

Ramian Social Structure

by Joseph Steven Coleman (RadioJoe5@aol.com)

The blue-skinned ramian arrived on Jorune as seritors of the Lamorii and were abandoned to their fate after the shantha expelled the lamorri from the planet. Ramian are a distant relation to the lamorri, but ramian is to lamorri as chimpanzee is to human. After almost 5,000 years apart from their lamorri masters, the ramian culture has developed in a stoic, stratified society that is virutally closed to outsiders. Ramian have established themselves with four locations on Jorune, although Voligire, buried in the cold country south of Gilthaw, is the land most people associate with ramian. Ramian can also be found in Ponteer, Drail and Sillipus.

Ramian society is a brooding caste system, where passage from one caste to the other is cause for despair or the bizarre remain destructive ceremony of Rak, which celebrates the elevation of a ramian to a higher caste while acknowledging the advancing ramian's desertion of his (or her?) family group.

CHIVEN RACHU-EH

The highest level in the Voligirian society is the Chiven Rachu-eh, those who are masters of themselves. Those who assert an amazing level of self-control during chiveer may burst their own blood vessels, particularly on the chest or above the ears, while resisting the desire to breed or draw much blood of those around them. No ramian is born to the caste and there is no caste that is favored within the highest caste. It is not unknown *for a ramian* to use chemicals or berry juices to fake the exalted bloodstains of the Chiven Rachu-eh, but discovery of the fraud may result in an immediate and painful death for the imposter. Chiven Rachu-eh are chosen to govern, negotiate with other races, administer the minimal governmental



structure within Voligire, Drail, Ponteer and Sillipus. Most gire ships carry at least three chiven rachu-eh to give the force of authority to decisions.

URAT

Below the Chiven Rachu-eh are the Urat, the nobility of Voligire who receive their position by birth. Urat take their high office from hereditary titles that can be traced back to the lamorri servitude and is ranked according to the responsibility the ancestor held as a lamorri slave. Urat seldom leave Voligire willingly, but a formal governorship is held by two Urat in Drail, one in Ponteer and one in Sillipus. Even the highest Urat lives a spartan life, surrounded

by lower caste ramian and affiliated with at least one or two Chiven Rachu-eh (who the Urat consider inferior). Urat governors studiously keep the meaningless ceremonies started by the lamorri to give their slaves an outlet for the need most intelligent races have for ritual. They avoid dealing with non-ramian, with the exception of thivin (who are considered deviant ramian), considering such contact to be distasteful and the duty of lesser ramian.

ZHON

The Zhon are the farmers and teachers of the ramian. Zhon maintain the plantations in Drail and teach the basic hearth skills to the young. The zhon will occasionally join a gire crew to reach a distant port for discussions with iscin and farmers to solve problems beyond the understanding of the other ramian castes. Five Zhon journeyed to the North Valley station (now called Gauss) to discuss the inability to grow a cultivated shirm-eh (the ramian healing limilate) with the scientist Iscin. Iscin travelled to Voligire with the Zhon to attempt to overcome the genetic weaknesses that causes domesticated shirm-eh to fail within three generations, necessitating the constant quest for wild shirm-eh to make healing limilates. (NOTE: It is a thriddle purpose in life to destroy any patches of shirm-eh they discover, destroying established sites. It is also a custom among forest thriddle to mark passage into adulthood by adventuring to a shirm-eh site and salting the ground to prevent it from every growing again. Many of the worst conflicts between thriddle and ramian have taken place because of thriddle action against a source of shirm-eh — and the thriddle are usually not the winners in such conflicts.)

RAMIS

The average ramian. Somewhat shorter and stockier than the lithe ramian gire and chiven rachu-eh, the Ramis are the common farmers, miners, fisherman and laborers. The philosophy of "powerful silence" illustrated by the Ramis — the site of dozens of blue gray Rami in the fields or the great open pit mines of Vinteer, working without uttering a word for days at a time can be very unsettling.

A Rami seldom travels more than a few miles from the site of his (or is that a her?) birth.

GIRE

The Gire are the outcast heroes of ramian society. Because shirm-eh will not germinate in domesticated fields, there is a constant need to discover fresh sources. Other nations, knowing the value of shirm-eh to the ramian, have charged outrageous prices for their supplies of the limilate and virtually forced gire into piracy to raise the exorbitant prices the merchants demanded. After a few thousand years, the role of gire as pirate was firmly established and their prowess in sea battles was well known.

A Gire can be feted for bringing ships loaded with unprocessed shirm-eh into Vinteer, and a six day feast, called Gire-sau, is held in the heroes' honor. It is forbidden to kill except in self-defense during Gire-sau and all non-ramian, including prisoners, become guests at the feast, with the understanding that on the sixth day everything will return to its previous status. There are several stories of captive adventurers who escaped from Voligire during Gire-sau — and they are the only ones who lived to tell the tales.

CHIVEER

Below the Gire are the chiveer. The ramian abandoned on Jorune found that their body chemistry changed as a result of being on the new world of Sho Caudal. Their normal mating cycle was changed. Where it was simple part of the reproductive cycle in the lamorri-ramian homeworld, on Jorune the season of the Chiveer ceased to be part of a normal cycle, but was triggered by build-up of Shal. Chiveer drove some members of the race into a bloodlust accompanied by physical transformation. Chivs, the bony projections other races use as a warning sign to mark mating-mad ramian, do *not* appear on all members of the race, but only those who have developed an extreme sensitivity to Shal isho. No one is safe from a ramian chiveer in full bloom — the chiveer will kill its parents or children as quickly as it will kill an enemy. The chiveer-sensitive are driven from the main population and commonly take up with gire crews — it is one of the only places they can

go and success as a gire will give them a return to society for a short time during Gire-sau and as giron, or 'hero.'

THIVIN

At the bottom of the social structure are the thivin, who are mutations of ramian who do the dirty work, the monotonous smithing and the trading with other races. Thivin within the ramian societies will never be anything other than thivin; there is no chance to advance or improve their station in life. After a plague reduced the population in Voligire to less than a third of normal, thivin were sent in place of Zhon to trade and negotiate with other realms. Most of the thivin who left did not return, but made new lives as respected craftsmen and artisans in the other cultures.

A free thivin returning to Voligire is subject to immediate capture and will be impressed into a thivin work gang, which amounts to a lifetime slavery.

JASPIAN RAMIAN

A colony of ramian remained in Jasp as hostages for three generations after the negotiations of Harangire (see "Voyages of the Aylon Star"). Many of them remained and Jasp eventually conferred full citizenship and rights onto its ramian citizens. Ramian from Jasp can be unnerving in their casual use of slang and other non-ramian flourishes in their speech (such as anecdotes and jokes). Jaspian ramian have learned the 'showing of teeth' which most races seem to associate with pleasure, but the sight of a ramian attempting to smile is very upsetting to most intelligent species.

CA-DU RAMIAN

Less than a dozen ramian have been accepted by Ca-Du shantha as acolytes, but these few have revealed a completely unknown aspect of the ramian personality — joy. When a ramian first fully understands they can make their own decisions without concern for other ramian, for Voligire, for the Urat or any other traditional concern, they begin experimenting with their new freedom. A newly liberated Ca-Du may make a series of decisions, one after the other, just to confirm the new-found right to think of things as non-ramian.



- Joe Coleman
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