

SAVAGE TEKUMEL

WELCOME TO TEKUMEL...

The Setting and the Characters

The setting is a pulp science-fantasy. You play a brawny warrior, wise priest, or cunning sorcerer, fighting hideous monsters, exploring ancient ruins, and exposing insidious intrigues for the glory of your god or your clan.

The Rules

The campaign uses the setting of *Tekumel: Empire of the Petal Throne*, but the rules of *Savage Worlds Explorers Edition*. You can download a free *Test Drive* version of the rules [here](#).

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SETTING NOTES

The Empire of the Petal Throne has ruled the nation of Tsolyanu for nearly 2,500 years. Rival states are Mu'ugalavya to the west, Salarvya to the east, Yan Kor to the north, and Livyanu to the southwest. Nonhuman foes are the barbarous froglike Hlutrgu in their swamps to the southeast; the bejewelled, scorpionoid Hluss, raiding from the island of Hlussuyal in their hive-ships; and the Ssu: Tall, slender, six-limbed beings who smell of musty cinnamon, and speak in bell-like chimes. The insectoid Pe Choi and batlike Hlaka are allies to man.

The indigenous Old Life consists of poisonous, blood-purplish jungle vegetation, called the Food of the Ssu; the Ssu; the Hluss; and their animal relatives. Imported life forms are those brought by mankind and its allies when they came to the planet Tekumel from 'the stars' (whatever *they* were) long ago to wrest it from the Ssu and transform it to their liking. Most ecological niches are occupied not by mammals, but by large insects or reptiles, usually six-legged. Anything not domesticated is probably poisonous.

The campaign starts in the southern Tsolyani port of Jakalla, which slumbers in luxurious, decadent splendour above yellowish tidal flats, bisected by the dark waters of the Equnoyel River flowing west. In the spring monsoons, it gets 380 cm of rain; temperatures range from 15° Centigrade in midwinter to a peak of 45° Centigrade in summer. Every 500 years the citizens raze Jakalla to the ground and rebuild on the rubble, but some cults worship their gods in the original locations, so the city stands on a mound riddled with underground complexes.

Tsolyani society is based on the clan; a clan's members look to it for health care, education, employment, legal representation, accommodation and food. Tsolyani government is an authoritarian bureaucracy, ruled with an iron hand by the Emperor through the Omnipotent Azure Legion. The punishment for almost every crime is summary execution. Although clanless foreign barbarians deal in hard cash, the Tsolyani rely on a system of cross-clan favours and obligations; imagine that the clan markings on their clothing act as credit cards.

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Technology differs from mediaeval Earth in three main ways: First, magic is real. Second, there are no riding animals; most travel is on foot, though creaky, slow-moving carts pulled by chlen (imagine a six-legged triceratops) are used for bulky loads. Third, iron and steel are so rare as to be considered magical; chlen hide, transformed by secret processes into something like fibreglass, is used for armour and weapons. The 'gods' really exist; they did not create man, nor do they especially favour him, but they can sometimes be cajoled – or bribed – into helping.

The gods are divided into those of Law and those of Chaos, and each group has five main gods: A 'king of the gods', a god for warriors, one for magicians, one for women, and one for the dead. Every main god has a cohort who specialises in a related area. The Great Concordat, signed by all the temples, prohibits violence by members of one cult against another. At least, while anyone is looking...

Tsolyani society is male-dominated. The good clangirl cooks, cares for children, and marries the man the clan elders select for her; in return, she enjoys total support and protection from the clan. However, any woman has the right to declare herself *aridani* ('legally male'), whereupon she accepts the same rights, duties, and risks as a man.

The Tsolyani Mindset

Tsolyani are obsessed with making the abstract concrete. If someone is of higher status than you, for example, they will be on a raised platform so that they can literally look down on you. If you want to know whether the clanmaster or chief priest is in a good mood, you look at the plaque hung on his door before you enter his office, and it will tell you.

Tsolyani are firm believers in collective guilt. Whatever you do reflects well, or badly, on your clan and your temple. If your cousin does well, everyone in the clan gains status, including you – whether or not you had anything to do with it. If he commits a crime, everyone is shamed.

Tsolyani also strive for what they call “noble action”, which we call “playing in character”. If you are a priest of Vimuhla, you are expected to sacrifice prisoners by burning them alive, so no-one thinks the worse of you for doing it. If, however, you heal them and let them go with a warning not to be naughty again, your clan and temple will be very upset with you.

RULES NOTES

To succeed at a task, you need to roll the target's Parry score (when rolling to hit someone in melee), or the target's Toughness (when trying to wound them), or a 4+ (for anything else). More experienced characters roll dice with more sides, giving them a better chance of success. If you beat the required roll by 4 or more (called a “raise”), you get a better result. Any die which rolls its maximum (an “ace”) allows you to keep that score, reroll the die, and add the new result to your total.

PCs roll a d6 as well as the die for their skill or attribute whenever they roll, except when rolling damage; you can choose to use the result from the normal die, or the d6. PCs also start each session with three “bennies”. You can use a benny to reroll any one die, or to try to recover from wounds. PCs have 3 wounds, NPCs have one.

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The combat system encourages swashbuckling and teamwork. You can attempt any number of actions per turn, although the more you try, the worse the penalties to your die rolls. Skills like Taunt and Intimidation, and tricks based on Smarts (“Look behind you!”) or Agility (throwing sand in faces) make it easier for you and your comrades to damage enemies.

CHARACTER CREATION

House Rule: You may adjust your character after the end of the first adventure, as that may suggest a better balance of skills, attributes, etc.

Skills

Every Player Character should have some skill in Fighting, Guts, Notice, and Shooting. Every adventuring party should have someone with Healing. Tekumel has many languages; these are treated as individual Knowledge skills, but all Player Characters know modern Tsolyani. Characters may not take the Riding skill, as there are no riding animals.

A skill of d6 is about average, giving the typical NPC a 50% chance of success; due to their wild die, PCs have better chances of success than NPCs.

Hindrances

Codes of Honour and Vows are especially appropriate hindrances for this setting.

Outsider

One reason to take this is because you are a clanless foreign barbarian from the Great Southern Continent, shipwrecked near Jakalla. You have no legal rights. Until you reach Seasoned rank, you speak halting Tsolyani with many grammatical errors, and constantly insult people by unintentionally breaking taboos. You also speak your native tongue, but it’s unlikely you will find anyone else who does.

Vow (Religion)

Whatever your religion is, you are a true believer. Your actions must be consistent with your beliefs.

Edges

Arcane Backgrounds

Only Magic and Miracles are permitted as arcane backgrounds.

Instant Characters

The Tsolyani Empire is run by the military and the temples in the Emperor’s name, and these offer a means for even the lowest to rise above their original station. The three so-called Great Professions are warrior, priest, and magician. You can take one of these as your Player Character, use it as a template and modify it, or create one from scratch, as you wish.

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Warrior

Warriors are fighting men, pure but not necessarily simple; those with aspirations to high rank will need to be more than just ‘good with their hands’; they must know the rudiments of siege engineering, how to fight with two weapons simultaneously (for pose value more than anything) and possibly several languages so they can read military classics in the original.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigour d6

Skills: Fighting d8+1, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Battle) d4, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Throwing d4.

Charisma 0, **Pace** 6, **Parry** 7, **Toughness** 7 (1).

Hindrances: Code of Honor, Loyal: Friends, Vengeful.

Edges: Brawny, Florentine.

Gear: Leather Armor: +1, Medium Shield: Parry +1, Longsword: Str+d8, Dagger: Str+d4; \$75.

Improving your character: Better attributes and skills are always good. Consider learning Knowledge (Pechani) if you plan to fight the Ssu, or the languages of Tsolyanu’s rivals if you intend to interrogate prisoners.

Priest

Priests may be administrators or spellcasters, but either way they are formally ordained clergy with responsibilities to their flocks and their temples. The skills and spells available to them depend on which god they worship, but all temples teach spells of detection, protection and healing. Priests are expected to speak several languages in addition to Tsolyani.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigour d6

Skills: Faith d8, Fighting d6-1, Guts d6, Healing d4, Knowledge (Bednalljan) d4, Knowledge (Classical Tsolyani) d4, Knowledge (Engsvanyali) d4, Knowledge (Theology) d6, Notice d4, Shooting d4-1.

Charisma 0, **Pace** 6, **Parry** 6, **Toughness** 6 (1), **Power Points** 10.

Hindrances: Vow: Religious Tenets.

Edges: Arcane Background (Miracles), Holy Warrior.

Powers: Healing, Light.

Gear: Leather Armor: +1, Medium Shield: Parry +1, Mace: Str+d4, \$375.

Improving your character: More Powers and Power Points are always good. Your temple suggests you learn Detect/Conceal Arcana at Novice Rank, Dispel at Seasoned, and Greater Healing and Puppet at Veteran.

Magician

Magicians are lay priests, attached to a temple but not part of the formal hierarchy. They tend to specialise in control spells, ESP, illusions, and ‘attribute buffs’. Being a magician is like knowing how to make nerve gas; it’s a skill difficult to practice without government backing, and once the authorities know you can do it, they keep a close eye on you. Most magicians learn their skill from temple instructors; it is possible to work out how to cast spells on your own, but this marks you as a dangerous subversive.

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House Rule: Illusions and ESP are trappings rather than specific spells. You might cast Fear, for example, by gazing into the victim's subconscious mind to learn his worst nightmare, and then showing him an illusion of it. Boosting your Notice skill might mean you read the target's surface emotions. Be creative; but don't expect to solve the mystery by reading the suspect's mind.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (Astrology) d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4, Spellcasting d8.

Charisma 0, Pace 6, Parry 4, Toughness 6 (1), Power Points 10.

Edges: Arcane Background (Magic).

Powers: Boost/Lower Trait, Detect/Conceal Arcana, Fear.

Gear: Leather Armor: +1, Dagger: Str+d4, \$425.

Improving your character: More Powers and Power Points are always good. Your temple suggests you learn Beast Friend, Bolt and Burst at Novice Rank; Telekinesis at Seasoned; and Puppet at Veteran. If your temple approves of that sort of thing, learning Zombie is also appropriate once you reach Veteran Rank.

Gear and Upkeep

The \$ symbol is used to denote silver Hlash. There are 10 copper Qirgal in a silver Hlash, and 10 silver Hlash in a gold Kaitar.

Your clan provides you with food, accommodation, clothing and transport as necessary; so don't bother keeping track of living expenses. If it becomes important, the monthly cost of food and lodgings is equal to your starting wealth; \$500 for the average hero, \$250 for one with the Poverty hindrance, \$1,500 for one with the Noble or Rich edges, or \$2,500 for one with the Filthy Rich edge.

Most items a character might want are already in the *Savage Worlds* rulebook, or can be represented by things that are. Steel weapons or armour, if you can get them, are considered permanently imbued with the Smite or Armour powers, respectively.

CONVERSION GUIDELINES

These are included as an aide-memoire for the GM, and can be safely ignored by players. They allow the GM to create adversaries and allies quickly from the Tekumel rulebook.

Stats

Strength has the same name in both systems. Dexterity translates to Agility, Intelligence to Smarts, Psyche to Spirit, and Willpower to Vigour. Charisma for Savage Worlds characters is calculated normally rather than converted from *Tekumel* Charisma. The actual value of the stat is taken from the table below:

Tekumel Stat	0-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11-12
Savage Worlds Stat	D4	D6	D8	D10	D12

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Attributes and Defects

These convert to Edges and Hindrances, respectively, and are converted on a case-by-case basis.

Skills

These convert to skills; the skill name is usually obvious, and the skill level is derived using the table below. Remember that a single *Savage Worlds* skill covers several *Tekumel* skills, and that the *Savage Worlds* Common Knowledge rule covers skills such as Culture, Politics and Style.

Tekumel Skill Level	0	1-2	3	4	5	6
Savage Worlds Skill Level	None	D4	D6	D8	D10	D12

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