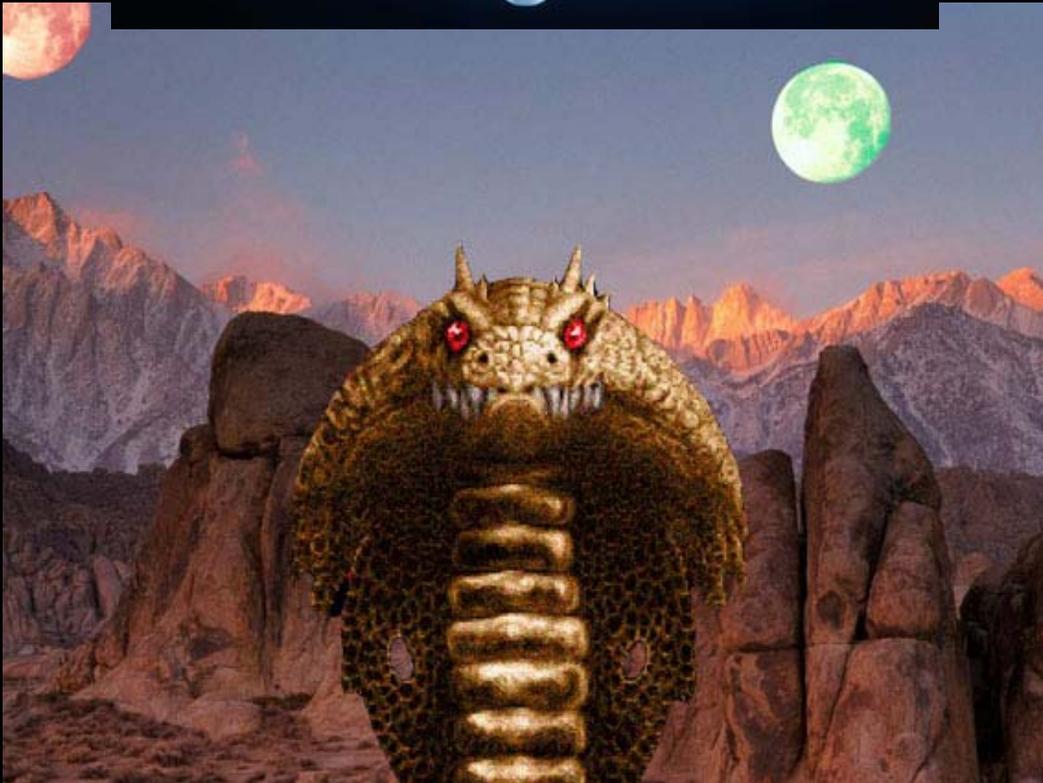
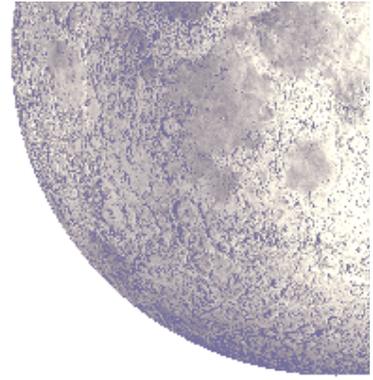


Gwenthia



She-Eth

Species Book 2



She-Eth

Gwenthia Species Book 2

Written by Pete Nash

Based on Ideas and Concepts by
Nathan Baron

Credits and Ownership

She-Eth and Nhi Tual created by Nathan Baron

Species development by Pete Nash

Layout and design by Lawrence Whitaker

About This Book

This is the second of Gwenthia's Species books, and takes a detailed look at the She-Eth. As a species the She-Eth might resemble snakemen or lizardmen from stock fantasy tales, but in many ways they are a unique and tragic species. This book explores that.

They are, of course, great roleplaying villains, but should not be dismissed as sword-fodder. These are intelligent, dangerous, motivated creatures that have a definite agenda. These are not lizardmen to be slaughtered by the dozen, but implacable, lethal, alien foes with a logical approach to conflict and a single-minded resolve to re-conquer their ancient homelands.

We've enjoyed developing the She-Eth and hope you enjoy using them.



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Introduction

Internal Zathuran Report

To: Arch Savant Zip'hocpoth, Head of Sapience Threat Analysis Department, Khrampur.

From: Savant Seth'Zzkarath, ophidian Studies, Department of Xeno Management, Khrampur.

Za'Laj Article #9472570985691263-Y, Study of She-eth - Minor Sapient Species

Over-savant! I have completed my initial survey (attached) of the remaining She-eth still hiding under Nbi-Tual. Despite the devolution of this species I am convinced that they retain a plausible threat to our cities. Notwithstanding major difficulties in sending mole drones through their still active web of seismic sensors, we have managed to ascertain that the prime motive of the She-eth people is to seek revenge against us, seeing Zathur as the reason for their fall from enlightenment.

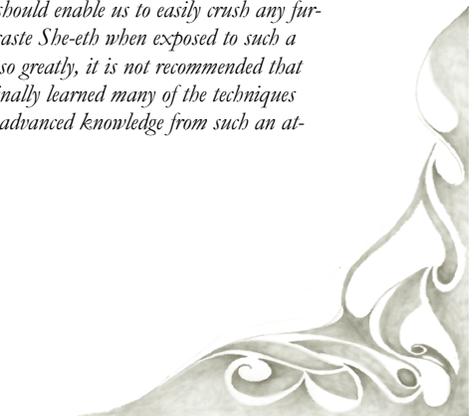
Thanks to our complete linguistic databases from before their destruction, we were able to translate the scent patterns they use for communication. We were also able to retrieve genetic material from their breeding pits to check that the modifications are intact. The good news is that the reptilians have still failed to 'regain their souls' and no She-eth has any psychic ability as was intended. However, the race has undergone a frighteningly large shift in its base genetic code, leading me to conclude that the scientist caste is redesigning their species at an unprecedented rate. Readily observable alterations include skin colouration, head hoods, extra limbs and fang elongation. We were unable to discern internal effects, and lack subjects to comprehend the ultimate purpose to these mutations. But considering that only four thousand local years ago the She-eth were but a single bioform type, the implications are ominous.

Based upon these findings, I would urge the Over-savant to authorise a full appropriation mission, whereupon we could subsume a wide range of the different bioforms for more rigorous testing. Unfortunately this would require an un-concealable intrusion since their sensor webs are too closely woven for stealthy purloining, unless we provoke an attack via a third party, such as the warrior monks of Nbi-Tual to draw them above the surface... a plan which is unlikely to provide live, or diverse specimens.

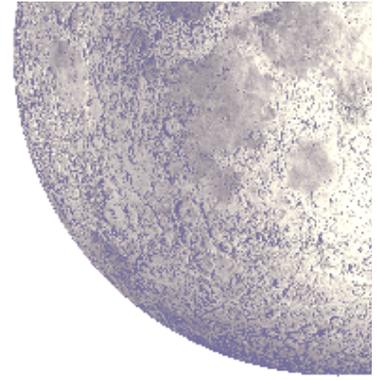
The socio-political front is by no means reassuring either. Since their destruction at the hands of the Ancients, the tri-part republican political system of scientists, thinkers and warriors has completely broken down to be replaced by a scientist autocracy. It is the drive of the scientist caste to recover their technology from Zathur, and to cast us down in their place - their limited understanding of the real manipulators behind the Ancients war has placed us as their foes - but what can one expect from a species of such limited imagination? Whatever the misplaced reasons for their drive for vengeance, the ruling caste has reformed their entire society into a weapon, and are starting to comprehend the science behind their few remaining pieces of high technology. The lower castes have been tinkered with to such a degree that freedom of thought appears to be no longer possible, and ultimately the society is doomed to either our, or their, destruction.

I recommend that this report be passed onto the Department of City Defence so that preliminary plans can be designed to eliminate this waking bug in case it decides to try and sting us. The primary focus of any attack be the scientist caste itself. Although they are few in number and the confusion caused by their loss should enable us to easily crush any further resistance, although I have doubts about what would happen to the lower caste She-eth when exposed to such a power vacuum. However, since the She-eth genetic code has been tinkered with so greatly, it is not recommended that this task be given over to the Dept. of Bio Weapons... especially since we originally learned many of the techniques from the She-eth themselves; their mastery of biology may allow them to regain advanced knowledge from such an attack.

End of Report!



Views of the She-Eth



Extract from the Encyclopedia Gwenthia

She-eth (sing. A She-eth, plural. She-eth)

The She-eth are an ophidian based race which currently live under the lands of Nhi-Tual. Although apparently aggressive in nature, the species has only recently reappeared and has never been seen beyond the borders of that country since the fall of the forerunners millennia ago.

She-eth appear to be serpents with extra limbs attached in an awkward manner to their bodies. Both legs and arms jut perpendicularly from the trunk, and the head seems remarkably small for a sapient species. The origins of the She-eth have been lost since the cataclysmic battles with the ancients, but it seems probable that they were created (or imported) as an alien client race.

Given their probable ophidian heritage the She-eth unsurprisingly fail to demonstrate any emotive capability. Their society is a highly structured one relying heavily on analytical analysis, logic and fore planning. Whatever their current objectives, the She-eth are dedicated to the reclaiming of the area which was once their homeland. They currently live in isolated subterranean fortresses from which they raid the surface at an ever increasing rate. As a caste based society, their military are highly organised, a fact which has granted them a distinct edge in the battles fought so far.

Their eating habits are considered obscene by the other races, since despite being omnivorous the She-eth prefer to ingest living creatures as sustenance. Language is far more difficult since they have thus far refused all communication. In conclusion, the She-eth are the last remnants of a once highly advanced culture whose recent aggression will probably bring about their final, and long overdue, extermination.

Bertrumias KiMentas

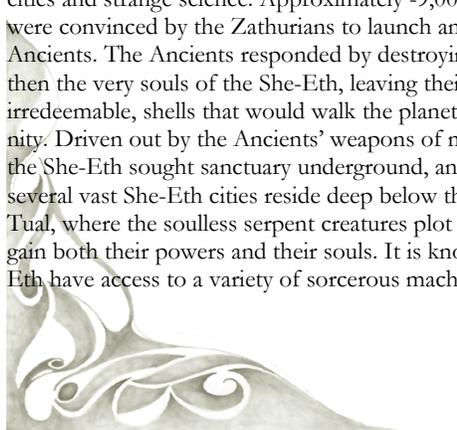
Extract from the Historica Gwenthia

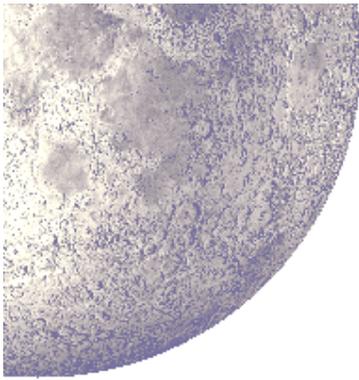
The serpent-like She-Eth were once a power upon Gwenthia, inhabiting the lands now called Nhi Tual with their sophisticated cities and strange science. Approximately -9,000 BP the She-Eth were convinced by the Zathurians to launch an attack upon the Ancients. The Ancients responded by destroying the cities and then the very souls of the She-Eth, leaving their bodies as living, irredeemable, shells that would walk the planet in misery for eternity. Driven out by the Ancients' weapons of mass destruction, the She-Eth sought sanctuary underground, and it is thought that several vast She-Eth cities reside deep below the surface of Nhi-Tual, where the soulless serpent creatures plot and scheme to regain both their powers and their souls. It is known that the She-Eth have access to a variety of sorcerous machines, either sup-

plied by the Zathurians for use against the Ancients, stolen from them, or developed independently.

Their schemes are now reaching a critical point, because the She-Eth have returned to the surface with vengeance in mind. The monastery island of Lô-Tual has been invaded by She-Eth warriors who have appeared through 'gateways of darkness' and begun the systematic sacking of the peaceful shrines and settlements. The attacks are fearsome: the She-Eth are fast and merciless. They strike quickly, slaying all who resist, capture as many humans as possible, drink the blood of the fallen and then return to whence they came just as quickly.

The Tribes of Nhi-Tual have sent warriors to Lô-Tual to repel the She-Eth attacks, but losses have been high and She-Eth military organisation is extremely good. Mercenaries from across Gwenthia have recently been drawn to the island, as much for the gold offered by the beleaguered Lo-Tualians, as the challenge of pitting themselves against this strange, reptilian foe.





She-Eth Physiology

She-eth appear to be fat snakes with spindly limbs attached to the sides of the main body. From analysis of the skeleton, the evolution of the basic form seems natural, but it is obvious that the She-eth once walked the land on four limbs rather than mimicking humanoids on two, much like a small lizard. The ophidians are of human size, but weigh slightly more due the muscular density of the body. The head is small with lidless eyes, large mouth and three fangs on the leading edge of the under jaw. The limbs are paired as in a human, with two arms and two legs, but look thin and weak in comparison with the main trunk. Sexual genitalia are kept internally, and only male She-eth have ever been seen above the surface of Gwenthia.

Scales

The entirety of a She-eth is covered in scales. The thickness of the scales is heavier on the backs of the torso and limbs, and grows thinner on the inside of joints and belly to allow flexibility and movement. If lowered on all fours, a She-eth is reasonably well protected by its scales, although by no means invulnerable. Yet upright it exposes all of its soft under areas.

A She-eth sheds its skin one to three times per year, or whenever the creature suffers a metamorphic change. Shedding is done in a quiet, dry location and takes about a day to complete. The scales come off as a single piece of translucent milky skin, and the She-eth extracts itself via the mouth opening which generally tears open a little as the limbs pass through. The parchment-like result is collected and used for a variety of tasks. It can be used to fashion clothing, patch piping, or even be written upon. However, the thin scales are delicate and many dozens of layers are quilted together for use other than parchment. Skinning dead She-eth provides much thicker leather which can be used for heavier tasks (such as armour) as it includes the living fleshy parts of skin, rather than just the outer surface of scales.

She-eth skin has a sub dermal layer of chameleon cells which lie under the scales. These cells can infuse themselves with a variety of bright colours, allowing the reptiles to change their pigment. They normally radiate specific colours according to their caste, which makes recognition of life-path and rank instantly obvious. However, with concentration a She-eth can actively control their chameleon cells which allows them camouflage themselves when scouting or hunting.

Limbs

Male She-eth possess arms and legs. Some rumours suggest that certain aberrations have a greater number of arms or legs, although these accounts have never been substantiated. Generally, a



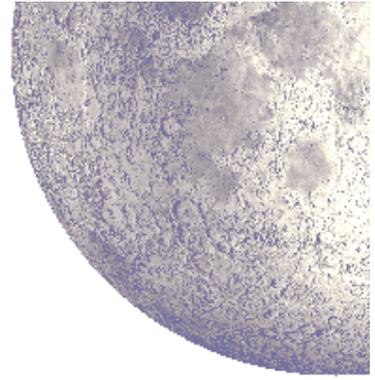
She-eth will walk, fight or survey surroundings on its two hind legs, run quickly on all four limbs, and swim slithering on its belly. She-eth are excellent swimmers.

Limbs have only three fingers or three toes, which has influenced their rank and numerical system. She-eth lack opposable thumbs, making gripping more difficult, but their claws are sharp and allow fine control if opposing limbs are used together.

A She-eth's limbs are not as strong in proportion to its body, mainly due to the primitive attachment points to the creature's spine. She-eth lack the complex shoulder blades or pelvises of a true humanoid, instead having a thicker spinal disk to which the limb's upper bone abuts. Because of this, a She-eth cannot lift or support large weights, which bias them towards lighter, thrusting weaponry. They also suffer dislocations relatively easily, but can always resort to undulating on the bellies if necessary. Losing a limb is inconvenient, but not crippling since they eventually will re-grow the location.

Body

The body of a She-eth is similar to the structure of a viper. It is narrow at the head and tail, but widens near the centre. The strongest muscles of the ophidians are in the main trunk, granting



it a powerful ability to either lash forwards to strike, or tightly engulf prey and constrict it. A She-eth grasping an object in its mouth and using its body to lift can pick up greater weights than attempting to pick them up with its arms.

If a She-eth lays its limbs close to its body, they can undulate across the ground, swim, climb up trees or even tie itself in knots. The trunk of a She-eth who hasn't fed is from 20-25cm in diameter. Overall length from the tip of the nose to the end of the tail is about 3.5 meters, but some of this length is lost when it stands upright since the tail is used as a balancing counterweight. Erect She-eth rarely top 2m.

Unlike serpents a She-eth's tail is prehensile, enabling it to grasp or lift small items. Warrior caste She-eth sometimes arm themselves with secondary weapons attached to the tip of the tail, using them to make surprise attacks, or trips, from below their opponent's attention.

The body of a She-eth lacks anything recognisable as an anus. The digestive tract is not designed to process solid waste, forcing the creatures to regurgitate their meals about a day after absorbing them. At this time, most of the flesh and soft tissues have been digested via the combined processes of venom and stomach acid. The remnants of the meal are usually bones and other hard materials like fur or chitin, covered in an acrid sludge of bile, rotted fur and partially reduced cartilage. Such meals are easily recognisable since the skeletal remains are usually intact. Normal bodily wastes are passed from the body via urine.

Senses

She-eth lack true binocular vision as their eyes are placed on either side of their narrow skulls. This grants them an almost 360 degree range of vision, and since they usually live in enclosed environments the lack of depth perception is not a hindrance. Indeed they have become rather short sighted over the thousands of years underground. The ophidians also lack ears altogether and cannot hear noise, voices or indeed any type of sound. However they have other senses which more than make up for this lack.

The primary sense of the She-eth is that of taste and smell. Both senses are combined into one sense organ, the tongue, which they flick out of their mouths on a continual basis, once every couple of seconds. The organ is so sensitive that it can even detect air movements, and the emotions of other species close to them via pheromone secretions (those which use scent - mammals for example). The delicate tongue is part of why She-eth biochemists are experts in their field, since they can detect and identify micro-

scopic traces of particular compounds. One of the worst fates which can befall a She-eth is the loss of its tongue.

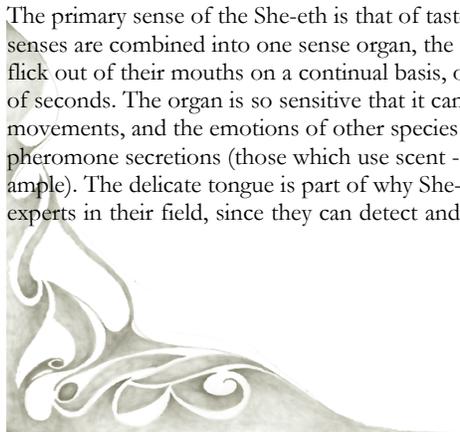
Due to their scaly skin, She-eth have a very poor sense of touch, save for the undersides of its hands and tail tip. However, a small organ set it at the back of the skull allows the creature to detect vibrations travelling through surfaces it is in contact with, an obvious holdover from the protean time the She-eth lacked limbs. They can sometimes be seen laying their heads along walls or floors to gauge approaching movements or detect digging. The natural ambush posture of She-eth is lying prone and then whipping upright when approaching vibrations indicate striking distance.

Another extra sense, are the heat receptive pits placed on either side of their snout, just below the eyes. Resolution of infrared radiation is excellent, making it probably the second most important sense to a She-eth, especially in conditions of poor illumination. The heat sensitive pits have a variety of uses. They can be used to track freshly wounded prey from droplets of warm blood, or spot hidden foes from exhaled breath for example. Range is not great however, sensitivity drops rapidly beyond five meters, but unusually hot heat sources can be detected further away. The most important use is for reading facial expressions. She-eth have patterns of capillaries under the skin of their faces and upper bodies, which involuntarily flush with blood according to the mental thoughts of the individual. These can be read by other She-eth as easily as reading a scroll. The ophidians can also use the organs to read the expressions of other races, which combined with pheromone sensitivity makes lying to them very difficult indeed.

Head and Brain

A She-eth's head is primarily used to locate the sensory organs, those of sight, taste/smell, vibration and heat. Since it is so small and narrow, there is little room for anything resembling a brain. Indeed, the brain of a She-eth is a strange organ, composed of dispersed clusters of nerve ganglions spaced along the entire length of the spine. Each ganglion acts as an independent control for the local functions, so there are sub brains for senses, arm movement, digestion, respiration, etc. It is not understood how the disparate structure of the brain allows the support of sapience, but the overall mass of nervous tissue closely approximates that of an average sized humanoid.

The length of the skull is matched by the lower jaw, granting the She-eth an intimidating bite. As with snakes, the jaw is only loosely attached by soft tissue, allowing it to elastically dislocate from the skull when swallowing objects larger than the diameter of its head.





Inside the mouth, mounted on the lower jaw, are three hinged fangs which normally lay flat when the mouth is closed. Each fang is close to 10cm in length and hollow, connected to modified saliva glands. A She-eth depending on its caste has a variety of different poisons which the glands can produce. The primary poison which all possess, breaks down the tissues of a creature about to be eaten. Others can be neurotoxins, soporifics, or even willpower depressing venom. (Venom is further discussed under technology later.)

Members of higher castes develop hoods which, when erected, form a broad surface behind and below the head. These are mainly used for signalling, so that infra red commands may be broadcast over greater distances. Hood size increases with rank and caste.

All She-eth are spawned with their sept ideogram genetically implanted into the scale cells of the snout, for easy identification.

Metabolism

She-eth metabolism is the main weakness of the ophidian race. They are cold blooded, which causes them to spend long periods in a semi-conscious state, especially when the temperature is cold (below 30 degrees centigrade) or food is scarce. However, this has the side effect of giving the She-eth a greatly extended lifespan in comparison with humans. The oldest She-eth on record was over four centuries in age. They move slowly and methodically when relaxed, and do little to expend unnecessary energy - except for recreation or war.

She-eth spend over half their time in this partially aware state, still able to think (albeit slowly) yet somewhere between sleep and alertness. A She-eth who eats becomes somnolent for an entire day and cannot be roused from its digestion stupor. The same occurs during shedding. Fortunately though, the ophidians only need to eat perhaps once per week, requiring about twenty kilos of meat in one sitting. The largest creature a She-eth can absorb is about the size of a sheep, or a small human child. An ophidian can process other sources of food, such as honeycomb or fruit, but its digestion is unable to break down most other vegetation.

The energy conservation processes of She-eth bodies would normally have a serious impact on its ability to respond to danger. To counter this, a She-eth has reserve stores of energy contained within glands placed along their spine. When threatened, the glands flood the body with adrenal hormones which increase reaction speed and give a short period of physical endurance. The effect reduces each time the glands are triggered until there is no hormone left. At this time a She-eth is totally exhausted and rav-

enously hungry. It must eat and rest for several days before its adrenal glands are recharged.

Metabolising venom is also very energy intensive, and the venom glands only hold enough for two to three bites. They then take several days to produce a new batch. However, since most castes of She-eth have several different types of venom, each with its own gland, this limitation is not quite as detrimental as it first seems.

Last, but by no means least, the She-eth cellular structure is designed to be fully capable of regenerating itself. Although their metabolism is slow, a wounded She-eth can eventually re-grow missing limbs or organs - as long as the original wound is not immediately life threatening. A leg or tail might take several years to replace, but this can be artificially speeded up by forced ingestion of extra food and being kept in a hot environment. Even so, such healing cannot be forced to complete in less than a few months.

Note

Only male She-eth are sapient. Females have in the course of the specie's (de)evolution been forced into becoming unthinking breeders. Since female She-eth have no function except for reproduction, they lack the extra limbs existent on males with only redundant nubs of flesh remaining on the sides of their bodies. Females are similar in size to male She-eth.

Another important aspect of the She-eth species is that 'all' She-eth share the same base genetic structure. The physical differences exhibited between life-paths and castes are the result of socio-environmental controls, not because they are an individually modified sub species. Any low caste She-eth has the biological capacity to transmute itself into one of a higher rank and caste. This voracious ability to redefine themselves when pressured is what makes the She-eth so tenacious, to eradicate them would require total genocide. Specifics of caste modifications are described in a later chapter.



She-Eth Psychology



The psychology of the She-eth is confusing... on one hand they appear to lack certain emotions or empathy, but on the other hand they can act as if with compassion. The strange dichotomy is due to their alien origins, which has evolved unusual priorities into their society.

The She-eth are usually stereotyped with the following character traits - Cunning, Honour, Savagery, Emotionless and Arrogant. Though somewhat of a misrepresentation, these caricatures are discussed individually;

Cunning

The She-eth have always been thought of as a cunning race, using intelligent plans to overcome adversity rather than brute force. This assumption may be somewhat misplaced since their original fall from grace with the Ancients was due to being out-thought by the Zathurians. However, since She-eth pass the majority of their time in a physically dormant state, it is of little surprise that they spend much of it pondering. The sheer quantity of time spent in this act allows the higher castes to lay complex plans with multiple paths which may happen according to the results of unknown (but foreseen) occurrences. It is believed that the She-eth constantly maintain hugely complex objectives which are represented as three dimensional trees, with each branch, twig and bud associated with another potential probability, and given to an individual She-eth to contemplate. Such staggering complexity requires large numbers of thinkers to maintain, but as each decision point is actually reached, many branches no longer become possible and those She-eth previously assigned to that route are redeployed to other potentials. Few outside the realm of the She-eth ever gain a hint of such plans, but recent raiding in Nhi-Tual has demonstrated that it has been extremely difficult to successfully trick or entrap a She-eth military force.

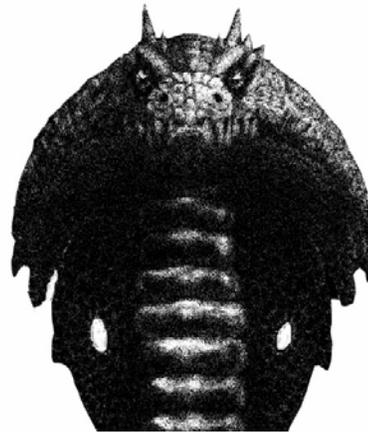
Honour

She-eth honour is a limited concept, which is irrelevant in most situations outside combat. Survivors of She-eth raids have reported that the ophidians appear not to attack non-combatants. Women and children are left unharmed even whilst their desperate defending husbands are killed before their eyes. She-eth will slaughter any who turn and run... however, bravery is respected and they offer single combat to those who dare to stand against them. Attempts are made to capture better warriors alive, who are taken to be brainwashed when raiding parties return underground. The She-eth are also considered honourable due to the high quality of life their slaves are subject too, yet this is simply a misunderstanding of She-eth philosophy. Happy slaves are efficient workers, mistreating them would simply be wasteful. Of course,

any slave who refuses to serve, or attempts escape, is simply sacrificed to the gladiatorial games.

Savage

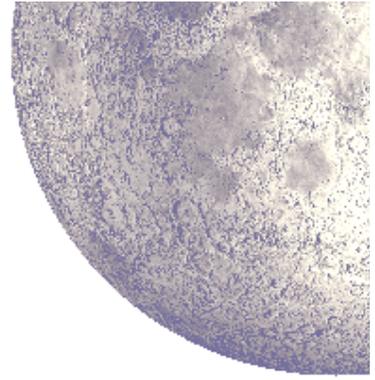
This is another misnomer applied to the ophidians. Whilst the results of a fight with a She-eth may be a welter of blood and impaled limbs, the species is not driven by rage - and the rumours of them drinking blood is certainly misplaced. She-eth are cold, calculating warriors who have uncanny reflexes. They gain no satisfaction from unnecessary butchery, but are able to use such tactics to intimidate foes into premature surrender. A She-eth may experience contentment in performing a skilled combat, and finding a worthy foe to prolong the challenge is pleasurable. The tasting of blood is both a sign of respect and a method of identifying potential useful family members of the same line. However, they do not 'play with their food' using any and all methods to win any fight as quickly as possible, since adrenal gland secretions rarely last for more than a couple of minutes.



Emotionless

Since She-eth lack facial expressions, they have little in the way of detectable emotions. Contentment comes with success, rising in rank and reproduction. Dissatisfaction occurs when carefully laid plans fail or when an ophidian suffers demotion. Anger, love, joy, sadness, are either unknown or simply so muted as to become ineffective. Fear and remorse are indulged because of their near destruction at the hands of the ancients, and hate is reserved only for the Zathurians. Without most recognised emotions, the She-eth lack empathy with those outside their species, hence their reputation for coldness.





Arrogance

Although others see the She-eth as arrogant, nothing could be further from the truth. To be arrogant, one must knowingly posture superiority over his companions... In the case of She-eth, they simply 'are' superior. Whether advancement in rank is the result of superior performance, or whether inherent ability rises to match rank is not known. Of course, the arrogance perceived by other races may simply be the result of the ophidian's lack of empathy and regular ability to succeed in their claims.

Drives

Quite clearly the psychology of the She-eth is primarily based around their motivations. Most species primordial drives are those of food, shelter and reproduction. The ophidians are unusual in the fact that their primordial drive is to advance in caste and promote their sept (see Society below). Power and responsibility come with greater rank, yet few luxuries are granted with it as She-eth society is remarkably utopian when it comes to material wealth.

However, other drives have been biologically implanted in the psyche of the She-eth by their own scientists; those of reclaiming their homelands, finding their souls, and seeking revenge upon the Zathurians. These artificial drives complement the prime drive of advancement, so as not to cause unnecessary stress on She-eth society.

She-eth follow orders without question, but they are always seeking progression to the next caste, spending much of their free time analysing the methods of their superiors in preparation for their own advancement. However, rivalry between septs promotes increasingly Machiavellian tactics as long as these don't undermine the command objectives of the ruling councils. Infighting between septs is encouraged to get the most ruthless and cunning to the top ranks. Loyalty, save amongst sept siblings, is seen as laziness or complacency. Indeed it has been conjectured that higher ranking She-eth (despite access to warmer chambers) spend so much time in a semi-somnolent state simply to design new stratagems to advance ahead of their competitors.

Even though She-eth psychology is somewhat divorced from more humanoid races, it has an extra layer of strangeness. A She-eth's motivations modify if their caste changes. Warriors tend towards selfish self improvement, Leaders towards competitive strategy, and Thinkers to cooperative progression of the entire species. Thus a She-eth becomes more philanthropic the closer it comes to the apex of power.

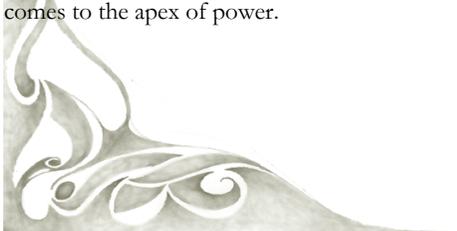
Race Relations

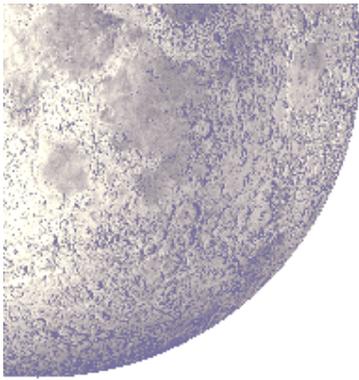
The She-eth don't experience xenophobia of other sentient races. Indeed, save for the Zathurians they tend to regard alien species as potential client species, as long as they're properly subjugated. Humans have been an incredible boon to the She-eth, freeing them from manual labour and allowing rapid expansion of their science and infrastructure. As creatures tied heavily to logic and pragmatism, the ophidians are willing to liaise with any race to complete their ambitions.

Fears

Since they have spent the last 9,000 years underground, the She-eth have developed a tendency towards agoraphobia; and hence, dislike remaining under an open sky for extended periods. She-eth gradually become more 'jumpy' under these exposed conditions and involuntarily trigger adrenal glandular responses, unconsciously registering threats from trees swaying in the wind, or clouds crossing the sun, till they collapse from exhaustion. Scouts and spies are specially trained to resist triggering from such natural phenomena, but still over react to any slight surprise.

The She-eth also suffer a subconscious fear that they will be struck down by the Ancients a second and final time. This adds to their fear of being above ground since it was from the sky that death originally came from.





Union of the Snake

Reproduction & Lifecycle

She-eth lifecycle is indelibly linked to the concept of septs. A sept is a family group of siblings who are all spawned at the same time from the same fathers. The philosopher scientists are forever tinkering with new combinations of genetic tricks to evolve their race to its maximum potential, and the septs are the final result of each batch of experiments.

A She-eth spends its life in service to its sept, and through it the race itself. Although half the life of an ophidian may be spent in a somnolent state, it uses most of its alert hours in hard work. Little time is left for recreation, but even that has a specific purpose. The life of a She-eth is truly a driven one.

Reproduction

She-eth reproduction can occur at any time. The sexual drive of a male ophidian peaks several times a year, becoming increasingly distracted from its assigned tasks. However, a She-eth can mate even when it is not in heat. This is usually offered as a reward for rising in rank, when reproductive hormones flood its body at the completion of its physical transformation. In general, only those She-eth who have excelled at their assigned tasks are granted permission to mate, since the Scientists wish to discourage strengthening 'negative' psychological traits back into the gene pool.

When granted permission to reproduce, a group of specially selected She-eth from many different septs are gathered together for the same spawning ritual. The group is then led into the heart of the female's quarter (usually the province of the Philosophers), where a number of mating chambers is situated. Each chamber is large, containing a circular bowl in which the females are kept... not unlike a dish full of wriggling worms. The chambers kept very warm to encourage a high level of physical activity. Steam mixed with exotic scents is released into the atmosphere to keep it moist.

Female She-eth are modified to permanently extrude a lust inducing scent, so that males are brought into the chamber become overwhelmed with the desire to copulate. The males lower themselves into the breeding bowl and a massive orgy of writhing serpentine bodies occurs, each mating time after time with every new female they find themselves entwined with. Eventually, despite the warmth and psychedelic aphrodisiacs, each male drains its adrenal glands and becomes prostrate at the bottom of the bowl. Unlucky She-eth occasionally die from a combination of exhaustion and being crushed by the orgy atop them.

At this point the females are decanted from the breeding bowl into the gestation chamber, drawn by a pavlovic response to specifically keyed perfumes. The comatose males slowly awake to the

smells of fresh food and wriggle into the recovery chamber where they feed and sleep again.

The females are universally fertilised from the orgy and it is impossible to specifically determine individual fathers to the offspring produced. After twenty weeks of gestation the gathered females begin to writhe together in labour, and they are moved into the specially prepared spawning chamber, which is filled with warm hormonal infused fluid. Live young are produced under the surface, dozens per mother. These are then gathered by Scientists who, after some initial testing, then take them from the female quarter to a nursery within the schooling quarter.

Post Natal

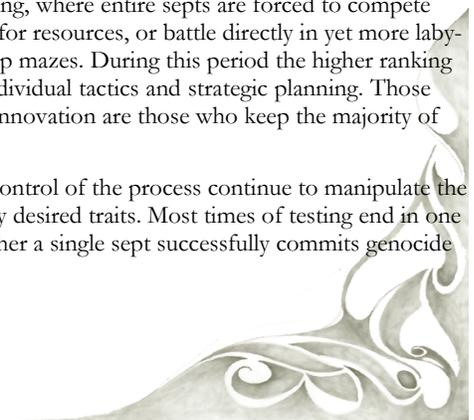
The new spawn are effectively mindless, proto She-eth. They lack muscular control, sentience and limbs. But the scientists start forced evolution, despite their incomplete growth. At first the weakest are culled by lowering and raising the temperature of the nursery bath, and then the birthing fluids are tainted with chemical pollutants. Also during this time they are not fed, forcing the wriggling spawn to consume the dead bodies of their siblings.

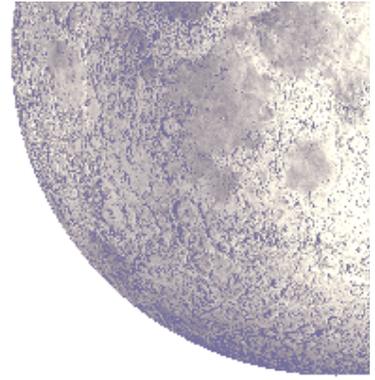
Once they finish the transformation from amphibious to limbed form, those males which have survived are taken to the chambers of learning for physical training and indoctrination. There they are tested for logic, memory and reasoning; being placed into mazes initially full of puzzles, but eventually increasingly lethal death traps. It is here that young She-eth are graded by their psychological, physical and social performance into the casts to which they will belong. At the moment of self realisation, the more advanced She-eth self bootstrap into a higher caste and immediately start undergoing the necessary physical and colouration changes.

During the time of learning the spawn only interact with their other siblings from the same spawning. Once the initial birth crop of spawn has been reduced to about a third of its original number, they emerge as a fully functioning unit - a sept - with warriors, leaders and thinkers.

From here the sept of spawn are assessed by further ordeals. This is the time of testing, where entire septs are forced to compete with one another for resources, or battle directly in yet more labyrinthine, death-trap mazes. During this period the higher ranking spawn develop individual tactics and strategic planning. Those with the greatest innovation are those who keep the majority of their sept intact.

The scientists in control of the process continue to manipulate the tests to extract any desired traits. Most times of testing end in one of three ways. Either a single sept successfully commits genocide





and eradicates all competitors; or several septs band together for mutual protection and crush the psychopathic ones; or a sept realises it is being deliberately manipulated and escapes the chambers of testing.

Depending on which outcome is achieved the sept is assigned its life path in She-eth society - Military, Sociology, or Philosophy. The surviving siblings are then released from the chambers of testing and take their place as an adult sept under the authority of one of the three councils.

Maturity

Adult She-eth are loyal to their brothers and will not knowingly perform an action which hinders the sept. Since all adult She-eth function as part of a coherent unit, the task an ophidian must perform depends greatly on the tasks assigned to the sept. For example, a member of the warrior caste of a sept assigned to guarding the city will be given picket duties, or a one from a sept allotted war training will spend its time in combat practice, etc.

Most of an ophidian's free time is spent in training and studying the methods used by its own superiors, in the hope of one day rising in rank. Even though all She-eth actively prepare for the day when they might be promoted, the higher castes have less time to spare for such self education.

The She-eth of castes are categorised according to their life-path. The military assign warriors as soldiers; sociologists use them as spies or hunters, and philosophers as engineers. A table explaining life-path and caste distinctions is described in Society below.

Mid caste She-eth are by nature organisers, rather than doers. They lead and command the low caste at the strategic level rather than the tactical, and rarely place themselves in the front line. Beyond achieving the tasks assigned to the sept, mid caste ophidians spend much of their time trying to outmanoeuvre rival septs in the same life-path.

Members of the high caste are primarily thinkers, those who plot the future course for the entire race or develop new ideas. Although the highest thinkers no longer involve themselves in the politics of inter-sept feuding, it is sometimes necessary for them to coordinate other septs to support what they believe are the best schemes.

As time passes, the septs suffer losses of their personnel; some to war, others to accidents or disease. When a sept shrinks due to this gradual attrition, it is assigned more specialised tasks more suitable to its limited workforce. Eventually though, either due to disaster or simply age, a sept will die down to a handful of individ-

uals. At this point the sept becomes untenable and the sept is formally disbanded, the name (including its history and traditions) will then be reused at a future point.

She-eth with no sept, tend to waste away unless they devote themselves to exotic pursuits. Despite any rank previously achieved by a sept-less individual, they have no authority or access to major resources, and are generally ignored by the rest of society, leaving them as lone wolves with the freedom to do as they wish as long as it doesn't threaten the race. However, most sept-less spend ever increasing times in their sleeping pots, dreaming of what was, or what should be. Eventually they die of malnutrition.

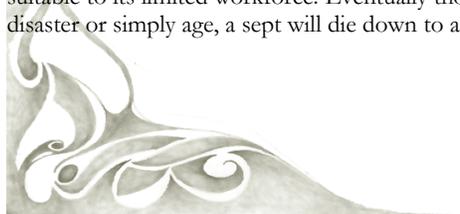
Death

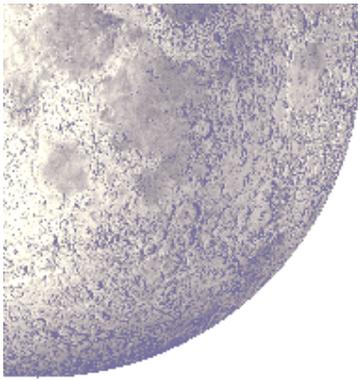
The She-eth are pragmatically efficient when it comes to death. All those who die within reach of the underground cities are given for study to the philosopher scientists, after which they are claimed by hydroponics engineers. All the flesh is dissolved off the bones in large algoid tanks to be used later as fertiliser or animal feed, and the bones are ground down for chemical components.

Since the individual is not regarded as important by the She-eth, there are no ceremonies involved with death of a person. However a period of mourning is held by all, when a sept is dissolved or destroyed. Each sept maintains a shrine under which are crypts containing the record scrolls written by previous incarnations of the sept name. The scrolls are maintained by a member of the high caste, who is appointed historian, and the records of the current sept are deposited at its dissolution. The scrolls are of vital importance to the She-eth since they contain the secrets which those before have kept hidden, and instructions of unique techniques utilised by that family.

Sept shrines are considered sacrosanct and no ophidian of one sept may read the scrolls of another. In the case of septs who are destroyed outright, it is the responsibility of the remaining septs to place the unfinished scrolls atop the shrine until a new sept is spawned to inherit it. This is as close to religion that the She-eth come, being a form of ritualised respect for those ancestors who went before.

Mourning ceremonies last a week. They involve fasting, recital of the known history of the sept's achievements, and the inhalation of narcotic herbs to free the mind to ponder the communal path of the She-eth. After the week concludes there is a small feast to appease suppressed appetites, and remember the pleasures of life.





She-Eth Sociology

She-eth society is an unusual variant of republicanism, with three branches of governmental control. Every She-eth belongs to a sept – the extended family of siblings who were born with it. Individuals have no power or recognition within the culture, only a sept does.

Each branch of the government is a collaboration of many septs. A sept may only belong to a single branch and never changes its life-path once assigned to it. The three disparate branches or life paths are the;

Military. *Controlling the defence of the She-eth cities and spearheading external conquests.*

Sociologists. *Co-ordinating logistics and infrastructure, gathering information and the indoctrination and control of slaves.*

Philosophers. *In charge of racial evolution, research and development, maintaining technological devices and city construction.*

Within each life-path the septs form a council to govern its direction. The council is supposed to be a republic with each sept possessing equal status with a single seat (given to each sept’s highest ranked leader) and a single vote, but in reality there are incessant politics between the septs to gain more authority for their own machinations. Motions are passed if two thirds of the septs agree to the issue, which has sometimes led to centuries of inability to agree on anything, and explains why the She-eth have taken so many millennia to organise their return. It is believed that a secret cabal of scientists from the Philosophy life-path have begun to manipulate the testing of young to produce a more cooperative society over the last century.

The numbers of She-eth septs in each life path are variable, with a distinct bias towards the military, as a precursor to fulfilling their programmed goals.

Over and above the three councils is the over-council which is chaired by the highest ranked thinker from the most prominent septs. The task of the over-council is not to engage in politics, but to give guidance to the councils... and enforce ‘internal security’ the councils threaten social stability.

Rank and Status

The prime number of three (the nominal number of claws or fangs) is used throughout She-eth society. There are three life paths, each one has three castes, and those are subdivided into three ranks. A simple diagram is represented below.

(Since the She-eth have no spoken language, the names for each caste have not been discovered. However, the closest human ap-

proximations are listed. Rank names have been excluded for simplicity.)

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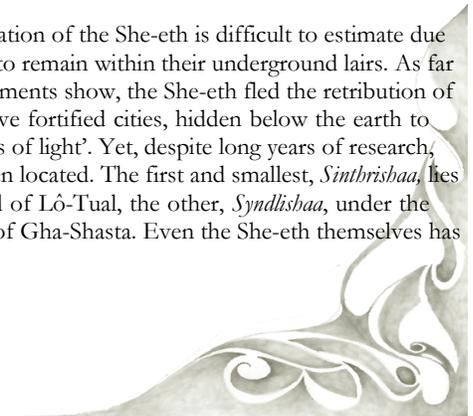
	Life Paths		
	Military	Sociology	Philosophy
Thinker Caste	Strategists	Diplomats	Scientists
Leader Caste	Officers	Administrators	Researchers
Warrior Caste	Soldiers	Spies	Engineers

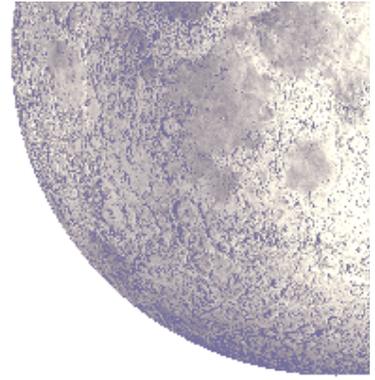
Because each She-eth assumes specific physical aspects of its assigned role, this produces twenty seven distinct bio-forms, each with slightly different colouration, glandular functions, and even gross modification of its body.

Social movement of an individual is usually limited to the ranks within a caste, although examples of caste promotions have been recorded. However, an individual can never change to another sept. The power structure of a sept is pyramidal, which follows a general trend of the three ranks being approximately split into one half, one third and one sixth of the caste’s individuals. The numbers in each caste is approximately six times the number in the caste above it. A new sept usually starts with about 250 members, but the number can be much smaller depending on the severity of its testing, but over time these numbers diminish, especially in the lower ranks as individuals are exposed to greater risk.

Population

The overall population of the She-eth is difficult to estimate due to their tendency to remain within their underground lairs. As far as the oldest documents show, the She-eth fled the retribution of the Ancients to five fortified cities, hidden below the earth toward the ‘weapons of light’. Yet, despite long years of research, only two have been located. The first and smallest, *Sinbrishaa*, lies beneath the island of Lô-Tual, the other, *Syndlishaa*, under the desert northwest of Gha-Shasta. Even the She-eth themselves has





lost the knowledge where the other three fortresses are, or even if any of their inhabitants still exist.

Prior to their recent emergence the She-eth had to be completely self sufficient in their cities, as thus could only support a limited population. To overcome these difficulties, they have begun enslaving humans from the surface world to act as labourers (excavating new chambers and farming above ground), releasing more of the ophidian population for pressing objectives. This drive has been so successful that the slave population now outnumbered the She-eth themselves, and no sept member needs to perform manual labour.

In the two remaining She-eth strongholds, the balance of septs assigned to each life-path has become dangerously skewed, due to the drive towards re-conquest;

Sinthrishaa – Military septs 7, sociologist septs 1, philosophical septs 2

Syndlishaa – Military septs 35, sociologist septs 5, philosophical septs 12

Taking the recent large number of casualties due to war and other natural events into account, the average size of a mature sept is approximately two hundred members. This gives a rough estimate of two thousand She-eth in *Sinthrishaa* and ten thousand in *Syndlishaa*. However, with the addition of human slaves to the subterranean fortifications the total populace of the She-eth Empire must lay between twenty five to thirty thousand sentient beings.



Mental domination of other races is perhaps one of the most frightening aspects of the ophidians. In their clutches, humans are reduced to completely willing, subservient slaves. The ability was initially developed by members of the philosopher life-path, and then embedded into the sociologist gene-set. It relies on special venom which is injected via biting into the target, followed by several days of brain washing. If at the end of this time the victim is still able to resist, they are sent to the gladiatorial pits to provide entertainment, or simply killed and recycled for protein.

The resilience of most subjects however is overcome and specific areas of their minds are blocked off so that they become loyal subjects. The dominance is so strong that victims will willingly betray their own species to serve the She-eth, and thus ophidian raiders are always on the lookout for skilled humans, especially proven fighters. However, the venom has a tendency to wear off each month, so that the sociologists are forever required to re-poison their slaves in cycle.

It is unknown whether the She-eth subservience venom has similar effects on other sentient species, lacking human gene sequences.

Language

The She-eth are generally considered to be telepathic creatures, but nothing could be further from the truth. Although incapable of verbal communication due to the lack of vocal cords and ears, messages can still be sent via scent and sub dermal heat flashes. Of course, to those lacking the required senses these messages are completely invisible.

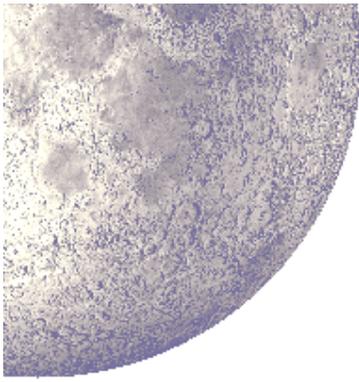
She-eth linguistics can be broken down into three categories; scent and heat, sign language and writing.

The normal mode of communication for an ophidian is bipolar. They use pheromones to transmit emotions/ideals, and sub dermal skin patterns for subjects/actions. The ranges of pheromones they are able to produce are stunningly complex, being excreted from special glands in the throat. To communicate the She-eth withdraws its tongue, which collects the manufactured scent and then flicks it outside of its mouth, rapidly oscillating the tongue back and forth to spread the pheromone widely.

Of course, the range of pheromone communication is limited to prevailing air currents, but the method has some advantages, being able to pass a signal up to a kilometre downwind. For more private conversations two (or more) She-eth will stand before each other and flick tongues together. Because this method of communication is not limited to air dispersal time, they She-eth can flick their tongues in and out at high speed, transferring the equivalent of a page of text in a few seconds.

The other half of the communiqué is transmitted via facial blood vessels which can individually flush. This is easily observable to the sensitive heat vision of another She-eth, and is read as if it were written text. The facial symbols are similar to ideograms and grow progressively more complex the longer the 'sentence'. So instead of flushing a series of separate words, they instead combine them all together in a single symbol. This has led to certain physiological developments among the highest cast, who have the





ability to spread their torso above the arm joints into a hood. The hood grows larger with rank, since it is used to display ever more complex ideograms. It is conjectured that the heads of each sept have the skill to project an entire thesis with a single flush.

The second benefit of these hoods is to flush larger copies of simple symbols upon them. This allows the symbol to be read from a far greater distance, which is a necessary ability when coordinating large groups of She-eth simultaneously.

Of course, such cunning methods of transmission are completely pointless when attempting to communicate with other races. Save for abnormalities such as the KiMentas, humans are totally blind to infrared light, and are incapable of distinguishing much via smell. To get around this problem the She-eth have developed a complex sign language which uses strange postures and limb positions to duplicate ideograms. An ophidian 'speaking' in this manner appears to be performing a graceful dance. A human however looks like a bad mime practicing torturous yoga. It is the task of all new slaves to learn this language so that they can understand their master's commands. Those who fail to learn the basics are soon sent to the recycling pits. Those who excel are promoted as overseers to translate more complicated ideas for other humans.

Writing is the permanent form of recording facial ideograms, supplemented by ophidian authors mixing pheromones into the ink. The majority of She-eth scribes are easily identified by the black tips of their tongues where they dab the nibs of their pens. The ink is specially designed to stabilise the pheromone content for years, but eventually fades after successions of readers glide their tongues repeatedly across the writing. She-eth books are usually hinged across the top edge, and consecutive ideograms are drawn in an anticlockwise spiral from the centre of the page. Scrolls use a similar layout but travel in circular spirals rather than square ones.

More important documents which are intended to last centuries use a different method of scent preservation. Each separate page (or strip if a scroll) is impregnated in a specific pheromone. When being read, the She-eth first tastes the bottom of the page or scroll and then replenishes the pheromone with a fresh deposit from its own tongue. Only those ideograms relevant to the embedded emotion/ideal are written on that page, and are separated from other pages by inserts of impermeable material to prevent contamination. The time required crafting such a book or scroll can take years, considering the amount of pheromones which must be generated to completely soak each section.

Clothing

The She-eth also use clothing as a visible sign of status, the less clothes you wear indicating higher castes. There are several reasons for this trend. Firstly, encumbering clothing hinders the ability of higher caste ophidians from spreading their hoods. Secondly, it demonstrates how much heating the individual She-eth has access to, as the higher castes are allowed more resources to supplement their working environment. Those who wear full coverings are probably expected to leave the heated passageways of their home city.

The different castes have the following dress code;

Warrior Caste – Cowled tunics with full length sleeves, trousers and sandals. Outside their tunnels these are supplemented with gloves and socks, and an over robe if necessary. The garb is tightly fitting for warmth, but flexible enough to fight or work in.

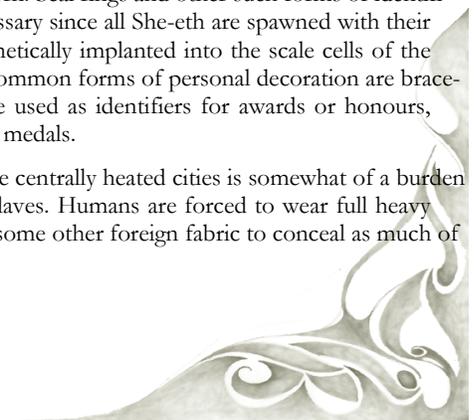
Leader Caste – Loose, full sleeved shirts and kilts, with sandals. Nothing is worn above the neck to allow their small hoods to dilate. Since leaders rarely have to leave the city, and have slightly warmer offices they wear looser, cooler clothing. However, if needing to go outside, then they wear similar clothes to the warrior caste except for the cowl.

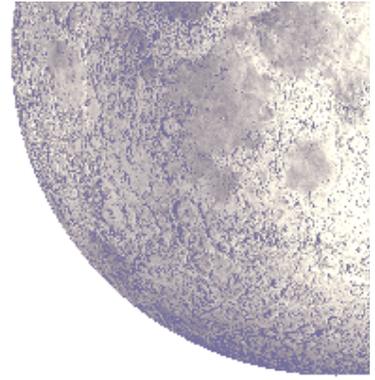
Thinker Caste – Kilts and sandals. Thinkers never leave the city and have comfortable chambers in the city centre for access to the warmest air, which promotes thought. They never wear anything on their upper torso which would interfere with spreading their larger hoods.

Most She-eth clothing is undecorated silk, produced by genetically modified beetles. However a trend has started in the city of *Syn-dlishaa* where the ophidians have been recently presented with a gift heavily embroidered linen. The bright threads have inspired the higher castes to seek slaves to produce more of this fabric, embroidered in the correct coloured patterns for rank, caste and path.

Ophidians wear little jewellery. Lacking ears, and disliking anything which wraps about their necks, leaves few locations where trinkets can be worn. Seal rings and other such forms of identification are unnecessary since all She-eth are spawned with their sept ideogram genetically implanted into the scale cells of the snout. The only common forms of personal decoration are bracelets, and these are used as identifiers for awards or honours, somewhat akin to medals.

Clothing inside the centrally heated cities is somewhat of a burden to the She-eth's slaves. Humans are forced to wear full heavy robes of wool or some other foreign fabric to conceal as much of





their alien bodies as possible. It is considered bad taste to flaunt a tail-less body, and human legs are oddly proportioned to She-eth sensibilities. In the city centres this has the drawback of making the already warm environment almost unbearable. The clothing requirement even extends to those living above ground, making life hell during the Nhi Tual tropical summers. The restriction is only waved for human warriors who wear similar coverings as their She-eth counterparts so that they are combat capable, or those humans assigned spying missions, since it is unusual for humans to wear such clothing in Nhi-Tual.

Food

The normal diet of the She-eth is live prey, which are bitten by digestive venom before being ingested. The largest creature a She-eth can consume is approximately one third of its size, no bigger than a sheep. Despite rumours to the contrary they do not eat humans, simply because they are too large to ingest.

Eating is one of the few pleasures a She-eth can experience outside of its primary drives. They not only savour taste and the victim's body heat, but also the vibrations of movement the meal produces even after consumption; cardio vascular pulses for example. Although primarily carnivorous an ophidian is able to digest simple carbohydrates such as those from fruits, honey etc.

Most She-eth eat only once a week. Under the auspices of the high caste sociologists, all She-eth have been reduced to a subsistence diet, primarily because food resources are very limited within the subterranean cities. However, a provision has been made to reward septs who complete assigned tasks, or perform well above average. To them is granted the right to host a feast and eat their fill.

A typical She-eth banquet involves alternating courses of very small live creatures, interspersed with dishes of sweet fruits or goblets of nectar. However, because She-eth become somnolent following eating they are forced to regurgitate food soon after consumption to avoid falling asleep. Thus a specially designed bowl called a *vomitorius* is passed around the company of feasters after several courses and each ophidian regurgitates his stomach into it. The briefly digested food is taken to the recycling tanks so that it's not wasted. Public regurgitation is not considered bad manners, and there are always humans at hand to clean up the resulting sticky mess.

Eventually the participants begin to fall asleep despite the aid of the *vomitorius* and a final course is brought in of still alert, full sized prey. The creatures are then released and the gathered She-eth engage in an orgy of squirming, writhing bodies each trying to

hunt down one of the animals for their own belly. Traditionally there is one less creature than the number of attendees, just to make things more competitive. The ophidian who fails to gain the last creature risks losing rank if it has a high status.

The She-eth prefer certain types of creatures for eating. Reptilians are generally avoided since they lack flavour and are usually not warm blooded. Snakes or eels are a cultural taboo as eating them is something only an unintelligent spawn would do. Large Insects are tough to ingest due to their sharp edged carapaces. Mammals however are well regarded, both for their body heat, and that most have pungent scents and hence taste interesting. All She-eth cities have breeding pits for the smaller breeds of live food, and sometimes these creatures are deliberately released into the hydroponics gardens for ramblers to hunt.

Larger animals however cannot be supported in the artificial underground ecology, and must either be raised in farms maintained by enslaved humans above ground or stolen during raids.

Environment

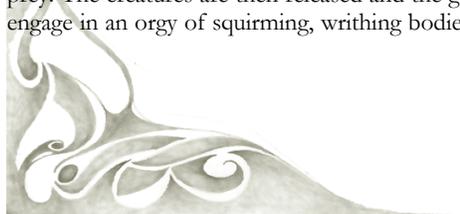
The great underground fortresses of the She-eth are strange organic sprawls of tunnels, chambers, chiselled rock, dressed stone, lights and darkness. They are more than 9,000 years old and have been modified and expanded dozens of times since their original construction.

All the She-eth fortified cities were originally built around the same basic design.

At the very centre are the Chambers of Life; which in fact house geothermal heat taps, a technology now beyond the She-eth to replicate, but fortunately easy to maintain. The chambers are hot enough so that even ophidians feel uncomfortable. From here spread countless metal pipes transferring hot water to the heating elements throughout the rest of the city. The heat tap also powers secondary pumps which refresh the city's air supply.

The next closest chambers to the centre are the female quarter (which contain the mating, gestation, and spawning chambers), the schooling quarter (containing the nursery, learning and testing chambers), the library quarter, and the hydroponics gardens. They are spaced about the chambers of life in a tetrahedral formation, to make best use of the hottest water and maintain a constant 35c.

Outside of this is a combination of larger chambers dedicated to utilities and recreation. These contain the breeding chambers (where live food is raised), medical facilities, sewage and protein recycling chambers, gladiatorial pits, feasting hall, and the pneumatic pump chambers (for message delivery). The temperature in this section averages about 25° c, which is bearably cool for a She-eth.





Finally in a sphere encapsulating everything else are the chambers of the septs. These once held thousands of ancient cryogenic berths, but these have all been cannibalised over millennia for spare parts and the metal they contained. The chambers have been expanded during this time to hold the large numbers of sept members in relative comfort. The heat from the slowly faltering geothermal taps barely manages to keep the temperature above 15° c which is uncomfortably cold.

The higher castes have their own private rooms which are kept slightly warmer (at the expense of robbing the heat from the main sept chamber) and the warrior castes are forced to wear clothes to preserve their body temperature, inside which they place heated rocks.

She-eth are used to the close environment underground, which aids pheromone communication and preserves body heat. They have no sense of claustrophobia which is fortunate considering the limited amounts of space available. The septs divide up their chambers into work and sleeping areas; the latter consisting of rows of large terracotta pots inside which are placed heating stones, and once warmed a She-eth will coil up inside it and cover itself with a lid. There are no cooking or eating areas since the ophidians eat live prey, and simply consume it at their work position, prior to retiring to their sleeping pot. Since space is at a premium, siblings in a sept will share pots, one working whilst the other rests.

The ceilings of the original city are fairly low, only two meters high, which poses no difficulty for erect She-eth who instinctively lower their heads to avoid banging them. Humans however find the situation extremely uncomfortable and tend to become hunched over in time. The limited height of the ceilings warps perspective, making everything look flat and wide, but does have the benefit of reducing the amount of volume needed to be heated.

The chambers are linked together by tunnels which are a nightmare for humans to traverse, a She-eth tunnel is barely a meter high. Ophidians easily negotiate them by dropping to all fours, a natural method of movement. A human must either crawl on their hands and knees - constantly scraping their back on the roof - or lower themselves onto small wheeled trolleys which can be propelled forwards by small foot movements.

All the heating, water and pneumatic pipes are also passed along connecting tunnels, but these are separated from the main thoroughfares and only accessible to maintenance teams to protect them from attack or accidental damage.

The pneumatic pipes are a cunning modification of the original ventilation system. Once the She-eth lost the ability to repair their

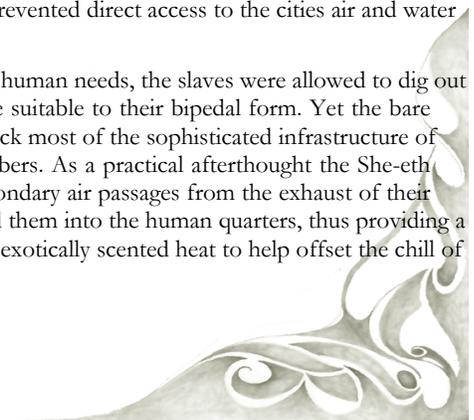
technological machines, they lacked a convenient method of communicating across their cities. Using hand carried messages was both inefficient and slow. Thus the philosopher scientists worked out a way of using the ventilation airflow to carry pheromone signals, by forcing pumped air down a dedicated line after spitting the message inside. The system has sprawled out of control since its first inception, but most air lines run from every main room back to the central pneumatic pump chamber; where operators receive the initial destination pheromone via breathing masks and then connect the sender and recipient's two lines together. A simple pheromone cipher system has been developed akin to Morse code to ease communication. It is still crude, but faster than messengers. It is also able to transmit warnings across the entire city simultaneously, by use of specially flavoured gases.

The architecture of She-eth cities is very smooth and organic in feel. Walls and surfaces meet at rounded curves so that there are no edges or corners. The corridors have been smoothed from years of body contact, and chamber walls lack any decoration, save for the natural polished strata of the rock. Small alcoves or niches are carved into walls for storage. However, these are usually hidden behind layers of tapestries and carpets which help insulate the room from the constant heat loss. Most chambers are either circular or oval in shape.

Needless to say, any force attempting to storm a She-eth city would find themselves in difficulties in the enclosing environment. There is little space to swing weapons, and every tunnel would be a choke point, easily held by a couple of She-eth. Each chamber has thick, airtight metal doors which can be locked from the inside. In addition they have control valves enabling the occupants to isolate themselves from air, water and communications.

As part of the re-emergence of the She-eth, large numbers of human slaves have been captured and brainwashed. Since the cities were already operating at maximum capacity, the She-eth were forced to expand their underground systems once again. It was decided that allowing humans to live in the same complex was too much of a security risk, and so new excavations were started above, but adjacent to the original fortifications. By doing so, the She-eth avoided potential disaster if the engineering works collapsed, and also prevented direct access to the cities air and water supplies.

In observation of human needs, the slaves were allowed to dig out passageways more suitable to their bipedal form. Yet the bare stone chambers lack most of the sophisticated infrastructure of the She-eth chambers. As a practical afterthought the She-eth have installed secondary air passages from the exhaust of their own cities and fed them into the human quarters, thus providing a modest degree of exotically scented heat to help offset the chill of



subterranean living. Although both the *Sinthrishaa* and *Syndlishaa* extensions can house several thousand humans, the majority prefer to live above ground, maintaining a façade of normality to any outsiders who pass by their homes. In reality these villages are used to produce food for the She-eth, and provide a first line of defence against any surface launched assault on their masters.

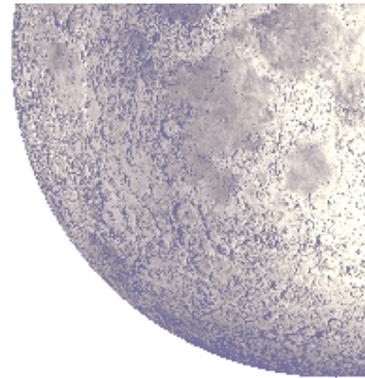
Recreation

Although She-eth have little time for recreation, it is recognised that all caste members need rest from continual work. The ophidians have combined this quest for optimum efficiency with the educational aspects of entertainment, and have several favoured pastimes.

Gladiatorial games are a favourite amongst the warrior caste. Spectators intently watch each combat noting the performance of the fighters. Between two She-eth contests are merely to the first wound. But when the fights involve free willed captives they are always to the death. If the prisoner wins they are granted a week's rest before facing their next opponent, who incidentally spends the time analysing methods of overcoming the captive's technique. Other combats are staged between ophidians and dangerous animals, and wrestling matches are also very popular. The games are rotated through the different military septs to distribute combat experience evenly.

Strategy games are more admired amongst the leader caste, which use them to exercise their minds in forethought and anticipation. They range from simple tests of logic, to full scale abstract war games. Each member of the leader caste usually has a dedicated table for pursuing such pastimes. At regular intervals throughout the year, a city wide competition is held for each specific game. All the septs partake, and the winners are granted breeding rights as prizes. The overall winner at the end of the year usually earns a promotion to the next rank.

A third popular activity in She-eth society is dancing. The art of dance is fundamental to refining body control, which in turn has direct benefits to those who practise martial skills. Leaders and thinkers also find it useful for relaxing the mind before contemplation of a difficult problem. She-eth dances are both graceful and beautiful, since the core movements involve fluid undulations. A skilled dancer can literally dance itself into a knot and back again, whilst keeping its head utterly immobile. So entrancing are the body movements that human onlookers can become mesmerised.



Art

The pursuit of artistic skills is another way that She-eth pass their free time. Although practiced amongst the higher castes, the best artists are the sept-less ophidians. With no tasks to perform, some decide to create artwork for the appreciation of their fellows. There are three main branches of She-eth art; tactile sculptures, heat pictures and scent scrolls.

She-eth sculptors carve small statuettes, gaming pieces or stone boxes which can be placed inside chambers at artistic points. Statues mainly take the form of ophidians in dancing postures. Stone boxes are somewhat different. As well as their practical side, the surface of these boxes are carved with delicate patterns which She-eth find soothing to rub and lack any sharp edges or corners.

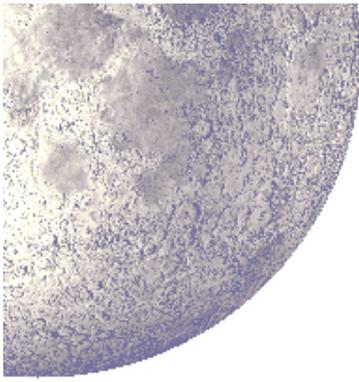
Heat pictures are exquisitely patterned tapestries or rugs, which have fine metal wires woven into the weave. The ends of these wires are attached to the nearest hot water radiator, which causes them to conduct the heat. In the infrared vision of an ophidian this causes the bright patterns to fluoresce, enhancing the overall effect. Heat carpets are even more popular since they are more comfortable to stand on.

Scent scrolls are the other form of art to be seen on chamber walls. They appear to be simple hangings, sometimes with a single ideogram painted upon their surface. Impregnating the parchment are subtle combinations of pheromones, complementing one another. The result is a poetic stimulus, with a deep underlying meaning. After a few years the slow release of pheromone fades away, and the scroll is replaced.

Law

There are no formal laws in She-eth society. Every ophidian obediently obeys its superior within the sept, and the heads of each sept follow the decisions made by their council (even if they do not agree and work to later overturn the decision). If any She-eth refuses to follow an order, then it is declared aberrant and it, along with its entire sept, are destroyed. She-eth do not engage in theft, perjury or murder, unless directly ordered to do so.

Slaves are a constant trial to the She-eth for they find it difficult to blindly follow orders. Humans have a tendency to question their superior's decisions, or interpret commands instead of following them to the letter. However, outright destruction of entire villages for containing a single aberrant appears to bypass the slave conditioning and cause them to rebel. The She-eth have been forced to reduce punishments to the individuals involved, who usually appear in the next gladiatorial games.



As a matter of respect, no human is allowed to stand higher than a She-eth, or communicate before being asked a question. It is also forbidden to talk in the presence of a She-eth without its permission, although some humans have developed ventriloquism to bypass this inconvenience.

Combat

She-eth warriors are dangerous adversaries; blindingly fast they simply overwhelm the defences of most races they come into contact with. Yet for all their speed, they lack the endurance of warm blooded creatures and can be beaten by well armoured foes weathering the brunt of their attacks until the ophidian's slow from exhaustion.

A typical She-eth warrior in its natural state has a back moderately well armoured due to its scales, possesses claws on its limbs and a set of fearsome poisoned fangs. However it lacks any protection on its throat, under-limbs and belly, and its limbs lack any significant strength.

Since She-eth lack opposable thumbs they don't possess the grip to swing swords or gasp spears. To overcome this problem they have developed 'punch' weapons which utilise sockets instead of hilts. The ophidian places its entire hand inside the socket which supports the weapon when used. The deadly blades, called *Ssathiz*, are usually long slender poniards up to 60cm long, with a fine glass tube running up the centre of the blade, connected to a reservoir at the front of the socket. When a blow is struck, the She-eth's fist squeezes the containment bulb forcing a fluid out of the tip and directly into the wound. The blades can be filled with anaesthetics, venoms or even acid. A She-eth warrior can use a *Ssathiz* in either hand, or even grip one with its prehensile tail.



A Warding Amulet against She-eth attacks, as worn by the Monks of Lo Tual

Prepared for war a She-eth will wear full armour over its limbs and belly, preferring flexible materials (such as light chainmail)

which allow it to still dodge efficiently, and wield up to three *Ssathiz* simultaneously. She-eth cannot wear rigid armour such as plate, for obvious reasons.

The She-eth armed fighting style utilises its speed and ambidexterity. Whilst under the influence of its adrenal glands, a She-eth can make attacks from any or all its limbs. Although the accuracy of each attack is lowered by a flurry of blows, the sheer number of them quickly saturates an opponent's defence. A favoured tactic used by ophidian warriors is to use their tail to make a scorpion-like thrust around their side, which usually surprises the foe the first time it's used. Another trick uses the tail to sweep the legs from under an opponent whilst spinning round, which also has the benefit of receiving counter blows to its thicker back scales.

Because the limbs of a She-eth are weak in comparison to its body, some warriors utilise their formidable fangs to strike, gaining the strength benefit of their torso musculature. A successful bite grants the option of injecting venom into its opponent. This is usually done in cases where a foe is to be captured instead of killed, since poisons have slow onset times in comparison to the speed of combat. However, striking with the fangs is a risky attack since they risk breaking if the strike is parried.

Warriors of the military life-path have the ability to spit venom at their foes, though the attack has a very short range.

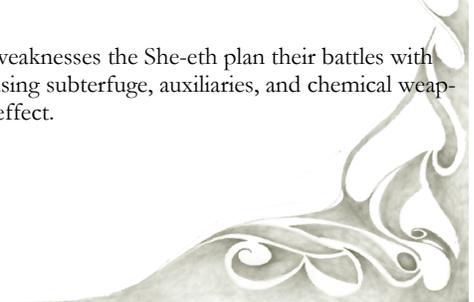
She-eth unarmed combat focuses on grappling to immobilise their foes and crush them. Grappling is preferred to direct strikes, since claws are usually no match for the reach and damage capability of a wielded weapon. But if a She-eth steps inside the range of his opponent, they gain the advantage. Few races can outwrestle a She-eth, and even the greatest sword masters can be subdued via crushing suffocation.

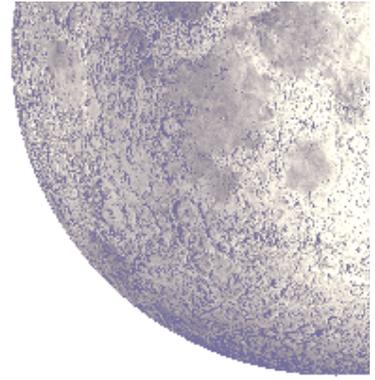
Perhaps from spending thousands of years underground, the She-eth do not use missile weapons. They are naturally short-sighted, and lack binocular vision. Thus accuracy beyond close range is poor.

War

In war, She-eth tactics play to their strength as light skirmishers. A normal unit of ophidians cannot face a coordinated unit of heavy infantry in formation, since it is difficult to bypass a hedgehog of spears to reach close combat, and interlocked shields are hard to strike past.

To counter their weaknesses the She-eth plan their battles with meticulous care, using subterfuge, auxiliaries, and chemical weapons to shattering effect.





Before engaging in any raid, the She-eth send spies to scout out the military movements of their target and map out the terrain. Once all the defences are discovered, a member of the leader caste formulates a multilayered battle plan, which is adaptable to several possible situations. This is given to the highest ranking warrior soldiers and left to be executed beyond the leader's direct control, though the leader may remain close by to observe results.

The next stage is preparation. In well guarded areas, subverted human slaves are introduced into the target location to act as observers and saboteurs. Warrior engineers are summoned for fortified objectives, excavating tunnels to specific locations under the area they wish to attack. A patient race, the She-eth can spend years setting up the groundwork prior to the final assault.

Battles generally start with the She-eth inflicting complete surprise on their opponents. She-eth septs split into small discrete units of fast moving skirmishers, utilising hit and run tactics before the enemy can organise itself. They prefer to run into combat on all fours, both for the extra speed and the tougher protection their back scales give. Unit size is always based on multiples of three.

Battlefield strategy similarly relies on wreaking confusion and distraction to split up organised formations. Sending three or more waves of false attacks from differing directions can sometimes crack even the most disciplined enemy unit.

If this disruption fails, the She-eth send in their auxiliaries, comprising of handlers with specially bred carnivorous reptiles. No bigger than a large dog, the vicious creatures are trained to attack targets of specific appearance or smell. When the lizards are released, they rush forwards fearlessly to leap upon the enemy, savaging anything they can bite on. Although the amount of damage each one causes is not particularly deadly, the swarming charge causes a test of morale as the creatures worm their way between legs or climb over shields. Those foes unfortunate enough to fall prone are usually savaged to death.

Once an enemy unit starts to break up, the She-eth are free to practice their personal style of fighting, which requires space to manoeuvre and freedom from being flanked. Alone in single combat against a She-eth, the average human will lose.

The key to success in any She-eth battle plan is that the fighting must be concluded quickly. If the warriors are kept fighting too long, they drop from exhaustion and become easy prey.

Thus far in the campaign upon L^o-Tual the She-eth have had experienced unmitigated victory. However, with the arrival of experienced mercenaries, new tactics are being used which disrupt the She-eth attacks. Firing volleys of arrows at She-eth units to provoke premature gland secretions, scattering caltrops before forma-

tions, using cavalry to counter flank attacks, false routs to lead She-eth into traps and even building barracks atop stilts to negate surprise attacks from below ground.

Yet with each setback the ophidians are learning from their mistakes, and adapting their tactics. Now a new class of battlefield weapon - chemical warfare - is being deployed.

Bio Science

The She-eth were once masters of techno-sorcery. But after their destruction by the anger of the ancients, the handful of survivors could not preserve the science they'd once attained. One by one their great machines ground to a halt, power sources failed and civilisation collapsed. Both the subterranean fortresses of *Sinlbrishaa* and *Syndlishaa* were once filled with cryogenic capsules in which superfluous refugees, unable to be supported by the struggling hydroponics gardens, had been stored for the future. When they failed en masse, thousands died.

The dark years which followed truly were black, once the artificial lights flickered off for the last time.

With their fall the She-eth reverted to an almost pre-industrial stage. Millennia passed whilst the survivors slowly rebuilt their society, and began to explore the realm of philosophy again. Of all the sciences, the She-eth were natural biochemists. With the natural sensitivity of their tongues, they could progress without need for complex alchemical equipment.

Today, the She-eth have overcome many of their technical problems by designing biological solutions. Dim lighting is provided by small glass globes filled with phosphorescent fungi which convert heat into light. Waste recycling is performed by throwing organics into tanks of caustic algae that produce a nutritious sludge as a by-product. Cleaning is performed by large amoeboid jellies which slowly scour surfaces of dirt and condensation. Dense squeezable jellies are used as optical enhancers.

The list is extensive, but the greatest work the scientists have performed is on the She-eth themselves. Generations of geneticists have made the ophidians into adaptable beings, armed with a wide range of exotic poisons.

Even the fastest neurotoxin still takes a significant period to affect human sized foes. So to bypass the disadvantage of onset time She-eth poisons were designed with differing attack vectors. Two such venoms bred into the soldier caste are those of blinding and pain. Pain venom starts its work within seconds of being bitten, overloading the local nerve synapses and inflicting agony, though no actual damage. Although the pain is muted slightly by adrena-





lin, it is enough to distract an enemy in combat, reducing their skill. Blinding venom is not designed to be injected. Instead it is spat towards the opponent in hope of hitting the eyes. The poison causes instant temporary blindness as the eyes being to water profusely. If untreated, it can cause permanent loss of sight.

Other She-eth castes possess different venoms. All ophidians have myotoxins which break down the muscular structure of a creature about to be eaten. Spies have a haemotoxin which prevents bite wounds from clotting, which they use this to injure foes and then track them back to their lair. They also use a paralytic poison to render captives immobile so that they can be transported back to She-eth leaders for interrogation. Higher caste sociologists have toxins which are used in the brain washing process of making new slaves. Engineer venoms are more akin to tools, but still have potential combat applications, and philosophers produce the toxins which trigger gross biological changes. In fact the number of different venoms ever designed, far exceed the glands available to manufacture them. It is part of the philosopher scientist's remit to decide what types of poison will be bred into future sept.

Bio weaponry is at the forefront of technical development. The She-eth have designed many weapons in preparation of ever crossing paths with the multitude of Gwenthia's races. They have even developed glue weapons to counter Iqari, in the hope that the sticky mess will prevent the airborne nightmares from flying. Despite the dubious effectiveness of such a weapon in the hands of myopic creatures and the fact that no She-eth has ever seen an Iqari for millennia, it illustrates the ophidian's propensity for forward planning.

Smoke bombs are now used in the continuing conquest of Lô-Tual, to cover She-eth units from missile fire. Spheres of fragile glass full of nauseating chemicals have been created to help disrupt military formations, rendering vomiting troops incapable of defending themselves. And a psychedelic dust weapon is already at the testing stage.

Technology

The archaic cities of the She-eth still contain many strange technological devices surviving from the time of the Ancients. The most obvious examples are the geothermal taps which lead into Gwenthia's crust. They still produce copious amounts of hot water, although the oldest records reveal that the temperature has dropped over the millennia. Power generators which once used the water have long ago broken down, but the She-eth have always maintained a basic knowledge of plumbing, diverting the hot water to heat their frigid chambers.

Many more devices remain, some of which the She-eth are now beginning to tinker with. Recent discoveries on the surface world have brought the ophidians into contact with the fallen shards of the black moon. Analysed with antique gauges, the philosopher scientists have realised that the glassy substance is a source of energy, and are currently scavenging any piece of black rock they can find. Rumours suggest that a large boulder of moon rock lying off the coast of Lô-Tual, is part of the reason why the She-eth are currently trying to conquer the island.

Recent experiments integrating shard fragments with ancient machines have caused several to return to activity. One creates black portals which send those who step through elsewhere. The device has been invaluable in several raids, although the range is rather short. Other devices vibrate, or switch on coloured lights, but have been opaque as to their real purpose. The She-eth hope that the apparatus secrets will all be revealed in due course.

The oldest histories hint that the Zathurians stole the greatest She-eth technologies at the time of their fall; automated food producers, regeneration machines, mind to mind communicators and transmuting weapons. One more factor which drives the ophidians to seek vengeance.

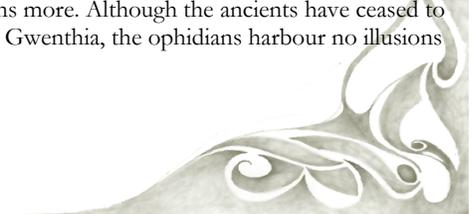
Magic

According to their history, the doom which befell the She-eth when they rebelled against their masters was that the ancients removed their power to cast magic. Their 'souls' were taken. Olden documents kept by other species suggest that the ancients were not responsible after all, and that the She-eth were struck by an advanced viral weapon, engineered by the Zathurians.

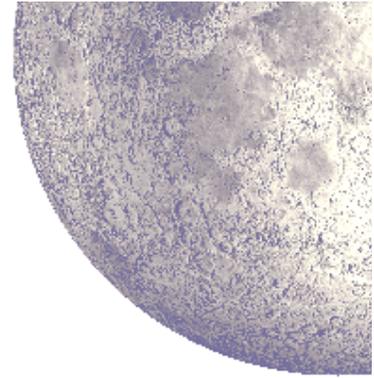
Whatever the true reason, since that time no ophidian has been able to summon magic, even though dozens of sept life spans have been squandered investigating what was done to them. The curse has been a two edged blade however. Even though She-eth are unable to generate supernatural effects, they in turn are immune to many forms of magic.

A She-eth is impervious to psionics, spiritual manipulation, hypnotism or any other kind of effect which directly attacks the mind or soul. They are still vulnerable to gross physical manifestations however, and the presence of a She-eth cannot disrupt or dispel sorcery.

Despite any benefits it has granted their race, the She-eth are determined to reverse the damage done to them. The quest for their souls will continue to be the main focus of the philosopher scientists for generations more. Although the ancients have ceased to meddle directly in Gwenthia, the ophidians harbour no illusions



Game Statistics



Using She-Eth with the BRP Game System

She-eth game statistics depend greatly upon the caste they belong to. Life-path affects the profession the ophidian will follow in its service. Each caste is subdivided into three ranks, with higher ranks being granted to those with more tactical, leadership or intellectual ability – not necessarily because they are more skilled in combat.

Warrior Caste

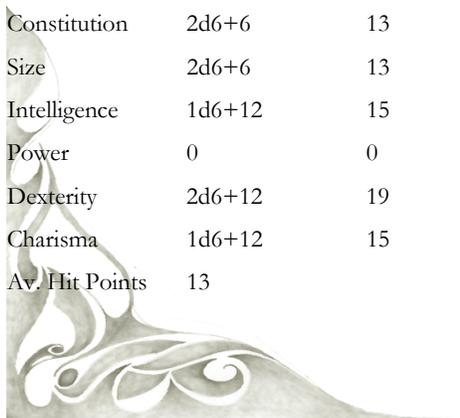
	Roll	Average
Strength	3d6+6	16
Constitution	2d6+6	13
Size	2d6+6	13
Intelligence	2d6+6	13
Power	0	0
Dexterity	2d6+12	19
Charisma	3d6	10
Av. Hit Points	13	

An average She-eth warrior has a damage bonus of +1d4 which only applies to biting damage. Scales give an armour value of 1d8 on the back, but only 1 on the front.

Poison glands; Soldier - blinding venom, pain venom, Spy – paralysis venom, bleeding venom, Engineer – caustic venom & glue venom.

Leader Caste

	Roll	Average
Strength	2d6+6	13
Constitution	2d6+6	13
Size	2d6+6	13
Intelligence	1d6+12	15
Power	0	0
Dexterity	2d6+12	19
Charisma	1d6+12	15
Av. Hit Points	13	



An average She-eth leader has a damage bonus of +1d4 which only applies to biting damage. Scales give an armour value of 1d6 on the back, but only 1 on the front.

Extra poison glands; Officer - fear venom, Administrator – domination venom, and Researcher memory venom.

Thinker Caste

	Roll	Average
Strength	3d6	10
Constitution	2d6+6	13
Size	2d6+6	13
Intelligence	2d6+12	19
Power	0	0
Dexterity	2d6+12	19
Charisma	2d6+6	13
Av. Hit Points	13	

An average She-eth thinker has no damage bonus. Scales give an armour value of 1d4 on the back, but only 1 on the front.

Extra poison glands; Strategist - death venom, Diplomat – truth venom, and Scientist advancement venom.

Life-path Modifications

She-eth have a different biological abilities depending on which life-path they follow.

Members of the military have the capability to eject their venoms, spitting through their fangs. This has a range of 3m and can only be avoided by dodging or parrying with a large object, such as a shield. The effect of spat venom depends on the condition of the target, since most are designed for direct injection.

The sociologists as the diplomatic and spying arm of She-eth society have extra pheromone glands which produce a specially tailored scent. This affects humans like a mild narcotic, causing them to become more relaxed in the She-eth's presence and fogging their perceptions so that they don't recognise the ophidian as a different race. The range of the pheromone cloud is only a couple of meters and cannot be maintained for very long, so She-eth keep themselves well covered when venturing into enemy territory. It has a potency equal to the APP of the She-eth and is resisted using INT.



Philosophers are heavily modified to be resistant to poisons and diseases. Their enlarged lymphatic systems allow them to double their CON when resisting biological attack; a necessity for creatures who tinker so readily with deadly substances.

She-eth Combat

The main danger of the She-eth is their ability to flood their bodies with speed boosting adrenal hormones. Without the effect of these secretions, a She-eth only gains a single combat option per round. But when boosted, a She-eth has three combat options. I.e. they can make two attacks and one defence per round! This speed gives them a major advantage in single combat, especially if combining both *Ssathiz* and *Natural Weapons* in a blinding series of attacks.

The first speed boost lasts for a number of rounds equal to the She-eth's CON. For each successive boost they reduce their CON by three points, which reduces the duration of the effect but not the ophidian's hit points. At the end of each speed boost, the ophidian must wait for 1d10 rounds before it can trigger another. A She-eth who uses up all of its boosts, collapses exhausted and cannot engage in any physical activity for an entire day whilst its body recovers.

She-eth have the possibility to claw with each of their limbs, bite using their fangs, or sweep with their tail. A She-eth may split its *Natural Weapons* skill across any or all of these different attacks, dividing the skill equally across the number of attacks chosen. Each appendage or limb can only make a single attack per round, whether they're boosted or not.

Claws can slash for 1d4 damage. However, since the limbs are weak in comparison to the main body, claw attacks do not gain a damage bonus for large size or strength.

Bite attacks only inflict damage if the fangs are used. The She-eth has the option of whether they wish to inject venom if the bite attack succeeds. However, the bite must bypass armour to be sure that venom actually enters the target. Bite attacks do 1d6 damage, and include a damage bonus if the She-eth has one.

Tail attacks can be used in two ways. Either it is used to wield a *Ssathiz*, or it can sweep the legs from under an opponent. In the latter situation the She-eth matches the total damage it has inflicted that round against the SIZ of the foe in a resistance roll. If the She-eth wins then the target is knocked prone. Tail sweeps do a base of 1d3 damage, but may include any damage bonus the She-eth has.

Ssathiz are specialised She-eth weapons which lack the punch of heavier weapons, but have their own nasty surprise. The base damage of a *Ssathiz* is 1d6+1, plus the effect of whatever fluids the She-eth has filled the weapon's reservoir with.

She-eth light chainmail has a protective value of 1d6 armour points. The very slender nature of a She-eth's physique halves the normal chance of missile fire against it.

She-eth Venoms

As a She-eth advances in caste it develops new poison glands to supplement its existing range. The purpose of the poisons is tied directly to the life-path followed by the ophidian, and divert from the normal expectation of merely inflicting death.

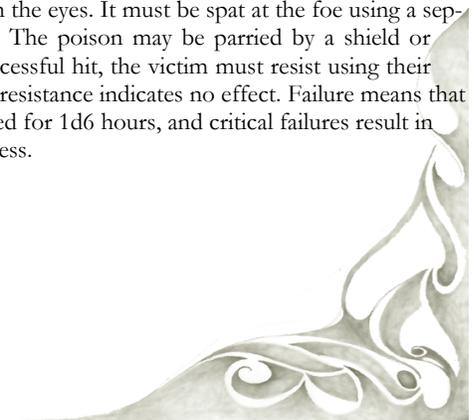
Warrior caste venoms are designed for field use, with primarily a conflict orientation. Leader caste venom is used for the manipulation of external foes and Thinker caste venoms are used to control She-eth society.

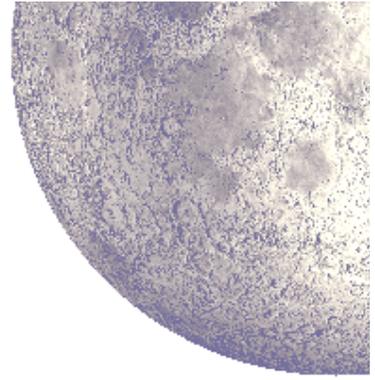
All poisons utilise the following rules;

- 1) The potency of the venom is equal to the CON of the She-eth.
- 2) Poisons are resisted against by a specific characteristic, as per the RQ resistance table.
- 3) Each poison can be used CON/3 (round up) times before the gland is exhausted.
- 4) Poison glands may only be recharged after feeding and sleeping (at least an entire day).
- 5) Poison is only injected on a successful bite attack which penetrates armour, unless otherwise stated.

Digestive Venom (All) – All She-eth possess this venom. Normally used only against smaller animals, it is resisted by the target's CON. Failing to resist inflicts the venom potency in hit-points damage over the next six hours. A successful save does half damage which may be able to kill an already wounded creature.

Blinding venom (Military) – The venom temporarily blinds an opponent if struck in the eyes. It must be spat at the foe using a separate *Spitting* skill. The poison may be parried by a shield or dodged. On a successful hit, the victim must resist using their POW. Successful resistance indicates no effect. Failure means that the target is blinded for 1d6 hours, and critical failures result in permanent blindness.





Pain venom (Military) – Used to incapacitate those designated for slavery. Resisted using CON, success indicates no effect. Failure causes the target to halve any skills due to agonising pain for 5d6 minutes. Onset time is the 1d4 rounds following the bite.

Fear venom (Military) – A strategic weapon designed to induce panic in the victim and their nearby companions, hopefully propagating mass surrender or rout. Resisted using INT, success indicates no effect. Failure causes the target to scream with fear, fleeing the conflict in abject terror. The venom works with skin contact or injection, taking 1d10 rounds for effect with the former, and 1d4 rounds the latter.

Death venom (Military) – Only used for the culling or eradication of those She-eth declared aberrant by the ruling councils. The venom only works against ophidians, bringing instant, painless death. Resisted using CON, success still inflicts damage equal to its potency. Failure causes outright fatality. Onset time is one round. However, if the venom is spat it has an onset time of 1d4 rounds.

Paralysis venom (Sociology) – Used to reduce the combat effectiveness of those to be captured for possible slavery. Resisted using DEX, a success indicates no effect. Failure causes paralysis of the victim for 5d6 minutes. Onset time is 1d4 rounds.

Bleeding venom (Sociology) – A venom which prevents bite wounds from clotting. Resisted using CON, success indicates no effect. Failure causes the wound to continue bleeding at 1 hit-point per hour until a number of hours equal to the poison's potency has passed.

Domination venom (Sociology) – Specifically manipulated to influence humans, or those with mainly human genetics, the venom weakens the victim's willpower. Resisted using POW, success indicates no effect. Failure causes the victim to freely submit to the orders of an ophidian. The onset time is a day when first bitten, and lasts for a month before requiring further doses. Victims continue to resist each successive dose, but their willpower is reduced by one each time, until they become permanently dominated.

Truth venom (Sociology) – Normally only used upon She-eth council members, each attendee is bitten to ensure compliance and root out possible aberration. However, the venom is also applied in interrogation of captured prisoners. Onset time is several minutes and lasts for an hour. Resisted using INT, success only allows misdirection, not lies. Failure forces absolute truth to be uttered in response to questions.

Caustic venom (Philosophy) – Designed primarily for engineering or mining work, this venom is highly acidic. It inflicts its potency in hit-points damage against metallic or mineral objects over a pe-

riod of five minutes, with no saving throw. However it is less effective on organic material, doing half that amount. When used against an armoured target, the armour ablates the damage first, and any excess points are carried through to the wearer, unless they quickly remove it.

Glue venom (Philosophy) – Also designed for engineering, the glue secretion has a STR equal to its potency. It can be used to stick organic material together, but the surfaces must remain immobile for a minute for the adhesive to set. The effect is permanent.

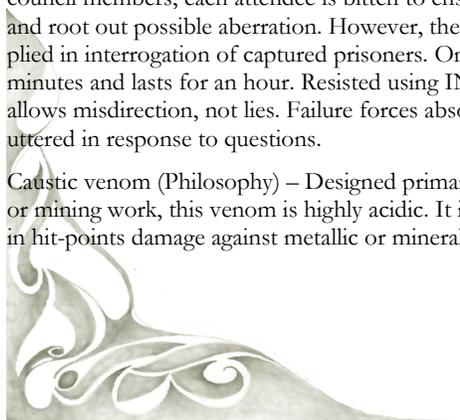
Memory venom (Philosophy) – Usually applied to important prisoners, the venom blanks memory of being interrogated prior to being released. It is thought that philosopher scientists also use the venom to manipulate the high caste members of other life-paths to support the scientist's current authority. Resisted by INT, success allows the hidden memory to resurface several days after the event in a series of dreams and flashbacks. Failure causes the memory to be lost permanently.

Advancement venom (Philosophy) – A slight misnomer, advancement venom covers a number of differing purposes. It can induce an immediate caste change in She-eth, either up or down, without the normally necessary bio-social environment triggers. It can also be used to inject short genetic sequences into a target, but requires intense mental concentration to formulate each specific modification prior to biting. The onset time is a day in which the She-eth collapses into a coma whilst its biological structure is rewritten. This process is primarily used by the scientists to experiment with new ideas before breeding them into the gene pool, but tends to create aberrant monstrosities. Resisted using CON, success means only that the bitten She-eth hasn't gone insane during its mutation. Some rumours suggest that scientists are experimenting with this poison on species other than She-eth, with horrifying results...

She-eth Bio-Weapons

The She-eth have developed a wide range of biological and chemical weaponry. However, the extraction and manufacture of the ingredients is laborious, meaning that they must be used sparingly. As such, most of the weapons listed below are only deployed in pre-planned raids, and never in large numbers.

Smoke Bombs – Lit prior to use, a smoke bomb must be either placed or thrown into the designated target area. It produces a thick cloud of greenish-grey smoke which obscures normal vision. She-eth heat detection is unaffected, which makes it a perfect tool





for clearing out enclosed spaces. However, the weapon is primarily used to provide cover from missile attack.

Nausea Spheres – Thrown towards targets, the fragile spheres shatter upon landing. The gas they release is coloured vivid pink to help designate the affected area, since She-eth are susceptible to the odours too. The compound has a potency of 3d6 which is resisted against by CON. Failure causes helpless vomiting.

Glue Sprays – Initially designed as a secret defence against the Iqari, the weapons have lain idle as none have been seen over eastern Nhi-Tual. However, the hand pumped sprays are an effective deterrent against large formations of warriors since the splattering glue tends to stick armour and weapons together into a large immobile mess. The potency of the glue is 3d6, which must be overcome by the target's strength. Success allows the gummed target to continue moving. A glue spray contains only enough glue for a single attack before becoming a gummed up mess, and only has a range of three meters. The glue takes up to 1d3 rounds to set, giving the recipients a chance to discard equipment.

Typical She-eth Skills

An adolescent She-eth is educated with the following skills; Chameleon, Dodge, Natural Weapons, Scent, Search, Strategy, Swim and Teamwork.

Professional skills are dependant upon the life-path of the adult She-eth. Adult She-eth may train in both their professional and adolescent skills.

Military; Athletics, Command, Dance, Etiquette, Spit Venom, Ssathiz, Survival and Wrestling.

Sociology; Administration, Etiquette, Insight, Language, Lip Reading, Politics, Sneak and Survival.

Philosophy; Art, Craft, Debate, Etiquette, Knowledge, Language, Physician and Sneak.

Chameleon is an inherent skill which allows a motionless She-eth to vanish against a background. A She-eth needs to actively concentrate on its camouflage to maintain it, but remains effectively invisible to normal sight beyond a few meters.

Survival has an extra function for those She-eth above ground, enabling them to resist involuntary hormonal secretions.



