is grievously wounded, or realizes he or she has grown too old to remain an effective leader. A thri-kreen who has accepted a non-kreen as a clutchmate, and knows he or she can overpower the non-kreen, might issue a formal challenge in hopes that the non-kreen will realize who will win, and a fight can be avoided.

If the challenged individual accepts, the two challengers move to a clear area and begin fighting. Generally, only natural weapons are used. Psionics and other weapons can be used if desired; sometimes a thri-kreen fights with a gythka (for example) to threaten other would-be challengers; a thri-kreen who can win a challenge with a ethka against claws is a formidable opponent indeed. Sometimes, both opponents will agree to use a certain type of contest, such as psionics, or gythka sparring, or leap-jousting, or even a chatkcha duel. Spell use is frowned upon in a challenge, but marginally acceptable if the spells are clerical in nature. Some challenges are conducted only until blood is drawn, while others are continued until one challenger surrenders or dies. However, since it never helps a clutch for a clutchmate to die in a dominance fight, if possible a priest stands by a challenge in case of accident.

Pack Challenge

The second type of challenge is the challenge between packs. This type of challenge stems from a meeting between two packs and some sort of disagreement between them. Rather than starting a free-for-all battle (which sometimes happens as well), the packs might agree to a contest of champions, to settle a territorial or other dispute, such as which pack has the right to go after a particular herd of erdlands or some such. The pack being challenged also has the tight to decide what they get if they win. The challenge can take place only between thri-kreen pack, though non-kreen pack members can participate. In this type of challenge, the challenger makes a simple, formal declaration, such as "On behalf of the Chtik-tek, I challenge the K'ro-kek for the tight to travel through their lands unharmed."

The thri-kreen receiving the challenge sets the terms, such as how many champions are to be involved, and whether the fight is to the death. Only natural weapons are allowed in this challenge, even if non-kreen participate. The use of magic and psionics is to be agreed upon before the combat starts, and both are usually forbidden. The winner of the challenge gets the agreed-upon reward.

The winners can also take possessions from the losers; this is limited to one item if the terms of the challenge allows the losers to live (and they do live), but can include all possessions if the terms were to the death. The one item chosen from a living loser cannot be a dasl chatkcha; this simply is not done, because it is too degrading to the loser. The loser's pack takes anything left over, so long as the winners do not object (and since thri-kreen abhor waste, they either take the losers' possessions or let the other pack have them). Even if the combat is to the death, the winners almost always allow the losers' pack to keep any dasl chatkcha possessed by the dead combatants; this avoids feuds that can last years.

"War" Challenge

The third type, challenge between thri-kreen and non-kreen, is rare. For the most part, thri-kreen will not accept a challenge from a human or other non-kreen "pack" (army or other group led by a human or other non-kreen). A thri-kreen accepts such a challenge only if the other side offers a thri-kreen as its champion. The combat is governed by strict rules: no weapons. Thri-kreen warriors do not challenge "meat" animals, nor will they accept such challenges from non-kreen who belong to a non-kreen pack. Such people are not believed to know how to fight correctly in a challenge.

Religion

Thri-kreen really have little use for religion; they have no gods or religious holidays of any kind. Thri-kreen do, however, show some reverence for nature and the elements. Note that the Great One, a legendary kreen from ages past, while a powerful and revered being, is not acknowledged as a deity of any kind, nor is the reverence offered the Great One particularly religious in nature. The Great One (an avangion) is covered in a following section.



Priests and Shamans

To help guide them in their reverence for nature and the elements, thri-kreen pack have shamans, who are elemental priests and members of particular thri-kreen packs, and druids, who most often guard fixed lands. Unlike some shamans of other races, thri-kreen shamans are under no illusions that the powers they revere are gods to be worshipped; in fact, the thri-kreen racial memory is quite specific in telling the thri-kreen that there are no gods.

The reverence shown for the elements is more or less religious in nature; while thri-kreen, even priests, do not actually worship a particular element or set of elements, they hold that element in high regard, and show respect for it. Thri-kreen do not pray to nature or the elements, though the druids and other priests must commune with the powers that be to gain spells. Thri-kreen druids and elemental priests are generally well-respected by other thri-kreen, who also usually respect priests and druids of other races.

Afterlife

Thri-kreen do have concepts of "heaven" and "hell." The former is a peaceful place with plenty of game; it is referred to as *Dej,* the Circle, and its shape is emulated by thri-kreen grave sites. Dej is a place where thri-kreen spirits rest between incarnations, not a place where they go for a true afterlife of rest and reward. Thri-kreen seldom think about Dej, either as a place to which they can go, or as a place which is particularly desirable; often, thri-kreen do not even remember Dej until something, like a visit to the vast northern thri-kreen graveyard in the Hinterlands, also called "the Circle," triggers the racial memory.

The thri-kreen "hell" is a cold place called *Kano,* which simple means "cold." According to thri-kreen myths, there is a frozen insectoid monster, Galug, who guards *Kano.* The knowledge of Kane and Galug can come to a thri-kreen any time, but their retrieval from racial memory is almost always triggered by exposure to some great cold.

The thri-kreen "hell" is actually based on a real place in the outer planes, Caina, the 8th plane of Baator (see the PLANESCAPE™ setting). "Galug" is any gelugon, a form of greater baatezu native to Caina. Kano is believed to be a source of monsters, and while based on a real place, in the thri-kreen belief system it encompasses all other planar sources of monsters, from the Astral Plane to the Abyss.

The Great One

Knowledge of the Great One is something else that rests in the thri-keen's racial memory, buried until triggered by some event. Seeing an avangion, or even the image of one, triggers the memory of the Great One, and in many cases causes thri-kreen to revere the avangion as the Great One. Another trigger for the memory is the huge thri-kreen head carved from white stone that lies in the Hinterlands, near the site of the huge grave site called the Circle.

The legend of the Great One, as held in racial memory, is sketchy at best. The racial memory simply tells the thri-kreen that the Great One is to be revered; after the memory has been triggered, the thri-kreen reflexively feels awe and fascination when in the presence of the image, or of an actual avangion. The thri-kreen feel compelled to drop their heads close to the ground, and seek to touch their antennae to the image, or to the edge of an avangion's light aura. The Great One gives thri-kreen a sense of peace and calmness, and removes all aggressive tendencies while they stay in the Great One's presence. Thri-kreen consider images of the Great One-in either thri-kreen or avangion form —to be sacred, and worthy of respect, though the word "holy" does not quite apply. Those thri-kreen who see the Head "remember" that it is sacred and very old, but have no knowledge of who carved it, or why.

The Head (Chak'sa) and its meanings are fully described in Chapter Five. Suffice it to say that the Head is a representation of an actual great kreen who lived thousands of years ago; this kreen also worked with an avangion, and the two "memories" have become inseparable over thousands of years.

Thri-kreen recognize avangions as those who can bring life to Athas. Since this includes animals to serve as prey, thri-kreen like the idea, based on tikchak. However, deep-thinking thri-kreen realize that a return of green means a loss of desert, and while thri-kreen are masters of the desert, they are not so well adapted to forested lands. They might not like the ideas of the

avangion, however, they would not necessarily oppose an avangion, for most deep-thinkers also realize the return of green means there will be pastures and grasslands, as well as desert areas, even after a transformation.

While it is true that an avangion has never been known to exist anywhere in the Tyr Region, the area of the Head, and of the northern thri-kreen nations, are not part of the Tyr Region.

Lifestyle

While the previous section covered the underlying principles that guide thri-kreen life, this section covers the specifics of that life: how thri-kreen reach maturity, have children, grow old, and die; how they survive and what they think of time. This section is still sort of a "big picture" overview, and specific thri-kreen customs and practices, which appear in everyday life, are covered in the next section.

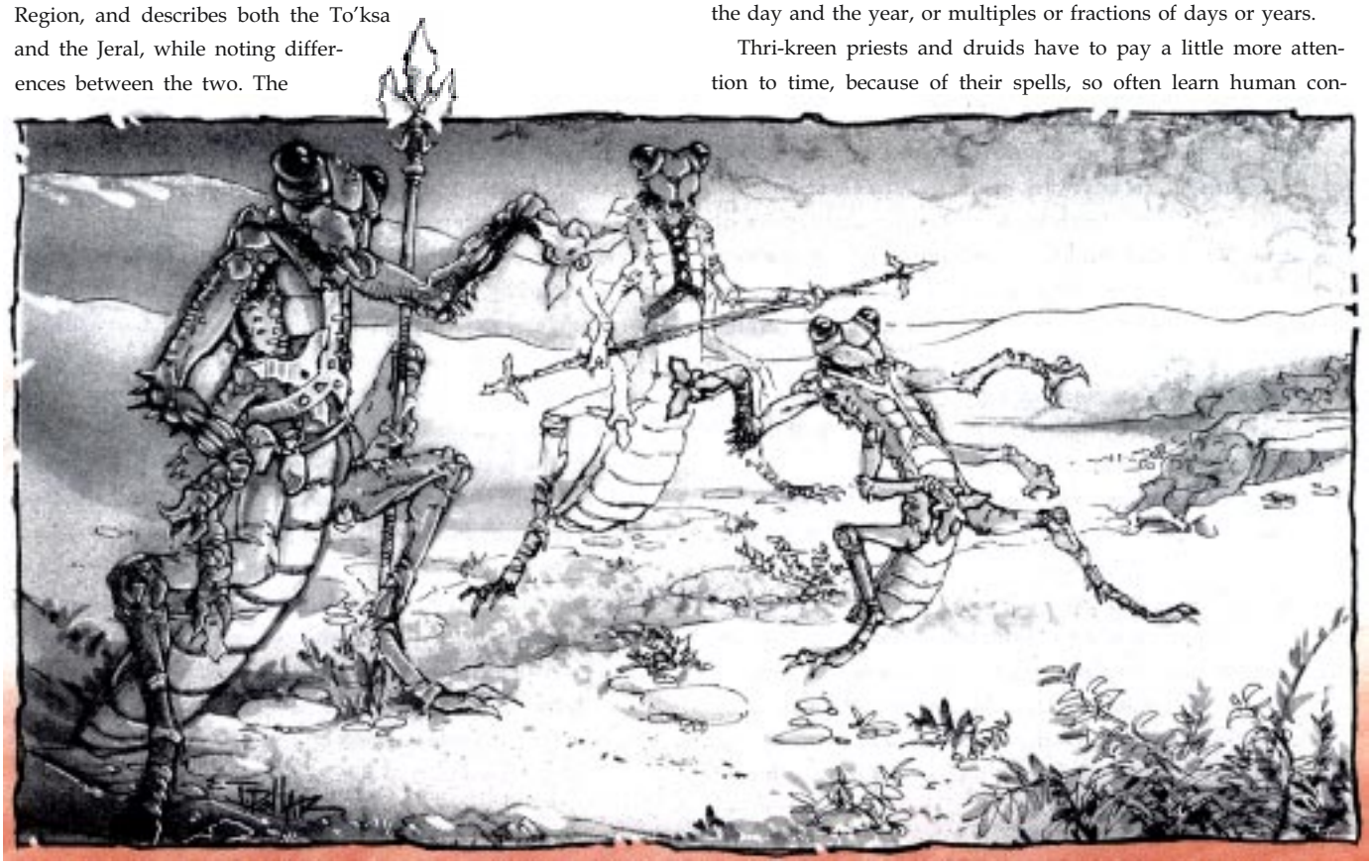
The lifestyle covered here is that of thri-kreen in the Tyr Region, and describes both the To'ksa and the Jeral, while noting differences between the two. The lifestyle of thri-kreen in the Tyr Region is notably different in some ways from life in the thri-kreen nations of the North (described in Chapter Five).

Time

Thri-kreen usually do not think much about the passage of time. There is little difference in the climate on Athas from one day to the next, or even from one month to the next. In addition, the thri-kreen are constantly active, even during the dark hours of the night. Time is not very important to a thri-kreen.

Still, thri-kreen can keep track of time, though most do not, leaving timekeeping to shamans or other religious personages. Thri-kreen shamans, and those other thri-kreen who are so inclined, keep track of time the same way others do: by the position of the sun and moons in the sky. Thri-kreen do not really have names for months, or years as in the human fashion; they do not normally use any unit of time measurement other than the day and the year, or multiples or fractions of days or years.

Thri-kreen priests and druids have to pay a little more attention to time, because of their spells, so often learn human con-



ventions, such as hours, minutes, seconds, weeks, and months. Chakak, with their psionic abilities, are also often concerned with time, so learn the different units as well. For others, learning time measurement is simply a matter of chance.

The Chatkcha Ceremony

As a sign of maturity, a thri-kreen must go through the chatkcha ceremony. For most thri-kreen, this occurs soon after the fourth birthday; for those thri-kreen who will have a profession (warrior, priest, or chakati, it happens after the sixth birthday.

The chatkcha ceremony occurs only after the thri-kreen begins producing those enzymes used as venom. Soon after beginning to produce venom, the thri-kreen usually starts making his or her first crystalline chatkcha. The thri-kreen chews a certain herb *(fejik,* or *zik-thok)* which when mixed with the venom, can be used as a catalyst to turn normal sand into a crystalline substance that is hard without being brittle. The method for making the crystal *(dasl),* and for shaping the chatkcha, is part of racial memory, triggered when the poison glands start working. Chatkcha construction is automatic knowledge for a thri-kreen who has started producing venom.

Once the thri-been has completed at least one chatkcha, he or she is ready for the chatkcha ceremony. The ceremony takes place at a time of the clutchleader's choosing, and is generally timed so that several thri-kreen can go through it at the same time. The ceremony is relatively simple: the thri-kreen going through the ceremony must show their chatkcha to the clutchleaders of the pack. The clutchleaders examine them carefully to see how well they are made, and if the thri-kreen shows exceptional skill or artistry. Compliments are given to those thri-kreen who have produced exceptional chatkcha.

They must first throw their chatkcha at a target and hit it successfully. Then each thri-kreen must throw a chatkcha so that it does not hit anything, but returns to the point from which it was thrown. The thri-kreen has one chance with each throw; if either misses, the thri-kreen must try again later. Once these tests have been successfully completed, the thri-kreen is almost done; the thri-kreen now announces his or her name to the clutch and pack. This can be the name the thri-kreen has carried through childhood, or it can be one chosen to reflect the thri-kreen's goals or profession. To complete the chatkcha ceremony, the thri-kreen must use the chatkcha during a hunt or in battle, and draw blood with it. Once this has been done, the thri-kreen is considered an adult.

The Early Ceremony

It is possible, though rare, for a thri-kreen, usually a warrior, to go through the chatkcha ceremony early. Since the thti-kreen cannot yet produce venom, a dasl chatkcha cannot be made. A chatkcha made of other materials cannot be used in the ceremony. The early petitioner must obtain a dasl chatkcha for the ceremony; often, this is a chatkcha that has been inherited, especially for a thri-kreen who is considered a "reincarnation;" see "Gender Relations and Raising the Young." It is also known for an adult pack member to give a chatkcha to the petitioner for the ceremony; usually this is done by the petitioner's mentor in the profession. The petitioner goes through the exact same ceremony as other thri-kreen.

Gender Relations and Raising the Young

Male and female thri-kreen are treated exactly the same in thri-kreen society, except when a female is carrying eggs, at which time she is protected by the entire clutch. The duties of the tribe-hunting, food preparation, caring for the young, making weapons, and so forth-are equally divided between male and female thri-kreen; neither gender is especially better at any task than the other gender.

Thri-kreen courtship reflects this; it can be initiated by the male or the female, and rejected by either party. Courtship begins when a thri-kreen gives a clutchmate a small gift. Both parties give such gifts over the next few weeks, and the thri-kreen spend hours together, hunting together, making weapons together, and talking. If they decide they enjoy one another's company enough, they declare themselves mated and announce their decision to the clutch. When they choose a mate, thri-kreen mate for life. For the actual act of mating, thri-kreen prefer privacy, and a couple wanders off together into the desert for a few hours, or constructs a special burrow for the purpose. The



pack does not wait for such things, and a thri-kreen couple might have to scramble to catch up if the pack has moved on. This does make mating a little dangerous, for Athas is not a safe place for two lone thri-kreen.

When the female becomes heavy with eggs, her hunting and other duties are restricted. The condition lasts only about 15 days (the 15 days immediately preceding the laying of the eggs). When the eggs are laid, they are often buried in the sand and left until they hatch. Jeral thri-kreen almost always return to the hatching ground at about the time of hatching, but To'ksa often abandon their young completely, allowing them to raise themselves. Jeral sometimes carry the eggs with them, on a sledge or travois, until they hatch. Young might be transported in the same way until old enough and fast enough to keep up with the adults.

If the young are raised with the clutch, which happens far more often among Jeral than among To'ksa, the whole clutch cares for them and teaches them, with duties split equally between the genders. Thri-kreen parents usually take little interest in their own children, beyond the interest they show in any young thri-kreen. Quite often, one or both parents die before the eggs hatch, anyway. The clutch and pack structures take the place of the family relationships found among non-kreen. It is highly unusual to find a thri-kreen who talks about her mother, or one that refers to his daughter. Thri-kreen are simply clutchmates or packmates, and rarely offspring or progenitors, to other thri-kreen.

Hunt or Raid

Thri-kreen packs fall into two broad categories: hunting packs and raiding packs. Thri-kreen are hatched to hunt, and most packs of thri-kreen remain hunters. They roam the desert searching for fresh quarry. When they are not hunting, they are usually making weapons or practicing hunting skills. Unlike most non-kreen hunter clans, thri-kreen do not burden themselves with shelter, and only rarely with other possessions. They take with them only what they can carry, plus sometimes a few items on a travois or sledge. Thri-kreen usually do not hunt other intelligent beings unless they have turned to raiding as a means of supporting themselves.

When thri-kreen start preying upon other intelligent races, they cross the thin line between hunting and raiding. In a broad sense, raiding is still hunting the prey and the tactics are simply different. Raiding thri-kreen are almost always more interested in food than in goods. They eat or take away all meat (including living beings), but will seldom take anything that is not of immediate use to them.

Jeral vs. To'ksa: Raiding

Even in the most desperate of conditions, Jeral seldom turn to raiding, and those who do stay with it only as long as truly needed before returning to the hunt. They have found that raiding brings the thri-kreen into conflict with intelligent foes, often making for a hunt more dangerous and less productive. The Jeral, less aggressive than the To'ksa, prefer to avoid the life of the raider.

To'ksa thri-kreen more easily fall to the lure of becoming raiders than Jeral. To'ksa might commit an occasional raid if hunting has not been as good as usual, and will turn to full-time raiding much more quickly than Jeral. Once they have become raiders, To'ksa seldom return to being just hunters. They seem to like the thrill of the raid, of fighting against intelligent prey. Also, once they have eaten elf meat, it is difficult for To'ksa to forget the taste, perhaps because of their antennae, which are more developed than those of Jeral; the craving for more often drives To'ksa to remain raiders. Even To'ksa pack who stop raiding sometimes enjoy capturing and eating an elf or two.

Treatment of Enemies

Thri-kreen treatment of enemies is legendary; like other legends, however, this one contains as much fiction as fact. Thri-kreen can be brutal enemies; they are persistent and dangerous, and their methods can seem cruel. However, thri-kreen seldom initiate violence from malice, but instead fight to survive.

Thri-kreen tend to seek vengeance against those who harm their clutch or pack Those who cause harm to a thri-kreen pack without destroying it risk the pack's undying enmity. Since pack members are almost never all together, this can cause problems even if all the thri-kreen are thought to be eliminated. The



remaining pack members might declare a *gythtik,* the blood hunt, against the culprits, tracking them for hours or days, and attacking with stealth if they judge a frontal assault might fail.

A single thri-kreen might follow those who injured it for weeks, waiting for someone to slip off alone, then attacking. Thri-kreen packs have been known to carry a grudge for years, passing the details of the attack to the young, so they might continue the blood hunt after all of the adults have passed on.

Thri-kreen also fight to preserve prey and water. Someone who hunts in thri-kreen lands, especially when prey is scarce, puts his or her life at risk. Someone who poisons or otherwise harms a water supply earns the hatred of the thri-kreen in the area; while they might not need much water, their prey does. Even the most vile and evil thri-kreen would not poison a water supply; tikchak, the hunt mentality, is just too strong.

Thri-kreen hunters rarely take prisoners, and seldom show mercy those who try to surrender after attacking them. While hunters seldom eat the bodies of other sapients, they tend to loot fallen attackers, taking food, water, weapons, and anything else that catches their eyes. They are more likely to take unusual items than are raiders who are just after food.

Raiding thri-kreen are a different matter, and there are stories of torture and worse. Thri-kreen raiders have been known to take some prisoners, keeping them alive until they were needed to feed the tribe. The tales of survivors of capture—watching while the thri-kreen feasted on family and friends, sometimes without even killing the victims first —can certainly be considered torture. This sort of thing happens only among raider packs, and more specifically, among To'ksa raider pack. Such practices are unusual.

There is one confirmed story of a thri-kreen pack that even went so far as to employ a tribal inquisitor who tortured humans and other non-kreen (see the description of the Riik-kik in the next chapter). This severe aberration led to their eradication at the hands of other thri-kreen pack.



Travel and Camps

Thri-kreen travel almost constantly, spending most of their time hunting or traveling to the next hunting ground. They carry most of their weapons and other equipment in their hands or in small pack, but they occasionally use sledges and travois.

Thri-kreen camps are simple affairs, barely more than a laying down of carried items for a few hours in the night. However, thri-kreen sometimes camp for days at a time, such as during particularly bad weather, or when they are waiting for females to lay eggs, or when they have killed something especially large that will feed them for many days (if they can fight off the scavengers). Thri-kreen seldom build shelters of any type, but sometimes dig small, lightless burrows if they have the time and the need, and the ground is suitable.

Jalath'gak

Some thri-kreen use a huge insect, the jalath'gak, as a beast of burden. Jalath'gak is a thri-kreen word, and the insect is used almost exclusively by thri-kreen.

The jalath'gak is a winged insect of great size, about 13 feet long when adult, with a wingspread of 20 feet. Some packs of thri-kreen capture the insects and use them to pull heavy loads during migration. They communicate with the creatures in a basic fashion with pheromones, or in a more complete way by using psionics. To better accommodate a sledge or travois, the jalath'gak's abdomen can be cut off; without it, the insect lives only for about a day and a half, but functions normally during that time. A jalath'gak cannot pull or carry anything when it flies, so is harnessed to walk. Moving at only half the speed of a thri-kreen, a jalath'gak pulls about 3,000 pounds on a sledge.

In desperate situations, thri-kreen handlers can also cut the abdomens off their jalath'gak to supplement dwindling supplies of food. Though the loss of the abdomen eventually kills the jalath'gak, a single harvested abdomen yields 16 gallons of water. Thri-kreen (and particularly hardy humanoid non-kreen) can ingest the blood/nectar plasma contained in the abdomen; a single abdomen generally contains enough sustenence for 32 common meals.

Death

When a thri-kreen (especially a packleader or other clutch-leader) dies, other thri-kreen issue a whining wail, to mourn the passing of their clutchmate. Some non-kreen jokingly refer to this as "thri-keening;" those thri-kreen who understand the pun are not amused. No other death rites are consistently observed, though thri-kreen often try to carry off their dead to a circular grave site. Many of these sites exist throughout the Tyr Region, though they all emulate "the" Circle, Dej, in the Hinterlands.

Dej is a huge, smooth, perfectly round bowl in the earth, 500 feet deep at the center, but almost filled with sand and thri-kreen exoskeletons accumulated over the centuries. The exact location is a closely guarded racial secret; it is even unknown to most thri-kreen, until a happenstance visit to it triggers racial memories of its centuries of service.

In Dej, or any of the lesser grave circles, thri-kreen bodies are lined up so their heads face the setting sun, preferably near the bodies of other members of the same clutch and pack. Leaders, though, are given special treatment and taken to the center of the circle. As mentioned, the grave circles often serve as egg-laying grounds as well.

Thri-kreen hatched from eggs laid in grave circles are believed to sometimes absorb the essence of departed thri-kreen. Though a thri-kreen normally has to fight for dominance order, those deemed reincarnations are given special status. To determine if a reincarnation has taken place, three items are placed in front of a youth; if the youth, in three separate and similar tests, pick items that once belonged to the same deceased thri-kreen, the youth is deemed a reincarnation. This seldom happens in the smaller circles away from Drej, because the thri-kreen of the Tyr Region do not usually carry around the items that belonged to generations of long-dead thri-kreen. Dej has storage facilities for such things, and thri-kreen to watch over the place.

Customs and Practices

This section details the customs and practices of the thri-kreen's day-to-day life. The things mentioned here are not biologically ingrained or major trends, like those already mentioned, but are still important to the thri-kreen.

Trade

Thri-kreen are efficient traders. When not hunting, they sometimes meet with other desert tribes to trade for food, water, and other vital substances. Thri-kreen also trade artwork, weapons, common goods, and sometimes the unusual items they find during their wanderings.

Thri-kreen apply tikchak to trade. They consider each transaction an honorable contest between hunter (buyer) and prey (seller). Trading is ritualistic. Even determining who is buyer and who is seller takes some time.

Thri-kreen Buyer/Hunter: "I want the metal dagger you carry. I am Ka'krin of the Grij-tek. I am third in clutch of Gok'ess. seventh in clutch of Kon•zet, and I am first in clutch of four. I am tembo-slayer and defended my pack against gith. The dagger."

Human Seller/Prey: "This is a fine dagger, sharp enough to kill many enemies. It is made with iron from Tyr, and was made by a mul weaponsmith named Dassin. I have had it since it was made, 30 days ago. I am Hintol, trader for House Vordon, out of Tyr. I have survived two raids by elves, and I have traveled from Tyr to Draj twice."

Since thri-kreen trade for other goods rather than selling for money, the difference between buyer and seller depends on who initiates the trade. Among thri-kreen, the individual who starts the trade is the hunter, and they generally assume that this is so for other races as well.

Bargaining is something of an art for the thri-kreen, as the hunter stalks the prey, seeking to cut off escape routes such as higher prices, and the prey seeks to escape the traps and ambushes laid by the hunter, to increase the perceived value of the goods being traded. However, no thri-kreen ever really asks another buy anything, for that is like offering oneself as prey.

Anyone who approaches a thri-kreen to begin a trade is believed to want something, and is therefore the buyer/hunter. A thri-kreen who has something to sell look for another item he or she wants, and tries to initiate the trade as the buyer, keeping his or her own trade goods hidden until they are needed in negotiations. Similarly, a thri-kreen approached by a potential buyer often quickly tries to find something desirable on the person approaching, and will try to pre-empt the initiation of trade in order to become the buyer. The buyer/hunter is the first to name a desired item held by the other trader.

For example, suppose Hakka walk toward Jaza; Jaza is trying to sell a small statuette she carved, of a hatori, but of course wants to appear to be a buyer (hunter) instead of a seller (prey). Hakka walks forward purposefully, as if he wants to buy something; unless Jaza acts quickly, she will become prey. Jaza quickly looks over Hakka, and notices he is carrying a finely made gythka. As Hakka gets near enough to speak, he opens his mouth; Jaza quickly blurts out "I would have that fine gythka you carry." She has beaten Hakka in the race to initiate the trade; thus, she is the hunter.

On the other hand, a trader unwise in the ways of thri-kreen might approach a thri-kreen and start with: "I have a fine piece of cloth I think you might like." The thri-kreen, not wanting to become prey so easily, interjects before the human can name his price: "I want the cloth you carry." The thri-kreen becomes the hunter, if the human had named his price first (as in "I will trade this for one chatkcha."), he would have become the hunter, the thri-kreen the prey.

The Trading Game

When thri-kreen trade, whether with other thri-kreen or with others, the DM can treat it as a combat encounter, with surprise rolls and initiative, to determine who is the hunter and who is the prey. A surprised individual is the prey (seller); someone who surprises, or who wins initiative, is the hunter.

The bargaining proficiency affects surprise in trading like the hunting proficiency is used in hunting.

Important: Only thri-kreen and those who have dealt with them before know about this aspect of trade with thri-kreen, so only they have a chance to surprise a thri-kreen trader. One unused to thri-kreen trading suffers a +2 penalty to initiative; the thri-kreen might win initiative automatically against a trader who does not know to be quick.

Once the roles of hunter and prey have been established, trading proceeds, there is no dishonor in being prey, and it is not



really considered a failure.

- The hunter, once established, begins the transaction by listing the clutches to which he or she belongs, and the place in the dominance order held in each clutch (the thri-kreen's lineage).
- The hunter then lists a few personal achievements, such as hunting and combat victories, or, if applicable, accomplishments as priest or chakak.
- Then the hunter again names the item he or she wants.

After the hunter finishes this introduction, the seller begins.

- First, the item is described, including who made it or where it came from, as well as its fine points and history.
- The seller is then expected to recount his or her own lineage or affiliations, and a few personal achievements. (A seller who stops after describing the item might have difficulty getting a response from a thri-kreen buyer, until lineage and achievements are mentioned. A seller who does not use "proper" forms is ignored by a thri-kreen buyer.)

After the initial statements, the buyer makes an offer, and the seller responds with a counter-offer. They bargain, occasionally mentioning their other accomplishments or talking about the trade goods, until they reach an agreement. Bargaining is a contest of wills and of personal honor; lying is considered wrong, and will cause a thri-kreen to end a trade immediately. The deal is done when both sides are satisfied. Thri-kreen believe cheating is wrong; a buyer should not feel pride for cheating a seller, and a seller who allows a buyer to pay too much should feel sullied. Remember that thri-kreen do not use money; all their trade is accomplished through barter.

Art and Sculpture

Thri-kreen engage in several types of artistic practices; these include body painting (colored clay on chitin, in either symbols or designs), sand painting (arranging colored sand in interesting, if temporary, patterns), and carving in stone, bone, and wood.

Thri-kreen carve large reliefs (almost always thri-kreen faces) and animals into stone. A thri-kreen carver seldom takes a large work on the trail, more often carving an image in large rock, then leaving it when the pack moves on. It might take a thri-kreen years to complete a particularly large work because he or she visits the area of the carving for only a few days out of the year. Smaller carvings bone, wood, or small stones are carried along and often traded. Thri-kreen use relatively advanced techniques. While they generally avoid great amounts of fine detail, their carvings often look quite lifelike.

Clothing and Decoration

Thri-kreen are not materialistic people, and pay little attention to wealth for the sake of wealth. They do, however, keep possessions that have a utilitarian or decorative value. This includes various forms of clothing, as well as harnesses and jewelry.

While thri-kreen generally do not need clothing (except for Jeral, sometimes, to keep sand and grit from getting into the breathing holes on the sides of their thoraxes), they sometimes wear it. The harness, used to carry weapons and other possessions, is the most common form of thri-kreen "clothing." It is usually made of leather, a typical harness circles the thri-kreen's thorax in two places, and has straps sort of like suspenders connecting the two "belts" and holding the whole in place. Scarves and sashes are common, with bright colors particularly favored for special occasions. Shirts, cloaks, and robes are also fairly common, especially among priests and chakak. Leg and arm wrappings, bands, and bracelets are also common.

Some thri-kreen also attach rings to their mandibles, or to other places on their bodies. This requires a skilled chitinworker, who can also create etched and colored decorations directly on a thri-kreen's chitin; such chitinworkers can also direct the shaping of new chitin that grows to cover a wound.

Recreation

Though it might seem odd for creatures so devoted to hunting and survival, thri-kreen indulge in several forms of recreation. Most of these are related to practicing for combat or for hunting.

Thri-kreen games include tag, stalking, and tracking. Their sports include throwing (stones for the young, gythka and chatkcha for older thri-kreen), racing, and gythka sparring. Thri-kreen also indulge in a type of dancing, called *tik-dul* (literally,

"hunt-move"); in this dance, a thri-kreen slowly goes through the motions of stalking, readying for leaping, throwing, stabbing, clawing, and biting. Non-kreen find the tik-dul rather beautiful in a sort of macabre way; it most often reminds them of human martial arts crossed with the movements of a spider spinning a web and eating prey.

Thri-kreen also use music, at least percussive rhythms, as entertainment, though it is more for personal appreciation than for other thri-kreen. The thri-kreen play rhythms mostly at night, with sticks and rocks and weapons; on the trail, the thri-kreen can use their own bodies to produce rhythm. On rare occasions, thri-kreen perform the tik-dul with percussion backing, and at times they engage in a clicking chant to accompany the rhythm. Non-kreen find the combination quite eerie.

Thri-kreen are not really suited for either singing or poetry, as the non-kreen understand them, and do not engage in either of these practices.

Without the Clutch

Sometimes, a thri-kreen leaves the clutch. This can happen for various reasons; perhaps the rest of the clutch is killed in battle, or maybe the thri-kreen has gone off to find better hunting grounds. Or perhaps the thri-kreen simply has wanderlust that encourages a journey beyond the lands normally traversed by the clutch. Whatever the reason, a thri-kreen sometimes goes off alone, in effect becoming a "clutch of one."

However, a thri-kreen cannot go long without a clutch of some kind; the thri-kreen is biologically impelled to be part of a group. Thus, lone thri-kreen easily accept members of other races as people, packmates, and even clutchmates, often based on something as simple as facing danger together. It is also important for a thri-kreen to know his or her place, leading to an establishment, at least in the thri-kreen's mind, of a dominance order within the group.

Adventuring

Thri-kreen, at least those with character classes, are often attracted to the adventuring life. They enjoy the variety of challenges faced by such self-professed adventurers, and the lifestyle of the adventurer allows the thri-kreen to pursue a wide variety of goals, from seeking all knowledge to trying to hunt and kill one specimen of every species on Athas.

In an adventuring group, a thri-kreen can be a valuable ally—once a dominance order has been established. A thri-kreen always attempts to defend companions, even if they have not been declared clutchmates yet. The thri-kreen never leaves a living companion behind, unless absolutely prevented from it. No matter what the alignment of a thri-kreen, the clutch is of paramount importance, and concern for the clutch overrides all other concerns. The thri-kreen can seem good and docile to group members (clutchmates), but can turn into a vicious killing machine against someone from outside the group.

In less formal groups, a thri-kreen often becomes leader, simply because he or she is the most aggressive and can get the others to listen—not necessarily because the thri-kreen is the best equipped to lead the clutch through various situations. Indeed, a thri-kreen is severely handicapped in dealing with non- kreen cultures, at least until the thri-kreen has traveled enough to have experience with the other cultures. A thri-kreen who becomes clutchleader of an adventuring group quickly learns to recognize and call upon the skills of clutchmates.

In the Cities

Thri-kreen are not common in cities, because of tikchak and because they possess only a dim understanding of human society. Nevertheless, they are sometimes taken as slaves. In this case, they serve as laborers or farmers, but never as soldiers: They are known to turn on their masters, and any human who trusts an enslaved thri-kreen with a weapon is a fool.

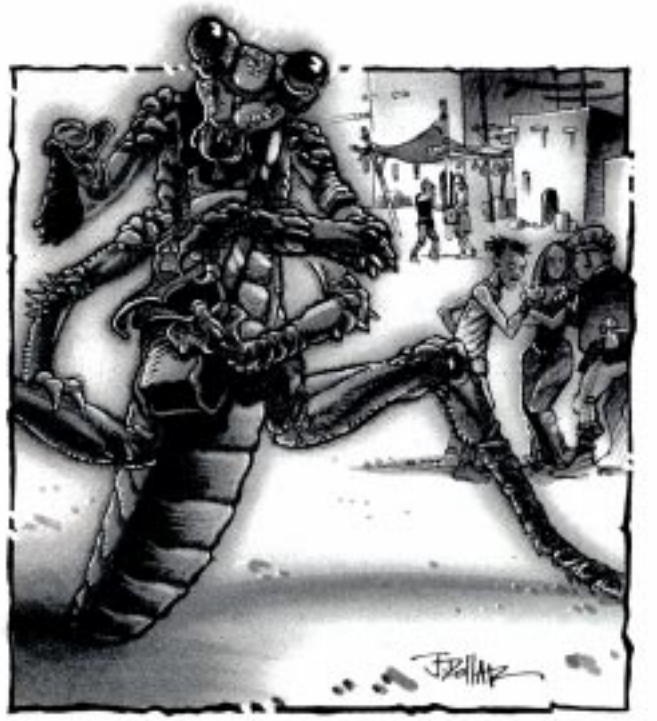
Occasionally, a thri-kreen comes into a city of his or her own free will, such as after the destruction of the thri-kreen's pack. A thri-kreen who goes to live in a city often voluntarily becomes a gladiator, almost always a free gladiator. This allows the thri-kreen to fight for his or her own reasons, rather than strictly for the pleasure of someone else. Thri-kreen gladiators learn unusual combat skills that they might later take back to help their clutch and pack, if such still exist Arena fighting emulates



hunting fairly closely, allowing the thri-kreen to gain fame and goods for doing something that comes naturally. Nobles are usually quite pleased to add a thri-kreen gladiator, even a free one, to the stables.

Some thri-kreen also put their formidable combat skills to use in the employ of templars. Though they may not last long in such positions—templars are rarely good clutchmates, so the thri-kreen often wants to leave them after a relatively short time—they are quite good at intimidating or punishing the enemies of templars, or anyone else for that matter. These rare thri-kreen "assassins" are universally feared and hated.

Thri-kreen also find it relatively easy to get jobs as guards and bouncers. What non-kreen is going to start a fight in a tavern when the bouncer is a thri-kreen? The intimidation factor of a thri-kreen is invaluable to many people. Thri-kreen are also adept at catching vermin in warehouses or elsewhere. Because they never sleep, they make excellent bodyguards and night guards. All the thri-kreen asks in return is enough food and water, a place to hunt occasionally, and some companionship.



How the Cities Treat Thri-Kreen

• *Raam:* Thri-kreen are most common in the city of Raam, where they make up about 4% of the population: more than 1,500 thri-kreen. Raam has more nonhumans than humans. While humans are still in charge, many nonhumans reach prominence. In Raam, thri-kreen are priests, merchants, artisans, servants and laborers, and there are many clutches.

The high population of elves in the city (about 15% of the overall population, or around 6,000) is a mixed blessing; elves are prejudiced against thri-kreen, but if the thri-kreen need a tasty snack, they just wait around an alley long enough. Of course, the law in Raam does frown on thri-kreen eating elves, but kreen will be kreen (see Chapter Five, "Special Packs" for more details.)

• *Urik:* In Urik, thri-kreen make up about 3% of the population, nearly 1,000 live in that city. The strong laws in Urik also keeps the elven population low, and thri-kreen actually outnumber the elves there. The gate guards have an unusual way of handling thri-kreen, which is detailed in Chapter Five (see "Thri-Kreen of Urik" under "Special Packs").

• *Gulg:* Perhaps 2% of that Gulg's rather small population is thri-kreen; the elves barely outnumber them. It is surprising there are not more, considering that Gulg, as a city, has tikchak, but Gulg is also one of the more traditional human cities of the region. While the efficiency of thri-kreen tikchak is admired, the thri-kreen themselves are considered less than human, almost as intelligent beasts. Gulg exports livestock to many places, including the rather close city of Nibenay, which may also explain the relative absence of thri-kreen. Gulg is also a forest city, not the best environment for the desert-adapted thri-kreen.

• *Tyr and Balic:* Both of these cities have small thri-kreen communities, and neither of them is especially friendly or unfriendly to thri-kreen. Balic exports livestock, so number of thri-kreen raiders stay mostly outside the city, preying on livestock farms and caravans. In Tyr, most thri-kreen are gladiators, but with the death of the Sorcerer-King, traditional kreen are likely to appear in greater numbers.

• *Nibenay:* Thri-kreen are rare in Nibenay. They are admitted freely and are treated respectfully, but are regarded with some apprehension. This stems simply from their somewhat unpredictable nature and well-known dietary habits. For their part, thri-kreen usually stay outside the city, where the hunting is better, and where thri-kreen raiders can more easily attack the occasional livestock caravans from Gulg.

• *Draj:* Thri-kreen are quite rare in Draj. Like Nibenay, Draj imports livestock, and its caravan routes are vulnerable to thri-kreen raids. Actually, the people of Draj don't much like thri-kreen, who are perceived as making their lives more difficult.

Language and Communication

Thri-kreen have their own language, which is unrelated to non-kreen languages (though the halfling language does have a few words similar to thri-kreen words, or vice versa). The thri-kreen language has its own patterns and rules.

Grammar

While sentence structure is basically the same as for non-kreen languages (subject and verb), there are minor differences. Thri-kreen use all the same parts of speech as non-kreen, except for articles ("a," "an," and "the"). They tend to leave such words out when speaking to non-kreen, and sometimes misuse them. For example, a thri-kreen might say "look at a running elf," instead of "look at the running elf."

Thri-kreen have a gender-neutral pronoun (ker), as well as male and female pronouns. They do not have different pronouns (such as "he" and "him") for nominative and subjective cases. Thri-kreen have no "shorthand" for possession, as in non-kreen languages, so instead of sating "that is Req's chatkcha," they are more inclined to say "that chatkcha belongs to Req." As with other differences, these cause numerous translation and learning problems for the thri-kreen.

Thri-kreen have no plurals, so they often refer to numbers when possible (as in "I saw crodlu many, mile two, east."). "Thri-kreen" is both singular and plural, as are "chatkcha," "gythka," and every other noun in the thri-kreen language. Thri-kreen do use some group nouns, such as *g'*, which means family and implies a plural.

Thri-kreen often have trouble adapting to using the plural forms of non-kreen languages, and tend to misuse them both ways ("rocks" when the thri-kreen means one rock, or "templar" when the thri-kreen means to warn the companions of many templars). Fortunately for communication, thri-kreen still refer to the numbers of the things about which he or she talks.

Word Structure

Thri-kreen words are often composite words, made by putting two other words together. For example, "g"' means "blood," and is often used to mean "of the same blood" or "family;" "tok" means "egg;" and "*mm* a'ak" means "close companion," or "one who fights at one's side." Thus, "g'tokmma'ak" means "clutch-mate," or more literally, "same-egg-family close-companion." Thri-kreen sometimes try to carry this practice over to non-kreen languages, combining words to make new ones, when shorter words already exist (as in "longrock" for "wall").

Thri-kreen often use the same word for a verb form and for the person who performs the action described by the verb. For example, "ka" means both "to seek" and "seeker."

Slang

Thri-kreen do have slang and idioms in their language. Some are related to their biology, such as saying someone was "hatched from a putrid egg" or referring to someone naive as a " larva." Other incidences of slang are related to thri-kreen beliefs, such as "clutch-breaker" being a vile insult (too vile to be used, really) or threatening to send somebody "to the Circle" being a threat to end their life. If directly translated, these idioms seldom make sense to non-kreen, and thri-kreen often have trouble making sense of non-kreen idioms, such as "you're pulling my leg."

Language and Racial Memory

The thri-kreen language, because it is learned mostly through racial memory is a mostly static language that changes little from year to year or century to century. Occasionally, new words



are introduced. It might take generations before these become a widespread part of the racial memory, so in the meantime these must be taught by adult thri-kreen to the children.

Language of the North

Tohr-kreen of the north speak their own language, which is closely related to the thri-kreen language of the Tyr Region. For example, "kek" is the thri-kreen word for "raiding pack," while "kulak" is the tohr-kreen word for any type of pack. The words are similar enough to show a common root, but different enough to create communication problems.

Because of all these differences, and since thri-kreen is a simpler language than most other non-kreen languages, thri-kreen prefer that members of other races learn to speak the kreen language, rather than the thri-kreen learning what is to them a needlessly complicated language. However, there are other problems for humans trying to learn thri-kreen, including non-verbal forms of communication used by thti-kreen, and the differences in structure of the thri-kreen vocalizing equipment.

Sounds

Thri-kreen voices all sound similar to non-kreen: rasping and dry. Generally, only thri-kreen can tell the difference between thri-kreen voices, because they are used to listening for the subtleties of the thri-kreen voice. Thri-kreen do not laugh naturally, but can learn to imitate the sound if they spend time among the non-kreen; a thri-kreen "laugh" is a brittle, staccato sound, something like a series of glass hitting glass. A thri-kreen gasp (as in pain) contains a series of quick clicks, in addition to an intake of breath.

The structure of the thri-kreen mouth prevents them from make all the sounds that humans and other non-kreen can. Thri-kreen can, however, make other sounds difficult or impossible for humans to reproduce, and use a few sounds or other vocalizations uncommon among the non-kreen races.

Thri-kreen do not have lips, so cannot duplicate sounds that require lips, like *p, b, f, v,* and *m.* They can duplicate such sounds somewhat, like using a pop (•) in place of *p* or *b,* or humming *(mm)* to make an *m* sound, or using the *th* or *s* sounds to approximate *f* and *v.* Less accomplished thri-kreen simply substitute simple sounds like *k* or *d* for the impossible sounds.

Thri-kreen words do not contain sounds that require lips; those sounds are considered useless, and thri-kreen sometimes consider non-kreen who use them extensively to be rather rude (both the pop and the grind have this implication in thri-kreen, note these sounds in the word for "clutchbreaker", *g'tokxhko•).* For example, a human named Povim would be considered unfriendly, because his name cannot be pronounced by thri-kreen; a close approximation would be •othi *mm.*

As indicated, thri-kreen can also make several sounds impossible or unusual for humans. These include the *click,* the *pop,* the *grind,* the *hum,* and the *glottal stop.*

Click: The click (represented by "qh") is made by clicking the mandibles together; non-kreen can attempt to duplicate the sound by clapping, snapping fingers, closing the mouth quickly so the teeth hit together, hitting two stones together, or even by using the psionic power of create sound. More lazy non-kreen use the *ch* to approximate. Thri-kreen appreciate the efforts, but the difference is obvious, except for psionic duplication. The click is not terribly common in the thri-kreen language.

Pop: The pop (represented by "•") is made by the thri-kreen by popping the tongue against either side of the jaw. Again, the sound is impossible for humans to accurately reproduce, though the tongue click or pop (made by drawing the tongue up against the edge of the hard palate, where the *t* sound is made, then releasing the tongue to click against the bottom of the mouth) comes close. A non-kreen might also try to duplicate the sound by flicking a finger against the throat. Again, the difference is obvious, but the thri-kreen appreciate the effort. The pop is relatively common in the thri-kreen language.

Grind: The grind (represented by "xh") is an audible blast of air from the lungs, accompanied by a gnashing (but not clicking of the jaws and mandible parts. A non-kreen can growl to achieve a relatively close duplication. The grind is rare in the thri-kreen language, and is used primarily for insults and derogatory terms.

Hum: The hum (represented by *"mm") is a* buzzing sort of hum, which can be best approximated by a human's open-mouthed hum, with a light "Z" sound made at the same time. Most humans compromise by using the *m* sound. The hum is rare in the thri-kreen language.

Glottal Stop: The glottal stop is one of the more common sounds of the thri-kreen language (represented by an apostrophe). This sound is simply a brief stop in sound, and is easily duplicated by humans, if they care to try (many do not). For example, the name Ka'cha is not pronounced "KahCHAH;" instead, it is pronounced "Kah-(stop)-CHAH." The glottal stop is more apparent in words where two consonants are together, when they would not be normally in a human word. A human trying to pronounce "kcha" comes close to making a glottal stop, a sort of nonvocal pause, between the *k* and *ch* sounds, because the sounds do not flow into one another. Non-kreen might ignore glottal stops or replace them with slower and less elegant sounds, like "uh" or "ah."

Non-Verbal Communication

Another factor that makes it difficult for thri-kreen to communicate with non-kreen is the non-verbal component of thri-kreen speech. Thri-kreen sometimes use pheromones to convey emotions; since their voices do not carry emotional range well, this is rather important. Unfortunately, non-kreen cannot detect the thri-kreen pheromones (unless they use a psionic power such as heightened senses; even then, it takes practice to correctly interpret the sometimes subtle variances in the pheromone discharges).

Sign Language: Thri-kreen also use movements of antennae, mandibles, and sometimes hands, to indicate certain words or phrases. For example, in To'ksa, crossed antennae indicate a negative, while antennae spread apart indicates a positive, and waving antennae indicates confusion, similar to a shrug in a human. In Jeral, whose antennae are quite small, such signals are even more subtle, usually indicated just by the direction in which the antennae point (this is about as subtle as a human or elf raising an eyebrow, or bringing them together). A thri-kreen "smiles" to indicate happiness or humor by bending the antennae forward and closing the mandibles.

Volume: Thri-kreen also use volume to indicate certain types of emotion. Soft volumes generally indicate more passionate emotions, such as admiration, awe, friendship, love, or tokchak. High volumes indicate excitement, from anger to happiness. Pheromones accompany the volume changes to indicate exactly which emotion is meant A soft-spoken thri-kreen phrase might be inaudible against a gentle breeze, and the thri-kreen will be reluctant to change the meaning of the words by "speaking up." At the opposite extreme, an excited thri-kreen might "shout" every word. Those who deal frequently with thri-kreen come to accept these nuances of speech, which are largely unalterable for the thri-kreen.

Names

Thri-kreen are given names when very young; these are usually simple names, related to something the young thri-kreen sees, or something the larva is observed doing. When the thri-kreen reaches adulthood, at the end of the chatkcha ceremony, he or she takes a new name that reflects goals or some other aspect of the life path to be pursued. There is no difference between male and female names; any name that can be used for a female thri-kreen can also be used for a male, and vice versa. Listed are several thri-kreen names and their translations.

Cha'ka	knowledge seeker; synonym for ka'cha
Chuka-tet	seeker of detailed information, who also enlightens
Drasna	she-who-sleeps-at-night; a thri-kreen name for a human woman
Hakka	lost seeker, seeker who never finds, wanderer
Ka'cha	seeker of knowledge
Ka'tho	seeker of experience; thrillseeker
Klik-chaka'da	teacher of mindpower and reverence; one who teaches psionics and the way of priests
Lakta-cho	finder and returner of lost knowledge



Writing

Thri-kreen in the Tyr Region generally do not write in their own language, though a few earn to use human lettering. Non-kreen letters are insufficient to express the sounds of the thri-kreen language.

In the North, however, tohr-kreen and thri-kreen use a form of lettering. The tohr-kreen writing is syllabic; in other words, each symbol stands for a certain syllable. Though it has more than 100 basic symbols, this writing system, used for the composite language of the thri-kreen, can compress a lot of information into a comparatively small space.

To most non-kreen, written kreen looks like a series of random slash marks. A thri-kreen who sees written kreen is instinctively able to read it, due to racial memory, if a successful Intelligence check is made. The writing can be learned formally by studying with a mentor, or by practicing with accessing racial memory. In either case, the thri-kreen must spend a proficiency slot to learn how to write the kreen syllabary (see "Proficiencies" in Chapter Three).

Equipment

Though most thri-kreen can craft weapons, they also make and use a variety of tools and other equipment. Small, simple tools are used for creating other items, these include scrapers, chisels, hammers, and so forth. Most are stone, shaped more-or-less like equivalent human tools. Thri-kreen do not create tools of dasl.

The smallest tools are used to craft weapons, to decorate chitin, to sculpt or carve pieces of artwork, and for a variety of other common tasks. These tools are much like their non-kreen counterparts and deserve little comment, except possibly for the small tools use to etch chitin. These small, sharp needles and chisels are of bone or stone (or rarely metal). They are used to scrape lines in the chitin; pigments are then often worked into the etched lines to make the colors relatively permanent.

Thri-kreen also use a few larger items, especially for travel. Chief among them is the travois, two long poles joined as a "V", with a skin or other flexible material stretched between them. A harness is attached to the apex, and goods are loaded on the flexible body of the travois. A thri-kreen (or two, for heavy loads) puts on the harness and pulls the travois. Thri-kreen rotate pulling duty so avoid exhausting one clutchmate.

Another piece of equipment is the sledge, built much like a travois, but with a solid and inflexible surface (such as a greater hatori scale) between two runners. The solid sledge is used to transport more fragile materials, such as thri-kreen eggs. Harnesses are arranged as for the travois.

Chapter 5: Pack and Nation

Unlike the tohr-kreen, thri-kreen have no true nations. *Instead, there are numerous packs of nomads. The packs occasionally trade, but seldom cooperate beyond that. The great majority of thri-kreen packs are hunting groups, but a* few *have fallen to raiding, and are little better than carrion-eaters. Due to the influence* of *the southern mammals, a few unusual packs show elements of mammal government. I also take pride in having helped expand the Kiltektet, which is leading some* of *the southern kreen to learning and study. Perhaps one day the Kiltektet will lead the southern packs to become allies and associates* of *our northern nations.*

—from the journals of Klik-Chaka'da.

Thri-kreen are found in most of the terrain types of the Tyr Region, though they avoid the salt flats, where almost no animals live, and inland silt basins, where prey is scarce and conditions are not conducive to travel. Thri-kreen packs never voluntarily visit the Sea of Silt; they are built poorly for locomotion in silt. Exceptional individuals might travel there and might even travel on siltskimmers and other conveyances. Descriptions of the other terrain types follow.

- *Scrub Plains:* These are dusty lands with scattered vegetation. Thri-kreen, especially raiders, are common here. Traveling is easier than in other terrain, and scrub plains are often protected by druids (possibly thri-kreen). Humanoid herders move through the scrub plains, and prey is relatively common: kreen favorites include mekillots and erdlus. Jozhal and gith compete with kreen for survival in the scrub plains.
- *Sandy Wastes:* Thri-kreen are common in this open, sandy desert terrain. The many dunes slow travel, but thri-kreen are comfortable moving in the sand. Sandstorms are a slight danger, but thri-kreen are mostly protected by their exoskeletons; they need simply cover their breathing holes to keep out debris, and they are fine. Thri-kreen, like other races, stop moving when a sandstorm hits to avoid becoming separated from the pack. Much prey lives in the sandy wastes, including most of the common animals also found in stony barrens; favorites include giant lizards and snakes. The chief competition for thri-kreen in the sandy wastes are anakores.
- *Stony Barrens:* While this is the most common type of terrain in the Tablelands, thri-kreen packs are less common here. Sheets of bedrock cover most of the land; rocky rubble and sand cover the larger sheets, and there are numerous cacti. Loose rock makes footing treacherous, impeding the thri-kreen ability to run and leap (the DM may require a Dexterity check, with penalties, for safe movement in certain areas). Prey in the stony barrens includes wild erdlus, mekillots, inix, and other common animals. Enemies of the thri-kreen include braxat, tembo, and belgoi.
- *Farmland:* Thri-kreen are attracted to these areas. While some kreen are hunters or traders, others come to hunt domesticated animals, leading to conflict with the animal's owners. These conflicts, and the simple nearness of intelligent mammals, sometimes tempt farmland thri-kreen into true raiding.
- *Rocky Badlands:* Thri-kreen are uncommon in these lands, where canyons, cliffs, and rock formations break up the terrain. The easiest way to travel here is by moving through canyons; however, these do not allow large creatures real freedom of movement, and thri-kreen have difficulty climbing. Prey is relatively common in rocky badlands, but so are tembo, belgoi, and silk wyrms.

The vast majority of thri-kreen packs fall into two categories: hunting and raiding. Perhaps 70% of thri-kreen packs are hunting packs (tek), while about 30% are raiding packs (kek). Following are short descriptions of the lifestyle and breakdown of the types of packs, including examples of tek, kek, and a few special packs.

Hunting Packs

A typical hunting pack might have between 20 and 30 members; smaller packs have an easier time finding enough prey to support themselves. A typical pack of 20 might consist of two or three clutches: half the members might be mature adults, one venerable, three young adults, and maybe a half-dozen young. Those of young adult age and older (14 members) include perhaps 10 hunters, while the others are special individuals (a chakak, an earth priest shaman, and two kalak).

Most thri-kreen hunting packs are found in sandy wastes or scrub plains, with a few in stony barrens or rocky badlands. Details are given for an actual pack, the Chtik-tek, or "Yellow-Hills-Hunting-Pack."

Chtik-tek

This hunting pack ranges the region in and around the Yellow Hills: the hills and badlands near the town of Walis in the southwestern corner of the Tyr Region. They are a medium-sized pack of Jeral thri-kreen that do quite well for themselves in the badlands. With the pack are 34 members, and perhaps a dozen more wander elsewhere. Many Chtik-tek become adventurers, and some are members of the Kiltektet.

While the Chtik-tek tend to stay in the Yellow Hills, they also range the nearby sandy wastes. They are dedicated hunters, and have never fallen to raiding this is partly because of their strong association with the relatively peaceful Kiltektet, and partly because the adventuring members help bring prosperity to the pack through their special skills and abilities.

The packleader of Chtik-tek is Do *mm* kwi, a female kalak about 15 years old. There are three other clutchleaders, including a chakak/ikthok (psionicist/earth priest) of the Kiltektet, a tik (hunter), and a former gladiator, all are of wandering age. Of the 30 other members with the pack, 17 are mature adults or older, of these, seven are hunters, and the other 10 are adventurers—four kalak (rangers), two chakak, one druid, one gladiator, one fighter/chakak, and one ranger/ik-kos (ranger/air priest). Three of the rangers, both chakak, and the ranger/ik-kos are also Kiltektet. The 13 younger members of the pack include five young adults and eight children. All the young adults will become Kiltektet of various professions, including chakak, ranger, and ikthok. The eight children are about evenly split, with five to become hunters, and the others to become warriors of some kind; one has begun following the gladiator clutch-leader, and is likely to become a gladiator herself

The Chtik-tek have a fair number of artists, and sometimes trade statuettes, chitin-painting, and ornately decorated weapons for food and tools. The Chtik-tek trade with other packs, as well as the people of Walis, who have come to recognize Chtik-tek as acceptably trustworthy. The Chtik-tek generally avoids other intelligent beings, traveling in a fairly regular circuit: 30 days in the badlands, then 30 days in the sandy wastes.

The Chtik-tek have been on friendly terms with a local tribe of human hunter-gatherers, the Tsumetl, for several thri-kreen



generations. The Tsumetl live according to tikchak, and they have a good understanding of tokchak. Tsumetl tribe members often become clutchmates ofchtik-tek thri-kreen.

Raiding Packs

Overall, there are fewer raiding packs than hunting packs. Raiding packs favor scrub plains because there are groups of nomadic herdsmen to raid; they also hunt near cities and along trade routes. They are more common in the southern regions of the Tyr Region, where much livestock is raised.

Many raiding packs started as hunting packs, but turned to raiding because prey was scarce. Most raiding packs eventually return to legitimate hunting, or are wiped out by those they raid. There are a few, however, that have been raiding packs for so long (generations in one case), they know no other way. For them, the raid and the hunt have become as one.

A typical raiding pack is about the same size as a hunting pack, about 20 to 30 members. A pack of 20 might consist of five or six small clutches, the remains of several packs: three-quarters or more are probably mature adults. Larva, child, young, and venerable age categories are rare, as the very young and the very old cannot keep up. About 90% of a raiding pack are hunters, mostly chakak or warriors. Gladiators are fairly common, but priests seldom remain long, druids rarely associate with them at all, and rangers never do.

Details are given for an actual raiding pack, the now-extinct Riik-kek, the "fire raiding pack," which at one time lived south of Bitter Well.

Riik-kek

Now extinct, this pack of thri-kreen sprang from an experiment gone terribly wrong. (One version of the legend of the Riik-kek appears in "Heat Lightning," a short story included with the adventure, *Dragon's Crown.*)

A zik-trin'ta known as Kachka approached a raiding pack in order to study it. He tried to teach the pack civilized ways, such as building, and got them to settle in one place; they built a village to use as a base between raids. A few pack members who had spent time in the cities of the humans brought back some unusual ideas. One was a charismatic fire priest; others were gladiators who had seen the activities of human templars. Normally, such ideas would have been ignored by the pack, but Kachka had primed the pack to listen to new ideas, and they listened eagerly.

The fire priest became packleader, and the pack became known as Riik-kek, the "fire raiding pack." One of the former gladiators became a tribal inquisitor who tortured prisoners for information—or simply for entertainment. As they thus abandoned thri-kreen ways, the Riik-kek carried out more daring raids, and their activities drew the attention of the humanoids of Draj.

Seeing this turn toward disaster, Kachka tried to persuade the pack to change its ways. Kachka was given to the tribal inquisitor and tortured, but escaped with the aid of a human prisoner. Not long after, stories of the Riik-kek reached the other thri-kreen of the region. The humans of nearby settlements began to retaliate against the Riik-kek, but, unable to tell that pack from other packs, they retaliated against all thri-kreen. To stop the retribution of the humans, and to end the Riik-kek perversion of thri-kreen ways, three hunting packs banded together and eradicated the Riik-kek and nearly all evidence of their existence. Though the elder thri-kreen have an unspoken agreement never to mention the Riik-kek, the rogue pack has entered into thri-kreen legend as a tale to frighten the young and encourage "correct" thri-kreen behavior.

At their height, about a decade ago, Riik-kek had about 70 members. Most were To'ka, though some say their fire priest was a Jeral. The majority were hunters, though there were gladiators and fighters among them, and a pair of skilled chakak. Today, they are but a memory, and a nightmare.

Special Packs

A few packs in the Tyr Region are not truly hunters **or** raiders; they do not even fit the traditional definition of "pack." While most of these are similar to hunting packs, they differ in significant ways. Their formations are unique, as are their policies. Three special groups of thri-kreen are described here: the Kltek-tet, an extended pack of scholars and philosophers; Raam-tek, the pack of the city Raam; and the thri-kreen of Urik.



Kiltektet

About a century ago, a zik-trin'ta attempted to bring civilization to thri-kreen of the Tyr Region (actually, there may have been more than one zik-trin'ta, with similar missions, but tradition describes one great teacher). This kreen is known as Klik-Chaka'da, the "teacher of the Way and of reverence."

Klik (as he was usually called) took in several clutches of hatchlings, mostly Jeral, and raised them, instilling in them a reverence for knowledge. He redirected the kreen's hunting urges into a thirst for knowledge, and a search for truth. His students became known as the Kiltektet, the "learning-pack-who-enlightens." These thri-kreen search for knowledge, experience, wisdom, and truth, and also seek to take their knowledge to other thri-kreen. Most Kiltektet use "ka" as part of their name, to indicate that they are seeking something.

The most famous Kiltektet was Ka'cha, the subject of the legend of "The Great Race" (as related in Chapter One). Since the days of that famous Ka'cha, the number of Kiltektet in the Tyr Region has grown. Many of the early Kiltektet met with scorn, because they chose intellectual pursuits over physical hunts for prey. However, well-traveled and diplomatic, they have been accepted by most thri-kreen of the Tyr Region. Few kreen ridicule them now.

Most Kiltektet are special individuals of some kind; few are simple hunters. Most are chakak, but usually in combination with another profession. Many are both chakak and priest. Typically, a thri-kreen becomes a Kiltektet if raised by Kiltektet, but some have joined later in life. To join later, a thri-kreen must be accepted as a Kiltektet clutchmate by another Kiltektet. This is not automatic in any way; while a Kiltektet can accept clutchmates just like any other thri-kreen, he or she is more selective when choosing Kiltektet. Before acceptance, the individual must prove worthy of the ideals of the Kiltektet: a craving for truth and knowledge, a willingness to share knowledge with others, and a less aggressive nature than typically found in thri-kreen. This is not to say that Kiltektet are pacifists, simply that they are less likely to attacked without good provocation. Kiltektet also exhibit a respect for all intelligent creatures, and never hunt sapient beings as a source of food.

The Kiltektet is an extended pack without a pack leader or any higer level of organization, though there are dozens of clutches within the Kiltektet. The actual number of Kiltektet is difficult to estimate, but there are at least several hundred scattered throughout the Tyr Region. Most Kiltektet are Jeral, though a significant number are To'ksa. Kiltektet do not necessarily recognize one another as packmates, though their manners tend to give them away. Remarkably, the Kiltektet has been able to remain fairly close to its original ideals. So far, no non-kreen has ever been accepted as a member of the Kiltektet.

Raam-tek

The city of Raam has more than 1,500 thri-kreen. They (like other nonhumans) are treated with relative fairness, and are priests, merchants, artisans, servants, and laborers, as well as adventurers. Many clutches of thri-kreen exist in Raam, and most belong to a single pack, Raam-tek. With more than 1,000 members, this is the largest pack known in the Tyr Region.

Its organization is loose, and the clutch of clutchleaders is an informal group at best. Raam-tek seldom acts as a group, serving mainly to give the thri-kreen of the city a sense of belonging. It is doubtful that all of Raam-tek, or even a large part, could readily act in concert. The packleader changes periodically, but is currently a very high-level female chakak named Sok'si.

Though Raam-tek is technically a hunting pack, few of its members are actually hunters. The pack considers elves legitimate prey and, while the law in Raam prohibits thri-kreen from eating elves, the prevailing chaos in the city allows incidents to occur relatively often. The number of thri-kreen in the city keeps them from being eradicated or driven out Despite the general lack of organization, Raam-tek is more united than the elves of the city.

Thri-Kreen of Urik

Thri-kreen are also common in Urik. The government here established a policy long ago that has been quite successful. Whenever thri-kreen enter the city, the gate guards explain that the city is a large pack, and that thri-kreen are welcome to join any of the city's many clutches, but must obey the laws of the pack. This works very well for the thri-kreen, who are usually happy to join the large and powerful pack. The humanoids of

Urik thus consider the city's thri-kreen "well-behaved," and their presence causes little friction.

The Thri-Kreen "Nations"

Thri-kreen do not have nations in the sense of states with formal governments. Humanoids consider some thri-kreen hunting ranges to be thri-kreen "nations;" many believe (incorrectly) that the thri-kreen have marked out and divided pack territories.

Thri-kreen packs do have areas over which they range, and which they think of as their own; however, they do not mark the boundaries of these areas, because there really are not any. Although no formal boundaries exist, it is considered proper to ask permission before intruding into another pack's range (thri-kreen are seldom surprised when other races do not show them this courtesy). Hunting packs seldom leave their own territory and most recognize some area around each human settlement as the territory of the mammal "pack" that lives there. While thri-kreen hunters respect such territorial divisions, raiders do not; such is the nature of the raider.

Thri-kreen are more common in the South, around Balic, Gulg, and the town of Altaruk, all of which raise and export livestock. Livestock caravans that cross into thri-kreen territory risk becoming prey. While thri-kreen who raid livestock caravans are not necessarily members of raiding pack, the practice is borderline, and most thri-kreen know it. The practical difference between a raiding kek and a hunting tek is that the latter, when it includes an intruding caravan in the hunt, does not attack other humanoids unless attacked first; they simply kill and carry off some of the livestock. Some caravans simply release some livestock to become prey for the thri-kreen. This works with hunting packs, and occasionally saves the caravan from a raiding pack.

Related Species of Kreen

The tohr-kreen of the north are separated from their southern relatives, the thri-kreen of the Tyr Region, by formidable geographical barriers. In addition, there is a cultural gulf; in comparison to the tohr-kreen, the thri-kreen seem uncivilized and barbaric. Beyond the Jagged Cliffs lie great cities of tohr-kreen, who are far more sophisticated than humanoids familiar with the thri-kreen imagine.

At tohr-kreen is a "settled mantis person;" most kreen in the North are tohr-kreen. While all six subspecies of kreen are found in the North, only two, the Jeral and the To'ksa, are found in the Tyr Region. This section discusses the northern kreen and related species: the savage trin, the manipulative zik-chil, the augmented kreen known as zik-trin, and kreen of other worlds.

Important: While most of the following details are open to players and DM alike, some material in this chapter and on the poster, notably information about the zik-trin and on the North, is unknown to the characters from the Tyr Region. DMs should take care in relating this information to players; players who read this section should be careful to avoid confusion between player knowledge and character knowledge.

Trin

Between the Ringing Mountains and the Jagged Cliffs lie the Hinterlands, home to primitive clutches of trin, also called *thri-trin.* As surely as the Ringing Mountains, the Forest Ridge, the Hinterlands, and the Jagged Cliffs, packs of trin present a barrier between the Tablelands and the North.

These savage and nomadic beings are similar to kreen, but less advanced, closer to beasts than to people. They have two arms and four legs, and can move slightly faster than thri-kreen. Thus, the kreen call them trin, or "near-people." They are primitive hunters and scavengers, deadly even to other mantis people. They roam the lands attacking and eating any animal that does not belong to their clutch.

Trin look something like kreen children, but are only a little smaller than full-grown thri-kreen. Their two large, vicious claws inflict more damage than thri-kreen claws, and can also hold victims. Trin are fully described in a monster entry at the end of this book.

Zik-Chil

These mantis folk are a cold and mysterious race found only beyond the Jagged Cliffs. Tohr-kreen consider the zik-chil to be



more than normal: manipulative and calculating beings with strange and inexplicable abilities. In tohr-kreen society, they are "priests-of-change." Among tohr-kreen, they are both revered and feared. To thri-kreen, zik-chil are mythical.

Zik-chil are similar in form to kreen, but shorter, more slender and a pale, almost sickly, green in color. A zik-chil has legs and lower arms similar to those of kreen, and their lower arms have three-clawed hands. However, their upper arms terminate in a unique and exquisitely-articulated set of claws. Each of these claws can separate into six slender, multi-jointed "fingers" capable of intricate manipulation.

In many ways, the zik-chil are throwbacks to ancient kreen. They retain the ability (through their racial memory) to manipulate their own enzymes, and the ability to rebuild and augment living beings. Zik-chil transform kreen into zik-trin. The cold mentality of the zik-chil also set them apart from other mantis people; they are unemotional and ruthless in their pursuits.

Kreen

Kreen are those mantis folk who are considered people by others of their kind. Athas has six subspecies of kreen and an augmented species called the zik-trin. Of these types, only two, the Jeral and the To'ka, are known in the Tyr Region.

The rare northern kreen that are seen in the Tyr Region are almost exclusively the augmented kreen, called tik-trin (identified in MC12 as "tohr-kreen"). They are described here under their own heading. Normal tohr-kreen, without the augmentation of the zik-trin, are unknown the Tyr Region. Should one arrive, he or she would almost certainly be mistaken by non-kreen for the physically similar thri-kreen.

The differences between thri-kreen and tohr-kreen are cultural, rather than physical. So far, this sourcebook has been devoted exclusively to the Jeral and To'ksa, as they are the only kreen native to the Tyr Region. However, beyond the Ringing Mountains and the Hinterlands, in the North, all six kreen subspecies can be found. The barbaric To'ksa can be found in great number, and the cultured Jeral are far more plentiful here than in the Tablelands. The kreen of the North also include the merciless J'hol, red-shelled kreen with small abdomens, the most humanoid in appearance; the militant J'ez, kreen with black shells and toothy maws; the reclusive Tondi, a race of unusual purple kreen that look something like giant flowers or exotic rock formations; and the simple T'keech, whose dark green chitin identifies them as having once dwelt in areas with plant-life.

The different colors of kreen chitin result from the evolution of natural camouflage, and match the color of the thri-kreen's blood. Both are is determined by the subspecies' metabolism, which absorbs certain natural substances and produces the species' characteristic chitin and blood pigmentation. The six subspecies and the general kreen growth cycle are pictured on the color poster included with this book.

The Jeral, J'ez, and J'hol have nations north of the Jagged Cliffs. All six species are briefly described on the color poster. The rest of this section includes notes on tohr-kreen society.

Zik-Trin

When encountered in the Tablelands, zik-trin are commonly called "tohr-kreen," partly because they are from the northern homelands of the tohr-kreen, partly because the leaders of the real tohr-kreen have been deliberately misleading the thri-kreen and other beings of the Tyr Region.

A zik-trin has been radically altered from its original kreen form by zik-chil, through the use of enzymatic serums and physical augmentation such as changes in the chitin and internal structure. They are also altered mentally, "programmed" for specific functions. Zik-trin are "manufactured" in the city of Thaythilor, a kreen city not far north of the Jagged Cliffs; among their mental "programs" is a strict order to never reveal their place of origin.

As evidenced by their name *(zik-trin)* means "altered near-people"), zik-trin are no longer considered true people by most tohr-kreen. However, almost all of the thri-kreen of the T-ablelands believe zik-trin to be "normal" tohr-kreen. The zik-chil take pains to insure that their secret, the fact that they augment kreen, remains a secret. As yet, the secret has not spread beyond the Empire, so no thri-kreen from the Tyr Region knows the truth.

So far, all zik-trin encountered in the Tablelands have been *zik-trin'ta;* these are specifically altered to serve as scouts for the tohr-kreen nations to the north.

Sometimes called "mantis nobles" by humanoids, the zik-trin are larger, stronger, faster, and more deadly than other kreen.

At the same time, due to their mental conditioning, they are more peaceful and cultured. To many, zik-trin seem a curious blend of sophistication and savagery: well-read and artistically-inclined,yet built for deadly combat.

This contradiction is intentional on the part of the zik-chil who manufacture the zik-trin. The zik-trin are conditioned to be civilized, so they can successfully study the peoples of the Tablelands. Some act as missionaries, trying to spread civilization to their "barbaric thri-kreen cousins." All gather information about the peoples of the Tablelands, with the intention of taking that knowledge to the fabled city of Thaythilor, from there, the information is disseminated to the tohr-kreen nations of the North.

To insure that knowledge returns to Thaythilor, the zik-trin are given formidable physical abilities. They are given a greater strength and a change in musculature, which allows them to use their arms to climb; this allows the zik-trin to breach the Jagged Cliffs and travel between north and south. Their speed is enhanced to allow them to avoid the trin common in the Hinterlands. In addition, zik-trin have special combat abilities, making them well able to defend themselves from attack.

The mental programming of the zik-trin insures the safety of their secret. When a kreen is altered to become a zik-trin, the character's previous knowledge and memory is mostly erased, and the creature is given a new identity. A zik-trin knows he or she is a scout and a missionary, with a mission to bring knowledge to the thri-kreen of the Tablelands, and to return information to their city. They call themselves tohr-kreen, because they come from the settled lands and because they are programmed to believe they are tohr-kreen; zik-trin never refer to themselves as zik-trin.

Other specific information is unavailable to zik-trin, including their origins. A zik-trin knows the name of the city, Thaythilor, and knows it lies beyond the Jagged Cliffs. When the zik-trin returns to Thaythilor, it is more a matter of instinct than knowledge; the information has been planted in the creature's subconscious by psychic surgery, and is accessed in a manner similar to the recalling of a kreen racial memory (or a post-hypnotic suggestion). Note that the hypnosis nonweapon proficiency (from *The Complete Psionics Handbook)* is completely useless on a zik-trin, either to alter the creature's perceptions or to retrieve lost or forgotten knowledge.

Certain psionic powers and magical spells can read minds; these are of limited effectiveness on a zik-trin, at least in regards to the secret information. Knowledge about zik-trin and the process of change cannot be found in the zik-trin's mind-unless the zik-trin has learned about it separately. They are never given knowledge of their origins. The being's previous life (before becoming a zik-trin) has been supplanted and suppressed; only a series of psychic surgeries might retrieve any of this information, and only small block at best (such as the character's original given name, profession, or birthplace).

The name "Thaythilor" can be psionically retrieved from the zik-trin's subconscious with the use of probe, a Telepathic science. Its location could possibly be discovered through psychic surgery, but the path to this information is keyed to a set of triggers, rather than just one, and several successful uses of psychic surgery would be necessary. A zik-trin is also given the compulsion to die rather than reveal the location of Thaythilor, and seek death if subjected to multiple psychic surgeries performed for the purpose of locating the city. Note that identity penetration (a Telepathic devotion) will not reveal that a tik-trin was ever other than a zik-trin; the being's fundamental identity has been changed, and the psionicist who uses identity penetration will at best receive a vague feeling that something is not quite right. However, the zik-chil are so good at the task of creating zik-trin that even such a vague feeling is quite rare; the zik-trin are well-built to hide such things.

So far, all zik-trin encountered in the Tablelands have been zik-trin'ta, the scouts. However, the zik-chil have also developed another type, the *zik-trin'ak,* built specifically for combat. Zik-trin'ak have not yet entered the Tablelands, and have been seen only briefly in the Hinterlands, and then only by a few. As to why the zik-trin'ak are being built, only the tik-chil and select tohr-kreen know for sure.

PCs into Zik-Trin

If a kreen player character is ever captured and undergoes the process of change to a zik-trin, the character is lost The player does not play a zik-trin; all zik-trin are NPCs. As such, they are used according to the MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM information about zik-trin. If the "tohr-kreen" entry from the first DARK SUN MC is used , ignore the information on young and on aging; since zik-trin are created rather than born, that information does not apply to them.



Crossbreeds

The three types of mantis folk—kreen, zik-chil, and trin—are not interfertile. That is, a kreen cannot breed with a trin or zik-chil, nor a trin with a zik-chil. Zik-trin are rendered sterile by the process that creates them, so cannot breed at all.

The six subspecies of kreen can interbreed. However, this seldom occurs, because kreen almost never mate outside their own species. On the rare occasion when such a thing might happen, the pair rarely produces young though interbreeding is possible, the physiology of members of different species differs enough to make successful procreation rare. Those rare individuals of mixed parentage might exhibit qualities of both parents, not all of them good. No offspring of mixed parentage has been encountered in the Tyr Region.

Between North and South

North and west of the Tablelands lie the Ringing Mountains. Beyond those mountains are the Hinterlands, a vast territory that is home to little intelligent life other than thri-kreen and the vicious trin. The thri-kreen of this region are almost exclusively To'ksa, and belong to hunting pack. Few clutches of Jeral live in the region, and no raiding pack (there are no caravans or cities to raid).

Interesting thri-kreen sites in the Hinterlands include the great stone head of a thri-kreen, known simply as the Chak'sa, "the Head." Chak'sa has some pseudo-religious significance to thri-kreen, and can trigger racial memories in them. Near the Chak'sa is Dej, "the Circle," a great grave circle of the thri-kreen, one that has been used for centuries. Both the Chak'sa and Dej are located within a few miles south of the Dragon's Crown mountains.

North of the Hinterlands lie the Jagged Cliffs. From their imposing precipice, though a sea of roiling mist, an observer in the Hinterlands might briefly glimpse the lands of the North.

Chak'sa and Dej

The Chak'sa is the last remnant of an ancient thri-kreen nation. Though no thri-kreen knows its true history, it was built about two thousand years ago by a nation that included thri-kreen and humans.The Chak'sa honors both beings who led that nation, a powerful kreen and an avangion. What happened to end the nation's prominence is something of a mystery, but it probably came into conflict with the sorcerer-kings and the Dragon of Tyr.

Thri-kreen who view the Chak'sa feel a fascination for it. Around the base of a dais bef ore the Chak'sa is inscribed with a message in an ancient kreen dialect; it says "When the age of the Great One is come, make ye a joyous light." Stepping on the dias caused bearns of light to shoot from the eyes, hundreds of feet, to shift around like searchlights sweeping the sky. These were intended as signals to alert others to the presence of the avangion at the Chak'sa. The inscription was left so that if an avangion visited the Chak'sa, the lights would alert others and call them to this location. This is no longer the case.

The Chak'sa is only a few miles from Dej, the great grave circle, another remnant of the ancient kreen/human nation. Modern Dej is the only permanent thri-kreen settlement close to the Tyr Region. The population at Dej rotates, but there are always thri-kreen there, learning psionics, caring for the bodies of the dead, and so forth. Occasionally, zik-trin'ta live at Dej and teach thri-kreen; within the last decade, a "tohr-kreen" named Chaxchik spent a significant amount of time at Dej and built an army of thri-kreen to fight a horrible psionic menace.

The Jagged Cliffs

Defining the northern border of the Hinterlands is the Jagged Cliffs, a huge barrier that stretches for hundreds of miles to the northeast and the southwest. The cliff drops two miles from the level of the Hinterlands to the level of the North. Since thri-kreen do not climb, this is a formidable barrier. However, the altered musculature of the zik-trin allows them to climb it.

From the top of the cliff in the Hinterlands, a kreen can look out upon great clouds; the cliff itself disappears downward into a thick mist, through which glimpses of the land below might occasionally be seen. The moisture of the mist is another barrier to kreen, who are ill-suited to humid climates.

Finally, no thri-kreen who has headed for the North has ever reported back. While some may have simply chosen to live in the North, most probably died trying to get across the Ringing

Mountains, caught chitin-rot in the Forest Ridge, were eaten by trin, fell from the Jagged Cliffs, or were taken prisoner by tohr-kreen or their zik-trin agents.

The North

Though travel between the Tablelands and the North is difficult, there are many interesting features in the North, including true kreen nations and cities, such as the city of Thaythilor. According to rumors, even more powerful kreen societies lie beyond the nations close to the Jagged Cliff...

Thaythilor, City of the Tohr-Kreen

Thaythilor is a city where zik-trin are created; it is the city closest to the Jagged Cliffs on the northern side. The city is fairly small, with a population of perhaps 10,000 tohr-kreen and a few hundred zik-chil.

Like other tohr-kreen cities, Thaythilor was built using the amber-like secretions of z'ock'n, larger versions of the snail-like ock'n found in the Tablelands. Most buildings are constructed by gathering a mound of sand, then allowing the z'ock'n to secrete their amber over the mound. Some buildings are a hundred feet tall or more, and the translucent amber reflects the sun in patterns on the sand. Domes and towers reach to the sky, while walkways and ramps stretch around and between the structures.

True to its nature, Thaythilor looks as if it was grown instead of built. Most non-kreen find the appearance of the city rather macabre, almost disturbing, with its spires, walkways, and domes, the membranes stretching between some structures, and the presence of overwhelming numbers of kreen in a variety of colors. The sight of such a city triggers racial memories in thri-kreen, however, causing them to recognize it as a safe haven, a "home."

Thaythilor is a free city that belongs to no particular nation. The population of Thaythilor is mostly Jeral and To'ksa, but has



elements of each of the other kreen subspecies. Zik-chil are more common in Thaythilor than elsewhere in the three nations of the North.

The Tohr-Kreen Nations

Beyond the Jaged Cliffs and Thaythilor are three nations of tohr-kreen: Jeral, J'hol, and J'ez. The primary species of kreen in each of these nations is named for the nation; the species are physically distinct from one another. Besides these three subspecies of kreen, there are three others (Tondi, T'keech, and To'ksa) that no longer have nations of their own. These are all pictured on the color poster.

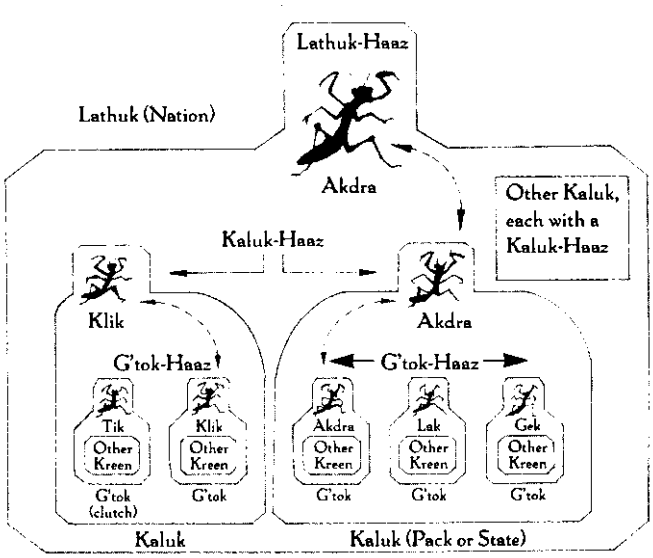
Each of the three existing nations has a form of leadership similar to that of a pack, but expanded. As mentioned previously, a thri-kreen pack is led by a clutch made up of all the clutchleaders in the pack; the leader of the clutch of clutchleaders is the packleader. The thri-kreen word for "pack" is *tek* or *kek,* while the word for "leader" is *hoz.*

The tohr-kreen word for "pack" is kaluk, and the word for "leader" is *haaz.* Kaluk has connotations of "state" rather than "tribe," as implied by tek or kek Likewise, *haaz is* closer to "governor" in meaning, unlike *hoz,* which is more like "chief." Thus, among tohr-kreen, a packleader is more correctly called a kaluk-*haaz,* and is similar in status to a humanoid regional governor.

Each northern nation, or *lathuk* is a collection of kaluk. The kaluk-haaz of a nation form a clutch of their own, and the leader of that clutch is the leader of the nation, the *lathuk-haaz.* The lathuk-haaz never takes an oath of office; there is no need. Tokchak insures the lathuk-haaz's dedication to lead and help the nation, and the packs and clutches that compose it. Any oath of office are redundant to the compulsions of tokchak.

The other kaluk-haaz in the lathuk-haaz's clutch also hold positions of importance, and several responsibilities are delegated to them. To maintain the stability of the nation, challenges for clutch dominance are restricted, at least in regards to the lathuk-haaz and the kaluk-haaz. A lathuk-haaz can be challenged only once each year, at the beginning of the year, and then can be challenged only by a kaluk-haaz. A kaluk-haaz can be challenged only once every six months, at the beginning of the year and halfway through the year. A kaluk-haaz can be challenged only by a clutchleader (g'tok-haaz) of the same kaluk.

Structure of J'ez Tohr-Kreen Government



Challenges for leadership positions are never made to the death. In fact, some challenges for leadership positions are not even made through combat; either the challenger or the challenged may initiate a "social" challenge, one that is made in terms of social and political accomplishments. If a social challenge is made for a g'tok-haaz position, the kaluk-haaz and the other g'tok-haaz decide the results. If a social challenge is made for kaluk-haaz, the lathuk-haaz and the other kaluk-haaz decide the results.

Though each nation of kreen is predominantly composed of a single species, members of other species are found in each nation. Following are descriptions of each of the three nations. Each nation has its own government and entertainments, including a ritualized system of challenges that is much like the gladiatorial arena system of the human cities of the Tyr Region; the profession of gladiator is a respected one in the thri-kreen nations.

The Names of the Nations

The "J" that begins three of the subspecies names has connotations of "nation," while the "T" that begins the other names has connotations of "former nation." It is probable that the three former nations were once "Jondi," "J'keech," and "Jo'ksa;" if the three current nations were to fall, those subspecies would become known as the "Teral," "Thol," and "T'ez."

Zik-chil

These kreen are rare, but can be found in each of the nations of the North. They are always found in their own clutches, in service to kaluk-haaz or lathuk-haaz. It is customary for each lathuk-haaz to be served by a clutch of zik-chil. The zik-chil are the "priests-of-change" of the kreen nations, respected by other kreen, and feared by many. Though the zik-chil often conduct experiments on other kreen, they create zik-trin only at the bidding of their lathuk-haaz.

The Empire

It is said that north of the nations of Jeral, J'hol, and J'ez, lies a kreen nation of immense power and size, an empire of kreen. The rumors say the empire is ruled by a hereditary emperor (the *Haazi,* or "leader of change") with abilities far beyond those of normal kreen. The Haazi supposedly has many zik-chil servants who augment the emperor's abilities and ruthlessly modify other kreen to serve as an elite, imperial guard. Rumors hint the empire has huge cities built with the aid of creatures unknown in the Tyr Region.

These rumors have barely reached the Tablelands, and the truth is certainly unknown to most of those who dwell there.

Kreen of Other Worlds

On Athas, thri-kreen are one of the dominant lifeforms. This is not the case on other worlds. Athas is thus something of a "base world" for thri-kreen. It seems that thri-kreen originated on Athas, then spread elsewhere through powerful psionics.

Thri-kreen can be placed on any world the DM chooses. They make good guardians for temples devoted to gods of insects, and as monsters they can create a formidable challenge for player characters.

Unless otherwise noted, kreen of other worlds are like those described in the *MONSTROUS MANUALLY™* accessory. A DM might allow thri-kreen player characters on other worlds, but their ability scores should be rolled according to the standard rules, not DARK SUN campaign rules. Such a character has the standard chances for wild ptionic talent, as detailed in *The Complete Psionics Handbook;* only "monster" thri-kreen have the 50% chance to have wild talents given in the standard monster description.

Where the Kreen Are

Kreen are found in many places. These include:

Toril: Most thri-kreen live in the Shaar region, in the southern part of the continent of Faerun. These kreen are similar in build to the T'keech, but are sandy-yellow in color. These thri-kreen also have a dark brown striping effect on their chitin, which helps them blend more effectively with the tail savannah grasses of the Shaar. Thri-kreen "monsters" of Tori1 have a slightly reduced chance for a psionic wild talent (30% instead of 50%). Other thri-kreen are possible, but the other intelligent races of Toti1 have not yet come into contact with them. Potential locations include the plains of Anchorome, north of Maztica, or (if trin) in the deserts near Zakhara.

Oerth: On Oerth, thri-kreen are rare. They are unknown in the Bright Desert, though th ere could be a few scattered packs in the Dry Steppes. Stories are told of thri-kreen packs roaming the Sea of Dust beyond the Hellfumaces. Thri-kreen of Oerth are similar in almost every way to the red-shelled J'hol, and have the standard chances for psionics.

Karameikos: Thri-kreen are unheard of in the "Known World" area of the MYSTARA™ setting. In the RED STEEL™ campaign setting, a vast territory known as the Yazak Steppes (north of the Savage Coast) might be a good place for thri-kreen; however, other races occupy their ecological niche, so kreen should be limited to a few scattered packs of tin. Other continents of this world are better suited for kreen. Wandering thri-kreen individuals or clutches from these areas might be encountered on rare occasions.

Krynn: Thri-kreen are unknown on Krynn. If the DM places thri-kreen on Krynn, they have no psionics whatsoever. It is likely that kreen were exterminated on Krynn long ago; it might be possible that they live on certain faraway islands or deep underground. Such thri-kreen may never have seen an elf, but their racial memories may tell them of the enmity elves hold for thri-keen.

Other Worlds: Thri-kreen can appear in other campaign worlds: the RAVENLOFT® PLANESCAPE™, and SPELLJAMMER® settings. On the Demi-Plane of Dread, thri-kreen are found on the "island" of Ka1idnay nay, a setting described in *Forbidden* Lore (#1079). Thri-kreen traveling to other domains are regarded as monsters, abominations that should be killed as soon as possible.

In the PLANESCAPE setting, thri-kreen from any world might show up, but they are almost never native to the planes (planars).

The SPELLJAMMER setting has spacefaring thri-kreen, and rumors persist of a crystal sphere ("Kreenspace") dominated by kreen called xixchil (perhaps similar to the zik-chil of Athas), and related races; most of the fauna of this legendary sphere is supposedly insectoid.

Chapter 6: Thri-Kreen PCs

While most thri-kreen are simple hunters, this primitive lifestyle does not suit everyone. As in the north, some kreen seek more challenges; those who specialize in certain professions travel beyond their normal tribal ranges. Though some of our northern professions – si'tsa and haazik – are unknown in the south, the southern thri-kreen have a fair range of occupations available to them.

– from the journals of Klik-Chaka'da.

Thri-kreen can, of course, be used as PCs in a DARK SUN campaign. Their adaptations and abilities make them well-equipped for survival on Athas – provided the player wants to role-play their alien ways. This chapter discusses character classes and kits among the thri-kreen.

Only thri-kreen with adventuring professions (those with character classes) are covered in this chapter. Thri-kreen raised as hunters (those who use the thri-kreen "monster" statistics, as described in Chapter Two under "Stages of Life") do not use the kits detailed here.

Ability Score Adjustments

As covered in the DARK SUN *Rules Book,* thri-kreen receive adjustments to their initial ability scores. A thri-kreen's ability scores are not adjusted for aging until the thri-kreen reaches venerable age (25), at which time the character suffers penalties of -1 to Strength and -1 to Dexterity.

Thri-Kreen Ability Adjustments (base roll: 5d4)

Ability	Adj.	Adjusted Range
Strength	0	8/20
Dexterity	+ 2	17/22
Constitution	0 *	5/20
Intelligence	– 1	4/19
Wisdom	+ 1	6/21
Charisma	- 2	3/15

**Jeral Modifiers:* Constitution -1, Intelligence 0. All other modifiers remain unchanged.

Physical Characteristics	Base	Variable
Height (in inches)	82	1d4
Weight (in pounds):	450	1d20
	Maximum	
Age (years, start/max:)	6	25+d10

Character Classes

Warriors of various types are common among thri-kreen. The chakak (psionicist) is important to their society. Priests, however, are uncommon, and are usually those who have left their pack. Rarer still are thri-kreen who pursue multiple classes, usually pairing a warrior class with something else. Since the thri-kreen have formidable natural combat skills, the combination of priest and chakak is perhaps the most versatile multi-class.

Thri-kreen do not become wizards because their brains cannot properly channel and manipulate magical energies of a non-clerical nature.

Thri-kreen do not become thieves; nor do they become bards. Skulking about and playing with locks, traps, poisons, and other nefarious devices just does not suit them. Those thri-kreen who have a talent for stealth and concealment become rangers.

Thri-kreen never become templars. Tokchak keeps them loyal to their group, whether a clutch of thri-kreen or a party of companions. The deceit, corruption, disdain for underlings, and disrespect for superiors displayed by templars are all completely alien to the thri-kreen mind-set. Besides, few thri-kreen would ever willingly follow a sorcerer king.

Table 7.1: Thri-Kreen Level Limits

Character Class	Level Limit	Character Class	Level Limit
Fighter	16	Priest of Air	14
Gladiator	15	Priest of Earth	12
Ranger	12	Priest of Water	12
Psionicist	U	Priest of Fire	10
		Druid	16



Warriors

Fighters are most numerous and most commonly encountered thri-kreen warriors. They are skilled and dangerous combatants, and can be of any alignment. Fighters of most races are known for their abilities and skills in mass combat; this is not really true of thri-kreen fighters, few of whom actually lead military forces. Thri-kreen are not that interested in war, nor do they usually need to be.

Thri-kreen fighters have a wide range of kits available to them; the most common is the Tik (hunter) kit. The Tik-Tik (guardian) kit is less common, and some fighters might take the Kik (raider) kit instead. These kits are detailed in this book.

Of the warrior classes available to the thri-kreen, the ranger, in many ways, epitomizes the thri-kreen race. Their love of nature, their abilities to hunt and track, and their wanderlust fit naturally into the nomadic thri-kreen lifestyle; however, their good alignment marks them as atypical. Most packs of thri-kreen have at least one ranger. A ranger's species enemy is usually an enemy predator that presents some threat to the pack. Curiously enough, elves are rarely a species enemy; the good-aligned ranger seems to instinctively avoid this choice, as many members of that species are also good-aligned. Belgoi, other evil creatures, and Kik raiders are far more common as species enemies.

Thri-kreen rangers are usually of the Kalak (scout) or Tik (hunter) kit; though a few eventually become Kiltektet (student missionary).

If *The Complete Gladiator's; Handbook* is available, the thri-kreen might have a gladiator kit. In fact, a thri-kreen who goes to a human city often volunteers to be a gladiator. Since the thri-kreen probably enters the city without money, he or she must find a trainer willing to provide support during training. The natural combat abilities of thri-kreen make them valuable as gladiators, so trainers are often willing to support them during training in return for some percentage of future earnings. This is an equitable deal. The benefits to the thri-kreen gladiator include the freedom to hunt and fight challenging prey (even if it is in the arena- availability of prey is important, since many thri-kreen who go to cities are motivated by a shortage of prey). A thri-kreen who craves fame-and there are a few-can sate such cravings as a gladiator. Some eventually receive the adulation of thousands.

The most common thri-kreen gladiators are the Professional Gladiator and the Reaver, while Montare are very rare. Thri-kreen gladiators are never Blind Fighters. While a thri-kreen Jazst is unknown, one might be possible if the DM makes a few adjustments to the kit for a thri-kreen character.

Chakak

Another character class of the thri-kreen is the chakak, or psionicist. The thri-kreen race has had chakak for thousands of years, and they are an important and respected part of the thri-kreen pack.

Telepathy is the most common primary discipline among pack psionicists (Tekchakak), for 15 usefulness in communication and group coordination. Other chakak, especially Tik (hunter) and Kalak (scout) chakak often have Clairsentience as a primary discipline, because that discipline is most useful for the hunt. Thri-kreen who do not have so great an aptitude for the hunt often have Psychokinesis or Telepathy as the primary discipline. Such thri-kreen often leave the pack in order to wander unless they serve a special function, such as Tik-Tik (guardian).

Whatever the primary discipline, the thri-kreen's second discipline is almost always Psychometabolism (though a few thri-kreen develop Psychometabolism as a primary discipline). In general, the sciences and devotions of Psychometabolism greatly enhance a chakak's fighting ability.

Chakak tactics include using adrenalin control and accelerate to increase attack abilities; reduction to hide for surprise; and others. One popular combination uses reduction to a small size, then levitation. When prey walks underneath, the thri-kreen stops using both powers: The prey is usually surprised when a 450-pound thri-kreen drops on top of it, seemingly from nowhere.

While humans have their "psiologists," who study in academies, thri-kreen learn the Way in their own fashion. Most learn control from a tekchakak or kiltektet; some learn from other mentors, such as an elder chakak of the pack or a visitor from another pack Those thri-kreen with wild talents are gathered by the klik (teacher), who provides a variety of props on which the thri-kreen can test their powers through practice.



Chakak-in-training are treated more formally, so they can properly open their minds to progression in power. They are gathered under a tekchakak or other mentor, and encouraged to experiment with their powers until they show a tendancy toward a certain discipline.

Racial memory helps this process as well. A thri-kreen can advance as high as 3rd level as chakak without instruction, by concentrating and allowing hidden racial memories to come to the surface and guide the student to the Way.

Thri-kreen usually begin manifesting psionic powers before they reach age 5, so begin training early. Mentors test the young kreen periodically, and there are usually enough chakak in a group that a thri-kreen has one or more training partners with whom to spar and exchange ideas.

If *The Will and the Way* sourcebook is available, a thri-kreen chakak might take the Beastmaster kit. An uncommon thri-kreen might be a Mercenary (the rules for payment should be altered to a medium more satisfactory to a thri-kreen). A very rare thri-kreen might take the Auditor kit if allowed by the DM; such Auditors can come only from cities such as Raam (or perhaps Gulg or Urik) where thri-kreen are common. Thri-kreen are never of the Noble, Psiologist, or Sensei kits. They have their own version of the Tribal Psionicist—the Tekchakak—presented in this chapter. Some thri-kreen chakak, both single-class and multi-class, might become Kiltektet.

Elemental Priests

Note: Much of this section refers to information from the *Earth, Air, Fire, and Water* sourcebook that will be reproduced in the 2nd edition of the *DARK SUN* basic rules. If the material is not available, then thri-kreen player characters can come from more traditional packs, in which the role of the Shaman is taken by the Tekchakak.

The thri-kreen respect for nature and the elements makes them naturals to become priests or druids. Still, thri-kreen priests are uncommon and druids are rare; these callings take them furthest from the hunt, and sometimes from the clutch as well. The draw of tikchak and tokchak are powerful enough to make any priesthood an arduous task, suited only to thri-kreen with the strongest wills. Priests and druids are more common among the Jeral than the To'ksa, though most packs will have at least one priest of some type.

The priest professions have the following frequency among thri-kreen: earth priest, paraelemental priest of the sun, and air priest are most common; water priests, paraelemental priests of rain,and druids are rare; fire priests and paraelemental priests of magma are very rare; paraelemental priests of silt are unknown.

An overview of elemental and paraelemental priest options includes:

Earth: The element of earth is by far the most common element revered by thri-kreen priests. Besides the natural reverence the thri-kreen give the earth (which they refer to as *thok,* the "egg of all life"), earthpriests have the most useful granted powers for hunting and for helping clutch mates. The earth supports the thri-kreen lifestyle, and represents the clutch to them; in return, thri-kreen revere the earth.

Air: Other thri-kreen become priests of air. The thri-kreen skill with missile weapons, and their love of freedom and wandering, make thri-kreen quite adept at this discipline, once they embrace it.

However, air priests are less common than earth priests because their initiation requires a trip to the mountains. Thri-kreen are not built for mountain travel; they cannot climb, and leaping from precipice to precipice is dangerous for such a large creature.

Both the "missile stream" and "missile deflection" powers work normally on chatkcha and kyorkcha. Optionally, the DM may also allow these powers to adjust the ability of a thrower to catch the weapons.

Fire: Thri-kreen very rarely become priests of fire. Some sources have claimed this is because thri-kreen have an "innate fear of flame;" this simply is not so. The reason thri-kreen do not often become priests of fire is not because they are afraid of fire, but because their culture does not use fire.

They do not cook their food; they do not forge metal; and they certainly do not need fire to keep warm. Thri-kreen have little experience with fire because they have little need for it. The rare thri-kreen who does come to revere flame (usually as a result of some impressive incident) has no special trouble making a pact with fire elementals.

Water: Water priests are rare among thri-kreen, because of

thri-kreen lack of need for water, and their mild phobia to large bodies of water. The minor granted power *quench thirst* yields a thri-kreen's full day's water requirement.

Paraelemental Priests: Thri-kreen who become paraelemental priests almost always follow the Sun; a few follow Rain, and fewer still Magma. Thri-kreen priests of Silt are unknown; thri-kreen don't live in or near silt, and prefer not to visit it.

Druids

While less common than earth or air priests, druids are more common among thri-kreen than priests of any other element or paraelement. Thri-kreen almost universally respect and protect nature, so they will always have prey and grounds for hunting and raising clutches. Thri-kreen almost always despise defilers, and this is reason enough for some to become druids. Being a druid usually takes the thri-kreen away from the clutch and forces him or her to remain in one place.

Thri-kreen druids might revere any element or paraelement, but never silt, and seldom magma or rain. A thri-kreen druid's guarded lands are usually an expanse of desert, or the skies over such an area; the affinity for earth and air continue even for the druid. Thri-kreen druids seldom adopt other types of guarded lands, especially if that requires settling down in an area without other thri-kreen. An exceptional case is the thri-kreen druid Durwadala, protector of the Lost Oasis in the southern Tyr Region. Durwadala has intentionally become a recluse, and never reveals herself to any intelligent creatures, considering the animals and plants of the Lost Oasis to be her clutch. This attitude, and the idea of the "plant-and-animal-clutch," are common among thri-kreen druids.

Multi-Class Thri-Kreen

Thri-kreen can become one of several multi-class combinations (see the list at the end of this section).

Fighter/psionicist and ranger/psionicist combinations are the most common: the ranger/psionicist is perhaps the most common multi-class combination among thri-kreen player characters. Priest multi-classes are uncommon, and druid multi-classes are very rare.

An uncommon combination is the cleric/psionicist. The cleric/psionicist combination gives a thri-kreen a well-rounded set of abilities, since the thri-kreen already has formidable natural combat skills.

Fighter/Psionicist	Cleric/Psionicist
Fighter/Cleric	Druid/Psionicist
Fighter/Druid	Fighter/Cleric/Psionicist
Ranger/Psionicist	Fighter/Druid/Psionicist
Ranger/Cleric	Ranger/Cleric/Psionicist

Character Kits

If the DM allows kits in the DARK SUN campaign, it is recommended that thri-kreen be allowed to use them. However, since thri-kreen characters already have many advantages, the DM may wish to restrict or modify kits available to them.

A kit provides a character with role-playing guidelines that help capture the flavor of that character's society In some ways, a kit is like a further specialization of the character class. A kit also provides a way of thinking about the class that reflects the character's cultural background.

The kits given in this chapter reflect thri-kreen nomadic culture and thri-kreen attitudes, and they provide a variety of viewpoints. However, since thri-kreen society is somewhat simpler than humanoid society, relatively few kits are offered. These kits should be used only by thri-kreen.

An overview of the kit descriptions follows.

Kit Descriptions

Each kit begins with a short overview, explaining how the kit reflects thri-kreen culture. The other sections used to describe each kit are as follows.

Character Class: Most of the kits given here are open to more than one character class; the classes available for the kit are given here.

Role: This section describes how a thri-kreen of the given kit tends to act in a campaign. It also details any special appearance or mannerism specific to members of the kit.

Weapon Proficiencies: This section lists weapon preferences for the kit, as well as any restrictions. *Bonus* proficiencies are



received without cost. *Required* proficiencies must be taken, and cost the appropriate number of weapon proficiency slots.

Generally, a beginning thri-kreen character is restricted to the weapons of the pack, unless he or she has had contact with other cultures. All thri-kreen characters automatically gain a bonus weapon proficiency with the chatkcha upon reaching 5th level. If the character spends a slot to learn the use of the weapon before that time, no additional benefit is gained when the character achieves 5th level.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: This section lists those skills that develop the role of the kit, including the following types: *bonus* (proficiencies received without the cost of a proficiency slot), *required* (must be taken and cost the normal number of slots), *recommended* (help define the character, but are not mandatory), and *barred* (cannot be taken by a character with the kit). Special proficiency notes are found in Chapter Three. These proficiencies include:

- Animal handling
- Artistic ability
- Chitinworking *(new)*
- Heraldry
- Hunting
- *Hypnosis'*
- Psioncraft
- Read/Write
- Sign language
- Spellcraft
- Survival
- Swimming
- Weaponsmithing

*From *The Complete Psionics Handbook*

Equipment: This section covers preferences and restrictions regarding miscellaneous equipment (weapons are covered under "weapon proficiencies"). Thri-kreen are restricted to the equipment of the pack when starting out, unless they have had contact with other intelligent creatures.

Thri-kreen never use armor.

Special Benefits: Some kits have benefits not available to other characters. This can be anything from special rights in certain places, to an unusual ability, to a beneficial reaction from others.

Special Hindrances: Just as kits have special benefits, so do they have special disadvantages that hinder them in some way. Nearly all thri-kreen, because of their alien ways, are targets of bigotry from members of other races.

Wealth Options: A kit may provide more or less wealth than a character class usually receives. Generally, thri-kreen characters forfeit all wealth not spent on equipment or weapons before starting play, though some kits allow otherwise.

New Kits

Six thri-kreen character kits are presented here. The Tik (hunter) and Kik (raider recreate the two primary types of thri-kreen pack members found in the Tablelands. Note that thri-kreen kit names are the same as pack functions and should not be confused. For example, a member of a hunting pack need not use the Tik kit. Likewise, a thri-kreen might be assigned by a packleader to function as a scout (kalak) without actually being of the Kalak kit.

Short Overview of Kits

- *Tik (Hunters)* are the typical thri-kreen, those to whom the hunt is of overwhelming importance. The Tik, while the most common thri-kreen, are seldom seen among non-kreen, because their devotion to the hunt generally keeps them away from cities and other centers of humanoid population.
- *Tik-Tik (Guardians)* are a little larger and more powerful than most hunters. Their primary function is to guard the pack, especially the young and the aged. They tend to be less dexterous and have less talent for the hunt than the hunters.
- *Kalak (Souts)* are thri-kreen with a special talent for stealth. While this kit is rare, most packs will have at least one or two. Far-ranging kalak find prey that is later run down by the hunters. Only rangers can be Kalak.
- *Kik (Raiders)* have turned away from "pure" hunting, to raiding akin to land-based piracy. Dangerous and unpredictable, Kik are what most people expect thri-kreen to be.
- *Tekchakak (Pack Psionicists)* aid their packs by use of psionics. The Tekchakak is the generalist psionicist among thri-kreen, with abilities in hunting, scouting, pack defense, and teaching.
- *Kiltektet (Student Missionaries)* devote themselves to seek truth and knowledge, and bring information to others. While members of other kits belong to whatever clutch and pack they desire, the Kiltektet automatically belong to a pack in which all Kiltektet are members. This kit is unusual in that any of the other kits can be abandoned in favor of it.

Priest Kits

If *The Will and The Way* is available, its kits can be used. The most common kits for priests, among the kreen, are the Shaman (for those who stay with the pack) and the Wanderer (for those who leave). Both the "Guardian of the Shrine" and "Cleric of the City" kits are very rare, as they require the thri-kreen to establish a permanent residence.

Thri-kreen druids, like other druids of Athas, seldom have kits. However, *The Complete Druid's Handbook gives* opportunities for experimentation. Of note for the thri-kreen are the Guardian, Natural Philosopher, Outlaw, Savage, and Wanderer kits (thri-kreen would not have the Advisor, Pacifist, Totemic, or Village Druid kits).

Multi-class Kits

A multi-class thri-kreen character can take a single kit, if the Dungeon Master allows. Multi-class priests may be of the Wanderer, Shaman, or Kiltektet kits, like most single-class priests. Multi-class druids can take only druid kits, and only if allowed by the Dungeon Master.

If the thri-kreen's combination does not include druid or priest, it is either fighter/psionicist or ranger/psionicist; these characters are almost invariably more warrior than psionicist. They can take any kit available to single-class thri-kreen warriors, so long as that kit is allowed to that class (a thri-kreen ranger cannot take a kit of the gladiator class, for example).

Tik (Hunter)

Tik are the most common type of thri-kreen, though uncommonly seen by humanoids, because they tend to remain with their packs. The Tik kit is for those who want to role-play a classic thri-kreen.

Character Class: This kit can be used by any thri-kreen except a cleric, druid, or combination that includes either of these classes.

Role: The Tik is first and foremost a hunter, the hunt for food occupies most of the character's thought processes. The individual hunts whenever possible, collects food, and has little love for staying in one place. In a pack of thri-kreen, the Tik hunts when possible, but might also serve as a scout (kalal) or guardian (tik-tik). Note that a Tik serving in either one of these roles does not have any of the special advantages and disadvantages of the kits of the same name.

A Tik is most often found among humanoids when his or her own pack has been destroyed. A Tik in such a group is usually confused by humanoid behavior and often tries to fit in by performing the same duties he or she would perform for the pack. A Tik with clutch-mates who sleep usually hunts, scouts, or guards while they do so, though it takes awhile to become used to this strange way of "wasting time. " The Tik is most strictly guided by *tokchak (egg-mind)* and *tikchak* (hunt-mind). When they do travel to villages or cities, they tend to be ignorant of "civilized" ways and a target for fear, suspicion, and prejudice.

Weapon Proficiencies: A Tik is, at start, limited to thri-kreen weapons. Proficiency with the gythka is required; the zerka is recommended. Chatkcha is never taken before receiving it for free at 5th level.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: The proficiencies for the Tik are as follows.

- Bonus Proficiencies: Hunting, tracking. Tik track as non-rangers unless they are members of the ranger class. They use their Wisdom as their base score for hunting (essentially a +l bonus).
- Required Proficiencies: Animal lore, survival.
- Recommended: Direction sense, endurance, weaponsmithing (kreen).
- Barred: Spellcraft, swimming (never available).

Equipment: The Tik is limited to thri-kreen equipment until exposed to outside culture. Even then, the character tends to use traditional items.

Special Benefits: Tik have the standard thri-kreen racial bonuses.

Special Hindrances: The character suffers no special hindrances other than the prejudices normally suffered by thri-kreen.

Since Kik raiders are seen much more often among humanoids, the non-kreen often expect a thri-kreen to be a Kik; they seldom understand or accept that a Trk, though a hunter, does not hunt sapients.



Wealth Options: The Tik receives the standard amount of wealth for his or her character class and forfeits any not spent.

Tik-Tik (Guardian)

Larger and less dexterous than most other kreen, the "hunter-of-hunters" guards the weaker members of the pack. In dangerous territory, Tik-Tik rarely hunt, unless the pack's normal hunters are spread too thinly or have been incapacitated by enemies.

Character Class: This kit is open to a fighter or fighter/psionicist. Rangers are barred. Tik-Tik must have a starting Strength of no less than 16 and an adjusted starting Dexterity of no more than 18.

Role: The Tik-Tik is an indifferent hunter, but acts as a guardian for those less able to fend for themselves. They commonly provide close protection around the edges of the camp; unlike Kalak, who range far and wide. When the pack hunts raiders or attacks intelligent prey, Tik-Tik come into their own. While not particularly mobile for thri-kreen, Tik-Tik are quite ferocious in battle, and are often accounted the best toe-to-toe warriors in the pack.

They are born warriors, just as the Tik are born hunters. Where a Tik is continually concerned with food, the Tik-Tik is concerned with competing predators: signs of their presence, the likelihood of an attack, the avenues of their approach, the best escape route for the pack if retreat is necessary.

In combat, Tik-Tik might attack the strongest opponents or provide a steady defensive bulwark behind which the pack warriors can regroup. They take joy in fierce combat. Surprisingly, however, they tend to be quite gentle with young kreen and the aged. Many become teachers in their later years.

On their own in towns and other civilized areas, a wandering Tik-Tik's instincts continue to function: they often become bodyguards, gladiators or, if fallen into bad company, thugs. Like the, Tik, a Tik-Tik is guided mainly by tokchak and tikchak.

Weapon Proficiencies: A Tik-Tik can begin play with proficiencies only in thri-kreen weapons.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: The proficiencies for the Tik Tik are as follows.

- Bonus Proficiencies: Endurance.

• Required Proficiencies: Survival.

• Recommended: Animal lore, hunting, tracking, weaponsmithing (kreen).

• Barred: Spellcraft, swimming (never available).

Equipment: Tik-Tik are limited to thri-kreen equipment until exposed to outside cultures; even then, the character tends to use traditional items.

Special Benefits: Tik-Tik have a+1 AC bonus, due to innate toughness, in addition to the standard thri-kreen racial bonuses. Roll an additional die for height and weight modifiers.

Special Hindrances: The Tik-Tik cannot start with a proficiency in tracking. Tik-Tik suffer the prejudices normally suffered by thri-kreen. As the largest kreen present, Tik-Tik are often identified as the greatest threat by opponents.

Wealth Options: The Tik-Tik receives the standard wealth for his or her class and forfeits any not spent.

Kalak (Scout)

Slightly smaller and quicker than most thri-kreen, Kalak excel at the use of hunting and stealth skills. In the hunt, their function is to locate prey and guide the hunters to it; they also range far beyond the periphery of thri-kreen camps in order to provide an early warning of the approach of enemies or large predators. They are survival specialists, even among the kreen.

Character Class: This character kit can be taken by any single-classed or multi-classed ranger.

Role: If Tik are first and foremost hunters, then the Kalak are first among those hunters. Able to track and find prey more readily than the most skilled Tik, the restless Kalak have even less love for staying in one place. They often travel far from the pack, in search of prey, water, and other necessities of life. They are often the first of the pack to make contact with other beings, whether these are humanoids or members of a strange pack. Most thri-kreen packs have one or two Kalak, and these often serve as the eyes and ears of the group. The existence of specialized Kalak does not prevent other kreen from serving as scouts, but they are not as efficient at it as a true Kalak. In other ways, Kalak are much like Tik

Weapon Proficiencies: Kalak can begin play with proficiencies only in those weapons normally allowed to thri-kreen.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: These are as follows.

• Bonus Proficiencies: Hunting. As rangers, they also have full tracking proficiency.

• Required Proficiencies: Direction sense, survival.

• Recommended: Animal lore, endurance, herbalism, heraldry (kreen), running, water find, weaponsmithing (kreen); alertness (see benefits).

• Barred: Spellcraft, swimming (never available).

Equipment: The Kalak is restricted to thri-kreen equipment until exposed to outside culture; even then, the character tends to use traditional items.

Special Benefits: Kalak have the standard thri-kreen racial bonuses. Survival proficiencies cost them only one slot instead of two. Subtract die roll modifiers from base height and weight instead of adding them.

Alertness: The alertness proficiency, if taken, allows a successful proficiency check (Wisdom+1) to reduce the kalak's chance of being surprised by 1.

Special Hindrances: A Kalak has the alignment restrictions of a ranger and will default to either the Tik or Kik kit if ranger status is lost.

Wealth Options: The Kalak receives the standard wealth for the class and forfeits any leftover wealth.

Kik (Raider)

The Kik are thri-kreen who have turned from hunting to raiding. As the most likely of the thri-kreen to have eaten the flesh of sapients and acquired a taste for elves, the Kik are barbaric in many ways (though they are not as feral as the trin). Since these raiders are the most likely to have come into contact with humanoids, these unpredictable and savage thri-kreen are what most others expect the mantis folk to be.

Character Class: A fighter, psionicist, or fighter/psionicist can be a Kik. Renegade gladiators often join Kik packs.

Role: Lack of prey, or a pack tradition of raiding, has led this thri-kreen from the purity of the hunt into predatory attacks on other sapients. The raider cares mostly for survival, of self and of clutchmate. A Kik is typically chaotic neutral in alignment; none are good, and few are lawful. A Kik usually cares little for non-kreen law or custom.



While some thri-kreen turn away from the pure hunt only temporarily, the Kik has turned away to raiding as a way of life. The Kik eats sapients; the rest of the world is prey. However, the clutch is still sacred: the Kik fights a clutchmate or a packmate only under unusual circumstances or in a challenge for dominance.

Note: A Kik is not the only thri-kreen who eats the flesh of elves and other sapients; merely the most likely to do so.

Weapon Proficiencies: Proficiencies with gythka and zerka are required. A starting Kik can use non-kreen weapons, as raiders are assumed to have been exposed to humanoid culture.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: The proficiencies for the Kik are as follows.

- Bonus Proficiency: None.
- Required Proficiencies: Hunting, survival.
- Recommended: Endurance, set snares, sign language, tracking, weaponsmithing (kreen).
- Barred: Spellcraft, swimming Lever available).

Equipment: The Kik is not restricted to the equipment normally available through a thri-kreen pack; non-kreen equipment is assumed to have been taken in raids.

Special Benefits: A Kik has the standard thri-kreen racial benefits.

Special Hindrances: Due to the subtle (and not-so-subtle) cues given out by Kik, they are easily identified as aggressive predators. Besides the normal prejudices faced by thri-kreen, Kik receive a +2 penalty to reaction rolls when encountering anyone except a member of their own raiding pack (kek) or clutch. In addition, since they have concentrated on the raid over the hunt, Kik suffer a -1 penalty to their hunting proficiency score.

Wealth Options: The Kik receives the standard amount of wealth for the character class. Money, though rare, is allowed.

Tekchakak (Pack Psionicist)

The tekchakak is devoted to the preservation and prosperity of clutch and pack. These psionicists use their abilities to support their clutchmates and packmates, helping to find prey and to defend compatriots against raiders and predators. Within a thri-kreen pack, the tekchakak offers advice, guidance, and teaching in addition to active support through his or her psionic abilities.

Character Class: Only a chakak (psionicisd can take the Tekchakak kit. Tekchakak are not restricted to a particular discipline, though most have Telepathy or Clairsentience as a primary discipline, and Psychometabolism as a secondary discipline.

Role: Tekchakak almost a ways have their chitin decorated in some manner, either through painting or chitinworking. The symbols used make them recognizable among kreen, but humanoids generally cannot tell the difference between the markings of a Tekchakak and any other kreen (a successful use of the heraldry nonweapon proficiency might allow a non-kreen character to recognize some differences).

The Tekchakak is a teacher, an advisor, and a hard worker. The individual serves his or her clutch in whatever way necessary to insure the group's survival and good fortune. The Tekchakak uses psionic abilities to offer advice to the leader, to help any member of the clutch or pack, and in defense of the pack. The most common Psychometabolic abilities developed are those related to healing or ability-sharing.

A Tekchakak usually belongs to a hunting pack, sometimes to a special pack, and occasionally to a raiding pack. Though the Tekchakak is usually disinclined to leave the home pack, the presence of other Tekchakak might free one to seek adventure. These thri-kreen are more anxious than the average specimen of their race to become part of a clutch, so that they might have someone to help.

Weapon Proficiencies: The Tekchakak is initially limited to the weapons of the thri-kreen pack, unless the pack has had extensive contact with other beings, Any thri-kreen weapon is allowed, but the gythka is most often preferred.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: The proficiencies for the Tekchakak are as follows.

- Bonus Proficiencies: Psionic detection, hunting.
- Required Proficiencies: Water find.
- Recommended: Animal lore, artistic ability, chitinworking, healing, psioncraft (rare), survival.
- Barred: Spellcraft, swimming (never available).

Equipment: The Tekchakak is limited to standard thri-kreen equipment. Even after contact with other cultures, traditional equipment is preferred.

Special Benefits: Besides the Tekchakak's bonus proficiencies, the character receives special modifiers when using the Telepathic devotion contact. Normally a thri-kreen has great penalties when trying to contact non-insect lifeforms psionically. The Tekchakak receives the listed penalties (based on life order) instead of those given in Chapter Three.

Life Order	Contact Score Modifier
Insect, Other Arthropod	- 1
Fish, Reptile, Amphibian	- 2
Bird, Mammal	- 3
Monster	- 4
Plant	- 5

Special Hindrances: Because a Tekchakak can be recognized by his or her decorations, the character is often a primary target of opponents. Also, no matter what the character's power level is, psionicists from other races regard the character with disdain, viewing the Tekchakak as using psionics "improperly."

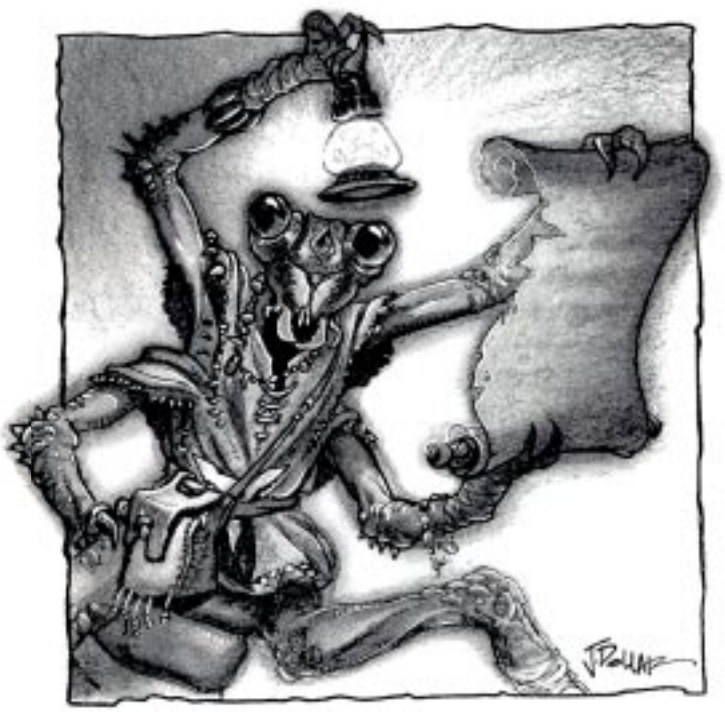
Wealth Options: The Tekchakak receives the standard amount of wealth for a psionicist and forfeits any remaining after buying equipment.

Kiltektet (Student Missionary)

The Kiltektet exhibits qualities that humanoids consider the least likely in thri-kreen. The name Kiltektet means, literally, "the-learning-pack-who-enlightens," and this sums up the philosophy of the members. The Kiltektet is a pack devoted to hunting knowledge, then spreading that knowledge to others. In general, the member of the Kiltektet is less aggressive than other kreen, more knowledgeable about humanoids and humanoid society, and more willing to talk to other beings. Though their numbers are growing, the Kiltektet are still uncommon enough that most humanoids view Kiltektet as aberrations.

Most Kiltektet are Jeral, though some are To'ksa. In the North, any kreen can become Kiltektet, though the kit appeals most to Jeral, Tondi, and J'ez.

Character Class: A Kjltektet can belong to any character class available to the thri-kreen. The majority are multi-class psionicist/priests.



Role: A Kiltektet is different from other kreen, having changed the focus of the hunt to a search for knowledge. Kiltektet are still hunters, and will kill for food or to survive, but most of their energies are devoted to finding knowledge and passing it on to others. In particular, a Kiltektet returns knowledge to other Kiltektet first, then to other kreen, then to humanoids. Kiltektet also seek self-enlightenment, so usually engage in philosophical or artistic endeavors. If asked to discuss something of interest, or to share knowledge, the Kiltektet almost always agrees, no matter who has made the request.

To others, the Kiltektet often seems overly concerned with collecting knowledge. Some collect books and scrolls, others learn stories, and some collect samples of art and crafts. Some seek simply to see as much as possible, or to experience many different things. Eventually, a Kiltektet hopes to share whatever is learned with other Kiltektet and other kreen.

To become a member of the Kiltektet, a kreen must first be accepted as a clutchmate by one or more members. The Kiltektet clutchmate or clutchmates then study the other individual to



determine if he or she would be a worthy addition to the Kiltektet. Generally, the candidate is informed of the examination and asked if he or she desires to join. If the candidate refuses, no more is said; if desire is expressed, one member of the Kiltektet asks questions and attempts to instill in the candidate a thirst for knowledge. This process can take anywhere from a few hours to several weeks, and at the end, the member of the Kiltektet informs the other of the decision.

On rare occasions, a thri-kreen ask to join the Kiltektet. This is done by approaching a member and expressing an interest in learning. The Kiltektet then goes through the same examination process as if the applicant had been approached by Kiltektet, first attempting the clutch-bond, then moving onto questions and evaluations.

Some kreen are also raised from hatching as Kiltektet, in the manner of the first thri-kreen Kiltektet of the Tyr Region (as described in "The Great Race for Ka'Cha" in Chapter One). These kreen are considered Kiltektet from the moment they hatch, so never have to seek acceptance into the pack. This method has been known to produce a few maladjusted Kltektet, who take the hunt for knowledge less seriously than they should. Normally, though, the Kltektet who raise a clutch into membership devote enough time and energy to their charges to insure their devotion to the cause.

Note: In the North, the Kiltektet has a much more militant stance. The members seek knowledge and try to spread it, sometimes to the point of forcing others to accept their way.

Weapon Proficiencies: Most Kiltektet use kreen weapons, but their greater exposure to other cultures allows them humanoid weapons as well. Tohr kreen influence gives the Kiltektet kit a bonus proficiency for the kyorkcha. In the North, the free proficiency is gained because of the para-military nature of the northern Kiltektet. If a character has come late to the Kiltektet, the proficiency must be the next one selected.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: The proficiencies for the Kiltektet are as follows.

- Bonus Proficiencies: Hunting, reading/writing (any single language). Many Kiltektet learn the kreen syllabary (described under "Language and Communication" in Chapter 4).
- Required Proficiencies: Artistic ability.
- Recommended: Chitinworking, direction sense, endurance, etiquette (standard or tribal), heraldry (standard or kreen), herbalism (kreen), history (local or ancient), languages (modern or ancient).
- Barred: Spellcraft, swimming (never available).

Equipment: Because of the Kiltektet's exposure to different societies, the character can begin play with any equipment normally found in the campaign. The character must have a sack, backpack, or some other way to can-y souvenirs or collected items.

Kiltektet always wear jewelry of some kind; a Jeral usually prefers to have a small piece of obsidian placed in the forehead by a chitinworker, while a To'ksa often wears rings beneath the mandibles.

Special Benefits: A character with the Kiltektet kit is a member of an extended pack. Though the pack has no hierarchy, the members value their bond with one another and will aid each other in any way possible, so long as such aid does not violate any Kiltektet beliefs. Thus, the member of the Kiltektet has a widespread support network. Kiltektet recognize each other by their decorative jewelry, their attitudes, the items they can-y, or through more subtle clues. Other than the benefits of the pack and the kit's free proficiencies, the Kiltektet gains no other benefits.

Special Hindrances: Kiltektet are uncommon at best, so other members might be hard to find. Hunting thri-kreen sometimes show disdain for the characters. Kik (and other raiders) have no respect for Kiltektet, and the feeling is mutual. Kiltektet receive a +2 penalty to reaction rolls when they encounter kreen raiders. A Kiltektet never joins a raiding pack.

Wealth Options: Kiltektet members receive the standard wealth for their class. The character has at least some understanding of money and keeps any leftover starting wealth in that form.

The Taste of Fear

The Taste of Fear is an adventure designed for three to six characters of levels 6 through 3. Ideally, most or all of the participating characters are thri-kreen. At a minimum, two characters should be of the mantis race, for *The Taste of Fear is* geared directly toward thri-kreen. However, this adventure is both playable and enjoyable for the other player character (PC) races if only two PCs are thri-kreen. If a party has no thri-kreen player characters, the Dungeon Master (DM) can introduce one or more thri-kreen from the Nonplayer Character (NPC) section at the end of the adventure. Three such NPCs are provided. These can be adapted for PC use if a player is without a character. If the NPCs aren't needed as player characters, the DM can use them to bolster a weak party or as a friendly encounter later in the adventure.

In addition to this book, the DM will need the DARK SUN® boxed set, the *DUNGEON MASTER®* Guide, the *Player's Handbook,* and *The Complete Psionics Handbook.* A useful, though not strictly necessary, adjunct to this adventure is the first DARK SUN MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® appendix, *Terrors* of *the Desert,* though core statistics for monsters used in this adventure are given with the encounter information. The *Prism Pentad* novel series can give players and DMs a feel for the burning world of Athas (however, note that the events in this adventure take place after the fifth novel, *The Cerulean Storm).* Another accessory, *The Will* and *the Way,* contains new psionic powers, whi1e *Earth, Air,* Fire, and *Water* gives information on elemental priests. Of course, being familiar with the first part of this accessory will enhance the DM's ability to lend a truly "thri-kreen feel" to this adventure.

The Taste of Fear is a stand-alone adventure. While it occurs after the events in previous modules, its isolated location and limited impact on the events in the Tablelands allow it to be set earlier or later in order to better fit in with an existing campaign. Future releases will deal with the civilized tohr-kreen, and other creatures of the northern lands beyond Tyr.

Adventure Overview

The Taste of Fear takes place west of the Forest Ridge, in a part of the Hinterlands not yet explored. The Overview Map on the next page outlines this area, and gives the sites of planned and optional encounters. It is for the DM's use only.

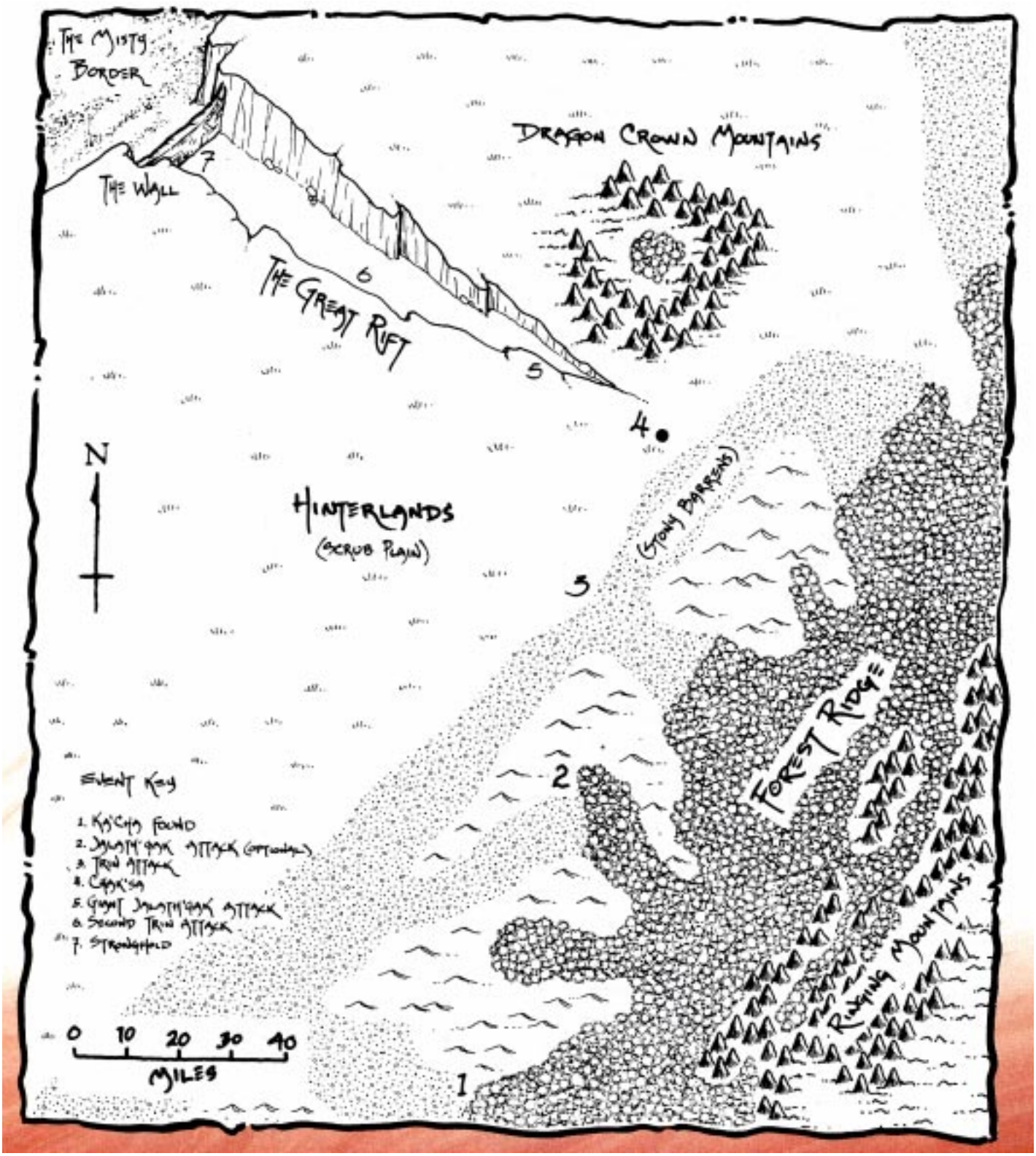
This adventure is divided into several parts.

"Part One: To Mourn Ka'Cha," deals with the death of Ka'Cha, a spiritual leader of the thri-kreen. The PCs encounter him on his journey to the Chak'sa, a place that he must reach before he dies. They find him in the far western portion of the Hinterlands, just beyond the Forest Ridge and 100 miles south of the Dragon Crown Mountains.

The great seeker of enlightenment is old and quite feeble. His last goal is to rest at the Chak'sa (the Head, as it is called by non-kreen), a site of great significance to the thri-kreen. A sudden earth tremor rocks his group and Ka'Cha is critically injured. The PCs are drawn to his location and head northward with Ka'Cha. The Chak'sa lies many miles due north, just south of the Dragon Crown Mountains. Ka'Cha can travel no more quickly than a dwarf character. On the journey, the PCs learn more of thri-kreen traditions.

At some point during the journey, the DM can stage an optional encounter. A swarm of wild *jalath'gak* attack. Or the DM can skip this encounter and go on to one more typical of the Hinterlands: a pair of *trin* attack the PC party. These savage, primitive creatures are distantly related to thri-kreen. They make no attempt to talk to the party and fight fiercely. (The trin are tough to defeat; if the party is too weak for them, the DM might use any NPCs to bear the brunt of the attack.) PCs arrive at the Chak'sa shortly thereafter.

"Part Two: Memories of Horror," focuses on events taking place at the Chak'sa. Here, just south of the Dragon Crown mountains, a giant thri-kreen head of stone rises out of the sand. (The Chak'sa was first revealed in the adventure, *Dragon's Crown* – the information presented in this adventure updates the details given there. Those who participated in that adventure may recognize the location.)


The Misty Border
The Wall
Dragon Crown Mountains
The Great Rift
Hinterlands
(Scrub Plain)
(Stony Barrens)
Forest Ridge
Ringing Mountains
N
Event Key
1. Ka'cha Found
2. Jalath'gak Attack (optional)
3. Trin Attack
4. Chak'sa
5. Giant Jalath'gak Attack
6. Second Trin Attack
7. Stronghold
0 10 20 30 40
Miles

Ka'Cha and the group come to a low stone dais before the Chak'sa. Any thri-kreen who approach the dais with reverence have racial memories stirred, much as their memories were stirred at birth and upon their coming of age. PC thri-kreen discover racial memories of an ancient thri-kreen leader, and of an avangion called the Great One (these racial memories are detailed on Player Handout #1). Ka'Cha dies and the PCs place his body at rest according to the thri-kreen way.

As the PCs return from a final ritual hunt, they are stunned to discover interlopers desecrating the Chak'sa. Beings similar to thri-kreen, are smashing at the Head and prying loose its multifaceted eyes. PC thri-kreen who see these zif-trjn'ta (as the creatures are really called) have another racial memory triggered. As outlined in Player Handout #2, memories of horror and fear grip the thri-kreen PCs. They recall fleeing from the insect masters of a strange city far to the north.

The PCs have several options at this point. They can attack the zik-trin'ta, observe the intruders to learn something of their plans, or try to talk with them. Whichever option is chosen, the PCs discover the zik-trin'ta are an advance scouting force from the north, and they are defacing the Chak'sa so that racial memories of the southern thri-kreen remain buried (this is an interesting theory, but they're wrong). Unless the PCs somehow stop them here—unlikely—they flee.

"Part Three: Race of Destiny," details the PCs' efforts to stop the zik-trin'ta from returning to their homeland, beyond the treacherous Jagged Cliffs. The zik-trin'ta's place of origin is a secret empire beyond the treacherous cliffs. The cliffs have, for the most part, blocked all but the most fortunate scouting expeditions. However, a recent earthquake has created a rift that has breached the cliffs near the Dragon Crown Mountains—a rift that allows these agents access to the lands of Tyr.

The thri-kreen in the party know instinctively that the intruders are enemies, and will make every effort to pursue the zik-trin'ta into the Rift. At the end of the chase they discover a partially completed stronghold on their side of the Jagged Cliffs. Behind the or Tess, a strange wall is already in place, preventing anyone from exploring the Rift... or beyond. They might encounter a giant jalath'gak in the Rift, if they did not encounter any in the first part of the adventure.

The adventure can end in several ways. The PCs might destroy the scouting group before it reaches the stronghold; they might attack the stronghold itself (and risk being overrun by more tohr-kreen reinforcements); or they may observe and return to the friendlier lands to the south. It is possible for the PCs to die if they persist in attacking the stronghold-they are *not* meant to pass the barrier in the Rift at this time. Ideally, the players should realize the threat posed by a possible tohr-kreen invasion, and warn their clutches and friends.

Finally, whether the PCs recover the remnants of the Chak'sa or not, and what they decide to do with the information they gain, will determine the outcome of the adventure. There is a short section on awarding experience, some notes on principal NPCs, the player handouts, and descriptions of several of the more important monsters used in the course of the adventure.

> *Important Note:* The DM need not force the pace of this adventure. If the party destroys the intruders without reaching the Rift, the long-term result is a slowly increasing number of encounters with future tohr-kreen scouting groups, until a local ruler or some other NPC decides to investigate the matter, possibly using the PCs as his or her agents.

Running This Adventure

On Athas, psionic powers and abilities are commonly encountered—the DM must understand psionics and be prepared for their use in combat.

Second, read this module thoroughly before running the adventure. Decide before you start how you will stage each of the various encounters and what kreen lore you will reveal.



Third, because this adventure is geared toward thri-kreen, the DM should encourage players to explore the unique nature of the insect mentality. Good role-players might be rewarded with bonus experience points (see XP Awards). Though thri-kreen move fast, never sleep, and have minimal need of water, the weakness of Ka'Cha will slow their movement to the pace of other PC races.

Note that the encounters in this adventure are presented in a particular order. *The Taste of Fear* is fairly straightforward, but an enterprising DM should feel free to use the optional encounters given here, or create other encounters for added excitement.

A Note about the Tohr-Kreen Empire

This adventure briefly mentions the large tohr-kreen empire that lies north and west of the Jagged Cliffs. This part of Athas is well beyond the Tyr Region (as shown on the map of Tyr in the original DARK SUN boxed set). The Overview Map for this adventure shows the Rift, which will eventually lead to the tohr-kreen empire. The entire empire, and several other cultures, is detailed in the revised DARK SUN® boxed set [2438], available in Fall 1995. That set describes the lands of the tohr-kreen and other new regions beyond the Tablelands Tyr that can be used as a setting for all-new DARK SUN adventures.



To Mourn Ka'Cha

To begin *The Taste of Fear* with "To Mourn Ka'Cha," the PCs should be close to the starting point noted on the Overview Map. Typical set-ups include rumors of hidden treasure or information in the area, or the pursuit of a rare or valuable creature. Whatever the reason, it should not be strong enough to prevent the players from being pulled into this adventure.

The adventure starts off with a telepathic contact from the group including Ka'Cha, a thri-kreen of great age and renown. While many kreen have been named after the first Ka'Cha, *this* Ka'Cha is lauded for his devotion to learning and his desire to seek knowledge in all its forms. Ka'Cha is a leader of a clutch that follows the ways of Kiltektet, those who believe the clutch is all.

Ka'Cha and a number of his closest clutchmates had been journeying westward through the Forest Ridge and into the Hinterlands beyond, on Ka'Cha's final pilgrimage. Most of them, including Ka'Cha, had fallen prey to chitin rot. They had been relieved to be free of the wet, strange forest and had made camp in the stony barrens just beyond.

Suddenly, a tremor shifted the land. Ka'Cha, in his weakened state, fell to the earth. A small outcropping of rocks, knocked loose by the tremor, fell upon him. Ordinarily, the thri-kreen would have easily survived such a mishap, but with his weakened exoskeleton he has taken critical injuries.

Any psionic character in the player character party receives the following impressions:

The tentative trickle ofanother mind reaches out to you, its touch soft *like the inner thigh of a freshly killed crodlu. The image tightens in your mind, and you know, with absolute surety, that a thri-kreen is contacting you. Slowly a faint buzzing begins to grow inside your head, then builds to a wail. You are swamped by a moment of sorrow so great you pause.*

"Ka'Cha is dying. Ka'Cha is dying. Ka'Cha is *dying. " The words whisper over and over inside your mind, washing across you like the sand of a dying storm. "'Must go north, to the final completion. Go north ..."*

The words shift away into an *image of a thri-kreen, lying broken among stones, surrounded by stun ted trees and sand.*

Even non-psionic characters feel a great sadness, a sense of loss, and the gentle pull of a task left undone. Thri-kreen characters will instinctively realize that what is happening here is, in some way, fundamental to their identity as a species. (If the PCs ignore the telepathic suggestion and choose not to investigate, there's no adventure.)

As the PCs travel to the location of the accident, guided by a feeling they cannot understand, the DM might stage several encounters according to the terrain they journey through. The DARK SUN boxed set has detailed encounter information and the DARK SUN MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM appendix has many different types of creatures to use. A few typical encounters follow.

- *In sandy wastes:*

Anakore (6): Int Low (6); AL NE; AC 8; MV 9, Br 15; HD3;hp21,19,17,15,13,11;THAC017;#AT2; Dmg 1d4/1d4; SA surprise (opponents –3), bite (if both claws hit, save or paralyzed 1d4 rnds), suffocation (if paralyzed, 1d4/rnd); SD burrowing (–2 AC); SZM (6' tall); ML Steady (11); XP 650 each.

While these dimwitted humanoids are not particularly dangerous to thri-kreen, who can easily leap out of the way, they do pose a challenge to more earthbound races. These anakore have burrowed underneath the party and will attack, each striking from beneath a potential victim. The PCs suffer a –3 penalty to their surprise roll; further, the anakore fight from under the sand, imposing a –2 penalty to the PCs' attack rolls. An anakore that hits with both claws will bite automatically. Though the bite itself causes no damage, it injects a poisonous saliva. The victim must save vs. paralyzation or be unable to move for 1d4 rounds. A paralyzed creature is dragged below



the sand, receiving an additional 1d4 points per round of suffocation damage. Anakore are nonpsionic. Optionally, no thri-kreen player character will be hit on the first round, giving these characters a chance to demonstrate clutch loyalty.

- *In stony barrens:*

Gaj (1): Int very (11); AL NE; AC 2; MV 12; HD 7; hp 48; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA psionics, mandible hold 5/rnd, lose 1d4 Int/Wis); SD half damage from nonmetal weapons; SZL (6′ diameter); ML Champion (15); XP 2,000. Psionics: PSP's 120; PS 17; *Attacks* II, EW, PB; *Defenses* IF MB, M—, TW; *Disciplines* Telepathy; *Sciences* domination, mass domination, probe, tower *of* iron will; *Devotions* aversion, contact, ego whip, ESP false sensory input, id insinuation, inflict pain, intellect fortress, life detection, mental barrier, mind blank, psionic blast, send thoughts.

This psionic monster is a reptilian giant beetle that has a spongy white head about 2 feet in diameter and huge mandibles. Its extremely hard shell reduces the damage inflicted by nonmetallic weapons to half. Further, it can pull its soft head inside the chitin, only its massive mandibles showing, with no loss of combat effectiveness. It first attack psionically, in order to disable its victim, before moving in with its two huge mandibles for the kill.

A creature struck by its mandibles must save vs. paralyzation or be pinned by them—automatically receiving 5 points of damage each round thereafter. The gaj then wraps its feathery antenna around the victim's head and uses its psionic probe power. This destructive process inflicts a loss of 1d4 points of Intelligence or Wisdom to the victim each round (each point lost is determined randomly). The loss is permanent; at 0 in either ability score, the victim becomes a mindless husk and will soon die.

- *In badlands:*

Silk Wyrm (1): Int Low (6); AL N; AC 3; MV 12, Fl 12 (C); HD 6; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA paralysis (1d4 days), psionics; SZL (50′ long); ML Steady (12); XP 1,400. Psionics: PSPs 45; PS 15; *Attacks* nil; *Defenses* nil; *Disciplines* psychometabolism; *Sciences* shadow form.

Silk wyrms are most commonly seen flying through the air during the day, searching for prey. They attack at night, when they assume their psionic shadow form and sneak into adventurers' camps. Anyone bitten must save vs. poison or be paralyzed for 1d4 days (though a *remove curse* cancels the effect). The wyrm drags its victim away and encases it in a sheath of silk. The victim may linger for a week or two, during which time the wyrm pushes aside the cocoon to bite its victim's neck, draining blood and causing both the loss of 1 point of Constitution and paralysis for another 1d4 days. Creatures reduced to 0 Constitution die, entirely drained of blood.

When staging this encounter, the party will first see the silk wyrms in the air during the day, very far away. Monitor the party's arrangements for guarding their camp at night. If they are expecting an attack by silk wyrms and try to hide their camp, they will avoid this encounter. If they just post an especially careful watch, they cannot be surprised. If they take no special precautions, roll for surprise as normal. If they post no guards, they will be surprised.

Ka'Cha

Regardless of what encounters the DM chooses to stage on the journey to the site of the Chak'sa, the PCs arrive in due course. This part of the adventure deals with the thri-kreen mentality and offers excellent opportunities for role-playing for the players and the DM alike. Read the following to the players as their characters near the source of the psionic call.



To Mourn Ka'Cha

The sun sets just as you climb yet another small hill, wondering how many more until you finally see Ka'Cha. But as you scramble nimbly over the rocks, you sense this hill is different—and you are *right. Thri-kreen minds reach out to embrace you, to bid you welcome as you crest the hill. You hear the clicking of mandibles.*

Below you in a tiny valley, a group of three thri-kreen walk in a circle around the *body of another, who lies still on a patch of rocky ground. A fifith thri-kreen bends over the fallen one.*

As the PCs near the circle, thri-kreen move aside to allow them passage. All suffer from hard travel and chitin rot. The thri-kreen on the ground is the most ancient of that race the PCs have seen. Next to him (thri-kreen realize instinctively the ancient one is male), an old thri-kreen rises slowly from his side.

This is Tiki, once constant companion and clutchmate of Ka'Cha, though not his mate (Tiki is To'ksa, Ka'Cha is Jeral). She, too, is suffering from chitin rot. It has spread across her exoskeleton, lending her an appearance of age and decrepitude. Tiki holds out all four limbs in a gesture of friendship and approaches the newcomers. Read the following to the players.

"I am Tiki. I bid you huntluck. Are you friend or foe or not, of Ka'Cha?" the thri-kreen ask formally.

She waits politely for the PCs to answer. Only thri-kreen PCs can discern the fatigue in her voice, and only they see just how far the chitin rot has eaten into her body. She seems on the verge of collapse.

The PCs are likely to respond with their names and where they are from. After the PCs have spoken, Tiki addresses the thri-kreen characters.

"Ka'Cha is most pleased that you have come. His second heart knows that all thri-kreen are but one clutch, and he rejoices to see you. The clutch is all," Tiki in tones gently.

If there are non-kreen player characters in the party, Tiki adds the following.

"And Ka'Cha is happy to see you, for he believes that you too are a part of the larger whole." Tiki's eyes whirl momentarily. "I confess I do not wholly understand Ka'Cha's forbearance, but it suffices that he counts others like you as his clutchmates."

When you are ready to continue, read the following to the players.

"Ka'Cha is ancient, and his life is nearly fled. We were on our way to a great sacred place, where Ka'Cha would complete his life's quest. We have traveled far, but at this place the quaking earth has injured Ka'Cha most severely.

"Four of us remain in Ka'Cha's clutch, but we have not the strength to carry out his wishes. Will you take him north, to the Chak'sa, the great stone head of our people"

The Chak'sa is located some 100 miles north of the PCs' present location, just south of the Dragon Crown Mountains (see the Overview Map). Given Ka'Cha's condition, the journey will take at least a week. Regardless of their answer, Tiki continues.

"You may join us for food. We have some fresh crodlu, and there is plenty to spare. "She then wearily leaves you, the thri-kreen moving in the circle gently pausing to allow her to pass.

At this time, a low sound builds in the moving thri-kreen. To non-kreen, it is an eerie, somewhat grating noise, its pitch just barely within human perception. To the thri-kreen, it is the *hurn of reverence,* reserved only for moments of great and solemn sorrow. Not taught to thri-kreen young, it is a part of racial memory; upon hearing it now, any thri-kreen PC who



The Tale of the First Ka'Cha

(Read aloud or paraphrase the following to the players).

"I would tell you now the tale of the first Ka'Cha, the first thri-kreen who knew and taught the truth: that the clutch is all. " Ka'Cha pa uses for breath, then continues.

"Many, many years ago lived a thri-kreen named Ka'Cha. They say *he was the first of the Kiltektet, the first who thirsted for enlightenment. True to his name, this Ka'Cha sought knowledge,* as *did I.*

"Ka'Cha wandered the world over, seeking new people and new insights. He bonded with others, making clutchmates even of those who were not kreen. But these others accepted and even learned the way of the thri-kreen, and Ka'Cha learned of them as well.

"One day, Ka'Cha knew the time had come to return home, to seek out Ka'Tho, she who would be his mate. But Ka'Cha and his clutch were attacked by a fiend, who used ha *ted magic to break the clutch. Ka'Cha knew there* was no *hope, save that his human clutchmate could wield a magical weapon against the fiend. But the weapon was not nearby, and so Ka'Cha sacrificed himself so that others might live once the weapon arrived.* Ka' *Cha hurled himself at the fiend; all to no avail, for the fiend was invulnerable to Ka'Cha's* claws. *Ka'Cha died. "*

'His clutchmates killed the fiend, now that the human had arrived with the weapon. But it was a *bitter* victory *indeed. How could they have failed their clutchleader? they thought. How could he have died so needlessly? A moment more would have sufficed.*

"Then the clutch met Ka'Tho, Ka'Cha's in tended, and she said, It must not be so. The clutches of Ka'Cha need him. Your traveling clutch, our Kiltektet clutch, and the clutch that he and I were to begin – all need Ka'Cha's wisdom and power.' Ka'Cha's clutchmates agreed, and thus began the Great Race.

"Ka'Cha's clutch carried his body over many, many miles, across terrain of broken rock and silt, hoping to meet up with the powerful thok [priest] named Klik. They had but ten days. If they were in time, there was a chance they could restore Ka'Cha. The clutch set a grueling pace, and the thri-kreen met up with Klik on the tenth day. "

Ka'Cha pauses, his mandibles clicking softly. "The ritual worked, and Ka'Cha was restored to life. He went on to form many clutches with Ka'Tho, and to spread the ways of the Kiltektet to all who would listen." The aged thri-kreen look around your group.

"I have tied to do the same. But now my body is worn out, beyond repair, and I am old. Before I die, I must reach the Chak'sa, for there is a final knowing, a completion that can be found only there. At that place, lay me with honor. On this journey I shall teach you how it is done. Leave me at the Chak'sa so that I may learn even beyond the now."

"Once this is done, go on one final hunt, and leave a part of the kill as an offering at Chak'sa."

wishes can join in. While this is often used to honor the dead, the thri-kreen do it now, as they know not all of them can go with Ka'Cha.

Eventually, the PCs eat and decide what to do. If they do not agree to undertake the journey with Ka'Cha, the adventure is over, and thri-kreen PCs will have lost a chance to find out important information. Otherwise, the PC party should be ready to leave with Ka'Cha first thing in the morning. The thri-kreen is old and feeble, but able to travel. The other thri-kreen can be used as NPCs, played by players, or sent by Ka'Cha with messages to his other clutches. It is possible Ka'Cha has foreseen the events to follow; in any event, his path may no longer be that of his clutchmates and followers. He goes to the Chak'sa, a long lost monument of the thri-kreen, located about 100 miles north of this camp, somewhat south of the Dragon Crown Mountains.

In the journey that follows, Ka'Cha can impart his lore to thri-kreen PCs, giving them whatever general information on thri-kreen culture and history the DM desires. The beginning of other plots concerning the thri-kreen can be introduced.

On the first night, he tells them the tale of the first Ka'Cha (see sidebar). Other suitable stories include "White Lightning" from *Dragon's Crown,* and the story of Kritik's Pack from *Slave Tribes.* Also, he will request a final ritual hunt after his death, with the kill to be placed before Chak'sa.

An Optional Encounter

This encounter introduces the adventurers to wild jalath'gak. These are enormous winged insects, used by some thri-kreen packs as draft animals, but also found in the wild. The abdomen of the jalath'gak holds up to 16 gallons of water, making it valuable in times of need. Depending on the strength of the party, the DM may adjust the number encountered.

These jalath'gak have gathered together in a loose hunting swarm. Any thri-kreen PC will be able to identify them and will know that they can communicate with each other using pheromones. (Thri-kreen can also communicate with them, though complex thoughts cannot be exchanged. If a player thri-kreen attempts this, the jalath'gak swarm can be satisfied with an offering of food.)

These wild jalath'gak each attack with six limbs and a bite. If the bite hits, the jalath'gak begins to drain blood, causing 2d6 points of damage each round until the victim breaks free (this requires a successful *open doors* roll). Once the blood draining starts, the jalath'gak can continue to attack with its limbs, though not its bite, and its victim cannot attack.

A jalath'gak reduced to 10 hit points will release a foul-smelling *stink cloud* that is 30 feet in diameter to its front. Those within must save vs. poison or be nauseated for 1d6 rounds. The jalath'gak will flee.

Jalath'gak (2): Int animal (1); AL N; AC 5; MV 3, Fl 24 (D); HD 8+8; hp 44 each; THAC0 11; #AT 7; Dmg 1d4x6 (claws)/1d8 (bite); SA blood drain (bite, 2d6 each round); SD 30' stink cloud (save vs. poison, incapacitated 1d6 rnds); SZ H (13' long); ML Elite (13); XP 4,000.

A New Menace

About 25 miles from the Chak'sa, the PCs are attacked by a pair of thri-trin. Have the party roll for surprise (at−2), and read the following.

Without warning, two large insectoid forms leap at you. You have only a moment to glimpse sandy mottled skin and wicked mandibles before they are upon you with arms flailing. They click and pop something uninteliigible. {To their horror, thri-kreen realize its words sound like the kreen tongue.]

These are *trin,* a primitive, vicious kreen species rarely encountered in the Tablelands. They are much more common in the Hinterlands. If they have surprised the party they have a free round of attack. Their stats are as follows.

Trin (2): Int low (5); AL CN; AC 5; MV 24; HD 8+3; hp 43, 40; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 3d6/3d6 (claws); SA hold (2 claws, bite +4 for 1d6+1 and paralysis), leap, camouflage/surprise; SD missile dodge (11+), mind blank; SZL (9' long; ML Elite (13-l4); XP 6,000 each.

Resembling young thri-kreen, these feral yellow-and-gray mottled mantids are ferocious. Trin attack and eat anything that isn't of their own immediate clutch. A trin has two arms and four legs, more mantis-like than the thri-kreen. Its large, deadly claws can hold a victim helpless, and it can move even faster than a thri-kreen.

Thri-trin typically travel in large pack. These two are hunting for a larger group. They have hidden here to leap upon the PCs. They have seen Ka'Cha and know that he is old and weak. One will try to seize him, while the other fends off the party.

If a trin hits with both claws, the opponent is held and the

trin's bite against that opponent has a +4 bonus. A held creature can break free by making a bend bars roll; however, if the roll fails, the victim takes an immediate 3d6 points of damage as the trin's claws instinctively snap down.

Any NPC thri-kreen that have come along might try to communicate with the strange creatures, who are so obviously a related species. This won't work, and it is likely that Ka'Cha will be taken. Though the PCs might think there is some special reason behind such an attempt, there is none; the trin simply want the easy meal Ka'Cha's body represents.

The thri-trin attack mercilessly, trying to carry off Ka'Cha, or the first party member slain. This encounter is meant to be difficult, for it foreshadows a new threat to the Tyr Region. While the trin ambush and slay most zik-trin braving the Jagged Cliffs, a major expedition by the zik-trin could drive large numbers of trin into the Tablelands.

If the party is weak, the DM might position NPCs to take the brunt of this attack. Alternately, trin are unused to wizard magic; clever use of flashy spells might drive them off. If the attack goes badly for the trin they will flee, though only at the last possible moment. Trin reduced to 10 hit points or less will certainly flee, seeking easier prey elsewhere.

After the attack, the PCs might mull over the strange creatures, perhaps examining the body if they killed one. If the DM chooses, one or more of the remaining NPCs might decide to return to a thri-kreen clutch or pack to warn them of the trim Unfortunately for the NPC, more thri-trin have moved southward, and he or she never returns home.

The Journey Onward

If the PCs continue onward, their journey is smooth. The DM should give the PCs the time they need to rest up and regain lost hit points and/or spells. Regardless of how long it takes to cover the last 25 miles, the party should make its final approach in the morning.



This part of *The Taste of Fear*, "Memories of Horror," focuses on events taking place at the Chak'sa, the Head. This area is just south of the Dragon Crown Mountains see the Overview Map). The Chak'sa, a giant stone image of a thri-kreen head, is venerated by all thri-kreen—both Jeral and To'ksa alike. Ordinarily, simply the sight of the Head is enough to trigger racial memories in thri-kreen, but the earthquake has shifted the Chak'sa. The link to memory that evoked immediate reverence has been broken, a condition that may have unforeseen ramifications for the thri-kreen of the Tablelands.

Arrival at the Chak'sa

The PCs arrive at daybreak. The Chak'sa Map shows the layout of the area surrounding the Head. Read or paraphrase the following to the players.

The sun rises to your right as you continue marching northward, toward the Chak'sa. The shadows give way to a feint, luminous light that slowly builds in to true daybreak. Off in the distance you catch sight of mountains —but a closer promontory of stark white rock demands your attention. It is flanked by a half-dozen fluted columns, some leaning wildly and others fallen over.

When you arrive at the rock, you see that directly facing you is what appears to be a large knob of white rock over 70 feet high, freshly slivered. At its base is the castoff stone, one part of it recognizable as a human; nose. Rounding to the other side you see the image of a giant thri-kreen's head, perhaps 50 feet across and more that in height. Huge, multifaceted eyes of purple glass, perhaps 10 feet across, scoured to dimness with age and sand, nevertheless seem to swirl with eerie life. The head faces northwestward, and the ground surrounding it is ruptured and broken.

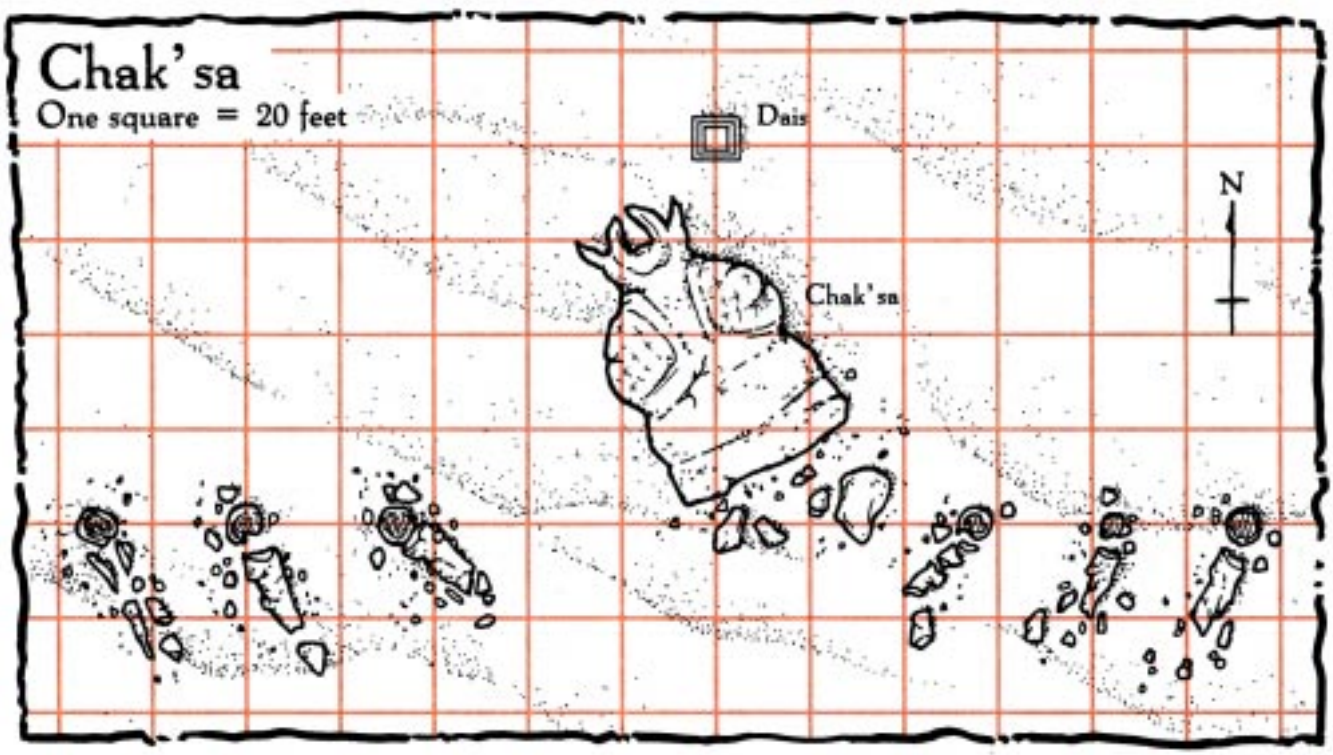
The Chak'sa originally faced due north, but the recent massive earthquake has shifted its direction. The Chak'sa is composed of a white marble unlike any rock found within many miles. Somehow it was hauled to this area, obviously with great effort. In DRAGON'S CROWN the Head was partially covered by shifting sand; here, the earthquake has revealed all of the Head. Faint ridges of marble descend into the sandy ground, perhaps portions of a thri-kreen body attached to the head. The remnants of six columns, made of the same white rock, are nearby. They once ringed the human side of the Head, but have no special significance for thri-kreen. On the side with the thri-kreen head is a dais of the same material.

The multifaceted eyes on the stone thri-kreen are skillfully constructed of transparent purple glass. Despite the earthquake, the facets are still intact (unless broken in the previous adventure), though they have been scratched beyond repair from the blowing sand. Each eye has 900 facets.

If any of the PCs in the party took part in the adventure DRAGON'S CROWN, read or paraphrase the following to that PC alone. A thri-kreen NPC with the party might also impart the information to the others. Note that the thri-kreen do *not* automatically begin worshiping the Chak'sa as in that previous adventure.

You wonder at the destruction of the human head that had once been attached to the back of the Chak'sa, but only for a moment. Something within you jolts into sudden realization: the Chak'sa has moved. You swear the last time you saw the Head it was facing north. How can this be? you wonder. What could have done this?

The PCs may want to confer over how and why the Chak'sa has changed. Though they are likely to scout about, they find nothing unusual, save for the shifted Head and the strewn rubble. If they roam farther afield, perhaps ten miles or more northwestward, they will see the beginnings of a shallow rift in the ground, widening and deepening as it heads northwest—directly along the sight of the Chak'sa. The PCs might conclude, and rightly so, that the recent earthquakes have damaged this region and shifted the Chak'sa. They might also



conclude, again rightly so, that the earthquake split the Chak'sa in two, destroying the human side of the Head.

When the PCs are ready to bring Ka'Cha's body to the dais, move on to the next section. Note that some of the information here differs from what was presented in *Dragon's Crown* the earthquake has had this effect.

To Worship at the Chak'sa

The memories of the Chak'sa are ancient indeed, and only here can they be triggered. An examination of the dais in front of the Head reveals a series of faint slash marks around its base. These are an ancient language that, if translated, read: *"When the age of the Great One is come, make ye a joyous light."* If any character steps on the dais, purple beams of light flash forth (although unlike in *Dragon's Crown,* when they swept the sky like searchlights, now they sweep outward, along the sandy desert dunes). Ka'Cha will merely observe what the player characters do at this point, and will begin his final meditations when someone triggers the light beams. He can translate the slash marks, and will do so for the party if asked, though he will have no more idea than they what the inscription means.

When he begins his meditations, he will stare into the eyes of Chak'sa and invite player thri-kreen to join him. If any do, read or paraphrase the following.

Into your mind slips, unbidden, an ancient racial memory. You know with absolute certainty what the marks on the dais mean.

Suddenly bright purple light builds within the faceted eyes, one beam swelling behind each of the many facets. They burst their confines, locking upon you for a fleeting instant. In that moment you recall the secrets of your race, and your mind is flooded with memories. It is similar to the moment you first learned to

hunt, though even more poignantly so. Then the beams begin wandering skyward, seemingly to beckon to the heavens.

Those not participating see nothing unusual; the Chak'sa remains bare, wind-scoured stone, and no lights come from it.

However, those players whose thri-kreen characters participate in the meditation are given Player Handout #1 (see page 123). This is the information their characters learn in that brief, blinding flash of knowledge. The information can be told to the other characters, but it is very difficult to do so. Trying to describe it is akin to telling someone how to breathe.

In the meantime, everyone has probably forgotten about Ka'Cha. He has stood, transfixed by his own private vision, while player character thri-kreen are reacting to their own racial memories. Then, slowly, he topples to the sand. Ka'Cha is dead.

After the PCs have thoroughly inspected the area and paid their respects to the Chak'sa, they must eventually turn to the business at hand: the funeral of Ka'Cha. Proceed to the next section.

Notes on the Chakka: Although it's unlikely that thri-kreen PCs would panic at the sight of the beams of light, some PCs may try to break the purple glass. This would be considered a serious offense by thri-kreen. If shattered, the entire eye explodes into hundreds of shards that inflict 3d6 points of damage to anyone standing within 60 feet of the Chak'sa. (The other eye has a 15% chance to spontaneously explode, too.) A broken eye does not produce any more light, even if another PC tries to activate the Chak'sa. Up to 3dl0 pieces of glass, 4x4 inches square, may still be intact; these may be gathered and sold to merchants as curiosity pieces. Each weighs half a pound. Although there is a hollow area behind each eye, there is nothing inside the Head. Later, the eyes will be broken, but at the DM's option, some shards may be able to trigger certain thri-kreen racial memories. The conditions under which they may do so are up to the DM.

The Funeral of Ka'Cha

This part of the adventure gives the players an opportunity to role-play a thri-kreen funeral. If desired, the players can present their own thoughts and ideas on how the ceremony for Ka'Cha should go (among thri-kreen these vary from clutch to clutch). Otherwise, the DM can read aloud or paraphrase the following to the players.

The moment has come. You lay Ka'Cha's body upon the dais, and you are pleased when you see the Chak'sa bless him with its lights of purple. Some of you gather around his body, humming the Song of Reverence. Others begin digging away at the soft sand, using only your claws in reverence, knowing that to use tools would be to mock how Ka'Cha came into the world, for no tools helped him then.

When a perfect image of a chatkcha a few inches deep has been made, you lay Ka'Cha gently inside it. Others lay Ka'Cha's few possessions beside him, their humming rising to a still higher pitch.

When Ka'Cha's remains have been placed upon the all-encompassing earth, you and your clutchmates begin clicking your mandibles together in a chant that lasts for more than an hour. Your antennae wave forward in a last salute.

Silence falls upon your group. Ka'Cha has been laid to rest. Tomorrow you will return, fully one day later, with his last offering. He will be pleased as his spirit leaves this material world. His time here will be completed.

The PCs need to set up camp and hunt for fresh game to provide the last offering of Ka'Cha. The best site for a camp is some distance away from the Chak'sa. From this position, they can see the faint outline of a rift to the northwest, leading directly away from the Chak'sa. A successful Intelligence check reveals that it is only a scar from a recent earthquake.

If the PCs do not find the Rift when they set up camp, they find it when they go hunting.



Desecration of the Chak'sa

This part of the adventure happens when the PCs are away from the Chak'sa. They may have camped some distance away, or they may be out hunting. If any PCs remained at the Chak'sa; the DM should give them a saving throw vs. death to evade capture, otherwise they are out of play until rescued. A character who evades capture can warn the party of the group now at the Chaksa, with a general description and a rough estimate of numbers.

When the PCs return to the Chak'sa, whether to return to their camp, to give their last offering to Ka'Cha, or because they have been warned, read aloud or paraphrase the following to the players.

The scene that meets your eyes is beyond belief. Desecrators are defiling the Chak'sa! People – thri-kreen with oddly shaped weapons – smash at the sacred Head. The eyes of the Chak'sa are missing, but no shard of purple crystal is in sight; you do spy four large bags. Next to the bags stand two black kreen of astonishing strength and size. They wield wicked chatchkas larger than any you have ever seen. They stand guard over a half-dozen young thri-kreen, bound by heavy ropes. {If there were any PCs left at the camp, add: *Among them is your clutchmate* (name)}.

One of the thri-kreen guards kicks the prisoners, and they begin pounding on the Chak'sa with their bare claws.

Swarming across the top of the Chak'sa are nearly a dozen smaller thri-kreen, smashing at the Head with vicious hammers. Six or seven more are likewise defiling the dais and base of the Chak'sa.

Thri-kreen PCs in the party realize immediately that the defilers are not thri-kreen, but kreen of some other type. (DM Note: They are *zik-trin'ta,* tohr-kreen specially adapted for scouting and exploration. The two larger kreen are *zik-trin'ak,* tohr-kreen specially adapted for combat. All of these zik-trin were originally J'ez tohr-kreen.)

The group is an advance scouting expedition from beyond the Rift. They believe that if they destroy the Chak'sa, the thri-kreen of the Tyr Region will lose the racial memories that the Chak'sa triggers. Also, in their travels, the alien kreen have captured a few hapless young thri-kreen, who will presumably be taken back to their empire as slaves.

Zik-trin'ta scouts (14): Int very (11–12); AL CN; AC 3; MV 36; HD 7; hp 33; THAC0 13; #AT 5 or 3; Dmg 1d8+2 (kyorkcha, 1d6+2 vs. L), or 1d6x4 (claws)/ 1d6+1 (bite); SA paralysis, leap; SD Missile dodge (11+); SZL (8' long); ML Champion (15); XP 4,000 each.

Zik-trin'ta psionicists (2): Generally as above, except as noted. AC 3; HD 7; hp 26; THAC0 7; XP 6,000 each. Psionics: PSPs 80; PS 15; *Disciplines – clairsentience,* psychokinesis, telepathy; *Sciences –* mindlink, probe, sensitivity to psychic impressions, telekinesis. Devotion-ballistic attack, conceal thoughts, control light, contact, ESP molecular agitation, psychic messenger, soften, truthear. *Attack Modes – ego* whip, id insinuation, mind thrust. *Defense* Mode – intellect fortress, mental barrier, mind blank, thought shield.

Zik-trin'ak (2): Int Ave (9); AL CN; AC 2; MV 24; HD 9; hp 52,45; THAC0 11; #AT 2 or 5; Dmg 1d8+2/ 1d6+2 vs. L (kyorkcha) +6 (Strength) or 1d6+6x4 (blade)/1d6+1 (bite); SA poison, leap, missile weapons; SD missile dodge (11+); SZL (11' long); ML Fanatic (19); XP 8,000 each.

Thri-kreen prisoners (4): Int average (10); AL CN; AC 5; MV 18; HD 4+3; hp 18 each; THAC0 15; #AT Nil; Dmg Nil; SZL (7' long); ML Unsteady (6); XP 300 each if rescued.

If the PC party seems undermanned, the DM may want to make all the zik-trin'ta nonpsionic. The text that follows assumes the PC party is together and has chosen to observe, at least at first, the desecration of the Chak'sa.

What a situation faces you! Strange kreen – obviously enemies of the thri-kreen – have taken prisoners and are destroying the Chaksa. What are you going to do now?

Some possible options include:

• *Attack outright.* This is the most likely result. The zik-trin'ak leap to the fore, leaving the thri-kreen prisoners in the charge of one of the zik-trin'ta. The zik-trin'ta, meanwhile, increase their efforts to deface the Chak'sa. If the battle seems to be going against the zik-trin'ak, four zik-trin'ta break away to join them, while the remaining scouts continue their work. If one of the zik-trin'ak goes down or they seem to be losing the battle, the zik-trin'ta retreat, dragging away the prisoners and the two bags containing the glass shards. The zik-trin'ak fight to the death to defend the retreat of their comrades; they will not listen to the PCs at all.

If the PCs attack using psionics, the zik-trin reply in kind. This particular encounter should be difficult, perhaps even a stalemate, though the PC party shouldn't die. If need be, the DM is *always* free to adjust monster stats or to add more monsters to an encounter (more zik-trin'ak stationed around the other side of the Chak'sa).

If the PCs attack and one of their members is a wizard (obviously not a thri-kreen), they have the advantage of surprise, for the zik-trin are completely unused to wizardly magic. This may be the PCs' only advantage, and should be used wisely once they realize they have it.

• *Wait and observe the intruders.* This course of action allows the PCs to learn about the zik-trin and to gather valuable information. The zik-trin are almost overwhelmingly confident in their abilities. Even if the PCs are seen wandering nearby the zik-trin do nothing beyond noting their presence, at least at first

It takes perhaps two hours for the zik-trin and their slaves to take the eyes of the Chak'sa. During that time, the PCs can hear snippets of conversation. Although in a strange tohr-kreen dialect, it is intelligible to thri-kreen PCs. Read aloud or paraphrase the following to the players, letting them know it is a conversation between two of the "regular" tohr-kreen, who are really zik-trin'ta, the scouting version of the tohr-kreen to the north.

"The Haazik ["Leader-of-Change"] *will be pleased with us. We have found much that is useful this side of the Great Cliff."*

"indeed, clutchmate. He will be especially pleased we have retrieved the eyes from this despicable monument, a folly if ever there was one."

"It will be good when our scouting is through and we can send in the troops necessary." The kreen nudges one of the guards. "'Isn't that so, Ezriik?"

The guard clicks his mandibles together furiously and says, "Yes indeed. The day this land falls to the Great One's yoke is..."

Suddenly, a strange roaring fills your ears, coming from somewhere deep inside you, and it drowns out the words you were so carefully listening to. Your mind fills with images that come fast and flash across your inner eye. Like at the Chak'sa, a memory has been triggered inside you.

At this point, the thri-kreen PCs who are listening to this conversation have a racial memory triggered. Give these PCs (and only them) a copy of the Player Handout #2 found on page 124.

• *Talk to the strangers.* PCs who call out to the zik-trin are ignored, regardless of what languages they use. PCs who issue commands to stop the desecration are still ignored. Only if the PCs attack, interfere with the destruction, or approach within 10 feet will the zik-trin take notice of them. Their response is immediate and violent: capture any player character thri-kreen and put them with the other prisoners.



The zik-trin look upon thri-kreen as primitives, far beneath them. They can barely tolerate the idea of using thri-kreen as slaves, so bestial do they consider their lesser cousins. The PCs' attempts to talk to them, even through those who speak tohr-kreen, are ignored until the zik-trin are irritated. Then the zik-trin attack as outlined above.

• *The PCs let themselves be captured.* This is costly. Non-kreen will be killed unless they are wizards and have demonstrated their strange magic. (ADM may modify this if the player offers a valid reason why the zik-trin might want the character alive.) If the PCs are captured at any time, read or paraphrase the following.

The point of an exquisitely sharpened kyorkcha digs into a soft fold of your flesh. One large, burly guard holds you at bay while another ties your arms tightly together. You stretch your muscles in protest, but the strange rope suddenly tightens, causing you immense pain. You realize now why the other slaves seems so acquiescent.

The guard spits a few words at you in a dialect of tohr-kreen you can just barely understand. "You there!" he clics. "Get over with the others, crodlu bile. "

A strange roaring fills your ears, coming from somewhere deep inside you. Your mind fills with images that come fast and flash across your inner eye. Just as at the Chak'sa, a racial memory has been triggered inside you.

Give any captured thri-kreen PCs the second racial memory handout (page 124). In brief, the PCs realize that these are not thri-kreen like those of the Tyr Region. These are zik-trin, augmented creations that serve a vast empire of unfamiliar kreen. For a few moments, the thri-kreen PCs will be petrified—and rightly so. They instinctively realize that the zik-trin are deadly and are not to be trifled with. Experienced players may also start working on their escape. 'Take any of their special preparations into account when running the rest of the encounters in this adventure.

What Next?

Regardless of PC actions, the surviving zik-trin travel northwestward, along the path of the Rift. They will use their giant jalath'gak to make good their escape, as outlined in the next part ("Race of Destiny"). Unless the PCs destroyed them all, the zik-trin'ta are either fleeing the attacking PCs or are, along with the zik-trin'ak, returning to the empire with prisoners and shards of the eyes (which are in the bags).

The PCs can opt to follow in an attempt to learn more, save the prisoners, and retrieve the shards from the Chak'sa—or they can choose to retreat back to the Tyr Region. If they choose the latter, the adventure ends, and the threat the zik-trin pose to the region will go undiscovered. If they press on now, they might catch the enemy and learn more. Waiting to confront the problem will only make it worse in the long run, and later may be too late.





The third and final part, "Race of Destiny," pits the PCs against stopping the advance force of zik-trin'ta from returning to their empire in the north via the Rift. The Rift is an extremely long crack in the earth caused by a recent earthquake in the northwestern Hinterlands. From its apex near the Chak'sa, it slowly broadens and deepens into a gorge that crosses the Jagged Cliffs, the two-mile-high cliffs separating the tohr-kreen empire from the Tyr Region. (As kreen have only a limited ability to climb, the treacherous Jagged Cliffs have been a natural barrier that kept the tohr-kreen from invading ... until now.) The newly formed rift allows access from the Empire to the Tablelands, for it has created a natural byway that can be traversed by kreen and related species.

The thri-kreen PCs instinctively know the intruders are their enemies, and they should encourage any non-kreen comrades to help them as they chase the zik-trin into the Rift. Based on the memories stirred inside them, all thri-kreen PCs (and any thri-kreen NPCs) are likely to let nothing stop them in their quest to halt the zik-trin from returning to their homeland. If they do not halt this menace, an ancient terror may soon stalk their lands.

If the PCs feel inclined to return to the thri-kreen of the south, the DM can either allow them to return with reinforcements or have a band of NPC thri-kreen conveniently nearby. If the player characters decide to follow the zik-trin into the Rift, proceed to the next section. The zik-trin, however, have an ace up their sleeve: a giant domesticated jalath'gak, capable of carrying heavy loads in great leaps.

Obviously, if all of the PCs have been captured by the zik-trin, the characters have little to decide other than how and when to make a break for freedom. They will be forced, along with the other thri-kreen prisoners, to huddle in a tight group. The zik-trin'ak will keep a close watch on the PCs to make sure they stay put For maximum effect, the Dungeon Master should adjust the following text to be from the PCs' perspective.

A Strange Sight Indeed

Read aloud or paraphrase the following to the PCs if they are either pursuing the zik-trin or have been observing the zik-trin.

There's a sudden, immense flapping and rushing wind coming from the far north. All eyes turn that way, and in a few short wingstrokes a creature comes in to sight. It is a jalath'gak, larger than any you have ever seen before. Though you are accustomed to seeing specimens over a dozen feet in length swarming across the plains, and know that some thri-kreen packs use domesticated jalath'gak to pull heavy loads, this specimen is almost twice the size of the largest one you have heard of.

Its monstrous, gossamer wings must be 50 feet across. *They labor mightily to hold the massive body in the sky. Its six legs are held close to its body. You catch a glimpse of its black-and-blue body, and then you see its gray abdomen – a sure sign of a starved jalath'gak. The insect lands heavily; it does not fly as much as hop. Then you see the abdomen more closely.... It's not that the insect is starving, it's that the abdomen has been largely hollowed out. Could this be how the monster grew so huge? you wonder.*

Your attention is drawn to the zik-trin. They are putting the prisoners in to nets and lashing them to the jalath'gak. They throw four large bags into another net and attach it as well.

If the party does not interrupt this process, the loading is completed quickly. If the player characters attack, some of the zik-trin will fend them off, while the others try to make sure the jalath'gak gets away with its load. For the purpose of this encounter, the giant jalath'gak is completely under the control of the zik-trin psionicists, and will successfully make any saving throws required (roll the dice anyway). While stopping its departure is not impossible, the players should display cleverness or do something really inspired to achieve this result.

• *If the PCs decide to attack the giant jalath'gak (and the zik-trin as well),* the most opportune time is now, as the zik-trin are tying the burdens to the insect. The jalath'gak won't stay to fight unless so ordered by one of the zik-trin'ta psionicists; instead, it hops northwestward as it was instructed. If the PCs can grab the nets or lashings, the monster might be pulled back to earth, after no more than a normal ground move. A thri-kreen PC has a 15% chance; each additional Thri-kreen adds another 10%. Humans, elves, or dwarves add 10%; halflings add 5%; half-giants add 20%. All chances are cumulative, there is only a single roll.

If the battle is going badly for the zik-trin, they order the jalath'gak to return and to attack the PCs. Although it is weakened from not being fed recently, it attacks desperately and eats the first thing it kills; it is diverted by any dead body, including zik-trin. If the PCs kill the tik-trin, it is possible for them to take control of the jalath'gak, provided they have the proper psionic capability. (Any power similar to control mind will work.) Spellcasters who can cast *control insects* have a 40% chance of controlling the creature. Except as noted here, the giant jalath'gak is the same as the smaller version.

Jalath'gak, Giant (1): Int low (5); AL N; AC 5; MV 9, Hop 24,18 if burdened; HD 14; hp 110; THAC0 7; #AT 7; Dmg 2d8 (bite)/2d6x6 (claws); SA piercing bite, drain blood; SZH (20' long); ML Fearless (18); XP 10,000.

The giant jalath'gak drains blood at a tremendous rate, and a hit with its bite automatically *pierces* thri-kreen chitin (+1 AC). However, the stink cloud effect has been disabled by the tohr-kreen, much like a skunk is descented. The zik-chil have modified this giant jalath'gak: the gutted abdomen, for instance, allows for heavier burdens, as well as a longer lifespan than if the abdomen had been entirely removed.

• *If the player characters do not attack here, or if fail to break through to the jalath'gak quickly,* continue.

A sharp command from one of the zik-trin'ta rips through the air: "Return!" Awkwardly the giant jalath'gak springs upward, flapping its wings hard. It gains altitude in an long arcing flight, then begins dropping to the ground off to the northwest. The zik-trin begin loping after the jalath'gak, picking up their speed as the monstrous insect begins its descent.

The giant jalath'gak is a strange sight. No thri-kreen, not even the best handler, has ever seen a jalath'gak carrying a burden like this (and certainly you've never seen one quite so large). Riding such a beast is unnatural, and for the most part unthinkable, due to the ponderous weight of the insect and the fragility of its wings.

The jalath'gak continues to the northwest. As it leaves, the zik-trin set out on foot and follow, not caring what the PCs are up to. The zik-trin have a movement rate of 36 and should outrun the party easily. The player characters, of course, will learn this. Go to the next section, which describes the Rift, when the players are ready.

• *If the player characters killed the giant jalath kak and some of the zik-trin,* read aloud or paraphrase the following.

The tohr-kreen break off the attack, retreating behind the jalath'ga k's body.

With no way to transport the prisoners, their plan is to slay the prisoners and retreat, which they will do unless the player characters prevent them. Ultimately, the survivors flee.

Suddenly the tohr-kreen burst in to the open-all heading northwest at a phenomenal speed. They are faster than the wind in a summer storm! Try as you might, your legs and lungs and hearts are no match for theirs, and they are soon out of sight.

Go to the next section, "The Rift."



The Rift

In this encounter, the zik-trin race through the Rift, trying to return to their home.

• *If the player characters haven't killed the giant jalath'gak and all of the zik-trin in the previous encounter,* read aloud or paraphrase the following to the players.

> *Again and again the monstrous insect leaps and flaps its tremendous wings, sending gusts of air to scurry across the sand. Each time it becomes airborne for a short while, its helpless cargo lashed to its body. Each time, it drops to the ground beyond you, yet still in sight, heading in a northwestern direction. Around it run the zik-trin, their steady lope easily matching the jalath'gak; progress.*

The PCs can travel after the retreating zik-trin with the hopes of attacking them along the way or observing where they are headed. At some point, the PCs enter the Rift proper. Read or paraphrase the following to the players.

> *The sand and jumbled earth slowly give way to an ever-wider path of broken rock. A rift in the earth is visible now, a tear in the ground heading northwestward, slowly widening and deepening across the land. What appeared to be a minor gully becomes a ravine, then a canyon. As the sides continue to steepen, the walls grow to cliff faces,*
>
> *Then, suddenly, the giant jalath'gak falters in the sky Its wings flutter once or twice in an effort to remain aloft, but it cannot. Awkwardly it tumbles to the earth, landing hard. The zik-trin dive out of the way, then scurry around it. Moments later, the zik-trin burst in to shocking speed as they race down the Rift.*

At this point the Rift is over a hundred yards wide and perhaps a thousand feet deep.

The jalath'gak is near death and unable to fly anymore. It is starving and weakened by the burden it carries. While it is stunned from the fall and poor landing, the zik-trin close in and kill any prisoners who show signs of life (any PC prisoners will be unconscious and missed). The jalath'gak recovers and twitches as the pursuing party approaches. Unless the PCs freeze in place and remain absolutely still for 5 rounds, the insect will catch sight of any movement they make and lunge toward them in hunger. The giant jalath'gak's stats are given in previous encounter, but it has lost 15 more hit points in the crash.

The PCs should have little trouble dispatching the monster. Because of its weakened state, it always attacks last. If the PCs throw food or water to it, the jalath'gak can be distracted. Regardless of its actions, the jalath'gak dies 2d4 rounds later. At this time, any captured PCs and any surviving thri-kreen prisoners can be rescued. The bags are missing.

The PCs are now free to continue chasing the zik-trin. The thri-kreen PCs, in particular, should believe they can catch the zik-trin, regardless of the invaders' display of speed. Go on to the next encounter when the players are ready.

Return of the Trin

At this point, there might be any number of zik-trin remaining, depending on the outcomes of previous encounters. If only one zik-trin has survived, do not stage this encounter. Instead, go directly to "The Stronghold to Doom," below. If more zik-trin are still alive, continue with the encounter.

> *The sounds of kreen screeching in pain and anger suddenly reach you. Then a truly amazing sight greets you as you move farther down the Rift: zik-trin and thri-trin locked in mortal combat! The primitive mantids are literally rending zik-trin limb from limb, though you also see a scattered body or two that might be trin.*

The trin, who wandered by chance into the Rift ahead of the fleeing zik-trin, are hungrily attacking them. One trin is pre-

sent for each zik-trin who has survived the encounters with the player characters. The trins statistics are as follows.

Trin (varies): Int low (5); AL CN; AC 5; MV 21; HD 8+3; hp 42 each; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 3d6/3d6 (claws); SA hold (both claws), bite (+4, d6+l), leap, camouflage/surprise; SD missile dodge (11+), permanent mind blank; SZL (9' long); ML Elite (14); XP 6,000 each.

• *If the PCs choose to help the zik-trin,* they will tip the scales and the trin will flee. The zik-trin, however, attack the PCs. If three or more have survived, they arrange themselves so that one of their number can flee. The others try to hold off the PCs.

• *If the PCs choose to watch the battle,* the skirmish ends with half of the remaining zik-trin slain. The trin scurry off, carrying the dead. The zik-trin rest for one turn, then continue their flight. Injuries, however, slow them to a movement rate of 18.

This is the perfect (and the last) chance for the PC party to waylay the remaining zik-trin. If they attack the zik-trin now, the PCs are highly likely to win the encounter. If they choose to capture a zik-trin for questioning, read the following.

The battered zik-trin stares at you, its multifaceted eyes whirling in fatigue. It tries to click its mandibles, but there is no sound, for one is broken and dangling. Nevertheless, it rasps out, "You... are chaff: We do not see you, save as pebbles to be stepped on. You ... give us nothing but the means to make more..." The zik-trin's eyes turn cloudy, and it dies.

If the PCs end the adventure here and return to their homes, they have only the fragments of a puzzle and a hint that the Tablelands are menaced. If they want to learn more, they must continue down the Rift (and go on to the next section).

The Stronghold to Doom

At the end of the PCs' journey, they discover a half-built stronghold on this side of the Jagged Cliffs. It is a strangely constructed structure, reminding thri-kreen PCs of nothing so much as exuded kreen saliva and sand... and indeed it is. The zik-trin to the north do not build with stone or wood or hides or anything used by the kreen of the Tablelands.

Behind the fort, a wall is already in place, preventing anyone from going beyond. The wall is constructed of rock rubble created by the earthquake, cemented by the saliva of special giant insects.

A note to the DM: The saliva used in the creation of buildings and other structures by the zik-trin is the byproduct of a domesticated insect. This huge, virtually immobile herbivore is completely dependent upon the zik-trin for its existence.

The one brought to this outpost was taxed beyond its limit to quickly produce the cement needed for the wall. It has recently died, which has delayed the construction of the stronghold.

When the PCs are ready, read or paraphrase the following to the players.

A strange sight meets your eyes as you travel downward into the Rift: a wall. It is an immense structure, rising nearly 500 feet. You have no way of knowing its thickness, but it is composed of rocks held within a smooth, crystalline material.

Just before the wall stands a rounded building, perhaps forty feet high. Its walls appear smooth, except for several window-like openings. Overall, the building appears deserted, and somehow unfinished, but then you catch a glimpse of movement in one of its windows. You also see, resting in the building's shadow, a massive gate set into the strange wall. To either side of the gate stands a large black tohr-kreen, dull spiky chitin fading into the shadows.

The guards at the gate are zik-trin'ak, specially augmented tohr-kreen combat specialists.

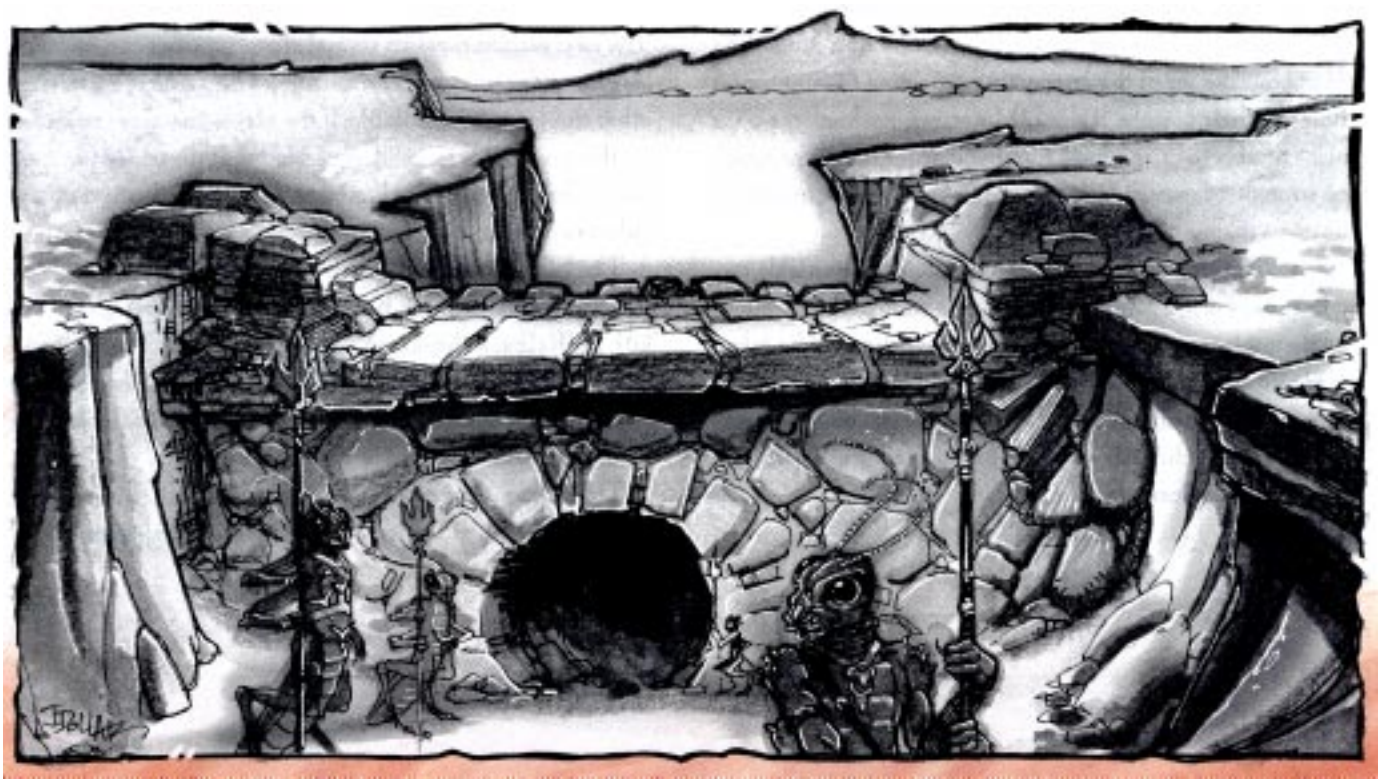
• *If the PCs haven't waylaid the scouting party by now,* read the following to the players.

The party of tohr-kreen you have been chasing hurries toward the stronghold. They drone and click wildly, and from within the building come two more of the smaller black tohr-kreen and two large ones. The party you chase points back along the Rift in your direction, and the new kreen and all four large ones (including the gate guard) race up the Rift toward your location.

• *If the PCs have waylaid the scouting party before it could reach the stronghold,* they can approach the area cautiously without arousing suspicion. Only a skeleton crew has been left here at the stronghold, as most of the zik-trin are out scouting the surrounding territory. It is possible for the PCs to take on the zik-trin here and perhaps destroy them. The PCs may then have an opportunity of holding the unfinished building against returning zik-trin troops or against reinforcements from the other side. Or they can opt to destroy the stronghold. (This must be done psionically or magically, or by long, hard labor. The crystalline material is resistant to fire.)

The PCs have several options to conclude this adventure. They may waylay the zik-trin scouting party (if they have not already done so), attack the stronghold (and risk being overrun by reinforcements), or observe the invaders and return to their clutches to the south. The DM should be forewarned: It is possible for the PCs to die if they persist in attacking the stronghold. Their best bet may be to simply discover the impending doom—that is, the invasion that is about to begin-and forewarn their family and friends.

Four zik-trin'ak and two zik-trin'ta are stationed at the stronghold. Their stats are as follows.



Zik-trin'ak (4): Int average (9); AL CN; AC 2; MV 24; HD 10; hp 55 each; THAC0 11; #AT 2 or 5; Dmg 1d8+2/1d6+2 vs. L(kyorkcha) +6 (Strength), 1d6+6 (×4) (blades)/1d6+1 (bite); SA poison, leap, missile weapons; SD missile dodge (11+); SZL (11' long); ML Fanatic (19); XP 9,000 each.

Zik-trin'ta (2): Int very to genius (11-18); AL CN; AC 3; MV 36; HD 8; hp 40; THAC0 13; #AT 5 or 3; Dmg 1d6x4 (claws)/1d6+1 (bite) or by weapon (kyorkcha); SA paralysis; SD missile dodge (11+); SZL (8-10' long); ML Champion (15); XP 5,000 each.

Afterward

What the PCs can accomplish, beyond the recovery of the eyes, is the capture or destruction of the outpost lying on their side of the wall. Behind that wall they may guess that a horde is massing—planning an invasion of the PCs' homeland.

However, the PCs are not ready to take action other than spying out the lay of the enemy and reporting the imminent threat to their people. If the DM desires, perhaps the PCs might be able to raise a large number of thri-kreen to go attack the stronghold, particularly if the PCs were unable to destroy the place themselves.

Another thing that the PCs can do (though not highly recommended) is to attempt infiltrating the stronghold. By allowing themselves to be captured as prisoners, they will be taken away into the kreen empire to the north. Barring escape, the fate of captured thri-kreen is quite certain: They will be "modified" by the zik-chil into either zik/trin'ta or zik-trin'ak, with no memory of their former selves.

XP Awards

In addition to the normal awards that the players can earn in this adventure, there are a few special story awards that the DM might give out.

- Thri-kreen players who consistently played their characters with a truly "insect mentality" should be awarded an XP bonus of 10% for this adventure (note especially the anakore encounter, the evening lore sessions, the meditation by the Chak'sa, the funeral, and the handling of racial memory handouts).
- The party receives 300 XP for each thri-kreen prisoner rescued.
- The party receives 500 XP for each bag of glass shards from the Chak'sa that is recovered.
- Any special tactic that defeats, solves, or completely bypasses an encounter (silk wyrm, jalath'gak, etc.) will give full XP.

NPCs

The next section presents several characters that can be taken by players for use in the adventure, *The* Taste of Fear, if no other thri-kreen are available. If the player character party has no thri-kreen, it is strongly suggested that they adopt at least two of these NPCs, as this adventure is firmly focused on the culture and history of thri-kreen.

The NPCs included in this section are: **Ka'Cha,** an aged thri-kreen (NPC only); **Ka'Ka'Kyl,** a thri-kreen fighter (Tik kit); **Sa'Relka,** a thri-kreen fighter/cleric (Earth priest); and **T'Chai,** a thri-kreen psionicist (Tekchakak kit). Players using any of the last three as characters can expand on or embroider the character descriptions as they see fit.

These characters might also be used by the DM as NPCs who join the group in order to augment an understrength party.



Ka'Cha

Aged Thri-Kreen, Neutral Good

Armor Class	8	**Str**	6
		Dex	12
Hit Points	18	**Con**	7
THAC0	20	**Int**	16
No. of Attacks	nil	**Wis**	19
Damage/Attack	nil	**Cha**	14
		Movement	6

The Jeral, Ka'Cha, is a many-generations descended namesake of the original Ka'Cha. A venerable member of the Kiltektet, his life is nearing its end. Unlike many other thri-kreen, the Dej and Circle have not called to him. Instead he must travel to the Chak'sa, for one final knowledge-hunt. His advanced age and feebleness will have a marked effect on his travels. As thri-kreen usually show no signs of unusual disability until very shortly before death, it is obvious to all that he has only a little time before the end comes.

Already, he is so slow that non-kreen can keep up with him. He is no longer capable of hunting for his own food, and his chitin has become dull and brittle. To make matters worse, he has contracted both chitin-rot and a lung infection in his recent travels. Only his indomitable will, and the pull of racial memory, has kept him going. He has come as far as he can on his own, it is only with the aid of his companions that he can continue at all.

The aged kreen is withdrawing more and more into himself as his physical powers deteriorate. However, at night in the open, he often talks of kreen lore and tradition, his own travels, and what he still does not know. The DM can use these sessions to impart as much information about the thri-kreen and their affairs as desired, bearing in mind that Ka'cha knows little or nothing of the kreen of the North. That adventure may fall to his new-found clutchmates.

Although he is a hunter of knowledge, his final request is that a special hunt, in the traditional thri-kreen way take place after his death, and the kill be placed as an offering at Chak'sa.

Ka'Ka'Kyl

6th-level Thri-kreen Fighter, Lawful Neutral

Armor Class	3	**Str**	15
(modified for Dex)		**Dex**	19
Hit Points	38	**Con**	15
THAC0 Claw/bite	14	**Int**	11
Chatkcha	12	**Wis**	14
Gythka	14	**Cha**	12
Qua bone	14	**Movement**	18

No. of Attacks

4 claws and 1 bite
2 with chatkcha
1 and 1 with gythka and bite
1 and 1 with quabone and bite

Damage/Attack

Claws	1d4/1d4
Bite	1d4
	and paralysis
Chatkcha	1d6+1/1d4
Gythka	2d4/1d10
Quabone	1d4/1d3

Psionic Summary: PSPs 38; Wild Talent-biofeedback (PS 15; Cost: 6+3/rnd)

Thri-kreen Abilities: Leap 20' up/5O' forward. Dodge missiles (9+). Poison saliva, save vs. paralyzation (size S creatures immobilized 2–20 rounds, size M 2–l6 rounds, size L l–8 rounds, and size H or larger 1 round).

Saving Throws:

DM	RSW	PP	BW	Sp
10	12	11	12	13

Weapon Proficiencies: Chatkcha, gythka, quabone, claw and bite.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Navigation, sign language, survival (desert), tracking.



Languages: Thri-kreen, common.

Equipment: 2 crystalline chatkcha, gythka, quabone, leather harness and backpack (containing 100-foot rope, miscellaneous ornamental pebbles, 1 week's rations, kank honey), 2 one-gallon waterskins; two *fruit of healing,* 72 cp.

Ka'Ka'Kyl is a thri-kreen warrior who has never been east of the Ringing Mountains, for he has spent all his life defending his territory in the Hinterlands—mostly from the halflings inhabiting the Forest Ridge. He finds halflings particulalry loathsome, for they brutalized his clutchmates when he was newly hatched. The halflings came upon his unprotected clutch and began pulling the legs off the newborns, leaving them to die in the baking sun. Somehow the halflings missed K,a'Ka'Kyl, but the first sight ever to grace his purplish eyes scarred the thri-kreen forever.

Ka'Ka'Kyl is unusually quiet, even for a thri-kreen. He speak only when necessary. Some of his new clutchmates attribute this to the brutal introduction he was given to life, but that is only part of what has shaped his personality. Ka'ka'kyl is interested in only two things: the hunt for food, and the hunt for serenity. This, more than anything else, drives him to seek solace and quietude. If the PCs or even his own clutchmates talk too much, or too loudly or frivolously, Ka'Ka'Kyl wanders away, searching for peace and serenity.

Ka'Ka'Kyl revered his clutchleader Ka'Cha, for he thought the thri-kreen to be the epitome of all he hopes to one day be. He wants to journey with the PCs to the Chak'sa. Unless the DM has a PC party that is very strong and with a number of thri-kreen, K.a'Ka'Kyl should join the PCs as they journey to the Chak'sa. If not, the DM can hold him in reserve.

Sa'Relka

5th/5th-level Fighter/Cleric, Neutral Good

Armor Class	5	**Str**	12
		Dex	17
Hit Points	30	**Con**	16
THAC0 Claw/bite	16	**Int**	12
Chatkcha	16	**Wis**	14
Gythka	16	**Cha**	13
		Movement	18

No. of Attacks
4 claws and 1 bite
2 with chatkcha
1 and 1 with gythka and bite

Damage/Attack

Claws	1d4/1d4
Bite	1d4
	and paralysis
Chatkcha	1d6+1/1d4
Gythka	2d4/1d10

Spells: *Bless, cure light wounds* (×3), *endure heat; dust devil, slow poison, withdraw, prayer.*

Granted Powers: *Eliminate tracks* (as *pass without trace,* but functions in sand or hard rock), *meld into stone* (1/day); *ignore earth* (move through rock, metal, wood and other earth substances; 1/day, duration 5 rounds; overstaying causes expulsion and 4d8 damage).

Psionic Summary: PSPs 34; Wild Talent—spirit sense (PS 11; cost: 10)

Thri-kreen Abilities: Leap 20′ up/50′ forward. Dodge missiles (9+). Poison saliva, save vs. paralyzation (size S creatures immobilized 2–20 rounds, size M 2–16 rounds, size L 1–8 rounds, and size H or larger 1 round).

Saving Throws:

DM	RSW	PP	BW	SP
9	13	12	13	14

Weapon Proficiencies: Chatkcha, gythka, claw, and bite.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Hunting, navigation, sign language (kreen), survival (stony barrens), tracking.

Languages: Thri-kreen, common.

Equipment: Crystalline chatkcha, gythka, leather harness and backpack (containing two obsidian skinning knives, metal needles, a thri-kreen syllabary, 1 weeks rations); a one-gallon waterskin; 6 cp.



Sa'Relka, a To'ksa thri-kreen, spent most of her life as a slave in Nibenay, living a life of fear and misery. Then, one day, her master inexplicably gave her a skin of water and pushed her outside the walled estate in which she had spent her entire life. Somehow Sa'Relka overcame the terror of being thrust into a world she had never seen, and she ventured away from Nibenay. Two things saved her: the kindness of Ka'Cha (who rescued her from a braxat early in her travels), and the slow realization that she had wild talents to foster.

Sa'Relka has devoted herself to earning more about her hidden abilities, and she has learned much of her people, thank to the teachings of Ka'Cha. If the party has any clerics, she seeks them out to "talk shop." She'll also try to join the PCs if there's a cleric in the group, or if Ka'Cha joins them. In combat, she is brave, though not particularly cunning, and in a general fight she tends to lose herself and revert to her natural weapons when under stress. For all of that, she has a fine appreciation of the natural order, has a high degree of loyalty to Ka'Cha, and is drawn toward the stability of Earth. The DM may keep Sa'Relka in the background as a special reinforcement if the PC party has difficulty.

T'Chai

5th-level Male Thri-kreen Psionicist, Lawful Good

Armor Class (modified for Dex)	4	**Str**	12
		Dex	18
Hit Points	20	**Con**	11
THAC0		**Int**	13
Claw/bite	17	**Wis**	15
Gythka	18	**Cha**	14
Light crossbow	16	**Movement**	18

No. of Attacks
4 claws and 1 bite
1 and 1 with gythka and bite
1 and 1 with crossbow and bite

Damage/Attack (vs. L)
Claws 1d4(1d4)



Bite	1d4+1 (1d4+1) and paralysis
Gythka	2d4+1 (1d10+1)
Quarrels	1d4+1 (1d4+1)

Psionic Summary: PSPs 60.

Disciplines – psychokinesis, telepathy.

Sciences – mindlink wis–5, IC contact, MC 8/rnd, R unlimited); project force (Con -2, IC 10, R 200 yd); telekinesis (Wis –3, IC 3+, MC l+/rnd, R 30yd).

Devotions – animate shadow (Wis –3, IC 7, MC 3/rnd, R 40 yd); attraction (Wis –4, IC contact, MC 8/rnd, R 200); conceal thoughts (Wis, IC 5, MC 3/rnd, R0); control sound (Int –5, IC 5, MC 2/rnd, R 25 yd); contact (Wis, IC varies, MC 1/rnd, R special); levitation Wis–3, IC 12, MC 2/rnd, R special); molecular agitation (Wis, IC 7 MC 6/rnd, R 40); truthear (Wis, IC 4, MC 2/rnd, R 0).

Attack Modes- id insinuation (Wis –4, IC 5, MC na, R 60/120/l80), mind thrust (Wis –2, IC 2, MC na, R 30/60/90).

Defense Modes – intellect fortress (Wis –3, IC 4, MC na); mind blank (Wis–7 IC0, MC0), thought shield (Wis–3, IC 1, MC na).

Thri-kreen Abilities: Leap 20′ up/50′ forward. Dodge missiles (9+). Poison saliva save vs. paralyzation (size S creatures immobilized 2–20 rounds, size M 2–16 rounds, size L 1–8 rounds, and size H or larger 1 round).

Languages: Thri-kreen, common, elvish.

Saving Throws:

DM	RSW	PP	BW	Sp
12	13	9	15	14

Weapon Proficiencies: Gythka, light crossbow, claw and bite.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Heat protection, psionic detection, read/write (common), water find.

Equipment: Gythka, light crossbow, 20 bone-tipped quarrels, leather harness, backpack (with 50-foot rope and 1 week's rations), 1 one-gallon waterskin.

T'Chai has striven to follow the Way ever since he was quite young. He is outgoing and particularly inquisitive, a trait that has gotten him in trouble more often than not T'Chai practically worships Ka'Cha for the inspiration he has been as a clutchleader.

T'Chai has come into his skills late, and sometimes this bothers him, even though his mentors have told him not to worry about it—some kreen, like some humans, develop at a different pace. At least one of his mentors has told him privately that he has unusually great potential; but the only thing that has done is to give him more to worry about. However, when he gets more experience, T'Chai will likely become the mainstay of his own clutch.

Although he is not currently a full-fledged member of the Kiltektet, he has ambitions in that direction, and was being sponsored by Ka'Cha. Of all the thri-kreen in Ka'Cha's group, he is the most likely to want to accompany Ka'Cha on his final journey, even if he has to disobey his sponsor and sneak along behind the party. He either can be played as a PC, or introduced in a timely fashion by the DM.



Player Handout #1

Racial Memories at the Chak'sa

You feel yourself plunge through a miasma of years, a tangled web of time that is centuries old. The weight of the years passing by presses on you, a memory so strange and distant as to be almost incomprehensible. A faint image of a mighty nation filled with thri-kreen and humans presses upon your inner eye. You catch only a sense of how well these peoples worked together, the harmony between them. Wonder grows within you, an emotion at once gladdening and disturbing.

A sense of awe builds in you, and you descend even further into the pit of time. Images of a thri-kreen, "the Great One," flood your mind. You know, somehow, that this was once your emperor, a kreen among kreen. Beside him is a single, strangely distorted image of a human who is not quite human—a being who has changed and evolved into a creature of great goodness. You realize this was the human half of the Chak'sa, the half now destroyed.

Your memories press onward, however, and you do not dwell on the human. Your thoughts center on the Great One, and you wonder when he will return. Somehow the thought that someday he *will* return strikes a deep chord of hope within you. You find yourself longing to see him.

But the moment cannot last, and already the memories of what you have seen—indeed, what you have remembered—begin to fade. Was there really an image of a mighty city where kreen and human alike worked together for the common good? Was there really a mighty thri-kreen emperor and an avangion? Everything inside you cries out yes as you struggle to hold these memories. As you come out of your revery upon the stone dais, you realize you have seen sights from a thousand years or more ago. You are left with a fascination for the past, and a strange longing to know the future.

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Player Handout #2

Racial Memories of the Zik-trin

What is this pain you feel? Is it the as lash of whips across your chitin? There is pain and more pain, and from somewhere far away you hear screams-your own screams. The fear surrounding you is palpable, like a strange, touchable thing. For a moment your *real* senses are overwhelmed, and you struggle to pull yourself back, but the memory is too strong to be repressed. It demands to be heard, and it corners your mind.

Again you find yourself falling through a miasma of pain and terror, a nightmare world you have never known, even during the harsh life you have spent on Athas. This is slavery unlike anything you have ever felt or heard of . . . this is degradation of the soul. You no now that these beings, these *zik-trin,* are hated and feared by your kind, for they are the most loathsome peddlers of fleshy our species has ever known. You fear and loathe them because they are not entirely *real;* they are constructed creatures, not born of egg and clutch.

Long, long ago, longer even than the time of the Great One and the avangion, there existed a time and place when you and yours were chattels of these beings. Venom dribbles from your mandibles in memory of the horror of your existence then. Mercifully you remember nothing more of that lifetime, though you wonder briefly how you escaped it.

The memory, with its terrible, terrible images, is fast receding. You cannot recall much of the details you thought you knew, but you know one thing with absolute surety: The creatures before you are your sworn enemy, more so than any elf ever could be.

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Trin

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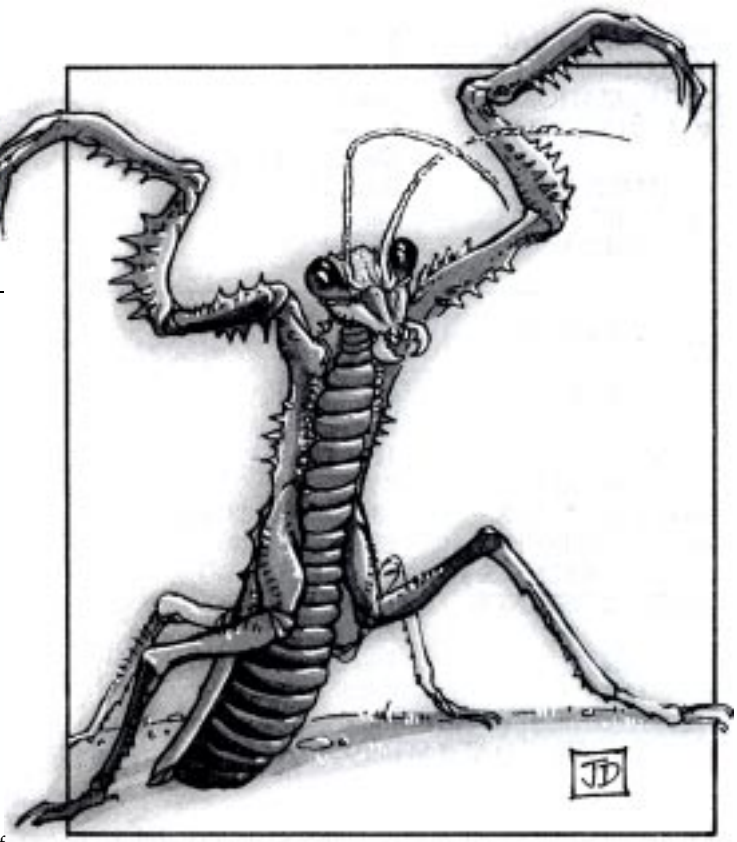
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land
FREQUENCY:	Uncommon
ORGANIZATION:	Clutch
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Constant
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (5–7)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic neutral

NO. APPEARING:	2d12
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	21
HIT DICE:	8+3
THAC0:	13
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	3d6/3d6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Hold opponents and bite for 1d6+1 damage plus paralysis; leap; surprise bonus
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Missile dodge, permanent mind blank
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L(9'long)
MORALE:	Elite (13-14)
XP VALUE:	6,000

NEW PSIONICS SUMMARY:
Dis–/Sci–/Dev–; #AT 0; MTHAC0–; MAC 7; Att–; Def Mbk; PSPs 12



Trin, also called *thri-trin,* are large, intelligent insects similar to thri-kreen, but slightly smaller. They have two arms and four legs instead of four arms and two legs, and their larger mandibles suggest the brutish and primitive. Like To'ksa thri-kreen, trin have a solid shell over the abdomen, a longer neck, and long antennae. Their arms terminate in large, vicious, hinged claws. Sandy-yellow exoskeletons with gray mottling allows them to blend into their surroundings somewhat.

These primitives roam the countryside attacking any animal that comes close, including thri-kreen, tohr-kreen, and other trin. Their claws prevent them from using tools or weapons. Their language is rudimentary; they speak only the most basic level of the thri-kreen language. Thri-trin communicate partly by pheromones; a trin clutch has an ability akin to a "group-mind" and is able to coordinate attacks even without verbal communication.

Combat: Like thri-kreen, trin never sleep, are unaffected by charm person and *hold person* spells, and are protected by their chitinous exoskeletons (AC5). Thri-trin are perpetual hunters, always searching for Prey.

Trin hunt in one of two ways: by lying in wait for prey and then leaping on it, or by running after it until the prey tires. A thri-trin can remain perfectly still; this, combined with the creature's natural camouflage, gives opponents a –2 penalty to surprise rolls when attacked in this way. In pursuit, trin are faster than most other Athasian creatures (including thri-kreen) A thri-trin that runs after prey attempts to leap onto it.

Whether leaping from a running start or the perfectly still ambush, a trin receives standard charging bonuses (–2 on initiative, +2 on the attack roll, +1 penalty to AC) for the leap. A thri-trin can leap 50 feet forward or 20 feet straight up and cannot leap backwards. Some might chase prey into an area where other trin lie in wait, or all might chase prey and alternate attacks. If there is not enough prey to go around, several thri-trin will attack each individual opponent.

If a trin hits with both claws, it holds the opponent. The victim can try once each round to break the thri-trin's hold. This requires a successful bend bars roll; the hold is also broken if the trin dies. If the victim fails to break the trin's hold, the creature's claws automatically clamp down, causing 3d6 hit points of additional damage.

A trin will bite at a held opponent, receiving a +4 bonus to the attack roll. If the thri-trin is attacked by others while holding and biting, the trin may attempt to carry the victim to a safer place for dining. A thri-trin can carry off a creature weighing 535 pounds or less.

Like thri-kreen, thri-trin can dodge missiles, but need a roll of 11 or better on 1d20 for success. Thri-trin have the Telepathic devotion mind blank but are not known to have any other psionic powers.

Habitat/Society: Trin have no real society, living the life of primitive, nomadic hunters. They mate at will, with eggs being laid about 30 days later and hatching in another 60 days or so. Only about half of the thri-trin eggs laid hatch; others are eaten by predators, including other thri trin. Young reach maturity in about a year.

Ecology: Trin are supreme hunters in their home territories, generally falling only to intelligent or extremely powerful opponents. They eat all forms of animal life. They are to thri-kreen what cavemen (neanderthals) are to humans.

Some thri-trin are found in forest regions. These are slightly smaller than the desert variety and are a mottled green color.

Jalath'gak

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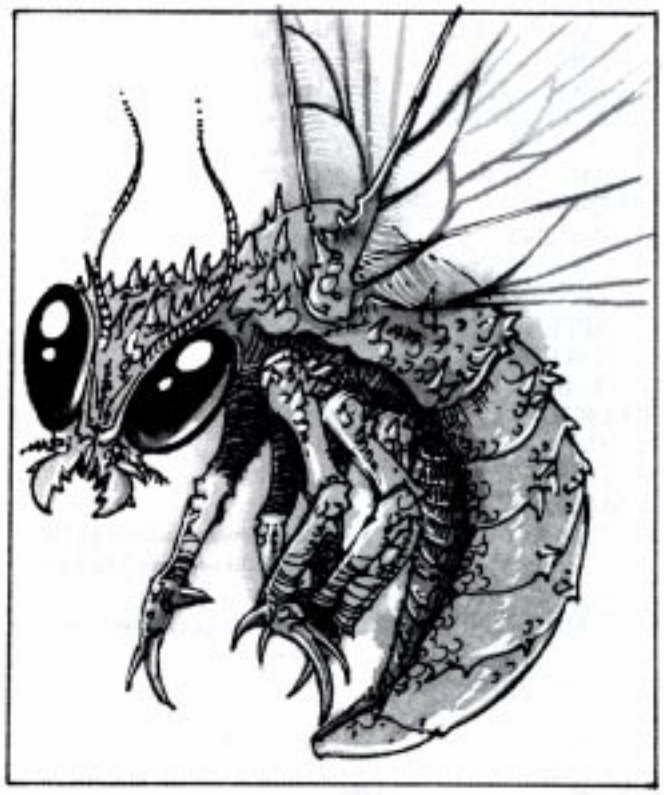
CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Scrub plains, sandy wastes
FREQUENCY: Uncommon
ORGANIZATION: Swarm
ACTIVITY CYCLE: constant
DIET: Omnivore (nectar, blood)
INTELLIGENCE: Animal (1)
TREASURE: Nil
ALIGNMENT: Neutral

NO. APPEARING: 3d10
ARMOR CLASS: 5
MOVEMENT: 9, fly 24 (D)
HIT DICE: 8+8
THAC0: 11
NO. OF ATTACKS: 7
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 1d4×6 (claw)/1d8 (bite)
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Blood drain (2d6)
SPECIAL DEFENSES: Stink cloud (15' rad.)
MAGIC RESISTANCE:
SIZE: H(13' long)
MORALE: Elite (13-14)
XP VALUE: 4,000
NEW PSIONICS SUMMARY:
Dis—/Sci—/Dev—; #AT 0; MTHAC0—; MAC 7; Att—; Def—; PSPs 0



First domesticated by the kreen of the distant North, wild jalath'gak are the scourge of herdsmen throughout the Tablelands. It is an enormous winged insect, 13 feet long, with a wingspan of nearly 20 feet.

The head is long and narrow so that it may fit into smell areas to collect blood or nectar. Its mandibles are extremely strong, end are hollow to draw nourishment. Long whiskers on the top of its heed detect pheromones and other odors; these are always moist, end are drawn beck against the head during combat The creature's exoskeleton is firm but brittle.

The creature's six limbs join to its thorax, and sport long dagger-like talons. The thin wings, also attached to the thorax, fold close against the creature's side when not in use, extending a few feet behind the creature. When spread, the fragile-looking wings are transparent.

The jalath'gak's abdomen stores blood and nectar. When the insect has recently fed, the abdomen bulges, becoming a deep red or yellow. If the insect hasn't fed in a few weeks, the abdomen sags, limp and gray. The rest of the insect's coloring is a pattern of black and bright blue.

Jalath'gak communicate with each other with pheronomes. Thri-kreen end other insects can communicate with them in a rudimentary fashion with their own pheronomes, but complex ideas cannot be conveyed. Other intelligent creatures can communicate with jalath'gath through psionics or magic.

Combat: The jalath'gak can always attack with its mandibles and six legs. It can either hover and attack, or land and rear back on its abdomen, bringing all of its legs into action. Each leg inflicts 1d4 hit points of damage, and the mandibles 1d8.

The round after the mandible hits, and each round thereafter, the jalath'gak drains blood. The opponent is pinned and cannot attack 2d6 points of blood are drained each round *and* the jalath'gak can attack with all of its legs. A pinned creature try to break free each round by making a saving throw vs. paralyzation. A jalath'gak that slays a victim by blood drain will remain attached to the body for another 1d3 rounds before moving on. One that has drained 50 points of blood in one combat is gorged end will not use further blood drain attacks.

If reduced to 10 hit points or less, a jalath'gak will release a stink cloud from its mouth. The cloud covers a 15-foot-radius sphere directly to the creature's front. Those in the stink cloud must save vs. poison or be incapaciteted for 1d6 rounds. A jalath'gak can release up to three stink clouds a day.

Habitat/Society: In the wild, these insects live in large swarms. Unlike hive insects, jalath'gak don't cooperate. Their eggs are simply dropped from the ever-flying swarm into the hot desert sends. Although only one egg in 1,000 hatches, this is sufficient to maintain the numbers of the Swarm.

Some thri-kreen packs have domesticated the jalath'gak, and use them to pull heavy loads during migration. At great need the abdomen can be cut off to provide food or water, or to pull an exceptionally heavy load. Wthout its abdomen, a jalath'gak will function normally for 36+ 1d6 hours, end then die.

Attempts to harness the jalath'gak for flight have been unsuccessful. It cannot carry much weight, and its wings and legs are prone to damage when harnessed. Also, the most common domestication techniques render them flightless.

Ecology: The abdomen yields 16 gallons of water and enough blood/nectar plasma for 32 common meals, for the hardy. Jalath'gek wings are sought by the artists of Raam and Draj as canvasses. An undamaged set of wings can be sold for 50cp.

Rumors exist of giant jalath'gak. These creatures are rare, but may grow upward of 20 feet in length, with increased capabilities. Their mandibles pierce thri-kreen chitin with ease. These insects don't so much fly as make wing-assisted jumps, end have little control of their direction once they are airborne.

Zik-trin'ak

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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land except Forest Ridge
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Constant
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (8–l0)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic neutral

NO. APPEARING:	1d4
ARMOR CLASS:	2
MOVEMENT:	24
HIT DICE:	9–12
THAC0:	9–10 HD: 11 11–12HD:9
NO. OF ATTACKS:	5 or 2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6+6(×4)/1d6+1 or by weapon (kyorkcha)+6
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Paralyzation, leap, missile weapons, high Strength
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Missile dodge
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L(11'long)
MORALE:	Fearless (19–20)
XP VALUE:	9 HD: 8,000 10+HD: add 1,000 each Psionic add 2000



NEW PSIONICS SUMMARY:
Dis 3/Sci 5/Dev 14; #AT 3/2; MTHAC0 12; MAC 6; Att All; Def All; PSPs 52

Like the zik-trin'ta scout (celled *tohr-keen* in the Tablelands), the zik-trin'ak warrior is a creature created from normal kreen. The zik-trin'ak looks much like a normal thri-kreen or tohr-kreen, but is larger and more dangerous. The zik-trin'ta stands as tall as 10 feet and is as long as I3 feet.

The zik-trin'ak is built for combat; the claws are longer end sharper than those of a normal kreen, and the exoskeleton is ornamented with spikes, knobs, and other protrusions. Though most zik-trin'ak have yellow exoskeletons (having been made from To'ksa thri-kreen), some have black shells, end a few are red or even green. Zik-trin'ak of other colors also have other features associated with their base species.

While intelligent and capable of speaking, they seldom talk, and cannot be distracted from en assigned task.

Combat: The zik-trin'ak are mentally adjusted for combat. They are programmed for specific purposes end implacably follow the instructions of the zik-chil who create them. If ordered to guard, they guard; if ordered to attack mammals, they attack mammals; if ordered to attack everything they see, they attack everything they see. They give no quarter end retreat only if ordered to do so.

Roughly half of zik-trin'ek are psionic. Most are equivalent to 9th-level psychokineticists, with psychometabolism as a secondary discipline.

If not ordered otherwise, zik-trin'ek first attack from a distance, throwing kyorkcha (inflict 1d8+2, and a +6 damage bonus due to the creature's greet Strength). A zik-trin'ak carries 2d8 kyorkcha, end throws them to soften opposition before closing. Psionic distance attacks are also used.

After using distance attacks, zik-trin'ak charge, using their leaps to great effect. A zik-trin'ak can leap 40 feet upward or 90 feet forward; it cannot leap backward. When leaping into combat, zik-trin'ak receive standard charge adjustments. Also, the leap itself counts es en attack; the creature's spikes inflict 2d4 points of damage against opponents of man-size or smaller end 1d6+1 against larger opponents.

Zik-trin'ak use no melee weapons. Once they close to melee, they attack each round with four sets of blades that have replaced their natural claws, plus a bite with augmented mandibles.

The bite attacks is poisonous. The creature bitten must make a successful saving throw vs. poison. Those failing the saving throw immediately take 20 points of damage (shock to the nervous system) and are paralyzed for 2d6 rounds (kreen are immune).

Finally, the zik-trin'ak can dodge missiles on a roll of 11 or better on 1d20. Only physical missiles can be dodged, not magical effects, and physical missiles with magical bonuses adjust the dodge roll by their magical bonus.

Zik-trin'ta are resistant to magical and psionic interrogation.

Habitat/Society: Zik-trin'ak have no society of their own and live on the edges of tohr-kreen society They can be found wherever they are sent by the zik-chil; they respond to the orders of zik-chil (whom they identitfy) by pheromones) and no one else. They enforce the will of the zik-chil end the policies of the the tohr-kreen empire. They do not refer to themselves as zik-trin, but call themselves tohr-kreen.

As implied by its name (which translates as "near-person, altered for combat"), the zik-trin'ak has lost its identity. These creatures are devastating combatants, but at the cost of their personality and beliefs, almost like zombies in many ways. Much like in in their ferocity, zik-trin'ak are also cold, controlled, and cunning They cannot breed.

Ecology: Zik-trin'ak are dangerous hunters. Zik-trin were ordinary kreen before their conversion; the process is believed irreversible.



Borys the Dragon has fallen,
Destroyed by the master he once betrayed.
What evil will arise to replace him?

The Sorcerer-Kings of Raam, Draj, and Balic are dead,
Killed by the First Sorcerer who created them.
Who will hold the city-states together?

Rajaat the War-Bringer is once again locked away.
Rain falls over the Silt Sea. An earthquake rocks Tyr.
What will the future bring for the world of the crimson sun?

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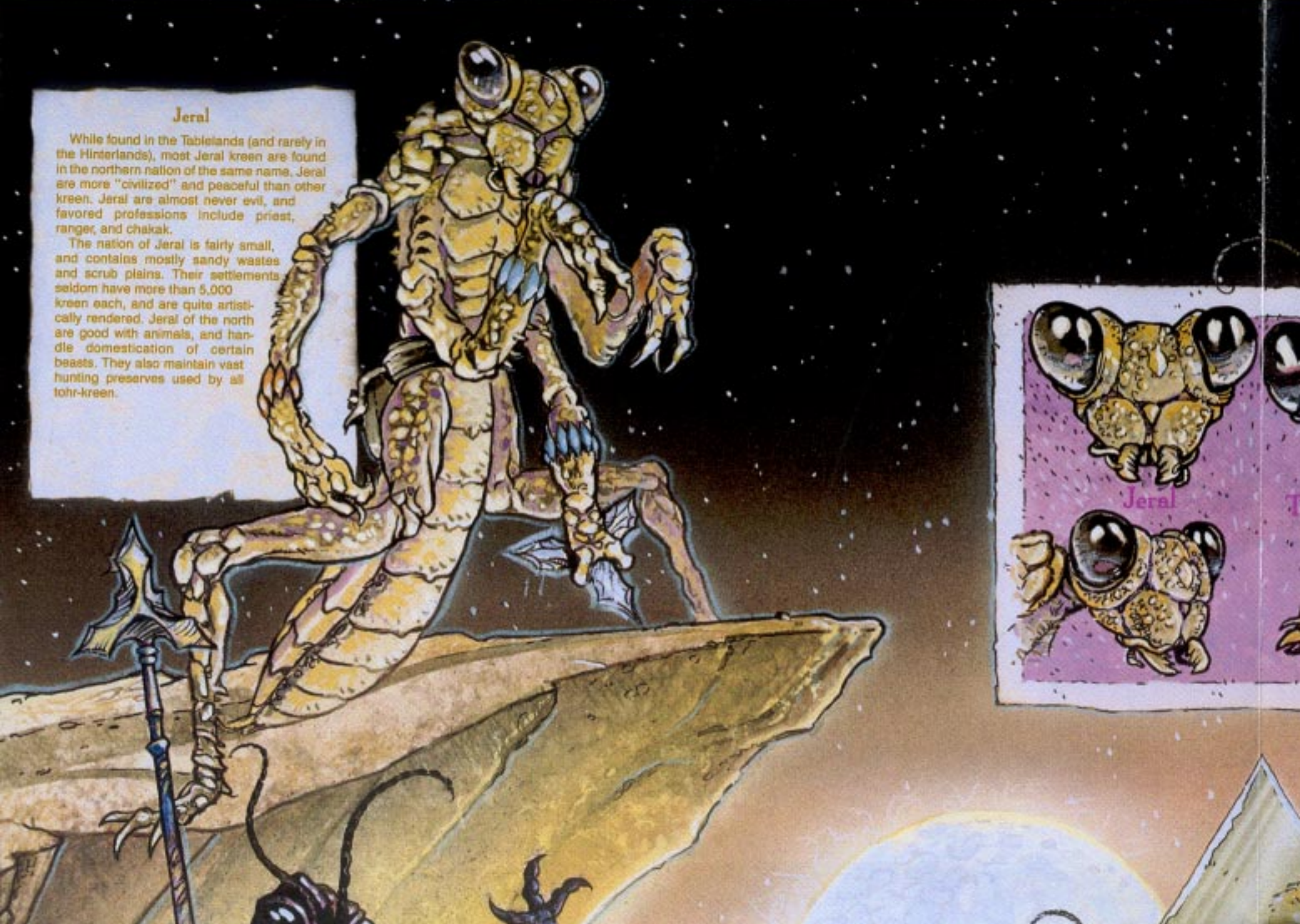
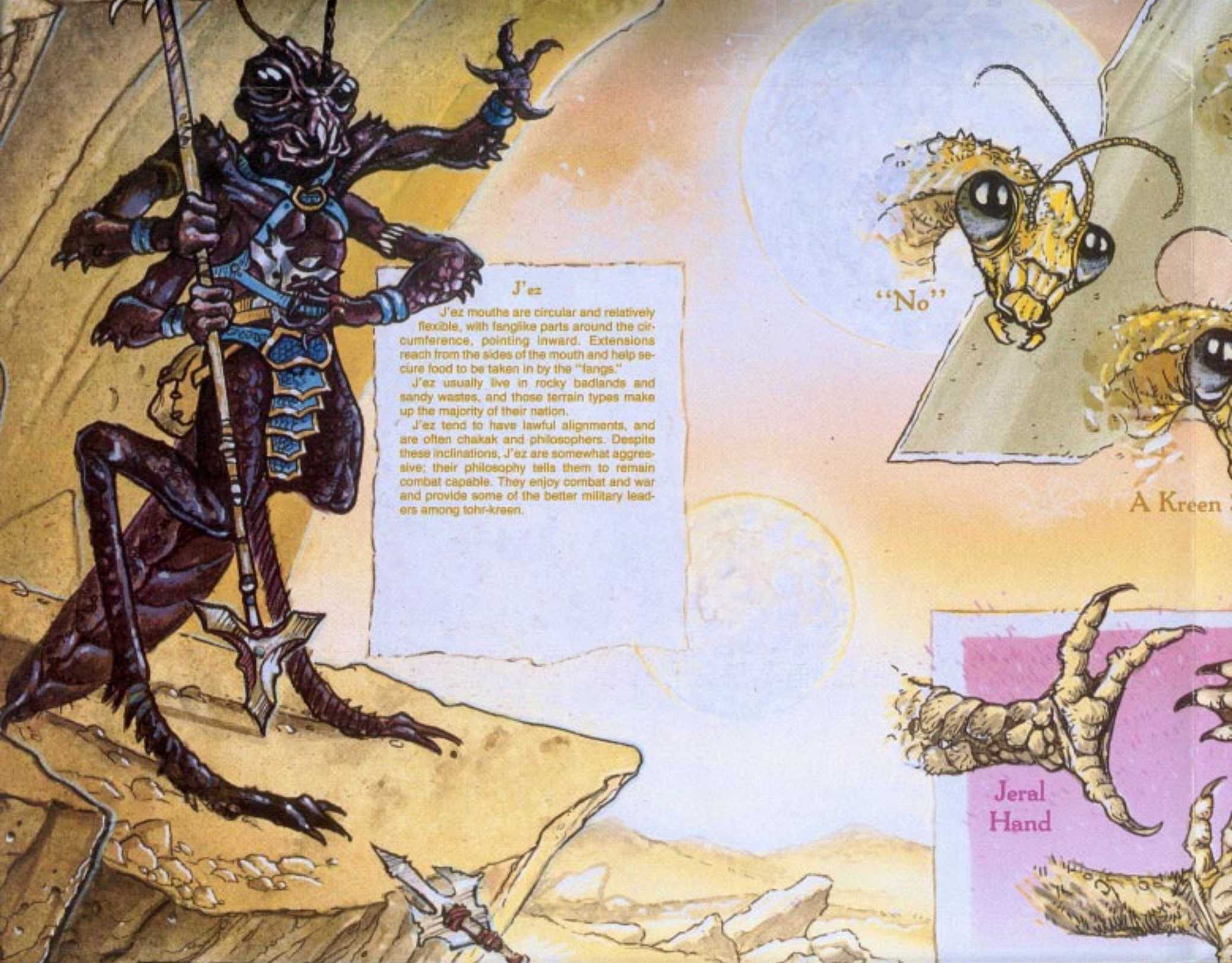

Jeral
While found in the Tablelands (and rarely in the Hinterlands), most Jeral kreen are found in the northern nation of the same name. Jeral are more "civilized" and peaceful than other kreen. Jeral are almost never evil, and favored professions include priest, ranger, and chakak.
The nation of Jeral is fairly small, and contains mostly sandy wastes and scrub plains. Their settlements seldom have more than 5,000 kreen each, and are quite artistically rendered. Jeral of the north are good with animals, and handle domestication of certain beasts. They also maintain vast hunting preserves used by all tohr-kreen.
Jeral



J'ez

J'ez mouths are circular and relatively flexible, with fanglike parts around the circumference, pointing inward. Extensions reach from the sides of the mouth and help secure food to be taken in by the "fangs."

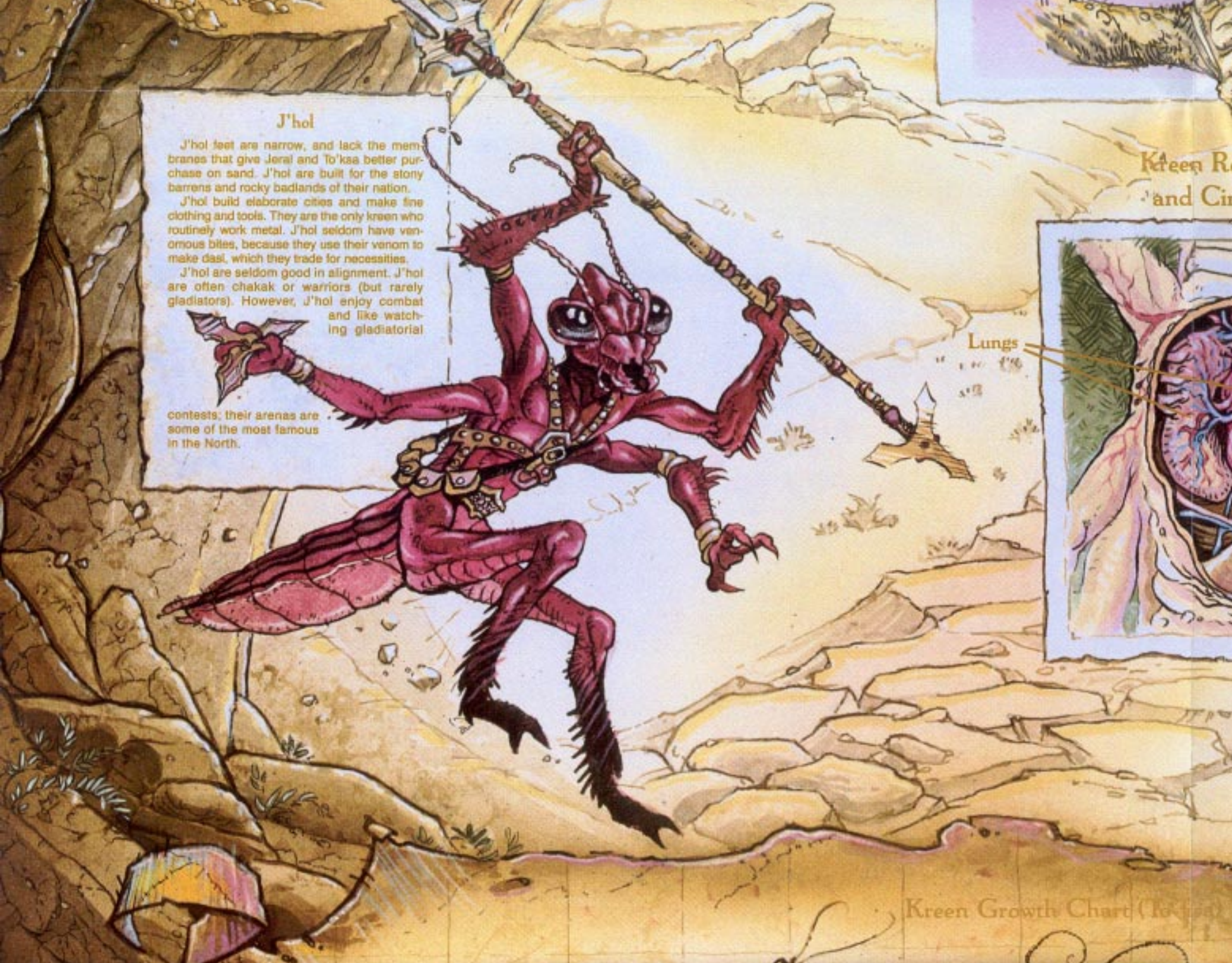
J'ez usually live in rocky badlands and sandy wastes, and those terrain types make up the majority of their nation.

J'ez tend to have lawful alignments, and are often chakak and philosophers. Despite these inclinations, J'ez are somewhat aggressive; their philosophy tells them to remain combat capable. They enjoy combat and war and provide some of the better military leaders among tohr-kreen.

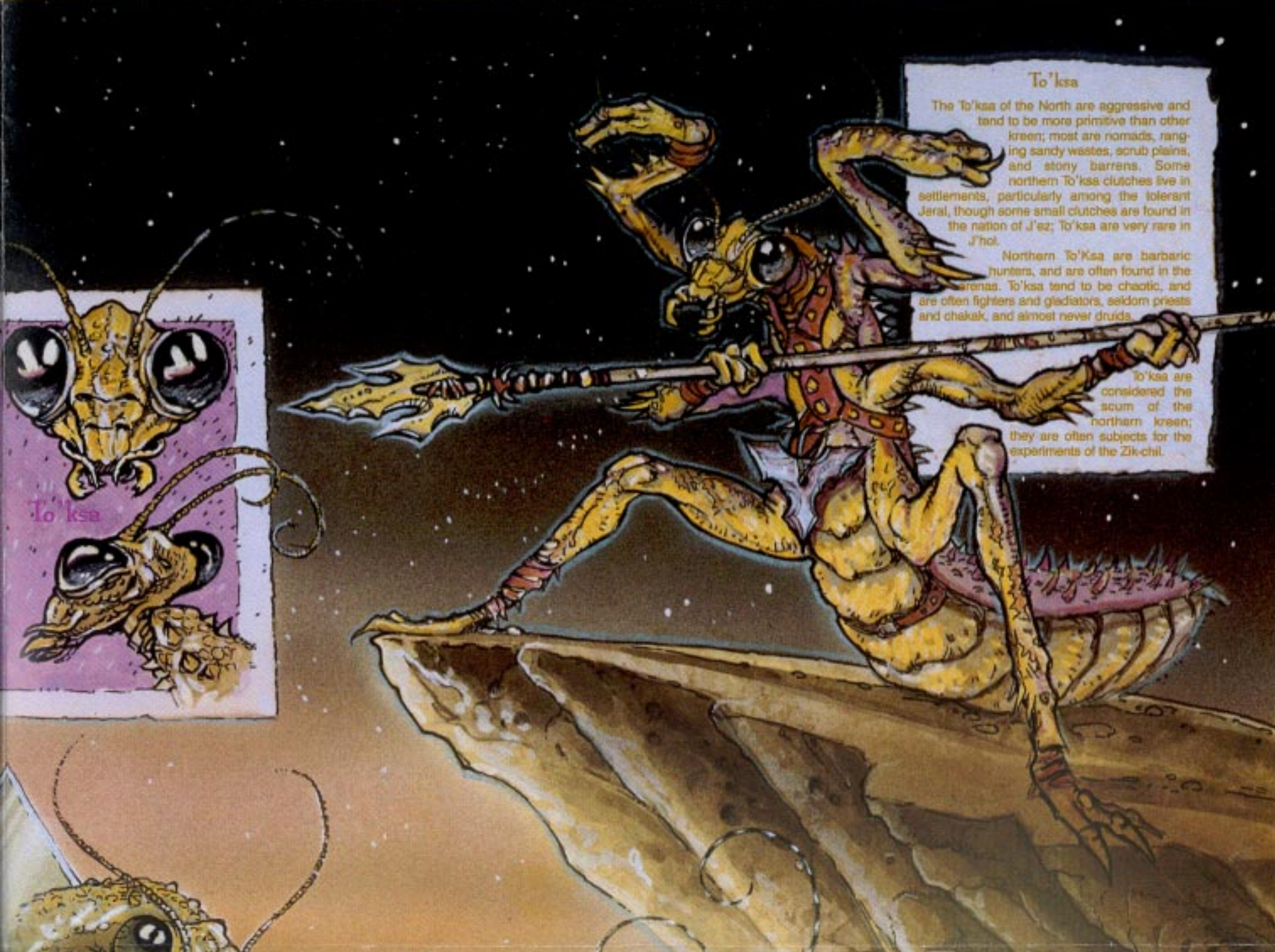
"No"

A Kreen

Jeral Hand


J'hol
J'hol feet are narrow, and lack the membranes that give Jeral and To'ksa better purchase on sand. J'hol are built for the stony barrens and rocky badlands of their nation.
J'hol build elaborate cities and make fine clothing and tools. They are the only kreen who routinely work metal. J'hol seldom have venomous bites, because they use their venom to make dasl, which they trade for necessities.
J'hol are seldom good in alignment. J'hol are often chakak or warriors (but rarely gladiators). However, J'hol enjoy combat and like watching gladiatorial contests; their arenas are some of the most famous in the North.
Lungs
Kreen Growth Chart


Kreen Growth Chart
Larva
Child
Young Adult
Young



To'ksa

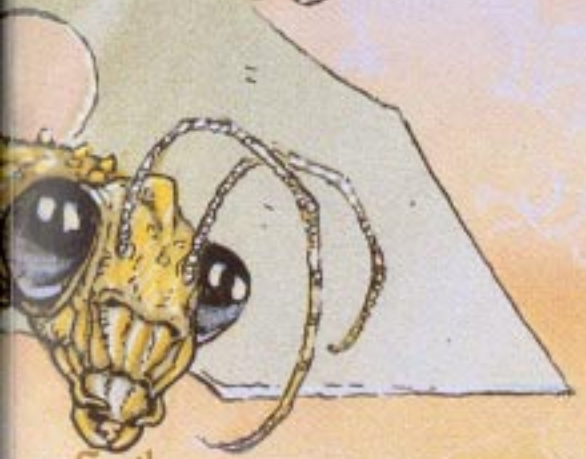
The To'ksa of the North are aggressive and tend to be more primitive than other kreen; most are nomads, ranging sandy wastes, scrub plains, and stony barrens. Some northern To'ksa clutches live in settlements, particularly among the tolerant Jeral, though some small clutches are found in the nation of J'ez; To'ksa are very rare in J'hol.

Northern To'Ksa are barbaric hunters, and are often found in the arenas. To'ksa tend to be chaotic, and are often fighters and gladiators, seldom priests and chakak, and almost never druids.

To'ksa are considered the scum of the northern kreen; they are often subjects for the experiments of the Zik-chil.



"Yes"



een Smile

T'keech

T'keech are uncommon; their green chitin indicates they once lived in verdant areas. While adapted to deserts as well as other kreen, T'keech are immune to chitin-rot and respiratory infections that affect other kreen in humid regions.

T'keech tend to be neutral in regards to law and chaos. Preferred professions include priest, druid, and warrior. Most, however, serve as laborers in the nations of Jersi, J'hol, and J'ez. Small clutches of T'keech are found in each nation. They are rarely nomadic, but some clutches have small, independent settlements near oases. T'keech prefer to live in scrub plains and near oases.



Kreen Foot



To'ksa Hand

To'ksa Hand

n Respiration
Circulation



Breathing Holes

Hearts

Tondi

When still, a Tondi looks like a giant ohi flower, or an outcropping of rock crystal. Tondi often lay eggs near ohi flowers, found in northern scrub plains. Adults often live in gardens of ohi flowers, or in rocky badlands of the North, where there are outcroppings of rock crystal. All Tondi are female, and they reproduce by parthenogenesis, laying eggs that hatch into more females. Tondi tend to be neutral with regards to good and evil. Most love nature and are skilled herbalists; almost every Tondi who follows a profession becomes a druid. Rare in the North, Tondi are completely unknown in the Tablelands; still, it is rumored that Durwadala, the kreen druid of the Lost Oasis, is a Tondi.



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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® 2nd Edition

Thri-Kreen of Athas

by Tim Beach and Dori Hein



They tower above mere human warriors and adventurers. In a savage world, they hunt—and all else is prey. Wandering the sandy wastes and stony barrens under the crimson sun, thri-kreen are the most skilled trackers, the most barbaric gladiators, the most implacable of foes. Mysterious and savage, the mantis people have been a closed book. *Until now...*

Thri-Kreen of Athas enters the world of the nomadic thri-kreen—a world governed by *tokchak,* the clutchmind, and *tikchak,* the hunt-mind. From hatching to hunting to coming of age, the secrets of the thri-kreen are at last revealed. From their formidable combat abilities to the subtleties of their psionic powers, this accessory explores every aspect of thri-kreen life. For players, there are new rules and new character kits—offered to DARK SUN® game characters for the first time!

A special adventure for thri-kreen characters, *The Taste of Fear,* is included. Dire events in the unknown North trigger ancient racial memories. What terrors lie in the lost secrets of their past?

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