

Gwenthia

Second Iteration



IQARI

By Pete Nash

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INTRODUCTION

Revised Extract from the Encyclopaedia Gwenthia

Iqari are found primarily in Cromaigne and Spiria, although flocks are known south of AurUrbs and have been sighted as far east as The Badlands. With humanoid arms and torsos, and the head, legs and wings of a raptor, Iqari are formidable hunters, possessing the keen sight and instincts of predators, and a strength and size far superior to that of humans.

Their origins are unknown. It has been speculated that the Iqari are a species created by the Evening Culture, although this has never been proved beyond doubt, and it would seem that the Iqari inhabited Cromaigne long before the Evening Culture settled the island. Perhaps the Geneweavers themselves designed the Iqari, for there exist certain mental defects in the sapient race which suggest an artificial genesis.

Iqari are social amongst their own kind, but are antagonistic towards most other species, including Cromaignians, Lapithians, and any who venture too close to their mountain colonies. Certainly they are intelligent, with tool-making and crafting skills. No one has yet been able to venture successfully into the mountainous reaches they inhabit to view first-hand what kind of settlements they occupy, but the common view is of great collections of nest-like structures that form crude versions of cities, high in the mountain peaks.

The Iqari can fly great distances far and wide, but seem to prefer the areas around their home mountains. They appear to husband the native animals as a food source, but are sometimes also seen soaring above the seas and lakes which boarder their territories, swooping low to catch fish on the wing. In Cromaigne and Spiria, Iqari hunting flocks regularly attack the settlements clustered in the fertile lower reaches of the hills and mountains, taking livestock and the

occasional human or Cromaignian victim - either as prey or simply for the joy of the kill.

Iqari communicate through a complex series of beak-clicks, squawks, feather-ruffles, head tilts and hand signals. Some have noted that they can understand certain languages but lack the ability to speak them. As yet, negotiation with Iqari has been futile: they are unwilling to communicate openly or offer any respite from their attacks.



As well as their natural physical attributes, Iqari employ long, barbed spears when hunting or attacking. These three-metre long weapons are dreadful in use, being either hurled from on-high or used as lances in the feared Iqari death-plunge.

The Iqari are regarded as deadly foes. Yet despite their predatory nature they are fascinating to humans. An Iqari's many coloured plumage is strikingly resplendent. However it is their singing for which they are famed. Their voices are so transcendently beautiful that they can overwhelm listeners with uncontrollable emotion. Many fortune hunters attempt to steal young chicks to sell as song-birds. However, few ever return.

It is rumoured that Prince yrGael of Spharain maintains a personal Iqari bodyguard, but how he has been able to communicate with, and control, such a fearsome species, is unknown. However, as is the case with most of the rumours surrounding Prince yrGael, this is most likely wild speculation.

Zathurian Species-Study Report

To: Arch Savant Zip'hoepoth, Head of Sapience Threat Analysis Department, Khranpur

From: Savant His'Zzthruth, Avianoid Studies, Department of Xeno Management, Khranpur

Article #94725700975-Z, Study of Iqari - Minor Sapient Species

Over-savant! Attached is my final study of the aberrant species you asked me to investigate. The original, and rather brief, study period of 162 local years was cut short due to over expenditure of resource personnel, but I have identified this minor race as having no discernable threat.

The study started well enough, but unfortunately, the visual alacrity of the Iqari species meant that our stealth-camouflaged recording units were constantly spotted and destroyed by the violent barbarians. Thus I was forced to rely on secondary sources for much of the information on cultural hostility.

Micro-eavesdropping devices scattered under cover of thunderstorms had more success in recording Iqari speech. However a great number in the immediate region of eyries were destroyed by falling rocks, leaving me to suspect that the species is sensitive to other electromagnetic wavelengths, since the devices should never have been detected considering the creatures pitiful lack of technology.

We now have a translation algorithm capable of producing partial comprehension of their primitive squawking. Unsurprisingly, the limited intellect of these creatures makes the translations near worthless, but served to illustrate the uniqueness of the culture. The second phase involved sampling the population

and testing specimens firsthand. The sapience of the captured genotypes all quickly devolved under interrogation, and failed to handle even our most basic of automated technological testing devices. Personal interaction with light boards was obviously out of the question.

A worry arose during the genetic study of the specimens. I was unable to find any evidence of any past genetic manipulation, which raises the slight possibility that this is a naturally evolved race, as all of the genes appear to be native to the ecosystem of this planet.

Thus there is a small probability that this species was generated from scratch, by a technology currently beyond our understanding. Please flag such in your report. Even if the Iqari are no threat directly, their presence may indicate a civilisation whose existence which we have no knowledge of.

I have sent a request to the department of History for access to archival planetary scans, but the librarian is insisting that solar flare activity scrambled the life form searches during the period requested. I suggest disciplinary action against the department as no attempt was made to record the 'limited sapient species identification' made soon after our arrival on this pox-ridden world.

Also note that I was unable to capture any data concerning Iqari 'sorcery'. This may be due to a lack of any psychic talent, certainly nothing indicating such abilities was discovered during postmortem examinations of the specimens, though it seems at odds with the scattering of legends I was able to secure from Cromaigne.

Another statistical disturbance were several high altitude tachyon bursts we detected over the Cromaignian mountains during the study, which corresponded to the times of Sun Seeker ceremonies. Source remains unknown.

In conclusion, the Iqari are techno-incompetents of limited sapience and are of no danger to our plans. My predictions are that they will eventually exterminate themselves against humankind over the next hundred years. Ultimately our involvement is unnecessary, unless the Department of Bio Weapons wishes to tailor a specific genetic weapon to stimulate even more violent behaviour, resulting in an all out territorial war within Cromaigne. A potential tool to undermine *that upstart* Prince yrGael, or at least provide a second front should we wish to launch an invasion utilising one of our subjugated client races.

Report Ends.

IQARI PHYSIOLOGY

The Iqari at first glance appear to be a cross between giant raptors and humans. This is a superficial comparison however. Standing close to two point five meters in height, Iqari are daunting just for their size.

Despite their hybrid appearance Iqari are actually evolved octopods. That is to say, they have eight limbs. The arms and primary wings extend from quadruple shoulder blades at the top of the spine. The legs and secondary wings share a single four-way pelvis at the spine's base.

Both sexes of Iqari have deep muscular chests which anchor the flight muscles for the primary pair of wings. Female Iqari also possess a pair of glands on the chest, which despite their resemblance to mammalian breasts are instead thought to produce calming pheromone secretions whilst raising chicks.

Feathers

Feathers cover all areas except for the chest, arms and lower legs. The feathers greatly vary in colour and most Iqari generally have at least two tints in their plumage. Stronger primary colours of the spectrum denote the hereditary lineage of the original clans. In general the feathers are iridescent in direct sunlight, due to a high metallic mineral content, with the flight feathers baring the brighter tones and the down feathers secondary and tertiary colours. Age brings a fading of pigment and loss of sheen. Close examination of Iqari feathers show a gradual change in colour from quill to tip, somewhat like a peacock feather.

Small Iqari flight feathers are prized by scribes for their exquisiteness, rarity and longevity. Larger flight feathers can reach over two meters in length. Although soft, down feathers cannot compare to those produced by smaller birds, their size (and colour) enables them to be used more easily to line clothing, rather than stuffing pillows.

However, anybody discovered wearing such clothing or sporting decorative Iqari feathers would be wise to avoid meeting a member of this fierce race. Stories are legend of wearers being killed for such presumption.

Many Iqari possess metallic hues around the eyes, beak and wingtips, and bright contrast is considered a sign of beauty. Male Iqari sport crests which are used to display warnings, or during courting displays. All Iqari are capable of ruffling outwards their head and neck feathers to make themselves look more imposing. Combining this with a hiss and wing spread can be extremely intimidating.



An Iqari raises its crest

An Iqari's feathers also grant it a small degree of protection during combat. The combination of quills and down is effective against concussive or slashing damage, but is of little use against thrusts. Hence the eaglemen are cautious of most missile weapons.

Although Iqari lack feathers upon their torsos, arms and lower legs, they keep warm in their high eyries by wrapping their wings about them. During flight, the exact opposite is required since the muscular power

required to flap their wings generates a large amount of waste heat. This is perhaps one of the main reasons that the Iqari are normally found in northern climes.

The skin of an Iqari is actually covered with small scales, which are thought to be proto-feathers. The scales are generally of a pale golden tone, but can also vary in tint, becoming more copper coloured in later age. Like the areas around the eyes and beak, the skin scales have a slightly metallic sheen.

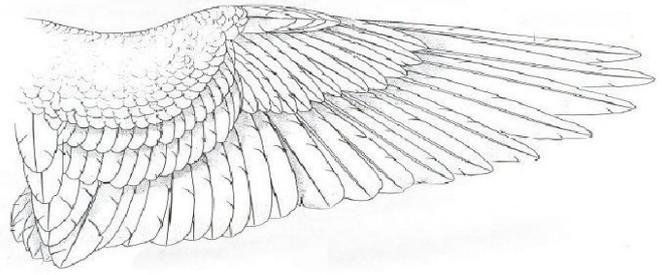
Wings

Iqari can fly using their large primary wings. Adult wingspan is typically between 7 and 8 meters for both males and females. The shoulder-mounted wings are extremely powerful, requiring a massively deep chest to mount the attachments for the strongest muscles in the body. When furled the primary wings extend above an Iqari's head, adding another half meter to their already considerable height., with the tips almost brushing the ground behind them, so that they are held in a slightly swept back position.

The secondary wings are mounted at the hips and are unable to flap. Lacking significant musculature, these wings can only extend backwards to form a two part stabilising tail fan, which because of its bi-part nature allows a high degree of aerial manoeuvrability. When alighted the Iqari furls its secondary wings along its back, under the primaries.

An Iqari can launch itself from a standing position, achieving rapid height very quickly; however such manoeuvres are very strenuous and Iqari prefer to launch themselves from high ledges. They take advantage of uplifts and thermals to save energy, and can glide for hours at a time without flapping. The most skilful flyers can achieve speeds of over thirty kilometres per hour by gliding, and twice this by actively beating their wings. Despite their mastery of thermals, Iqari cannot hover in the same spot., but must maintain forward momentum to remain airborne. The quad-wing design of their bodies allow stunning changes of direction which makes them such agile flyers. Despite their size, Iqari are extremely difficult aerial targets, able to side-slip, brake or tumble with alacrity.

When grounded, the primary wings of an Iqari are also effective weapons. Since each wing has a reach of nearly four meters they're used to batter or trip opponents before they can reach weapon range. Once prone, a target is then leapt upon by the Iqari and kept smothered within the flight feathers. The last sight of many warriors was the enveloping beauty of an Iqari's iridescent wings.



Another manoeuvre practiced by Iqari is to throw up a wing when charging down missile-weapon wielding men. Although it doesn't provide any solid protection (as arrows pass straight through the feathers), it masks the Iqari's true position, making them more difficult to hit, sometimes causing the opponent to falter due to the impressive display.

Bone Structure and Body Mass

Iqari have many extra neck vertebrae enabling them to rotate their heads 180 degrees in either direction, even whilst flying. An Iqari also has four shoulder blades, two of which are placed as normal for a humanoid's arms. The second pair of shoulder blades emerge from the upper back, and support the primary wings. This complex arrangement allows the wings to flap without interfering with the Iqari's arm movements.

At the bottom of the spine is a four jointed pelvis which connects to the Iqari's legs and its secondary wings. Because all four lower limbs are inherently linked together, an Iqari must furl its secondary wings whilst walking, and vice versa.

Like birds, their bones are hollow yet very strong and are comprised of metallic enriched calcium. This combined with their remarkably light musculature give the Iqari a comparatively low body mass. A 2.5 meter tall Iqari weighs, wings and all, about 80-100 kg, the same as a human.

Eyesight and Other Senses

The Iqari are blessed with six different senses; sight, sound, touch, taste and smell common to most advanced life forms, and an extra sense which detects electrical activity.

Eyesight is an Iqari's primary sense, with excellent distance and movement sensitivity. They exceed the vision of predatory avians, with 60 degrees of binocular arc out of a total field of 320 degrees. There is a blind spot of 40 degrees directly behind the skull. Thus it is very difficult to blind-side an Iqari. All Iqari have a nictitating membrane which is used to protect the eye when flying or when exposed to blinding, or higher frequency light.

Iqari eyeballs are an impressive 10 cm in diameter. This huge size gives them the ability to see an order of magnitude times as much detail as a human. Translated into practical terms, an Iqari can not only see and identify a rat a kilometre and a half away, it can also watch its sides expand and contract with each breath. At 500 m away, it can see the blink of the animal's eyes, the delicate twitch of its nose, and distinguish the individual hairs that make up its quivering whiskers. This visual acuity is vital for a species which spends so much of its time aloft at high altitude.



It has been conjectured that Iqari vision extends slightly into the ultraviolet spectrum, which might explain why they also see well at night. Despite this advantage they lose colour perception and a degree of detail depending on the available star and moonlight. Under heavy cloud cover, or at the hour of the night hag, even Iqari are blind.

The disadvantage of such large eyes is that they are unable to rotate inside the ocular sockets, since there is no space for the musculature. But the Iqari bypass the need for independent eye rotation by using small head bobbing movements to bring an object into the sharpest part of their vision. This also refines their already excellent distance judgement.

Hearing is the equal to a human's in sensitivity, but picks up a far greater range of sound since Iqari communicate with both high pitched whistles and lower frequency squawks.

Iqari possess an extra sense, tiny sub-dermal organs which are meshed with a secondary set of nerves lying under the skin. These pick up electrical activity in close proximity, and route the information directly to the brain, where they are translated into a visual signal and superimposed onto the Iqari's eyesight. Range is limited to less than a dozen meters, but it is very sensitive. The reasons for such a sense are unknown, but it has been suggested that Iqari use it to detect potential lightning strikes in advance of a discharge.

The sense of touch is similar to humans. However smell and taste are inferior. It is conjectured that the overdeveloped visual structure of the Iqari brain has left little space for olfactory analysis. This may be born out by rumours of humans killing Iqari by leaving poisoned carcasses near their mountain habitats; an act which inevitably brings retribution.

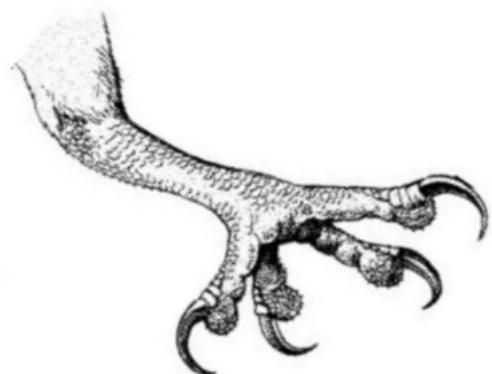
Beak and Claws

An Iqari's beak is both tool and weapon. It is easily able to shear through flesh and bone allowing an Iqari to dismember and consume its prey. Although capable of inflicting serious damage in combat, Iqari prefer to keep their heads out of range to protect their eyes. As a tool, the beak is used to carve bone, wood and soft stone.

The beak is formed from a highly ceramic keratin, which continues to grow throughout the Iqari's life, replacing sections which break or wear down. Beaks are usually a golden or copper colour with distinctive, individual black markings.

Although an Iqari's beak appears to be the most dangerous part of its anatomy, the second strongest muscles in an Iqari body are actually in the claws. These are used to hunt and roost. An Iqari can easily lift a creature greater than their own mass in their claws, or break the backs of large herbivores. Their feet are also used in close combat, primarily when their opponent has been knocked prone. The shape of leg allows only forward facing kicks when alighted.

Each digit of the claw ends with a wickedly sharp talon 15 cm in length. The claw is unusual in that it has a moving opposable digit, allowing one of the forward facing talons to swivel backwards to augment the reward talon when grappling prey. On the ground the Iqari are able to walk on their claws, but become discomforted if the claws remain splayed for extended periods. They prefer to grip ledges, branches or similar objects to rest.



Iqari have a second opposable talon used when hunting

IQARI PSYCHOLOGY

Cursed with a major flaw, the Iqari are viewed by other races as an artificially created species. Despite the physical perfection of the Iqari's flying humanoid form, their mentality is unpredictably brutal. The indication that they are an experimental mixture of raptor and human minds becomes apparent when analysing Iqari psychological behaviour.

In general Iqari are clear thinking and intelligent creatures, but during times of mental anxiety their sapience crumbles. The Iqari returns to the bestial level of consciousness believed to be inherited from its avian progenitors. Speech, rationality and ethics are all lost until the stressful situation is resolved. In some cases, the transition never reverses and the Iqari is left as an amoral animal.

The Iqari are painfully aware of this inherent instability and their society practices many laws to avoid unnecessary emotional strain. However, key elements of life cannot be avoided and these have been bound in ritual to help control Iqari animal instincts. A few of these major areas are discussed below.

Personal Space

Iqari are creatures of the skies. They value personal space and do not like to be crowded. The bustle of a human city is intolerable, causing Iqari to become very defensive and twitchy. They also dislike enclosed spaces, suffering claustrophobia if unable to see the heavens. Both situations can potentially cause Iqari to explode in uncontrolled violence until nothing moves within reach of their wingtips, or they find open sky.

Some Iqari can be specially conditioned to tolerate the presence of people within reach, or to enter buildings. But the training requires time and patience under the supervision of a respected elder, who can intervene if anything goes wrong. Thus touching an Iqari is a potentially suicidal act, and the most polite response one can expect is losing the fingers of that hand!



Hunger

Being totally carnivorous, Iqari do not have to eat on a regular basis. However, their metabolism burns energy quickly due to the drains that flight and living at a high altitude places upon them.

An adult Iqari needs to eat an average of between thirty and thirty-five kilos of meat per week. Appetite changes during colder months when the Iqari gain a preference for fat over meat. Bone marrow is also an important part of the diet, from which Iqari receive many of the vitamins and minerals they need. It is supplemented by mineral or metal licks found in their mountainous environments.

Iqari can usually withhold their hunger for a couple of days. After that they slowly lose self control until they slide into a non sentient state, which withdraws once the Iqari has fully fed again.

As carnivores, the Iqari prefer to eat freshly killed animals. Carrion is avoided since it is difficult to tell if it has rotted, been deliberately contaminated, or has been used as bait for a trap. Cooking meat is considered an insult to the sun (See Religion p21) and is considered inedible due to the distinctive taste which cooking instills in flesh.

Consumption of sapient life is avoided unless driven mad by hunger, and discovering that you have eaten a thinking life form can be a permanent mark of shame. Hungry Iqari are dangerous companions to keep, since they have to continually suppress attack instincts triggered by movement.

Bloodlust

Killing is such a fundamental aspect of Iqari psychology that through it they re-affirm their core selves. However, some Iqari pursue the act of killing simply for its addictive nature, rather than as a conclusion to hunting or defence of the eyrie. They can quite literally achieve a state of imagined invulnerability during extended periods of combat.

Although Iqari never suffer full mental breakdown in combat (retaining their tactical cunning) they will continue to kill beyond the point of necessity simply for pleasure, thus placing themselves in danger. However, the bloodlust ends quickly if the Iqari becomes critically wounded, though at that point the Iqari may simply fight to the end of its life, if escape seems impossible or if the injury seems permanent.

Mating

The primal urge to reproduce is one of the greatest threats to mental stability. The Iqari have surrounded the act of mating with so many rituals, it has become a sanctified event. Females come into season once a year in midsummer, and only if they currently have no young to support.

Any male may challenge for the right to mate with a female, even if they are members of a different (and possibly hostile) colony. During the first day all the males who apply for participation array themselves before the available females and begin a ritual dance. The rest of the eyrie sings mating songs to control the aggression of the males who posture and pose with their plumage spread to full effect.

One by one, the females select those males who satisfy their demands, in either beauty, dancing skill or dominance, and lead them to the highest peaks of the colony. There they continue to dance throughout the night., mindless slaves to their hormones.

The second day starts at dawn with the female Iqari launching themselves into the sky. The tired males leap after their various selectors and try to mate in the air. This is complicated by the males attempting to drive each other off. At first the aerial display is simply one of skillfully interweaving bodies. But soon the buffets become actual attacks as the males fight beak and claw to win their prize. One by one the males drop out of the challenges, some due to exhaustion and others due to wounds. These Iqari usually return to sanity and no rancour is held between the injured.

Eventually only a single male is left for each still resisting female and he must put in a supreme effort to

catch his target. If he is unable to capture and mate with her by dusk, then the contest finishes and no eggs are laid that year. Some of the species' greatest tales are of mating flights which are consummated just as the last ray of sunlight drops below the horizon. These hatchlings are considered to be blessed with great fortune.

If the mating is successful, then each breeding pair withdraws towards the remote nest already prepared by the female. There the bonding continues throughout the night. The male remains in a state of paranoid jealousy, continuing to chase away any who approach the nest until the eggs are laid, only then does he return to sanity. The male is then honour bound to feed the brooding female through the winter until the eggs hatch in late spring, at which time both parents support the developing young and live in the eyrie.



Iqari illuminated by lightning

Honour

Iqari society has a rigorous set of laws to ensure that they do not return back to the beasts they were raised from. These are formalised into ritual songs which are repeatedly sung to the young. They are taught that the only thing which prevents the Iqari from devolving are their principles. Those who break the laws have no honour, and are thus considered mindless animals. This sense of personal honour is so strong that if an Iqari breaks the codes, even by no fault of their own, the psychological backlash can drive them into insanity and insanity generally equates to psychopathic self destruction.

The following is a list of the five-fold path of honour; *integrity, loyalty, retribution, self-control, and valour.*

Integrity Creatures of honesty, the Iqari always stand by their word. Whether they are incapable of deception is unknown, but the closest an Iqari comes to lying is by being non-responsive. It has been proposed that given their limited brain size, Iqari do not have the imagination to be able to lie. An oath agreed by an Iqari is never broken, even if it costs the creature its life, or the life of its family. Hence this is the reason why so few Iqari give their word to any outside their own race.

Loyalty The Iqari demonstrate unswerving loyalty to themselves, their eyries, their colonies and their species in that order. One must be true to ones own feelings is a favourite chirp. Most Iqari willingly follow the suggestions of the elders with respect to their own eyries, yet disputes leading to violent conflict between colonies and more commonly other species are not unknown. It is almost unthinkable for an Iqari to turn entirely against its own people, but such heinous things are told of in legends. Any Iqari who breaks the law of loyalty in this way becomes subject to exile and being hunted for its crime., with word of its deeds sent to neighbouring colonies so that they can find no sanctuary elsewhere.

Retribution Vengeance is the heart of your enemy still beating within your claw was stated by Dusk-Tears-Drying, an elder during the closing days of the Octaminist Crusade. Retribution is an important burden for any male Iqari to bear, since they inherit the 'vengeance debt' of their parents. Mostly this aspect of honour concerns the long running vendettas between competing eyries, many of whose origins are now lost in history. But in some cases an Iqari will seek retribution against those outside its race generally against human hunters who kill lone Iqari for a fortune in feathers. Any wrong done to an Iqari will eventually - be repaid in full, unless the entire male line is wiped out to the last egg.

Self-Control A common mantra of the Iqari is

*Fall not upon the prey at the first smell of blood,
lest someone be hunting yours*

*Withhold the claw in times of insufferable insult,
lest it snatches away your reputation*

*Eat not the flesh of thinning people, lest your
appetite consumes your soul.*

A clear mind costs only patience

The maintenance of self control is vitally important in a culture of aggressive carnivores, with the alternatives being chaos, bloodshed and ultimately the extinction of the Iqari. However the same self control is little used outside Iqari society, since humans especially are generally seen as alien creatures with no knowledge of honour.

Valour Baring vengeance openly, orating opinions bravely and fighting until the last are all demonstrations of Iqari valour. Since social status is based upon personal reputation, an act is only performed to claim the glory of that act. As such, Iqari have little use for stealth or politics. Even if an Iqari attempts a challenge and fails, it still gains some glory by challenging *openly*. All acts of vengeance are enacted in this way, and long laid subtle plans are especially appreciated. The only area where the ideal of valour is unclear is in the art of war. Excessive valour is seen as stupidity if it becomes unnecessarily wasteful in lives. Iqari do not aid one another during personal combat, in case their involvement dilutes the valour of whoever is in difficulty. It is more preferable, more valorous, to allow that Iqari to die striving with its last breath.



An elder meditating on the path of self control

IQARI SOCIETY

Iqari are a complex species with a society as rich and diverse as any of the human civilisations across Gwenthia. That the Iqari are viewed with hatred, fear and suspicion by humans is unsurprising. However, in reality, Iqari behaviour towards humans is not as a result of genuine hatred on their part. The information presented here explains Iqari countenance and give an insight into the fascinating lives of these creatures.

Since Iqari society is a strange mesh of spiritualism and the egalitarian ways of primitive hunters, they lack many of the psychological problems of civilisation.

Theft is unknown, since the Iqari own few manufactured goods. Pride is simply a statement of personal status, and as such is a normal part of life. Suspicion is reserved for those who do not have honour, and selfishness is pointless since it harms the whole colony.

The concept of cruelty is not understood, since it is the natural order of things; life must kill life in order to survive. Forgiveness is a sign of weakness, and temperance is difficult to define in a culture lacking narcotics or plenty.

All in all, the Iqari are a simple race with simple tastes.



The peaks of Scarclimb Rise

Population

Iqari can be found in all of the greatest mountain ranges of Gwenthia. Preferred habitat are the inaccessible peaks of mountains at high altitudes, especially if the ranges are closely located to the oceans. The Iqari maintain colonies in Cromaigne (Scarclimb Rise and the central mountain ranges), Spiria (Mt. Oreas), AurUrbis (the Mountains of Gold) and Meravaenia (Astrav and eril Mountains).

In Cromaigne specifically, the central mountain range is approximately 600 km long and averages between 50 and 75 km wide. The northern range is only 150 km, but of a similar width. This gives a combined territory of approximately 47,500 square km, and added to that are seven major lakes with a total surface area of 18,500 km. This totals a possible hunting area of 66,000 square kilometres, enough to potentially support over four thousand Iqari. Most Iqari colonies maintain mountain territories within a two hour flight of their eyries, yet are willing to fly up to six hours to reach outlying lakes.

Since the northern mountains are situated next to the coast, the Iqari living there extend their territories out into the ocean. Given that a typical Iqari can easily range up to 100 km from their eyrie in a day, the northern mountain colonies could potentially support an additional population exceeding three thousand. But as few humans survive penetration into the region, it is unknown exactly how many actually reside there. It should be noted that there are no established colonies in the western mountains. Any Iqari who live there are regarded as feral.

Thus Cromaigne has an estimated Iqari population of around 7,500. Upon the neighbouring island of Spiria are calculated to be at least another 2,500 Iqari .

Lacking similar detailed surveys from the Thurian continent, projected population of Iqari is figured to be;

the Mountains of Gold - 1,000, Mt. Heril and surrounds - 2,500, Mt. Astrava and Ishida's Horn - 3,000. (the Dragon Horns appear to lack the elevation to support Iqari nearer the equator). These lower population estimates are an indication of the higher competition the Iqari face with the more diverse races of Thurian and the lack of proximity to oceans. (See Herding and Fishing p18)

In total, the entire world population of Iqari could be less than 16,500 creatures, with Cromaigne as their greatest concentration.

Colonies

A colony usually holds up to a hundred members. More than this places strain upon the immediate ecosystem, and forces the Iqari to fly much greater distances to harvest food. However, locations near the ocean are able to support a far higher number. The population of a colony is distributed approximately as 10 elders, 60 adults, 10 adolescents and 20 chicks.

A colony is generally located on the highest peak in a thirty to fifty kilometre range of mountains. Although height is the first criteria, security is the second so that some colonies are perched on unreachable cliff tops or spires which may be lower than their neighbours.

Each colony is in fact a distributed series of eyries surrounding a central roosting area. Some eyries may lie up to a kilometre away from the next nearest, and each has an attractiveness ranking based upon safety, central location and updrafts. The most popular eyrie locations are fiercely competed for by female Iqari, and losers forced to move to (and fight for) a lesser situated one. There are never enough eyries for all the adult Iqari, which is deliberate in order to prevent overpopulation and ensure that only the strongest Iqari breed.

Every eyrie is positioned overlooking a great drop, accessible only by flying. They are wide ledges sheltered from the prevailing winds, the best having overhangs protecting from precipitation too. The eyrie incorporates a large nest over three meters in diameter in which the female broods and then raises her chick. It is solidly constructed from branches and sticks woven together, filled with skins and then lined with down feathers which are glued in place with seepage from the mother's tear ducts. The walls of the nest are high to give eggs and young chicks some protection in bad weather. Nests rarely last many years, since each time the eyrie is wrested away by a new mother, the existing nest is ripped apart and cast over the drop.

She then builds a new nest from scratch. Challenges over eyrie ownership are only allowed when the nest no longer contains eggs or chicks.

The central roost is where the adolescents, non-breeding adults and the elders reside. Again it is a high area with good lines of vision and shelter from prevailing winds. However, whilst eyries are generally located on cliff faces, a roost can also be found atop mountain peaks or even inside huge rifts or caves. Roosts are not generally places where nests are built. Instead the Iqari scratch out shallow pits in which they refuge, or find perches in rock fissures. The colony generally faces east so that it can see the rising sun each morning. Another feature of most roosts are that the areas have fine acoustics, to amplify or echo Iqari song.

Birth

Iqari start life as eggs, which are laid in a small clutch about a month after midsummer. The eggs remain incubated for ten months and eventually hatch in late spring. Once free from the shell the brutal effort for life begins. Hatchlings begin a struggle with each other for food which culminates in the weaker chicks being forced out of the nest. Usually this causes the death of hatchling, but sometimes the chick survives and becomes feral.



Iqari fledgling

The remaining chick is raised over a period of five years by the female, during which time the hatchling grows rapidly to near full size. It only grows its flight feathers towards the end of the fourth year, preventing the chick from leaving the nest early. The mental stage of development is equivalent to a teenager, educated in the cautionary tales of Iqari life but fostering an increasing rebelliousness to parental supervision. Once the chick has achieved adolescence (or suffers a premature death) the mother of the eyrie may be challenged for ownership of the location.

Names

Iqari chicks are always named by the elders of the colony and never by the parents. After considerable deliberation, the elder chosen to conduct the naming ceremony holds the chick aloft, usually over the drop from the eyrie, and proclaims the name in song. Then the chick is released to take its first flight. Those chicks who survive are considered to have accepted their name.

Names are not gender-specific, and neither do they follow any particular pattern or nomenclature. The name given to a chick is whatever inspires the elder or he or she considers appropriate. Parents of a chick never question the given name: to do so would be to question the honour and judgement of the elders, and even to question the honour and integrity of the chick.

Names *tend* to be nature-related, but may also relate to physical features or parental heritage. They can be descriptive, cryptic and sometimes even nonsensical even to the elder who did the naming. Some examples are given below:

Stormwing, old-Hatched- litter, Dawn isser, oo s-Far-Stares- ong, Redcrest, Daughter-of-Farwing- ind- al er, Fastfeather, Swordbea , Hunter-of-Honour-Thieves, Shadow.

Maturity

After the age of five, when the adolescent has been named, it travels about the other eyries and central roost of the colony. There it is educated in the laws of adulthood and honour from elders of the requisite sex.

By the time it reaches double figures it reaches sexual maturity. Young males continue to be viewed as adolescents until they have single handed slain a dangerous predator or an armed human in combat. At this point they are considered adults and are permitted to join mating flights.

Females remain adolescent until they successfully drive a female away from her eyrie and claim it as their own, tearing down the previous nest and rebuilding it with her own sweat and feathers. Only then can the female be wooed by mature males. However it is rare for Iqari of very young age to succeed at their initial attempts to claim adulthood.

Adults are allowed to speak at the colony's central roost during important meetings, but are ranked according to personal status. (See Status p15) When a male Iqari no longer experiences the hormonal drive to participate in mating flights, and a female can no longer lay eggs, they declare themselves as elders.

Elders are responsible for education of the young, and religious observance. In times of war or disaster, they become de-facto leaders and coordinators to ensure direct action can be taken when speed is of the essence. Although they never exceed the boundaries of decisions made by the colony as a whole.



aying the piper - A statue of a death god found in uatzadua, which takes the form of a stylised Iqari

Death

Iqari usually die either by violence or flying accidents. Those that survive the nest must learn how to take to the air, and a few succumb to the treacherous winds and lake surfaces of their mountain homes. Many more die attempting to claw their way to adulthood or during mating flights. Maybe half of all hatched chicks survive to adulthood. Of those, only a small number ever achieve the status of elder. Elders rarely live beyond fifty years of age.

The Iqari celebrate death, yet mourn loss. They have a selection of ritual songs, each one specific to the method of death. These range from 'death by weakness' for chicks who are forced from the nest, 'death by the winds' for those who crash, to 'death by darkness' for those taken by Nightspawn. A ritual dirge starts at sundown and continues throughout the night (save for the hour of the Night Hag where no noise is uttered) during which time the achievements of the dead Iqari are praised. It concludes at sunrise with an outpouring of joy as the spirit of the dead Iqari rises to join with the sun. When the first ray of dawn clears the horizon, a fire is started and the body of the Iqari is burned. Strangely the songs always last the entire night, no matter how much or little the dead Iqari might have done in its life.

Great portent is claimed if the rising smoke takes on a specific shape or form. After the song concludes, the attending Iqari retire to their eyries, leaving the ashes of the fire to be scattered by the winds. Those Iqari with the highest status are remembered in the history of the colony, by being included in the song of heroes.

Language

The Iqari have three forms of communication: *sign language*, *squawking*, and *singing*.

The first method comprises of head, arm, and claw gestures. It is used to communicate whilst Iqari are in flight, when it is impossible to hear due to either wind rush or distance. The advantages of sign language allow subtle and silent communication between Iqari in the presence of humans and it also allows messages to be sent several kilometres away, if both Iqari are in direct line of sight.

Verbal communication is differentiated by its two forms. Squawking is considered 'Low Iqari', a crass but succinct language of chirps. Information is squeezed into the modulation of the short squawks, sounding like a rapid trilling noise to the human ear. Several sentences can be compressed into a single warble. As such, most species find comprehending Low Iqari extremely difficult and whistling replies to be neigh impossible. (It is thought that Elucen whistling, a form of communication in Meravaenia, is a linguistic development deriving from Iqari squawking.)

Singing is 'High Iqari' and is the opposite of its counterpart. The language is flowery, sometimes taking minutes to express a single sentence. As such, the use of High Iqari is limited to ceremonial ritual, oratory and the exchange of challenges. The peculiarity of the singing is that its pure tones evoke unconscious emo-

tion in its listeners. Between Iqari this aspect of the language prevents any misunderstanding, but outside their species an uncomprehending empathic can be lead astray. Many times have humans listened to joyous melodies little realising that the Iqari was in fact insulting them in a most sarcastic manner. Those blessed with perfect pitch are able to master the alto and soprano notes of High Iqari, but few ever manage to win the trust of the eagle-men to be taught.

Iqari hatchlings, stolen and raised by hand, are considered worth their weight in gold for the beauty of their voices.

Entertainment

The primary form of activity for an Iqari is pursuing prey (see Hunting p16), but few Iqari hunt all of the time. Other types of entertainment are *sports*, *singing*, and *grooming*.

Sports invariably involve flying. Adolescents have many different games which they use to improved eye and claw coordination. A favourite is a simple form of tag, where one Iqari is 'it' and must touch another with its claw. Another popular game is a variation of catch, where a young Iqari drops a stick in flight, whilst it's companions swoop down to recover the branch before it hits the earth. The closer the catch is made to the ground, the more admiration is won by the daring Iqari.

Adult games are far more violent with an aerial variant of rugby being the most popular. The Iqari are split into two or more teams, with the same number of mountain peaks are selected as the 'goals' and a large animal (generally a sheep or goat) is used as the 'ball'. The idea is to drop the animal atop the team's peak to score, whilst the other teams try to wrestle the bundle away from the carrier and take it to their own peak. The animal generally fails to survive the game intact, as it is constantly dropped, caught and torn from the players' talons, and a new animal is substituted after each goal. Games can last from dusk till dawn and the biggest matches are usually played between rival colonies. A feast is then held, with the goal animals being consumed by the teams who scored with them.

Singing is a diverse pursuit which can be done as a solo or group activity. All day and even after the sun sets, many roosting Iqari sing to pass the time. The songs are diverse in their subject matter, ranging from love ballads to heroic dirges to genealogy and even light hearted humour. Singing is a very social practice, so once an Iqari starts a song, the rest of the roost will usually join in.

Tales are told of Shak Duvan the greatest of Cro-maignian thieves who in his attempt to steal an Iqari egg chanced to hear the beginning of a song, becoming entranced when the music echoed hauntingly from peak to peak as each eyrie joined in. According to the story, the thief could not move up or down the cliff in his rapture and was discovered the following morning then torn limb from limb for his impertinence.

Grooming is another social activity, vital for bonding the Iqari of a colony together. Cleaning and tidying plumage can take several hours per day, more for males whom are fastidious about their appearance in order to be seen as a prospective mate. Most grooming takes place between specific social groups within the colony, reinforcing status and position. Inhabitants of an eyrie groom family members, nest-less adolescents groom one another and everyone grooms the elders. Although individuals are quite able to groom themselves, after a period of time alone an Iqari will lose the desire for cleanliness, slowly becoming ragged and lice infested. Feral Iqari are easily identified by the loss of plumage on their heads and necks where the feathers simply fall out due to neglect.



Ancient Meravaenian stele of an Iqari elder collecting medicinal plants

Medicine

Since the Iqari are a violent species and usually fight to the death, their practice of medicine is somewhat limited. Wound sewing is performed by females, although applying this knowledge is made difficult since wound scars are considered a status symbol by males. The uglier the scar, the larger the reputation. Bone setting is a well practiced art, since a badly set wing bone consigns the Iqari to life without flight, tantamount to a human suffering paralysis.

Sickness is a different matter. Iqari by their very nature as high altitude creatures are not exposed to many pathogens. A few however do plague them, and are mentioned below.

Black-froth is a respiratory condition which comes after particularly severe winters. It slowly erodes an Iqari's strength by incessant coughing, till they are no longer able to fly. Treated early it can be held in check, with the ground-up seeds of the Seeping Heather plant (found in the bogs of The Shifts) which are snorted like snuff. If left untreated, the cough causes the lungs to bleed, slowly drowning the Iqari in its own blood.

Talon-rot is another disease highly feared, since once contracted it is incurable and requires the amputation of the talon, or worse, the entire claw. The source of this infection is unknown.

Mange is the most common disease, triggered by infestations of lice picked up from goats and sheep. It is hated simply because it causes plumage to fall out, which not only makes flying more difficult, but also prompts a loss of beauty, and therefore status. Grooming is the best method to prevent mange, but in bad cases the plumage must be soaked in water seeped with large amounts of pot ash... An unpopular treatment since potash requires burning wood or bones, and Iqari are mortally afraid of immersing themselves in liquid.

In general, since Iqari like their personal space, disease rarely spreads further than a single eyrie. But if a disease is untreatable, the infected Iqari are more likely to seek a death in heroic combat or fly to the sun, rather than waste away in a nest.

Several mountain herbs are known as antiseptics and analgesics. Blaze Moss is a type of lichen are known to aid healing if applied to a wound (as well as being a good fire starter when dried). Sun Sparks are small yellow flowers which flourish at high altitudes whose nectar is a powerful pain killer, but it takes several hundred blossoms to produce a single dose.

Law

Iqari society is a strange mixture of anarcho-syndicalism and anarcho-primitivism, with added cultural restrictions. As such there are few laws per-say and they can be summed up with the following list:

You shall not be an animal.

You shall not steal another's glory.

You shall not act against brother without open challenge.

All other rules within Iqari culture are merely a matter of social convention. Some examples are:

Let those with less glory act first.

Defend your eyrie or find another.

ive surplus to those less able.

Maiming during play is loss of self control.

eedless death threatens future eggs.

Eat not thin ing life.

In everyday life most Iqari act as individuals, having little necessity to come into conflict with one another. Hunting territory is communal, and even eyries are considered temporary possessions, until another Iqari challenges for its ownership. Excess food is given to the weak or injured in the colony, and there is little in the way of material wealth to be sought after.

However, there are occasions when a colony must make far reaching decisions which affect its inhabitants. At this time a roost council is held to debate the situation and possible solutions. It is general practice to allow those with a higher status to gain the last say and in theory all voices at a gathering carry equal weight, if not wisdom. Decisions are decided by open ballot with each Iqari carrying one vote. There is no concept of veto, or over-ruling a group majority. Such councils are held during times of territorial challenge, natural disasters and judgement of law breakers. A council can also be gathered for the declaration of a feud, but of course in this situation the attendees cannot vote on the pronouncement.

Iqari who abuse social conventions, gradually find themselves ostracised by their fellows, their voices unheard and songs unsung. Unless they manage to resolve their errors, they are eventually chased from the colony and must find another to take them in (usually in a different mountain range) or become feral. Exile is by far the worst punishment an Iqari can face.

Rank and Status

As Iqari are by nature egalitarian, rank as such does not grant authority. However an informal rank system exists based upon age, and is a fair indication of mental stability. The four ranks are chicks, adolescents, adults and elders. As the hormonal drives of youth fade, the Iqari retains greater self control of its own emotional state, and it is for this reason the elder members of a colony are listened to carefully.

Status is independent of rank, although the two usually go hand in claw. Status signifies the pecking order in a colony, and most Iqari are strongly competitive in seeking it. The higher the status, the more attractive an Iqari becomes in the eyes of prospective mates, and the more respect they gain from the colony.

An Iqari wins status by acts of courage. It can be won via egg laying, oration, hunting, raiding, war, eyrie control and personal challenges. Minor increases can also be gained from famed or beautiful possessions. The amount of status won for each act is somewhat variable, dependant on such esoteric aspects like style, finesse, or odds. An elder taking down an adolescent will be worth little, but if the adolescent were able to better the elder, then the gain would be significant.

Personal challenges are a favoured method for gaining status. Any challenge must be declared openly before the colony, and the recipient cannot refuse. However, the recipient has the choice of how to settle the challenge whether it be combat, skill or quest.

Quests are set by consensus of the elders, but most Iqari prefer combat. Duels can be fought to submission with clenched claws, or to the death. The challenge is witnessed by the assembly of the colony and bounded by tradition. Both participants sing statements in High Iqari about why they are fighting, and then promise that no matter what the result of the contest, the issue will be settled and no further challenges made upon it.

Even if a challenge fails, then the declarer still wins a small amount of status, simply because the Iqari potentially risks its life if the recipient takes offence and turns it into a death duel.

A common way of putting younger Iqari in their place is to claim a feather from its plumage when it is defeated. The feather is then added to the victor's ritual head dress, rubbing the loser's beak in it. However, treating adult or elder Iqari in this manner is considered a dire insult, and is the root of many vendettas seeking to return the favour, or win the feather back.



A hunting Iqari

Hunting

Whether the Iqari are a natural species or created via proscribed technology, the fact remains that they are born predators. Driven by primal urges to hunt and kill prey, they excel at both.

Hunting is one of the greatest joys of an Iqari, and most recreation is based upon it. Hunting can be split into three categories; food, sport and war. Food hunting is self explanatory. An Iqari will hunt every three days or so, either for mountain game or fish. Preferred prey is young sheep or goats, hares, trout, salmon and even deer if they leave the forest. The Iqari will gorge itself until it has consumed between ten and fifteen kilos of meat. If there was insufficient flesh on the kill, then it will hunt again. But if the animal was too big, then it will carry the rest of the carcass home to the colony and offer the excess to the elders or to its chick if it's a parent.

Since the Iqari are the top predator in the mountains, their prey is experienced at keeping one eye on the sky. This forces the Iqari to use different hunting tactics depending on the prey and its location. Some of the best hunters dive from high altitude out of the sun, snapping out their wings at the last moment to halt their plummet and knock the prey prone with a sweep of a clenched claw, before circling back to

smother it in their wings. Others specialise in low level flying, gliding inches above the ground and using natural cover to conceal their approach. This method allows the Iqari to rake the prey and grip it with their talons, and is especially used for fishing. Food is almost always hunted with the natural weapons of the Iqari, with some exceptions (See Spear Crafting p1).

Sport hunting is used for both recreation and status. The numbers of dangerous predators in the mountains are kept tightly controlled. During the autumn months, any predators considered surplus by the colony are hunted with barbed spears. The smaller animals, such as wolves are hunted by the adolescents. Larger creatures like scale bears are reserved for the adults. Each Iqari is only allowed one attempt to strike at the predator and the sequence is made in reverse order of status. I.e. the lowest status Iqari strike first. Any Iqari who become grounded during their attack are given the choice to continue their attack on foot, and the hunt is paused until the grounded attacker takes to the air, kills the creature or is ripped apart. Whoever makes the final telling blow is awarded the status of the kill. If the beast survives all the attacks, or kills an Iqari, then it is allowed to go free. Hunts held over the ocean stalk dangerous foes like sharks or small predatory whales. Of course, if an Iqari flounders in the sea then it invariably drowns.

War hunting is effectively a precursor to a declaration of war. The targets are generally human livestock that have been allowed to forage in Iqari territory, or sometimes a human who has had the temerity to invade the mountains to steal feathers, or even worse, chicks. It has been rumoured that feral Iqari (living in the western mountains above the Shifts), kidnap human herders or hunters, bring them to the centre of their range and give them a night's head start to escape the mountains. At daybreak the hunt begins

A technique used by mature Iqari is to stun their prey into immobility by screeching loudly at a high frequency. Sounding like metal being torn in half, the noise is reported to be so powerful that it can cause a man's heart to stop within his chest. Of the few Cromagnians who escape Iqari attacks, many find they've been gifted with perforated eardrums. Some soldiers on sentry duty have taken to using beeswax to protect their ears, but the loss of hearing merely makes it easier for them to be ambushed.

War

Although antagonistic by nature, the Iqari do not engage in war upon their own kind. The main reasons for this are due to the low population density of the race in their mountain retreats, communal hunting grounds and an evolved ritualised system which allows individual challenges to solve personal problems.

Most battles have historically been waged against alien species. More recently however, it is humankind who have encroached upon the Iqari territory, forcing territorial conflicts.

Whilst alighted, a solitary Iqari is generally more than a match for a professional human warrior. Its greater reach, speed and strength, combined with the versatility of its natural weaponry, places most other species at a severe disadvantage. Yet this physical superiority can be offset by the use of missile weapons, to which Iqari have little defence.

However, the natural environment of an Iqari is in the sky. Whilst airborne the Iqari become exceedingly difficult targets to hit, using their excellent eyesight to identify missile trajectories and performing aerial acrobatics to avoid them. Flying also places them in a tactically superior position for returning missile fire, and most Iqari carry surplus spears to cast down onto their enemies. The spears are barbed so that they remain impaled in the opponent, which besides aggravating the wound, hinders them in close combat or reduces movement. Static adversaries then become targets to the 'Iqari death-plunge', where diving Iqari use the

extra speed to drive spears completely through fully armoured bodies. Iqari also cast hooked nets upon bowmen, preventing the hated foes from firing and making them easy prey when alighted.

Despite their flight agility, the Iqari have learned that massed archers can still bring them down. Thus they either attack at times of low cloud, or during the night when human eyesight has faded. Since their numbers are so few, the Iqari use guerrilla tactics and rarely engage in direct open combat, save for times when the eyrie or colony itself is under direct threat.

Cromagnian sentries fear the sound of unseen feathers swooping overhead, closely followed by the sickening thud of a spear rammed through a companion. Such attacks dramatically erode morale, and have thus far prevented serious incursion into Iqari held mountains.

If brought to war, the Iqari muster all the adults in the colony, save the elders who remain behind with the young. Each eyrie forms its own 'claw' and generally fights as a discrete strategic unit. These are combined together as 'wings', usually related by family, and led by the Iqari with the highest status. Most colonies can field from three to seven 'wings', each one assigned tactical objectives by the colony elders. Realistically, this usually means that an individual colony can only take on a single village or fort. However, during times of great threat, several colonies may co-ordinate their attacks on multiple targets or combine together to assault a town.



A portrait of an Iqari in rince r ael's bodyguard

IQARI RA TS

Despite their primitive way of life, Iqari are crofters and craftsmen of no small ability, requiring these skills to survive in their mountainous environments. Iqari do not produce livestock or items to barter. Only enough is made to support the individual or eyrie, and excess is given to those of greater need in the colony. Trading for profit or personal gain is an incomprehensible concept to an Iqari.

Using only their beaks and talons, Iqari manufacture beautiful items from natural materials. Most Iqari own little and desire less, but there are few articles which are considered vital; spears, nets, pouches, talismans, cloaks, head dresses and fire stones.

herding

The harsh environment of the Iqari mountain fastness does not encourage a high density of animal life. To avoid over grazing the native fauna, the Iqari practice a limited form of husbandry with the mountain goats and sheep. During winter the animals are driven down into the lowest valleys, and in spring the wild livestock naturally return to the high vales. Most of the largest predators are culled during annual hunts, to preserve the bulk of the animals for Iqari consumption. The hunts also serve to acquire status and experience.

When humans encroach on Iqari territory they see vast areas of unused grassy valleys and establish their own livestock, little understanding that the valley bottoms are deliberately left fallow for winter feed. The Iqari punish such temerity by killing the introduced animals and confiscating the meat for their eyries.

Even with husbandry, an adult Iqari requires at least 15 square kilometres of mountainside to supply enough food to survive. This is considerable territory, and forces the Iqari to live in small, distributed colonies. Fortunately the constant rainfall, and mild winters in the mountains of Cromaigne and Spiria

produces lush grass to support the mountain herbivores. In other regions of Gwenthia the amount of hunting ground can vary according to climatic conditions and native fauna. For example in the more southern parts of the Thurian continent, sheep are replaced by high altitude lamox and lopar which require more grazing area in the arid environment.

Fishing

Throughout Cromaigne and Thurian are large fresh water lakes which also form a large proportion of Iqari hunting grounds. Iqari are consummate fishers, diving from altitude to skim above the surface of the water and using their claws to grab fish swimming just under the surface. Once the prey has been grasped, the Iqari soars upwards to avoid ditching in the lake which generally proves to be fatal, since Iqari cannot swim.

Since Iqari generally hunt great distances from the shore, they either transfer the catch to a waist mounted pouch, or consume it on the wing. In both circumstances the Iqari's forearms become invaluable as extra manipulative limbs. An inland lake can support a similar density of Iqari as the equivalent area of mountainside.

Costal Iqari rely almost completely on a diet of predatory pelagic fish and sea mammals. Seals are favourite prey, but require the use of barbed spears since they are too big to snatch cleanly out of the water. They even hunt small whales with harpoons, but this requires a co-operative hunt between many eyries to return the carcass to shore for butchery.

Because of the inherent fertility of the ocean, it can sustain a much greater population density of Iqari living near the coasts. A single Iqari can support itself on a minimum of 5 square kilometres of open ocean. Coastal Iqari sometimes exchange excess catch with inland colonies for fresh meat, so as to vary their diet and balance nutrition.

Spear Crafting

Spears are made from two-three meter long ash saplings. They are tipped with either bone or obsidian blades, triangular shaped with backwards pointing barbs designed to remain in the wound. These are glued to the shaft using partially dried Scale Bear bile (or equivalent) and then tied with wet sinew. Iqari usually own a single hunting spear which is beautifully decorated with swirling, spiral patterns scratched into the wooden shaft by months of nibbling with their beaks. The blades are polished to a high lustre by rubbing on rocks, and bone tips are etched too. If hunting for ocean mammals, the spear is tied to the Iqari's arm with a thin rope made of either sinew or human hair, which prevents it from being lost in the sea and allows large prey to be dragged back to land. Some spears last for centuries, having their own history and grant both a psychological and status bonus for those who are blessed enough to wield them. The Iqari also manufacture barbed 'war spears' which lack any decoration, since they are designed to be cast away as missile weapons.

Net notting

Nets are an Iqari war weapon, disdained for hunting since, save for large ocean mammals, they usually rely upon the skill of their claws.

Nets are fashioned from sinews and strips of leather, with animal claws or teeth woven into the mesh. Small stones are attached to the edges to help the net wrap around its target. The addition of natural barbs enable the net to hook onto its target, making it both difficult and painful to extract oneself, and turning the tool into something of savage beauty. No real effort is made to further decorate them since they are considered expendable during an attack.

As nets are considered expendable by the Iqari, a small number of them are often found after any major military encounter with their creators, and are highly valued by collectors of Iqari miscellany across Gwenthia.

Pouch Sewing

Pouches are used to carry small prey whilst hunting, as it is impractical to return to the eyrie each time a couple of hares are caught. The bags are worn around the waist where the belt cannot interfere with the Iqari's flexing upper shoulders or tail wings. They are made from thin strips of leather, woven into a lattice, and these are then tied or sewn together. The Iqari decorate the leather strips with bone beads and sometimes dye the leather by masticating it with their tongues and

a mouthful of red, blue or yellow producing berries or herbs. The weaving can be quite intricate, producing similar swirling patterns as found on their spears. Pouches recovered from dead Iqari have been found to include strips of brightly coloured fabrics, obviously torn from human clothing.

Talisman Carving

Talismans are worn around the neck on cords of sinew. They are made from many diverse materials; bone, wood, stone, claws, ivory and even sea shells. Each item signifies a particular spirit or a philosophical ideal, and a typical Iqari might wear up to a dozen or more, many passed down from previous generations.

As with the rest of their goods, talismans are etched with complex designs, some of which resemble pictures of animals or objects. Brightly coloured talismans are prized, although those made from the teeth or claws of a particularly fierce enemy are highly regarded too.

The older the talisman, the greater its inherent value to the Iqari who wears it. Iqari believe that these talismans hold a part of the essence of the spirits they represent, and gain a psychological benefit by invoking them. Ancient heirlooms are believed to wield much influence over their associated spirits.



otive talisman discovered near an abandoned Iqari Totem during the war against the Evening culture. Iqari often sacrifice their talismans to as for help from the spirits which they believe inhabit the world around them.

Cloak Weaving

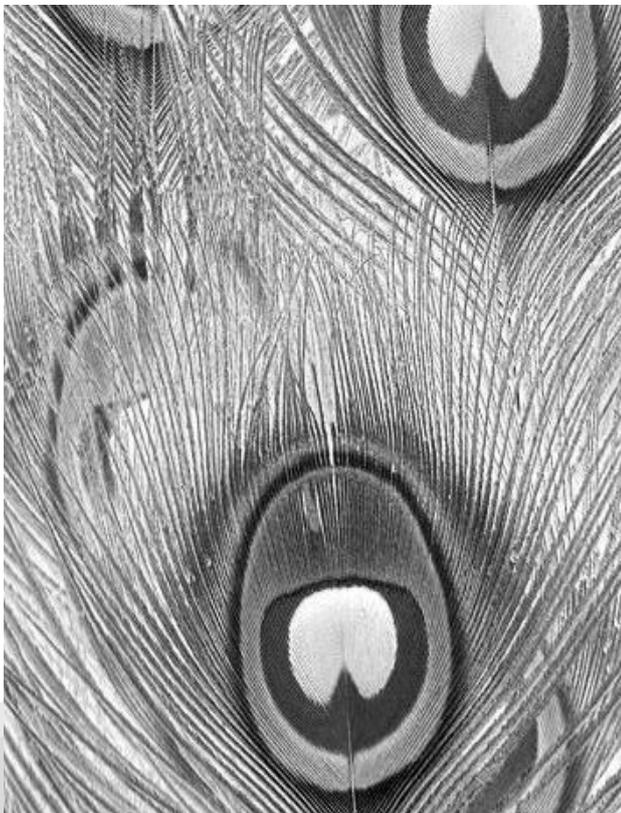
Cloaks are worn only in the eyrie or at roost meetings. They are always made from Iqari feathers, and serve to enhance the wearer's own natural plumage. Feathered cloaks are started by female Iqari for their young whilst brooding, and can take upwards of several years to finish. A cloak extends over three meters in length and when laid out resembles a three quarter circle - so that it can be worn over the folded wings of a roosting Iqari - leaving only the head exposed. The more colourful and intricate the design, the bigger the status associated with it, and hence the more valued. During winter months cloaks are worn to help preserve body heat, and protect un-hatched eggs.

Headdress Stitching

Headdresses are made from the largest and most beautiful Iqari feathers. Worn only during roost councils, to be presented with your first head dress is a sign of becoming accepted as an adult. The headdresses are made from wickerwork caps, which support sprays of feathers radiating upwards and outwards from the head. Since the cap covers the Iqari's own natural crest, the spectacles are usually impractically large to replace their own display, sometimes reaching up to a metre and a half in height!

The feathers used in head dress construction may only come from the Iqari's own plumage, or be plucked from the wings tails head dresses of those they defeat in ritual challenge. As such, a head dress is usually a good indication of the social status, since Iqari who sport overly sized ones are seen as presumptuous and are plucked by their betters.

Iqari like to augment their head dresses with small shiny items that they catch the rays of the sun. Favoured reflectors are coloured glass, quartz or other crystals and small nuggets of yellow metal found in rivers that are beaten flat with rocks. The most prized items to decorate a head dress with are silvered mirrors which can sometimes be found in human habitations by those Iqari brave (or foolish) enough to enter the low claustrophobic buildings during raids.



The beauty of Iqari feathers

Firestone Grinding

Firestones are large pieces of transparent crystal, slowly and painfully ground into convex shapes. These are used to light sacred fires by focusing the light of the sun. Fire crystals are perhaps the most difficult item to craft, since large clear crystals are somewhat rare and the grinding can take months of arm breaking work to complete. Because of this, most colonies only own a few fire stones, and larger stones grant prestige to their owners. The best firestones come from the Mana Mountains in Athuria, and many young adult Iqari have lost their lives questing across the sea to find a large crystal.

Most of the time, the possessions of an Iqari are stored in communal shelters, built from dry-stone fitted rocks. These buildings, although appearing like crude igloos, can hold all the cloaks and head dresses for the entire colony, keeping them safe and dry during inclement weather. It is always constructed next to the central roost for security and convenience.

IQARI RELIGION

Iqari worship an eclectic combination of spirits which they believe dwell in the world around them. In practical terms they are animists who see a myriad of spirits inhabiting the winds, mountains, plants and animals. The larger the object, the bigger the spirit which inhabits it. The greatest spirits, the Sun, the Egg, and the Winds are regarded as gods in their own right.

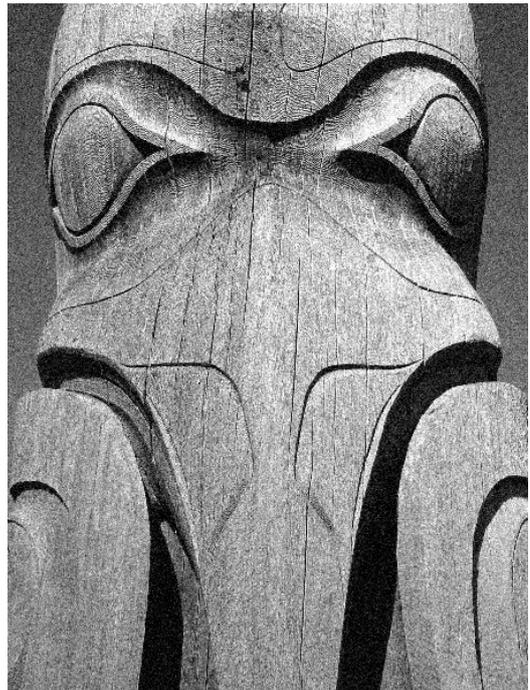
Religious knowledge is passed between elders, and only they can act as priests for a colony, passing on the tribal songs to each new generation, and leading the rituals for everyday life.

The Spirit Realm

To the Iqari, the spirit realm lies behind, or adjacent to the material realm and can be reached in dreams. Spirits must always be treated with respect, thus they are given gifts — tokens to demonstrate good will and politeness. These can range from the first beak full of flesh from a kill, to a finely carved necklace of bones.

The spirits held in great favour are the herd and fish spirits, eyrie spirits and spear spirits. Ones held with respect are those of large carnivores, lightning and mountains. Those placated with trepidation are spirits of lakes, seas, cold, snow, and disease. Sacred locations for these spirits are placed at sites of significant resonance. For example, the spirits of animals are appeased at the place they are killed; the spirit of the sea might be venerated on a water-bound pillar of rock. Most of these settings are in high places, inaccessible to those without wings.

The greater spirits have totems carved from wood or stone emplaced at its sacred spot. These can be many times larger than an Iqari and have taken generations to decorate. Without fail, the area around such totems is deep with centuries of crafted offerings. To plunder a holy site would bring down the concerted antipathy of all the colonies.



Iqari Totem

The Sun

The Sun is foremost of the three beings revered as gods. Its light brings warmth, colour and protection from the Night Hag. It is considered the father of all Iqari, as its golden light fertilised the goddess of the Great Egg.

Celebrations to the sun are held every morning, as all birds of Gwenthia do. When the glow of first light thaws the deepest darkness of the Night Hag, the sun priest starts the dawn song, joined in turn by the Iqari of the colony in order of rank. At the crack of dawn, the Iqari reach a crescendo and then cease singing.

Other important festivals are the summer and winter solstices, during which time huge bonfires are lit to celebrate or mourn the waxing or waning of the Sun. Fire is considered sacred to the Sun god and is lit by focusing sunlight through specially shaped 'firestones'.

Only offerings to the Sun are burned, including the bodies of dead Iqari who wish their spirits to return to their source. Because of this food is never cooked by fire, and the idea of eating roasted meat is sickening to the Iqari.

The position of sun priest is given to the oldest male elder. It is their responsibility to keep a small 'holy' fire burning throughout the year, which is only extinguished and restarted during the midsummer solstice. Normally no Iqari light fires for warmth since the danger of nests and feathers immolating is too great. But at times of great peril, whether from winter cold or Night Spawn, the colony withdraws to the central roost to light fires from the holy flame and ward off the threat.

Those few elder Iqari (of either sex) who survive to extreme old age and face an insipid death by sleep, sometimes undertake the mighty quest to fly to the sun. They memorise messages for the dead from living descendants and take off from the highest peak in their territory. Such rituals are rare, but very moving.

It is laughable to believe that Iqari are actually capable of flying to the stars. Theory suggests the elders attain such high altitudes that they suffocate and crash back to earth. However, there has never been any record of the body of a Sun Seeker being found after an attempt, and any who try to follow the path of the elder into the sky are blinded by the light of the sun.

The Egg

As the Sun is the patriarchal divinity of the Iqari, the Egg Mother (or Great Egg) is their matriarchal goddess worshipped for her fertility and protection of fledglings. Few humans have ever been able to engage an Iqari elder in ideological debate to determine where exactly the Egg Mother is supposed to reside. Unlike other spirits, there are no single specific objects or locations which are deemed to represent her. Popular belief amongst sages is that the Iqari consider the world itself to be the egg, which poses some interesting theological questions.

Although she is worshipped by Iqari of both sexes, priesthood of the Egg Mother is limited to females. She is prayed to for strength to win an eyrie, fertility of the laying, and protecting the eggs from cold. Sacrifices are buried deep inside the stygian darkness of small caves accessible only by flight. The position of egg priestess is granted to the oldest female elder in the colony. It is her responsibility to sing the fertility laying songs and teach adolescent females how to weave their own nests.

The Wind

The third major divinity venerated by the Iqari is the Wind. Although other species tend to differentiate the winds according to the direction they blow from, the Iqari see the wind as a single entity, whose whimsical nature causes it to change both strength and heading depending on its mood.

The wind is of utmost importance to a species whom soar the skies. Not only does it fill their feathers enabling them to fly, it also brings the changes in weather and seasons. When he is angry, the Wind manifests as storms which can cast the Iqari to the ground, or strike their eyries with lightning. His sons are known as Snow and Ice, whom are released every winter to kill those too weak to live in the world.

Priests of the Wind can be elders of either sex, but are generally those known for their consummate skill at flying. Once extreme age begins to limit their aerial ability, a wind priest resigns their position to take up the mantle of sun or egg priest(ess), or attempts the flight to the sun.

All worship to the Wind takes place on the wing, in the sky above the highest peaks in the colony's territory. The priest leads the colony in intricate ceremonies involving aerial acrobatics in the teeth of the strong air currents to show their respect.



An Iqari wind priest e alting in a worship ceremony

The Moons

Unlike most other Gwenthian cultures, the Iqari pay no respect to the moons, though the deity of the eighth moon is feared. In point of fact the Iqari consider all the moons to be interlopers that should be cast away from the world. Why the Iqari believe this is not known, yet legends from the Island of Spiria suggest that the Iqari were present at the beginning of time. Both hints are tantalising clues to the origins of the winged people

IQARI MAGIC

Iqari magic is a three fold path comprising of psychology, animism and the harmonic application of their songs. Yet only the latter is recognisable specifically as a form of sorcery. Few species know about and fewer comprehend the magic wielded by the Iqari. Most references to it are taken from Cromagnian history.

The Iqari spurn any respect towards the moons. In their mythology are stories of the time before the interlopers illuminated the heavens, and as such the Moons are viewed with active dislike and even fear in the case of the dark moon. Instead they revere the myriad of spirits inhabiting the land, sea and sky.



An Iqari ruffles out its head feathers at the start of a war dance

Fanaticism

Fanaticism or the psychological art of self belief is first learned by young Iqari after they have left the nest. As self centred individuals their absolute faith in their strength and immortality is carefully nurtured with a series of ritualised songs and dances, which grant the performer a small psychosomatic boost to their abilities. Common examples of this include war dances prior to conflict or hunting dances before seeking food. Such rituals are performed on a daily basis, and the benefit lasts until the next sunset or sunrise, or another dance is conducted.

The Iqari's single minded intellect may only hold one of these benefits at a time, and since they are fuelled by the creatures own hormonal secretions, it is difficult for them to invoke a change without a new, drawn out ritual performance. Another issue with these rituals is that they must be carried out either in the presence of other Iqari (boasting) or in front of an enemy (intimidation) to work. An Iqari cannot convince itself without an audience as witness.

If a group of Iqari gather to perform the same ritual together then the effects are magnified, simply because of the psychological boost of being surrounded by competing status seekers. An entire flock of Iqari performing a war dance, with puffed up plumage, spread wings, slashing claws, waving spears and expressive tongue movements - each trying to outdo the others - is a fearsome sight indeed!¹ However, the down side of such group rituals is that they place the Iqari under increased mental strain, risking the chance that it will suffer sapient breakdown during a critical moment of the upcoming challenge, with the usual psychopathic results.

Although Iqari war dances do not directly affect viewers magically, the frightening sight is usually enough to test the resolve of even the most disciplined soldier.

Invoking Spirits

The power of Iqari animism has no magical basis. Yet although the spirits might not grant power or knowledge to the Iqari, the respectful sacrifices tend to placate the more mischievous or malignant spirits, preventing them from maliciously affecting their supplicants. As such, for most Iqari the weather remains natural, predators keep placid, diseases don't go out of their way to infect and life is, all in all, slightly easier. In return the Iqari are always creating small gifts for the local spirits and delivering them to the widespread sacred totems in their spare time.

Though many Iqari wear amulets and talismans dedicated to specific spirits, their benefits are purely psychological in nature, just as with the boosts granted from ritual dancing (See Fanaticism p23). In this case however the Iqari *believes* that the spirit is guiding them. The improvement is only slight, but unlike fanaticism the effects are continuous whilst the Iqari possess the talisman. The professed powers of the object increases with age, since they believe that the older a sacred talisman is, the more of the spirit's *essence* is held within it. Hence the psychological effect also grows with the item's heritage. Occasionally an Iqari might sacrifice a talisman to the spirit's totem, thus gaining a much improved short term boost at the expense of forever losing the item, an act not taken lightly.

Despite more formalised worship neither the Sun, Egg or Wind renders any direct power to the Iqari, unlike the moons who channel miraculous abilities for other races. But it should be noted that the shades of the Dark Moon do not generally plague Iqari eyries. Maybe their faith is rewarded by granting the light of their sacred fires power over the dark, or perhaps it is simply because the Iqari have cast down any moon shards from the highest peaks of the world...

Harmonics

The secrets of harmony are passed only between the elders of the Iqari. It is rightly believed that the potential potencies available to practitioners of this art are too great for the more immature.

The nature of this sorcery is based upon the mastery of song. All Iqari unintentionally cause emotional resonance in those races whom listen to their singing, although the effect can usually be resisted by beings of sufficient willpower, or those whom are already in the grip of a stronger emotion. Harmonics takes the energy of both sound and this music, focusing it with far greater results.

The puissance of this art is usually mustered from coordinated choral singing, the more Iqari participating, the more powerful the effect which can be created. The conducting elder channels the sound and focuses it towards a single purpose. Synchronised music is the easiest wellspring of energy to draw upon, but the greatest harmonists can take power from even discordant sources. A side effect of this magic is that sound is nullified as it is absorbed in the drawn upon area, save for the one harmony being used to create the result. This can sometimes serve as a warning of impending doom.



An elder scribe ing a harmonic incantation

The effects of large scale harmonics can be overwhelming, yet have thankfully been extremely rare. Elders can only be coaxed into using these powers only in direct defence of their colony, or to fight off larger threats against the entire Iqari race. Generally the magic is applied to confuse or divert organised invaders who enter their mountain territories. However, one example of pro-active use was the *attle of Falling Tears* (remembered by humans as the *attle of Amerain*). The conflict was won by a now forgotten elder who gathered the voices of his Iqari warriors hidden above the clouds and sung a wave of remorse over the forces of the Evening Culture. The Shard magicians staggered, overborne by feelings of guilt, which allowed their indestructible demonic thralls freedom to turn upon their summoners. Sadly, many hundreds of Octimist crusaders also succumbed to the angelic voices from the sky and those who did not fall upon their own swords were butchered in turn.



The Survivors of Silent-Thunder's Tragedy

Elders prefer to use harmonics to create large scale emotional consequences in opponents, although the power of harmony can also be turned to more physical effects. But this is rare since Iqari elders dislike such crass application of their art. However, some stories exist in Iqari mythology of cliff walls being cast down upon invaders, or of shields of pure tones shattering waves of arrows in the sky.

A popular tale told in Menerain is of the 27th lord of the city who promised to keep settlers out of the Iqari mountains in exchange for his weight in polished crystals and gems. The nearby Iqari colonies laboured for a dozen years to fulfil the covenant only to be cheated when the now fantastically wealthy overlord raised an army to invade the region. Instead of attacking the Cromaignian soldiers directly, an elder flew directly over Menerain and sung a single, powerful note. The sound shattered every pane of glass, crystal and gemstone within the city. The overlord was killed by his own men seeking payment, and nobody suffered from kidney stones for an entire year!

While technically harmonic magic could be used as a direct material weapon - rupturing the internal organs of an enemy for example - the Iqari never exploit it as such. Iqari philosophy advocates settling of conflict by beak and claw. Thus using magic in this way is abhorrent to them.

Perhaps the greatest material effect ever attempted was that caused by the lamented Silent-Thunder, an elder who heard the angry rumblings of a mountain spirit in the western range of Cromaigne. Warned of the possible danger to nearby colonies, the elder gathered four hundred Iqari and led them in a great song of sleeping over the mountain. Unfortunately, its spirit refused to be succoured and back-lashed, releasing its rage in a tremendous eruption.

Silent-Thunder acted on impulse and instinctively took the deafening blast of raw power from the explosion into himself and his helpers. In the moment before they spontaneously combusted from the vast quantity of energy they'd absorbed, the elder uttered a single word, deflecting the majority of the eruption westward away from the Iqari settlements, instead annihilating a major human town was ed so completely that no trace remains of its original location.

Tragically, the loss of so many adult Iqari was a futile sacrifice. The range soon became uninhabitable due to the fallout of ash and the few remaining Iqari decided to abandon the mountain range entirely and have never returned.

FALLEN IQARI

A tragic yet prevailing event in Iqari society is the loss of sapience suffered by those who suffer terminal mental breakdown. Feral Iqari are dangerous to all, including their family and closest friends. To prevent unnecessary injury or the possible spread of the insanity to other members of the colony, feral Iqari are chased away and given a day and a night to flee the colony's territory. After which, they become fair game for hunting parties.

The feral Iqari of Cromaigne who escape persecution eventually end up in the island's western mountain range; an area declared taboo by the colonies. Within Thurian however, feral Iqari from Mt Meril or the Astrava Mts. have no such safe haven locally in which to hide. Traveling north will bring them into contact with the Iqari of AurUrbis, and west takes them into the mysterious, yet ecologically poisoned, Mana Mts of athuria. The eastern mountains of Meravaenia are also unsafe, being widely settled by humans and few feral Iqari survive for long there.

The only path of escape which allows these feral Iqari to endure, lies to the south; following the spine of the world to Hash Takk Marg and then southeast into uatzadua. Most insane Iqari are found in the lands of the Earth God. (See The uatzaduan Cult of Muraz-coatl in the Gwenthia Gazetteer)

The Nature of Becoming Feral

To be *feral* is the collapse of mental stability, and in so doing loose all sapience. It is the most terrible thing which can befall an Iqari, yet sadly it is prevalent throughout their society. Although Iqari can suffer a temporary loss of intellect, on the whole a psychotic episode is recovered from with no undue effects, save to the dignity of the victim. Many of the most stressful situations in Iqari society are bound by ritual to help control such an occurrence. Only if the Iqari fails to regain its sentient state does it is then become feral, a fortunately uncommon event.

The mind of an insane Iqari suffers a catastrophic breakdown in neural links, losing access to language, empathy, morals and rational calculation. It retains its skills, instincts and a base cunning, allowing it to understand or emulate simple strategies.

After the initial trigger event has concluded, feral Iqari become obvious to their brethren due to the excessive, and unusual, twitching movements of the head and claws. Insanity causes them to become inherently paranoid, responding with increasing aggression to any and all movements in their vision. Although physical illnesses can sometimes replicate the same symptoms, a sick Iqari can always communicate with song or sign language, something which a feral Iqari is no longer able to do.

Upon recognition of insanity, the Iqari is driven away by its companions. Since Iqari are social creatures by nature, the exile causes them considerable anguish, an unconscious sense of loss fuelling their madness. Initially they try to find other Iqari, instinctively looking for succour, but continual rejection twists this imperative to one of destructive hatred, eventually forcing the insane sufferer to seek out isolation.

Once this stage is reached, the sight of another Iqari immediately triggers a combat response. This can include seeing themselves, and feral Iqari will even attack their own reflections in pools of water. The broken mind attempts to reconcile this alienation by engaging in self mutilation; plucking out feathers, scratching disfiguring scars and even breaking their own claws. This disfigurement, combined with the feral Iqari's lack of hygiene, causes them to become infested with lice, causing further plumage loss, and the creature starts to stink of rotted flesh.

Over time a feral Iqari loses its ability to fly, due to the increasing damage suffered to its plumage. It can still make short gliding attacks but must launch itself by leaping, or plummeting from a position of height,

since it can no longer remain airborne by flapping its wings. An Iqari reduced to such horror appears to be a giant half plucked bird, lacking feathers on its head, neck and lower legs. Whilst what's left of its wing and tail feathers are still vividly coloured, the iridescent sheen is muted under an encrustation of faeces and other dirt.

The loss of sapience means that none of the Iqari laws are remembered or understood. Prime amongst these is the consumption of other sapient creatures. A feral Iqari will maliciously hunt down any living being it deems edible. Humans are prime amongst these because of their prevalence and ease of killing them.

It is thought that the Tagooer or Dagger Bird, found in the deep jungles of Western Uatzadua, are the sad remnants of devolved Iqari which have been forced off the mountains by the constant migration of arriving feral brethren. It is unknown if these creatures ever reproduce in the wild, and what the mental state of such offspring would be. But some Arboreals have been seen riding large flightless birds of some sort. It is unknown whether the Iqari are aware of this domestication, or even if they care of what happens below their lofty mountain peaks.

Feral Iqari Combat Tactics

Lacking sufficient feathers, feral Iqari have no physical protection and can no longer attain flight. They sometimes make an initial gliding leaping attack at the start of combat, using either their claws or a wing to strike. Feral Iqari are unable to use any weapons or armour; however they still retain the ability to utter a paralysing shriek.

Since feral Iqari are wired psychopaths, they never attempt to defend themselves during conflict; instead attack berserk, usually gaining the initiative due to their reach and speed. Feral Iqari retain the prowess in non-mental skills they held before their downfall, which can sometimes make them extremely deadly.

Most feral Iqari have excellent unarmed combat skills, otherwise they'd not survive in the wild. They also pick up an instinctive ability to hide and stalk to aid in hunting. They frequently attack from ambush and the only hint of their presence in heavy forest or jungle is the rotting stench of their unheeded bodies.

Creatures which somehow survive a feral Iqari's attack, generally die later due to infections picked up from the festering dirt trapped under its talons.



rude uatzaduan stone tablet illustrating the ancient lord Xocotal hunting a feral Iqari after it has slain a pack of quatzhunds

ROLEPLAYING IQARI

Iqari are very dangerous creatures. Larger, stronger and faster than the average human, they make fearsome foes. Not counting their furled wings, an Iqari stands nearly two and a half meters tall. Despite this great size however, an Iqari has a surprisingly low body mass, due to its hollow bone structure and unique muscle tissue. Regardless of its deadly physique, Iqari are generally considered beautiful creatures by most sentient races, mainly for their plumage and voices.

Although originally designed for use as adversaries for player characters, role-playing Iqari can be an enjoyable challenge.

Using Iqari with the BRP Game System

The statistics and game mechanics used are derived from baosium's Elric System, which is itself a derivative of the asic Roleplaying System. Familiarity with any baosium system should mean that the mechanics presented below are easily convertible to any game.

	Roll	Average
Strength	3d6 12	22
Constitution	2d6 6	13
Size	2d6 12	1
Intelligence	2d6 6	13
Power	2d6 6	13
Dexterity	2d6 12	1
Charisma	1d6 12	15

See Age and Intelligence, below

Hit points are half the total of Constitution and Size. On average this is 16 hp. Its physique also grants an average Iqari a damage bonus of 2d6.

Note, that the true mass of an Iqari is only two thirds of its Size characteristic. So an average Iqari weighs about 2 Size.

Age and Intelligence

Iqari intelligence develops markedly with age and experience. Young, immature Iqari (ages: 12 to 16 years) begin with an intelligence of 1d6 6. Mature Iqari (16 to 40 years) have Intelligence of 2d6 6. 1 point of Intelligence is gained for every three years an Iqari survives beyond the age of 40, up to the species maximum INT of 24.

Feral Iqari have no intelligence attribute. They are considered animalistic with no rational thinking ability, save for a base level of cunning.

Flying

Iqari can fly with their massive, raptor wings. Wingspan is typically seven to eight meters, and the broad, shoulder-mounted wings are extremely powerful. An Iqari can launch itself from a standing position, but at the exclusion of any other activity since gaining altitude is very strenuous. It can climb half its DE in metres every melee round.

However, launches are preferred from a position of height to take advantage of air currents, uplift and thermals. Iqari cannot hover.

In flight Iqari can glide for hours without having to beat their wings, at a cruising speed of one and a half times their DE in kilometres per hour. Greater speed is achieved through active wing beats, and an Iqari can achieve up to twice its gliding speed in this way. However, it is tiring to do so for long periods, and wing-beat flight can only be sustained for a number of minutes equal to the Iqari's CON before it has to glide for twice this time to recover. Thus an Iqari flying as quickly as possible over a long distance can maintain a top speed of about DE x2 in PH.

Whilst flying, an Iqari may carry a load of up to a third of its STR value in SI, without unduly affecting its gliding capability.

Maximum load is one half of its STR in SI, but this forces the Iqari to actively flap to maintain altitude, reducing its endurance to (STR - CON)-Target SI in minutes. Then it must either land, or drop the load.

Attacks and Damage

The favoured Iqari attack technique when aloft is to swoop down on the opponent and deliver a thrust with the long, barbed, Iqari spear. Going into a controlled dive from height gives the Iqari immense speed and doubles the Iqari's damage bonus. However diving is a tricky manoeuvre to successfully complete, and thus the Iqari's chance to hit with its spear is halved. This technique can be used with the Iqari's claws as well, using the same rules.

If the damage inflicted exceeds the SI of its target, the victim will also be knocked prone. In this situation the Iqari can lift the target with its spear (or claws) if it overcomes the target's SI with its STR, subject to its maximum load as described above.

Whilst airborne, an Iqari substitutes their Flying skill for Dodge. An Iqari's eyesight and reflexes are so good that it can dodge arrows in flight.

Using Spears

Despite their primitive lifestyle Iqari are intelligent beings, and their use of long-hafted spears is testament to this. Although devastating in close combat using their natural weaponry, an Iqari using a spear is out of melee reach of a humanoid target. If ground based, this usually means that the Iqari will always get the first attack before an opponent can close on them (and possibly hopping backwards to keep the range open). However if airborne and utilising a diving or flyby attack, they are effectively never in reach of the target's counter attack - save if the victim is also armed with a polearm of similar length.

The base damage of an Iqari spear is 1d10 + 1. Iqari spears are barbed for a very good reason. If a target suffers damage from such a spear (which bypasses armour) it remains lodged in the wound, hindering the victim.

The effect depends on the location struck, but a good rule of thumb is that the target can no longer use the location until the spear is removed. This requires a STR x3 roll if being extracted by the victim or a STR x5 roll if someone else pulls it out. Unfortunately, unless a successful medicine or first aid roll is made, the spear causes another 1d4 damage on removal. Of course, if a flying Iqari impales its target it must leave the spear behind (if it doesn't lift the target away).

If prepared for war or raiding, an Iqari will bring two or three spears for attack, keeping spares in its off hand until needed. Once expended, and assuming it doesn't take the time to recover weapons from dead foes, the Iqari will continue to fight using its natural weapons.

Natural Weaponry

Even unarmed, Iqari are extremely dangerous; an armed human warrior would be hard pressed to defeat one in single combat. Although their SI and DE usually guarantee the first attacks, they cannot wear armour.

An Iqari's feathers only grant them 1d3 protection, and piercing weapons bypass even this. Feral Iqari lack most of their plumage and therefore gain no protection.

Iqari do damage with their natural weapons as follows; Claws 1d8 + damage bonus, Beak 1d6 + damage bonus and Wings 1d3 + half damage bonus.

When alighted upon the ground, an Iqari may split its Natural Weapons skill across any or all of these different attacks. Each appendage or limb can only make a single attack per round. As the wings are so large, a wing sweep can target several human sized opponents with the same attack. However, when aloft an Iqari may only use either its claws or a wing to attack, since it hasn't time to hit with everything whilst flying past.

An Iqari doesn't usually use its beak, save as the coup-de-grace, since it doesn't like exposing its eyes to possible danger.



Don't ever upset an Iqari...

Feral Unarmed Attacks

Feral Iqari generally infect any wounds they cause with virulent diseases which they carry. Assume the infection has a potency equal to the Iqari's CON (anything higher would have killed it) and must be resisted using the normal disease rules.

Some feral Iqari unconsciously utilise their infectious claws to weaken larger animals before killing them.

Sonic Abilities

As a free action, the screech of an Iqari can be used to stun or deafen a target prior to attack. In game terms, successful use of the Paralysing Shriek skill forces those within 5 meters to make resistance rolls of their CON vs. the Iqari's POW. Anyone who is unsuccessful is paralysed by the horrific noise for a single melee round and temporarily deafened. Those who make their saves are merely deafened for only 1d6 melee rounds, unable to communicate verbally.

Each attempt to use a paralysing shriek costs the Iqari a single magic point.

Iqari can also inadvertently charm those who listen to their singing. Most sentient beings will stop to listen to the pure tones of an Iqari song.

A successful Singing roll forces those nearby to make a resistance roll of the listener's POW vs. the Iqari's POW. Failure causes them to fall under the seduction of the music and fully experience the emotion the Iqari is inducing, unable to act until the voice stops.

The Iqari do not sing whilst engaging in combat. However, they may sing as part of a prelude to a battle or raid, to inform their opponents of their anger. A courtesy which has the side effect of making most foes fully realise the impending doom.

Fanaticism

Iqari can augment some of their skills by performing ritual dances. A successful dance attempt will add 1 for each allied Iqari or belligerent enemy within sight of the dance! The drawback of this is that any mental stability checks performed whilst under the duress of the fanaticism are reduced by a like amount.

The bonus may only be applied to a single skill, chosen at the time the fanaticism dance is executed. It may not exceed the value of the Iqari's dance skill.

Harmonics

No rules for harmonics are presented in this book as this formidable sorcery is strictly designed to be under the remit of the Game Master.

Talismans

As psychological focuses, Iqari talismans only work for Iqari, and only when inherited or won legitimately by personal challenge. Each talisman only affects a single skill (or specific application of a skill) depending on the spirit to which it is dedicated.

The effects bestowed by a talisman are continuous, requiring no invocation to activate.

The bonuses to the skill imparted by a talisman depend purely upon on its age.

Less than 10 years	1
10 years or greater	5
100 years or greater	10
1000 years or greater	15

If a talisman is sacrificed to its patron spirit, the owner is granted a one use x5 multiplier to that skill bonus. After which the talisman is gone forever.

Typical Iqari Skills

An adult Iqari starts with the following cultural and occupational skills.

- Barbed Spear. The primary weapon.
- Craft. Since the items created are relatively primitive in their construction, the same Craft skill can be applied to creating any of the possessions an Iqari might normally possess. (See Iqari Crafts p18)
- Dance. Used for fanaticism rituals, mating and social interaction.
- Dodge. Ground based dodging.
- Flying. For acrobatics and dodging when aloft.
- Insight. Halve skill when used on other species.
- Genealogy. Knowledge of family lines, historical events and mythology.
- Listen.
- Natural Weapons. This skill can be applied to any of the Iqari's own natural weapons. Iqari usually acquire a very high instinctive ability in this ability.
- Natural World. Specifically to mountainous terrain.
- Navigate. Iqari are excellent navigators, and their geographical knowledge extends well beyond Gwenthia's mountain ranges.
- Own Language. This covers both Low Iqari and Sign Language.

- Paralyzing Shriek.
- Search. An Iqari's eyesight is typically one of its highest skills, and is primarily used for hunting and fishing.
- Sense Electricity. Used to detect any form of electrical activity within range, or avoid impending discharges.
- Singing. This is High Iqari cannot exceed the Own Language skill. It is also used when orating.

Iqari elders also gain the following skill.

- Harmonics.

No skill point allocations are mentioned here, as that is an aspect of campaign power level and game balance. However, as a general guideline it should be noted that Iqari have far less skills to learn than the average human, and thus they tend to excel at those few they possess.

Mental Stability

Whenever an Iqari is subjected to the mental stresses mentioned earlier (See Iqari Psychology p7), it must make an INT x5 roll to avoid slipping into psychosis. If the roll fails the Iqari becomes psychopathic, attacking all those within reach, even if friend or ally. Once the trigger situation has passed, the Iqari may recover its intellect.

However, if the roll is a fumble then the loss of sapience is irrevocable. The Iqari becomes a feral wild beast, hunted by its own kind.

ote that Iqari elders never have to chec for mental stability. y their very achievement of reaching old age, elders have gained perfect intellectual control.

Example Elite Iqari Warrior

Once a winner of yrGael's decennial test to become one his personal bodyguard, Stormwing left the prince's service several years ago under unexplained circumstances, baring a scar across one eye. The black and gold plumaged Iqari now wanders the mountains across Gwenthia on a mysterious odyssey. A survivor of many challenges, Stormwing is a formidable opponent when roused to combat, and is one of the few Iqari known to have associated with humans.

Stormwing (known as one-eye in the human tongue)

STR 27 CON 15 SI 22

INT 16 POW 17 DE 23

CHA 15

Hit Points: 1 Dam Bonus: 2d6

Armour: 1d3 vs. Crushing or slashing only.

Skills: Climb 25 , Crafting 65 , Dance 70 , Dodge 75 , Flying 130 , Insight 80 , Genealogy 50 , Listen 85 , Natural World 55 , Navigate 0 , Other Language (Understand Cromagnian) 50 , Own Language (Iqari) 80 , Paralyzing Shriek 75 , Physik 45 , Search (reduced due to scar) 85 , Singing 0 , Barbed Spear 140 , Natural Weapons 165 .



Stormwing, the mysterious questing Iqari