

# GURPS® *Traveller*® Planetary Survey 5

# TOBIBAK™ THE SAVAGE SEA



By **LOREN K. WISEMAN**  
and **SCOTT HARING**

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

## Still waters run deep . . .

The world called Tobibak lies slightly off the beaten track in Corridor Sector, a world 99% covered by ocean and overlooked by history for many centuries. When Humans came, it was to exploit, not to settle, but Tobibak was already inhabited – by a primitive intelligence mysteriously similar to another aquatic race from many light years away. TobiCorp exploited the natives as unpaid labor, using them to help mine the sea bottom and harvest the teeming schools of shrimp for sale offworld.

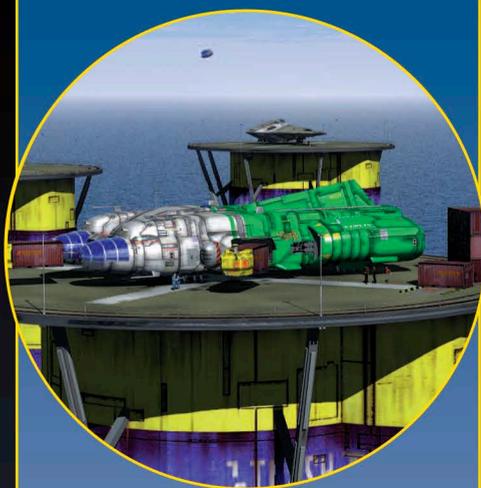
When a TobiCorp scientist discovered the truth, his conscience led him to expose the company's crimes and Tobibak was taken over by the Imperial Ministry of Colonization.

Water worlds have always fascinated science fiction fans, and **Tobibak** is a treatment in depth (so to speak). On Tobibak, Humans cooperate with the native aquatic race to develop a planet with vast animal and mineral wealth, dodging mammoth hurricanes and marauding predators. But the waters of Tobibak conceal enigmas – who brought the aquatic sophonts, and why? Explore the mysteries in the depths of Tobibak . . .

## . . . the Savage Sea.



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The *GURPS Basic Set*, *GURPS Traveller*, and *GURPS Space* are required for full use of this book in a *GURPS* campaign. 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.

### THE SURVEYORS:

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AND SCOTT HARING

Based on the award-winning *Traveller*  
science-fiction universe by

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# GURPS<sup>®</sup> Traveller<sup>®</sup>

## Planetary Survey 5

# TOBIBAK<sup>™</sup>

## THE SAVAGE SEA

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### CONTENTS

Planetary Map .....	IFC
Introduction .....	2
ISS Data – Tobibak / Corridor.....	3
Chapter 1: History .....	5
Chapter 2: Tobibak Today .....	9
Chapter 3: Extrastellar Relations .....	20
Chapter 4: Characters .....	26
Chapter 5: Adventures on Tobibak .....	29
Index .....	31
Worlds Within Jump-6 .....	32
Jump-6 Map .....	IBC



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# STEVE JACKSON GAMES

## 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 include:

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The *GURPS Traveller Planetary Survey 5: Tobibak* web page is at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/ps5/](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/ps5/).

### Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium 1*. Other abbreviations are GT for *GURPS Traveller*, T:AIII for *Alien Races 3*, T:AIV for *Alien Races 4*, T:FI for *First In*, T:GF for *Ground Forces*, T:MC for *Modular Cutter*, T:RF for *Rim of Fire*, T:ST for *Starports*, and UT for *GURPS Ultra-Tech*. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated list at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html).

# Introduction

Water worlds have always fascinated science fiction fans, but *Traveller* coverage of them has always been a little sparse – something this book will remedy. Tobibak has the added interest of an enigma or two, animal and mineral wealth to exploit, mammoth hurricanes to dodge, and a primitive sophont culture to observe – and preserve – there is something here for almost every adventuring group.

The system's location in Corridor Sector makes it accessible to Spinward Marches campaigns (with a little travel), but it is not tied to any one location so heavily that it cannot be transferred elsewhere.

## How to Use This Book

The Planetary Survey books are not rules; they're background, nearly system-free. They are designed as a series of adventure settings . . . not just worlds the PCs can visit, but also “offstage” places with their own history that can be used to drive adventures elsewhere. You can use this book:

☉ As is. Tobibak/Corridor is an official part of the *GURPS Traveller* continuity, located in a logical place and tied in to the history of the Imperium. Take it and run.

☉ Elsewhere. If you like the setting but don't want to take the party to Corridor, you can just uproot the world and put it somewhere else. Drop TobiCorp and replace it with your favorite oppressive megacorporation, swap in your favorite aquatic aliens, and change the history of the world to fit your requirements.

☉ In pieces. You're free to ignore all the details of location and history and treat the book as a generic guide to creating your own water world.

## About the Authors

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

Scott D. Haring remembers *Traveller* back when it was a major accomplishment to survive the character-creation process . . . A respected industry veteran (another way of saying “older than dirt”), he has previously written for *GURPS*, *Dungeons & Dragons*, *AD&D*, *Car Wars*, and many other games. He is also the former editor of *Autoduel Quarterly*, *The Gamer*, and *Pyramid* magazines. He lives in Buda, TX, with his lovely wife, Louise, a goodly number of cats, a dog, and a rabbit.



# History

Tobibak is a backwater in Corridor Sector, and history has largely passed it by. It was for this reason that the odd nature of its inhabitants escaped notice for so long. Tobibak was, after all, only one of 20 water worlds in Corridor Sector, and there was nothing unique about it – on the surface.

## BEFORE FIRST CONTACT

The Ziru Sirka focused its attention in the rimward and trailing regions of their empire, and the sector now known as Corridor received little attention from the Vilani. Tobibak is first mentioned in Vilani documents relating to a cursory survey of the sector (known to the Vilani as *Eneri* Sector) dating from about -2800 Imperial. Tobibak was then called *Giuunatobiibaaka*, or *Giuun* for short, and was used as a refueling stop for Vilani merchant starships headed toward more promising worlds. A few survey teams had landed on the world, and noted the presence of significant marine life but no arable land suitable for settlement. The surviving records are incomplete, so it is unknown whether any Vilani survey team observed the Tobai, but if they did, they did not recognize them as sophonts – the surviving portion of the survey notes the world had no sentient life-forms and little developmental potential.

Vargr bands moved into the Corridor Sector in -2400 to -1700, but Tobibak did not seem worthy of notice by the Vargr either. There is evidence Vargr ships used the world for refueling, but no indication they ever landed there for anything other than emergencies.

At about the same time Vargr were entering Corridor, Zhodani exploratory vessels first made contact with the Vilani in the region. The earliest record of Tobibak in Zhodani records dates from around -1800, and is a single entry in a listing of worlds in *Eneri* (Corridor) and *Provence* Sectors, with no other information. The main Zhodani interest in Tobibak came after the discovery of Tobai sentience (see p. 6).

There is no record that any official survey of Tobibak was undertaken under the First Imperium, but records from that era are spotty, and Tobibak was far from the center of the Rule of Man. Since there was no population on the world, it is doubtful the First Imperium did anything more than install a few navigational beacons in the system, but no trace of these has survived (if they ever existed).

## THE LONG NIGHT

The Long Night brought chaos to Corridor Sector, and many bands of Vargr took advantage of this to settle on numerous worlds in the region. Some of these were already inhabited, and the “settlement” in these cases was undoubtedly contested. During this period, the sector received a significant Vargr element, which it retains to the present day. There is no evidence the Vargr took any special interest in Tobibak, although the wreckage of several Vargr starships from this era indicate the world was used for refueling and for minor repairs. Vargr are not the most meticulous record-keepers, and no written evidence from this period survives at all.

## THE THIRD IMPERIUM

As the Third Imperium expanded into what would later be called the Domain of Deneb, it came into increasing conflict with the Vargr worlds in Corridor, which lay across the only routes to the newly established settlements in the Deneb and Spinward Marches sectors. To secure Imperial control of Corridor (renamed from *Eneri* in recognition of its status as a connecting link with the new frontier), the Imperium fought a series of small actions between 220 and 348, collectively known as the Vargr Campaigns. These campaigns secured the vast majority of the worlds in Corridor for the Imperium, although many of the vital worlds in the sector are within a few jumps of extra-Imperial Vargr polities. Corridor remains heavily militarized to this day.

## ATMOSPHERE AND GRAVITY

Tobibak possesses a standard, pollution-free oxygen/nitrogen atmosphere. The slightly high gravity (1.17 G) means that newcomers may take a day or two to adjust, but the higher gravity is not a major factor in underwater operations, as the natural buoyancy of the water compensates nicely.

## SETTLEMENTS

The major settlement on Tobibak is Seahaven Downport, located near the equator on the Karlsruhe Seamount, an area of shallows where the ocean floor rises to within a few hundred feet of the surface. The stable bedrock of the Karlsruhe Seamount gives the constructions of Seahaven a solid foundation.

The only structures of Seahaven Down that protrude above sea level are the string of landing pads. These are large, flat discs resting atop tall pillars and rising above the waves to form a stable landing platform for spacecraft. The remainder of the starport is completely under the surface of the sea, deep enough to avoid the turbulence of the surface storms (see p. 10).

The MoC maintains scientific research stations at various locations on Tobibak. Only the manned weather station at Mount Hamlet is above the surface; the rest are on the sea bottom and change locations from time to time. Most are in the shallows of the various seamounts, but a few deep research stations are maintained. These stations are primarily built from 50-ton cutter modules, because they are inexpensive and readily portable.

## THE TOBAI

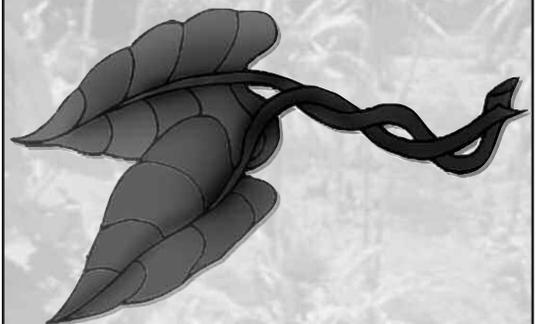
Physically, the Tobai are almost identical to the minor race known as the Githiaskio (see pp. T:AIV61-67). They have a cylindrical body (about 18" in diameter at its widest point) with a broad swimming "fluke" at one end and six tentacles clustered around a mouth at the other. Tobai are between 6' and 8' long, their length about evenly divided between body and tentacles. They respire oxygen dissolved in the water, and are capable of tolerating pressures at depths of up to 2,000' with no ill effects. This is far deeper than their eyes can see (even though they can detect light at very low levels), and they seem to have a form of sonar (lacking in the Githiaskio) that enables them to function in the total darkness of the deeps. Some observers believe this ability developed independently; others feel it was bred into them by whatever entity brought them to Tobibak.

## TOUCHING THE SKY

Tobai venture out onto the land in a special religious rite and test of courage and stamina known as "Touching the Sky" (to the Tobai, the sky is anything above the surface of the water). Those who aspire to leadership positions (the rite is not mandatory, but very few Tobai have gone on to lead a tribe without passing this test) announce their intention, and are accompanied by tribal elders to the shore of an island after participating in a series of cleansing rituals. The candidate (a "reacher") must go ashore and return with a branch or leaf. Since Tobai can't survive very long outside of water and have difficulty even moving on land, this is a dangerous and arduous test, and few return from it. TobiCorp and MoC anthropologists long wondered about the Tobai bodies found on various landmasses; at first it was thought to be a form of illness, similar to sick Terran whales' beaching themselves. After the Tobai learned to trust offworlders, the existence of the rite was revealed, although it is still considered an extremely private affair.

Tobai view attempts to help or rescue "reachers" as criminal, and the candidate who accepts assistance in any form must undergo the rite again (without aid) to cleanse himself of the dishonor. MoC has decided that the rite is voluntary on the part of the Tobai involved, and has ruled that outsiders should not interfere, even though it usually results in the death of the participant.

Githiaskio observers are mystified that any of the Tobai manage to survive the ordeal at all. Some believe the rituals of preparation enable the Tobai to resist the dehydration and internal injuries attendant upon removal from water. No Githiaskio has yet tried it, however.



## EDUCATION

Serving members of the IISS C&L Branch might be assigned to help train and educate a tribe. Show the Tobai the benefits of modern technology, and help them discover their own potential.

## ADVENTURE SEEDS

**Haunted Mountain:** New Tobai legend/songs begin to speak of a haunted mountain (under the sea, of course). MoC and IISS officers will be concerned that this represents some nefarious plot: smugglers using high technology to frighten the primitive Tobai away from the area while they perpetrate some outrage on a defenseless group of latimi, a long-dormant Ancient site reawakened for some reason, or the remnants of some TobiCorp science experiment gone awry . . .

**Swarm:** The party is part of a science station or mining site attacked by a greattooth swarm just as a massive storm system shuts down communications and makes it impossible to leave. What defenses can the group improvise from the available materials? Is the best option to hunker down and try to outfight the swarm?



**Tour Guide/Babysitter:** The first Tobai have finally made it into space. MoC and the IISS will need escorts, specialists, perhaps even bodyguards to show them the universe, keep them out of trouble, and, of course, make certain that their trip to space is pleasant and educational.

**Psi:** Adventurers with psi talents might be contacted (by the psi institute they attended, by their mentor, by one of the many psionic undergrounds) and asked to go to Tobibak and help the Tobai learn the truth about their wild talents. The group would need a cover story, since psionics is suppressed and persecuted within the Imperium – perhaps they might pose as legitimate scientists or businessmen.

## Index

- Adventures, 29-31; *seeds*, 31.  
Anagathics, 3, 18.  
Ancients, 3, 7, 9, 15, 30-31.  
Aquatic disadvantage, 26.  
*Argosy*-class submarine, 25.  
Atmosphere, 11.  
Bad Sight disadvantage, 26.  
Color Blindness disadvantage, 26.  
Dolphins, 3, 23.  
Dolphins, 23.  
Elders, 12.  
Extra Arms advantage, 26.  
Extra Flexibility advantage, 26.  
Faz Sense advantage, 26.  
Fishing trawlers, 24-25.  
Floaters, 16.  
Forbes-Hamilton, Jacques, 7, 10, 20, 27-28.  
Githiaskio, 3, 6-8, 11-12, 15, 23-24.  
Gravity, 11.  
Greattooth, 6, 17, 31.  
Hurricanes, 10.  
Latimus, 3, 6, 18-19.  
Legends, 8, 15, 31.  
Minerals, 19.  
Mining stations, 22.  
Ministry of Colonization (MoC), 3-4, 6-7, 10-11, 14-15, 18, 20, 22, 28; *adventures*, 29-30.  
MoC, see Ministry of Colonization.  
Mount Hamlet, 4, 10-11.  
Music, 15.  
Occupations, 14.  
Plants, native, 10.  
Poor Grip disadvantage, 26.  
Possessions, 14.  
Psionics, 12, 26, 31.  
Religion, 15.  
Resources, 19.  
Science stations, 22.  
Seahaven Down Starport, *see Seahaven Downport*.  
Seahaven Downport, 3, 9-11, 21.  
Seahaven Highport, 3, 21.  
Seahaven Orbital Starport, *see Seahaven Highport*.  
Seahaven Starport, 4, 21.  
ShuKhuTam, 4, 7, 20, 29-30.  
Spacecraft, 24.  
Surface skimmers, 28; *racing*, 13.  
System Data, 4.  
Tobai, 6-7, 11-12; *and war*, 13; *culture*, 12; *language*, 8, 15; *racial template*, 26; *society*, 12; *traveling offworld*, 24; *worship*, 14.  
Tobai squid, 6.  
Tobibak, *geology of*, 10; *surface of*, 9.  
TobiCorp, 4, 6-7, 18, 20, 24, 28, 30.  
Tobishrimp, 6, 9, 16, 18-19.  
Touching the Sky, 11-12, 27.  
Trappers, 16-17.  
Tribemeets, 13.  
Vargr, 3, 5-6, 23.  
Vehicles, 24-25.  
Vents, *undersea*, 19.  
Weather, 10.  
Zhodani, 23.