

GURPS[®] *Traveller*[®]

ALIEN RACES

Aslan, K'kree, and Other Races Rimward of the Imperium

2



STEVE JACKSON GAMES

The Aslan want your planet . . .

The warrior **Aslan** revere honor and glory; their traders and mercenaries are found throughout the Spinward Marches and the Solomani Sphere. Their wanderlust and combative nature make them well-suited to adventuring, while their habit of blatantly grabbing land when no one is looking makes them good recurring foes in a campaign.

The K'kree want to kill you . . .

The militant vegetarian **K'kree** are driven by their faith to rid the universe of all meat-eaters. Players may join this effort, fight against it, or simply try to make a living amidst the crusade. The K'kree are constantly clashing with the Vargr, and keep an uneasy peace along their borders with the Hivers and the various human client states in the region.

Good thing they don't get along.

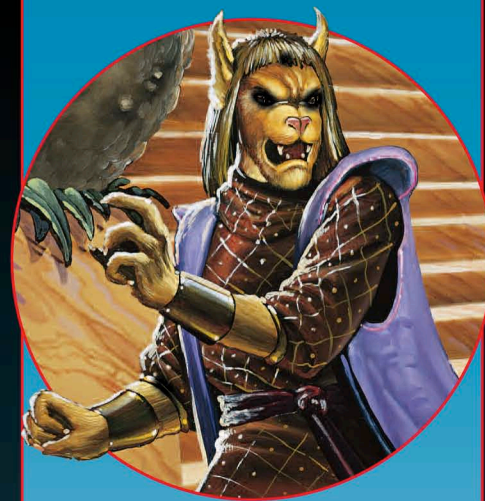
The biology, homeworlds, culture, and society of the fierce Aslan and the centauroid K'kree are examined in detail. **Alien Races 2** covers their historical involvement with the Imperium, from first contact to the present, and supplies racial templates, rules for playing alien characters, and examples of unique technologies and ship designs.

Two new minor races are also presented here:

- The **Inyx**, a race of aquatic parasites who absorb bio-electrical energy from their whale-sized hosts;
- The **Devi Intelligence**, comprising two forms: the *Intellects*, sentient fungi who resemble colonies of giant toadstools, and their predatory spores, the *Shiverbats*.



STEVE JACKSON GAMES
www.sjgames.com



The **GURPS Basic Set**, **GURPS Traveller**, and **GURPS Space** are required for full use of this book in a **GURPS** campaign. **Ultra-Tech** and **Ultra-Tech 2** are not required, but will be very useful. The background presented here will be of great value to any **Traveller** campaign, and will also serve as a source of inspiration for other SF games.

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By **ANDY SLACK, DAVID THOMAS,**
AND **DAVID L. PULVER**

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science fiction universe by* **MARC MILLER**

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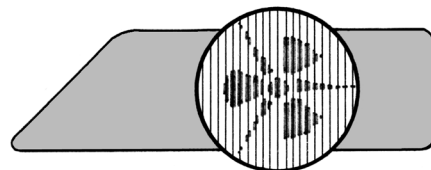
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About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for *GURPS*. It also covers all the hobby's top games – *AD&D*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun* and many more – and other SJ Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. And *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online, to see (and comment on) new books before they're released.

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our Web site (below).

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Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

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Much of the online discussion of *GURPS* happens on GURPSnet. To join, send mail to majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the body, or point your World Wide Web browser to: www.io.com/GURPSnet/www.

The *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 2* web page is located at www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/alienraces2.

Page References

Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. CI refers to *Compendium I*, GT to *GURPS Traveller*, UT to *Ultra-Tech, Second Edition Revised*, and VE to *Vehicles*. T:AI refers to *GURPS Traveller: Alien Races 1* and T:BC to *Behind the Claw*. See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a full list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles. Or visit www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html for an up-to-date list.

INTRODUCTION

Four alien races of the *GURPS Traveller* milieu are described in this book. The Aslan warrior race has a mindset focused on honor and glory; their traders and mercenaries are found throughout the Spinward Marches and the Solomani Sphere. Their wanderlust and combative nature make them well-suited to adventuring. Their habit of grabbing land (or whole planets) when no one is looking also makes them good recurring adversaries in a campaign.

The militant vegetarian K'kree are driven by their faith to rule the Galaxy and eliminate all meat-eaters. Players may join this crusade, fight against it, or simply try to make a living while it goes on around them. The K'kree are constantly embroiled in skirmishes with the Vargr, and keep an uneasy peace along their borders with the Hivers and humanity.

There are also two new minor races, one each from the Two Thousand Worlds and the Aslan Hierate. All four races are intended for use both as PCs and NPCs; campaigns set in Aslan or K'kree space are also possible, featuring Humans in alien space or aliens at home.

This is the second book in a four-part series; the first covers Zhodani and Vargr, the third will cover Hivers and Droyne, and the fourth will deal with many minor races both new and familiar.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Andy Slack is a weregamer (he turns into one at night) who has been playing and writing about *Traveller* since 1977, and playing *GURPS* since its beginnings. By day, he is a project manager in the software industry – the (office) politics involved in this role make it suitable work for a male Aslan. He has a son, Nicolas, and a small landhold in Hampshire, UK, administered by the requisite three females – wife Costanza, and daughters Anna and Giulia. He is a member of BITS (British Isles Traveller Support – check out their website at www.bits.org.uk), and a technophile who wrote his share of this book on a palmtop computer while traveling between company offices.

David Thomas lives and works in London. He has been playing *Traveller* and *GURPS* for longer than he can remember. Like Andy, he is a member of BITS. Unlike Andy, he has the requisite two cats.

David Pulver is a game designer and author based in Kingston, Ontario. David's published work includes more than two dozen RPG sourcebooks, including *GURPS Alien Races 1* and *GURPS Vehicles*.

ABOUT THE LINE EDITOR

Loren Wiseman was one of the founding partners of GDW, Inc., original publisher of *Traveller*, and spent over 20 years there as a game designer, developer, typesetter, and editor. After GDW closed, Loren freelanced for a time, and then came to SJ Games, where he is the *Traveller* line editor and expert-in-residence.

THE TRAVELLER NEWS SERVICE

For many years a feature of the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*, *TNS* chronicled the ongoing life and times of the Imperium. Loren Wiseman is once again writing *TNS* as the alternate history of the Third Imperium develops. It is updated regularly; read it online at www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/news.html. "Back issues" of *TNS* are also online.

The SJ Games *Traveller* page has links to the *Traveller* Web Ring, and thus links to most of the major *Traveller*-oriented web sites. For information on subscribing to the *Traveller* Mailing List, contact traveller-owner@mpgn.com.

The Aslan

The Aslan (who call themselves *Fteirle*) are the youngest of the six major races, having only developed jump drive a little over 3,000 years ago. The earliest Terran explorers saw in them a resemblance to the Terran lion, and they have been described as lion-like ever since. Ferocious carnivores, they have been driven by their instincts to develop a warrior society based on territory, loyalty, and honor.

PHYSIOLOGY

Aslan are warm-blooded, four-limbed, bipedal sentients; they are grossly similar to Terran felines in appearance, although internal details vary considerably.

EVOLUTION

The Aslan are descended from solitary, arboreal predators native to the forests of Tafohti, the largest continent on their homeworld of Kuzu. This means that, unlike the Terran lions to which they are often compared, the Aslan are practiced climbers, very much at home in Kuzu's equivalent of trees.

Approximately 1.8 million years ago, severe climatic changes turned much of the forest into grassland, eliminating the small fauna on which the proto-Aslan fed. Pushed onto the grasslands in search of new prey, they found that the larger plains creatures were too much for a single Aslan. They were forced to begin hunting in prides of several families, and developed intelligence to support the planning and communication this required. The strongest male present took the lead, with his family receiving the choicest kills, sleeping places, and waterholes.

DIET

The main component of the Aslan diet is meat. They use plants only as spices and seasonings (in addition to the drug dust-spice; see p. 38); they practice agriculture almost exclusively to support their animals. They prefer fresh meat, but have tough digestive systems and can feed on carcasses in an advanced state of decomposition.

Typical of carnivores, *Fteirle* have a short, simple intestinal tract; the small intestine, if fully extended, would be less than 20 feet long.

The higher proportion of meat in their diet means Aslan need noticeably more water than Humans (although not enough to be significant in terms of life-support requirements).

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Aslan average 6 feet (1.8 meters) in height and weigh about 200 lbs. (90 kg). Aslan have good night vision and a heightened sense of smell. Aslan posture is upright and digitigrade – they walk on the pads of their toes. They have strong limbs, flexible spines allowing them to climb and pounce, and short muzzles.

They have a single, highly specialized dewclaw under each thumb, which folds like a jackknife from a joint at the tip of the thumb into a horny covering in the base of the thumb and palm. Three fingers oppose the medially placed thumb, all with more ordinary retractable claws. The ability to withdraw the claws allows the Aslan to move silently at need. The claws – especially the dewclaw – make the Aslan clumsy when using Human tools, but the powerful shoulder configuration (unusual in such an advanced species) gives them a strength of arm superior to Humans or Vargr.

Diurnal Cycle

Kuzu's day is 36 standard hours long. Aslan spend about one-third of their time asleep – 10 to 12 hours of sleep followed by 24 to 26 hours awake – longer but at less frequent intervals than a Human.

Like most large pouncers, Aslan are often active at night, especially if the night is dark and stormy, when they find it hard to sleep. Variations from their normal diurnal cycle affect Aslan less than Humans, although lack of sleep dramatically reduces their efficiency.

It is thought that the proto-Aslan hunted mainly by night, and that their habits changed with the adoption of agriculture and other technologies.

Aslan tend to eat their largest meal shortly before retiring for the night, so that their digestive torpor has less impact on their other activities.



The K'kree

K'kree Timekeeping

Unit (translation)	Contains	Imperial Time
Pim!bigr (year)	368 Kritur	440 days
Kritur (day)	4 Krix'leeka	28.6 hours
Krix'leeka (watch)	10 R'Keer	7 hours
R'Keer (1/10 watch)	10 Nixir	43 minutes
Nixir (1/100 watch)	10 Trakeek	4.3 minutes
Trakeek (moment)	10 Hkur'ghe	25.8 seconds
Hkur'ghe (instant)	–	2.58 seconds



The Smart Vegetarians

Humanity's scientists had always assumed that intelligence was a byproduct of predatory activity . . . that it helped in sneaking up on or outwitting one's food. Early Human xenologists always stated that a herbivorous species would never need to be smarter than its prey – hence, would not evolve intelligence. These early academics' successors have not yet explained K'kree intelligence in their theories; they are reluctant to admit that their approach is flawed.

The simple fact is that the K'kree developed intelligence in response to challenges to their survival, like all major races. Survival required active, reasoned cooperation to achieve long-term goals. Superior cognitive ability arose in response to the needs of information processing and communication in a large group with complex demands. K'kree society needed language, memory, and the preservation of ideas. They developed them all.

Charges Like Thunder, Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds, rules a huge empire from his four-mile-wide domed palace on his home planet, Kirur. He sees his subjects as an enormous extended family and himself as its loving, considerate father. He dotes on his family and worries for them; they face terrible dangers and enormous challenges. He knows that they are fated to rule the entire universe, but fears the cost they must pay. Charges Like Thunder knows that the price is worthwhile and that his people will meet it. They are, after all, the K'kree.

PHYSIOLOGY

The K'kree, like all living things, are a product of their environment. All of the larger animals on Kirur are hexapodal (with bilateral symmetry), and evolved from a common ancestral aquatic form.

EVOLUTION

The K'kree evolved on a dry planet with a long year and virtually no seasons. Their ancestors were an extremely social species of large, grazing animals which lived on the verge of extinction – almost succumbing to starvation and similarly hungry predators. This situation changed with a huge increase in hard radiation, courtesy of a nearby supernova (now the neutron star Thirty [0606], so called because it broadcasts 30 pulses a *trakeek*). The flood of particles and, later, actual debris may have saved the species by increasing their mutation rate.

The K'kree happened upon two major evolutionary departures: intelligence and an upright attitude for their front body section. A need to reach inaccessible leaves, berries, and seed cases partly explains their development of a vertical trunk. Lifting their front legs from the ground allowed the development of manipulative digits.

The upright posture also created the opportunity to increase the field of vision. With the head higher from the ground, the K'kree could see hostile creatures at a greater distance than was previously possible. To search for far-off targets, the eyes moved from the sides to the front of the head, providing stereoscopic vision and an ability to judge ranges. This is rare among herbivores, and is not evident in any other fauna on Kirur.

The K'kree ability to detect enemies sooner than competing species gave them another advantage. Carnivores switched to devouring the easier prey (which are now found only in the fossil record), affording the K'kree a window in which to develop. By the time the carnivores returned their attentions to the K'kree, they had developed beyond a risk from fang and claw.

The developing K'kree intelligence reinforced their existing biology. Language enabled cooperation among greater groups. Information on food sources and predator packs passed quickly between families, and individual leaders gained renown for their wisdom and altruism. Eventually, these smaller units fused into the remote ancestors of the modern K'kree herds.

A short time later, by biological standards, they discovered horticulture, then agriculture and irrigation. This last breakthrough meant the K'kree could use their land, and especially their precious water, intensively enough to allow permanent settlements. These in turn attracted the predators they so feared. But using the powerful tools of language and reason, the K'kree decided to end the natural predator-prey relationship. They copied hunting from their enemies, and took the offensive. At that point, K'kree history began.

The Devi Intelligence

Devi is a warm, wet planet, slightly smaller than Earth, with a relatively slow rotational period and a dense atmosphere. The world's heavy cloud cover and long nights favored the development on land of fungi-equivalents over chlorophyll-using plant species. Over the eons, pseudo-fungi evolved that were similar to animals, including mobile eaters of sedentary fungi and predators who fed on them. Meanwhile, life followed a more conventional path in Devi's oceans. Relatively recently (in evolutionary terms), some sea creatures evolved into amphibians, and crawled onto the land.



The resulting struggle between primitive animals and highly evolved plant life tossed up a mutant fungus – a predator gifted with psionic powers. With telepathic and telekinetic abilities, these creatures had the equal of Human eyes and hands. Evolution favored those members of the species who learned to use them cooperatively, merging their minds to increase the power and intellect at their disposal. Over millions of years, the ancestors of the Devi Intelligence became a single sentient being, a collective intelligence with considerable psionic powers.

The Devi Intelligence (or *Kirrkxughring*, as the K'kree call them) exists in two forms: the *Intellects*, stationary sentient fungi who resemble colonies of giant toadstools, and their mobile carnivorous spores, the *Shiverbats*. Both forms of the Devi Intelligence are plant life, analogous to highly sophisticated fungi.

Offworld, the Devi Intelligence can exist in any environment that Humans can inhabit, though moderate to high humidity and temperature are preferred. The immobile Intellects require a few feet of good soil or compost.

First Contact

Devi (located in the Crucis Margin) was first surveyed by the Imperium circa 500 (Imperial), although no manned landing is recorded. The system fell into the K'kree sphere of influence during a minor territorial realignment, but the planet's climate delayed any serious exploration until 1070, when an ambitious boss decided to mount a comprehensive planetary survey.

The explorers originally took little notice of the Intellects – just one more “strange fungus” among many. First contact was made by the Intelligence, after it received reports of large flying objects (grav vehicles), and it directed Shiverbats to investigate. Its long racial memory assumed the K'kree were sea creatures, some new form of amphibious life arisen from the alien depths. K'kree explorers had food and weapons telekinetically snatched by curious Shiverbats; the K'kree were both appalled and impressed by their curiosity and abilities. Before violence could break out, the Devi Intelligence used telepathy to contact the expedition leaders.

The discovery that both the native Devi Intelligence and Shiverbats were sapient initially aroused consternation; the K'kree feared they had encountered a planet of psionic *g'naak*. Further contact revealed that while the Shiverbats behaved like predators, their “prey” was merely mobile vegetation. In other words, they were vegetarians. After some philosophical debate, a decision was reached that the Devi Intelligence was not *g'naak* after all.

The Intellects had similar difficulty coming to terms with the K'kree. After they comprehended the idea of other planets (the best analog was “distant islands in the sky”), the Intelligence became interested in expanding to encompass them.

The Intellects were given the name *Kirrkxughring* (loosely, “mysterious thinkers of the forest”), and permitted to join the Two Thousand Worlds as one of the K'kree's subject races.

The Inyx

The Inyx are a race of aquatic, parasitic ergovores. Their ancestral hosts were whale-sized sea creatures who could generate electrical currents in the same manner as electric eels. The Inyx attached themselves to their hosts' bodies, feeding off this bio-electricity. To prevent their giant hosts taking offense, the proto-Inyx always trickled back a bit of the electric current they stole, in carefully modulated voltages designed to stimulate the pleasure centers of their hosts' brains, addicting them to the Inyx's presence.

Ecological turmoil resulting from a comet impact on their homeworld led to the rise of predators that found the hosts of the proto-Inyx especially tasty. To protect their hosts, the Inyx had to become more intelligent and cooperative. They developed the rudiments of sentient behavior, took their first steps out on land, developed fire and industry, and created a civilization that eventually reached into space.

The Inyx did not discover jump drive, but their slower-than-light ships reached nearby stars, aided by the species' natural longevity and low life-support requirements. Sometime during the Long Night, they contacted both Aslan and Solomani exploration missions; by carefully playing both sides against one another, they secured a place in the middle, establishing alliances with several Human client states and Aslan clans rimward of the Hierate. Today, the Inyx represent a potent economic force on the Rimward edge of known space. Their cultural adaptability, market savvy, and lack of territorial ambition help them secure corporate footholds on hundreds of Human, Aslan, and other worlds.

PHYSIOLOGY

Visualize a collection of six soap bubbles, joined to form a roughly spherical shape, with one bubble in the center and the others spaced around it. Each bubble is 3 feet across, and the whole about 8 feet wide. Give every surrounding bubble a single opalescent tentacle, 6 feet long, 4 inches wide at the base, and tapering to a finger's breadth at the tip. The entire object gives off a soft phosphorescent glow. Underwater or in zero gravity, it swims like an octopus, moving with a boneless undulating grace. That's an Inyx.

Although they are carbon-based life forms utilizing traditional hydrogen-oxygen-carbon biochemistry, the Inyx push the edge of "life as Humans know it." Rather than being carnivores or herbivores, they are *ergovores*, living storage batteries who use their tentacles to convert electricity directly into the energy needed by their bodies. Even their brains and nervous systems have more in common (by analogy) with a fiber-optic computer than with what Humans expect of "life."

Religion

Religion is uncommon among the Inyx. They are atheists who only worship efficiency, and consider mystical experiences to be, at best, hallucinations or misunderstood psychic powers.

That is not to say the Inyx are indifferent to religion; they recognize its value as a tool and commodity. In fact, Affinity quietly owns interests in several Solomani and Aslan client-state religious organizations. On some worlds, it even runs many evangelical broadcasting stations.

Inyx do, however, enjoy being worshipped as gods by primitive societies. This is a prime "first contact" strategy recommended by Genesis Corporation's exploration arm.



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