



enophobic and mysterious the Denal Kuboran occupy the foetid marshes at the headwaters of the River Denia. Their unhappy history is bound to that of the mad god of the Kubora: Crador the Blind, who, like them has fallen outside the mainstream of Kuboran culture for nearly a millennium.

ORIGINS & HISTORY

When Kemlar's son Crador was blinded he was cursed to wander alone outside human company. However Kemlar granted him the power to come to the Kubora in their sleep; if they failed to live lives as Kemlar decreed Crador would make their nightmares real.

So it was that Crador became the shadow lurking on the edge of every camp fire: thanked for all things good; blamed for the bad; and venerated in the hope of future favour. Rendered mad by the pain of his torments Crador became fickle and demanded more and more from the tribes lest he curse them with their worst nightmares.

One tribe, the Denal, refused to bow to Crador or court his whim. They determined to find and confine 'The Trickster' once and for all. The hunt they began lasted generations and their pursuit harried Crador away from the ranges of the tribes and into lands no Kuboran coveted: the Denia Marshes. The other tribes, fearing 'The Dream Maker', left the Denal to their quest but appreciated the absence of poor luck, illness and disaster during this time. For generations Crador spared the other tribes and focused all his attention on those that pursued him: the Denal.

Though the Denal could confine Crador within the Broken Lands to the east of the Denia Marshes they could not contain the dreams that he sent. They were tormented into sleeplessness during the night and cursed with bad luck during the day. Slowly these once valiant people had their spirit broken until they wished nothing more but to live in their god's forsaken marsh and serve him. All they wished was that the nightmare should end. With the Denal cowed Crador returned to tormenting all Kubora until the sacrifices began again. However, food or animal sacrifices were not always enough. Kemlar had denied the Kubora the right to take a human life in worship so they took to choosing a youth or maiden to be sent 'as a gift' to Crador. To this day, when sorely pressed, the Kubora will send a 'gift of sacrifice' to the Denal who convey the boy or girl to the Broken Lands where Crador decides their future. That has become the sad fate of the Denal: intermediaries between man and god; warped servants of a warped god. Over the centuries the Denal have changed physically as well as morally. It is as if the transformation from brave champions to craven servants has been reflected in their often twisted bodies.

Denal girl children display a panoply of minor birth defects: disfiguring birth marks or extra digits are common. Other differences, not always so noticeable at birth become very marked with aging, such as facial hair, crook backs, and joint defects. A group of middle-aged Denal women can resemble a frightful coven of witches.

However it is among the boy children that the curse the Denal carry is most marked. Fully half of all live male births diverge very significantly from the Kuboran norm. In almost equal numbers these boys are marked out at birth as either *anhengfil* or *tenau*. The former are as low in intelligence as they are huge in physique; the latter dangerously frail but gifted with unnatural intellect.

Crador the Blind

When the Kubora arrived in Peran a man called Lensha came to them. Described as 'swarthy featured and hailing from the south; a young traveller in the company of 7 companions – each a champion of power and each bearing a sacred stone'.

Kemlar had taken a wife, Heneryne. She was young and beautiful and though she loved Kemlar she also loved the forest. He would never let her far from his hearth without escort and for this he trusted only Lensha. A friendship, and more, grew between the vibrant young woman and her husband's favoured visitor, and there were whispers of disloyalty. Kemlar heard none of this and when Heneryne fell pregnant the old man celebrated the birth of his only son whom he called Crador.

Kemlar doted on Heneryne's child but sadly Crador showed no interest in learning but revelled in practical jokes and mischief. With age his games became more malicious and sinister. He stole and drank and whored his way from tribe to tribe but still Kemlar did not discipline him.

Finally young Crador went too far and ravished a chieftain's daughter. A council of all the tribes demanded Kemlar take the boy in hand and so their Guide called Crador before him.

When his accusers voiced their charges the youth laughed in their faces. Kemlar tried to keep order but the warriors would not hear him and seized the youth. Some, fearing to take the life of their Guide's only son, cried 'Let him no longer see temptation. Let his eyes be taken in recompense for the wrongs he has done'.

So it was that Crador became 'Crador the Blind', set free into the forest so it could finish what the chieftains had lacked the courage to do themselves.

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DENAL KUBORA 2

Denal Anghenfil ('Marsh Ogre')

Anghenfil are born with a deep torso and long limbs but develop as any other child through their early years. However their mind stops growing at the age of 5 or 6. Their bodies in comparison quickly outstrip those of others, and they are typically 7 or 8 feet tall with an extremely heavy build conferring enormous strength and stamina by their early teens. They remain hairless throughout a life that rarely exceeds 30 years.

While they lack the intelligence for sophisticated warfare they have an instinct for the hunt and stealth. They can sit still for hours in ambush and then spring to the attack as if they had just arrived at the fray. They swim like fish; the webs between their fingers and long toes allow them to speed through water. Their deep chests give them a phenomenal lung capacity and they can dive for minutes on end or sit in the deep mud of a reed bed for hours with their eyes and nose barely, and rarely, exposed. Many a group of unwelcome visitors that have made camp on what they took to be solid ground have been woken by several anghenfil erupting out of the reeds among them. Encounters with other Kubora have led to tales of 'Marsh Ogres' that have reached Rethemi taverns.

STR	20	EYE	15	INT	06	END	12
STA	22	HRG	15	AUR	05	MOV	11
DEX	10	SML	18	WIL	15	Ini	70
AGL	10	VOI	02	MOR	10	Dge	50
Awareness	80	Climbing	35	Foraging	55		
Herblore	15	Jumping	65	Physician	15		
Stealth	75	Survival	75	Swimming	85		
Throwing	75	Tracking	60	Weatherlore	50		
Combat	Unarmed 75/3b		Big Knife 75/6p		Thrown Rock 75/5b		
Strike Locations: Standard				Armour: Hide: B2 E4 P3 F3			

Denal Tenau ('Shaman')

The tenau is the polar opposite of the anghenfil. At the time his massive brother seems to halt his mental development that of the tenau accelerates. Many have memorised all the tales of the Denal by the time they are 10 and mastered the more intricate crafts practiced among their people, including that of the 'string drum', soon afterwards. Their hair is never thick as a child and Denal mothers say they can identify how wise their child will be by the age at which their remaining hair recedes and is lost. It is not surprising that they are often identified as a potential shaman early in their life. Though others do not know it almost every tenau has some shaman skills and these are as important in defence of their villages as the strength of the anghenfil.

Tenau have a perverse relationship with Crador in as much as though he is thought responsible for their condition, he is also particularly responsive to their calls for help. Hence tenau casting ritual invocations in Crador's name treat those invocations as if they were one circle less difficult. Invocations caste in Kemlar's name are one circle more difficult, reflecting the Denal view that he has abandoned them.

STR	06	EYE	17	INT	16	END	05
STA	06	HRG	17	AUR	18	MOV	18
DEX	20	SML	08	WIL	18	Ini	75
AGL	18	VOI	15	MOR	10	Dge	70
All Physical Skills	25	Awareness	70	Folklore (Denal)	95		
Folklore (Kubora)	65	Herblore	65	Intrigue	55		
Legerdemain	65	Mental Conflict	65	Musician	60		
Oratory	70	Physician	55	Rhetoric	60		
Ritual (Crador)	65	Stealth	55	Weatherlore	80		
Combat	Unarmed 25/1b			Knife 25/1p/1e			
Strike Locations: Standard				Armour: None			

The Uniqueness of the Denal

Whether the characteristics the Denal display are due to the antipathy of Crador, the environment of the Denia Marshes, or inbreeding within the small Denal communities is unknown.

When the Denal defied Crador the other tribes took less interest in their women, and married fewer of them into their clans, for fear of attracting his ire. That may explain why, today, the Denal consider it taboo to marry outside the clan, let alone into another tribe.

The Denal say that 'if one brother is tenau and another anghenfil then between them they have the wit of any normal man'. This is not intended cruelly. The Denal have long accepted that each birth brings something different, but equally essential, to the tribe. Both the anghenfil and tenau are prized as 'special' by their parents so they are rarely allowed to leave the marshes. They never accompany the small group of warriors that travel to the Kuboran Moot each Larane. Nor does any woman.

Those boy children who are neither anghenfil nor tenau are, in all superficial respects, indistinguishable from the warriors of other tribes, though they tend to be less generally healthy. They do, though, almost all have some aspect of their more extreme brothers' characteristics. Some will have webbing between some their digits in imitation of the complete webs that link the fingers of each anghenfil hand and the long toes of each anghenfil foot. Others are prematurely bald or have thin hair all their lives. Some are heavily built, such as 6'7" tall Ustar. Called 'the Giant' by other Kubora. Ustar has won the wrestling event at the Annual Moot for two years and hopes to win again this year. The jibes of those he has defeated, that he is 'kin to a Marsh Ogre', cause the big man to smile wryly as he thinks of his brother, Ustad, called 'The Giant' by other Denal.

THE DENAL CLANS

The three clan structure of the tribe allots each a specific role in the divinely inspired work of the Denal. It also leads to political stability: Edak and Guran have held their positions since the death of their respective clanheads almost a generation ago.

Though marriage outside the clan is taboo among the Denal there is some cross-adoption between the clans which provides an opportunity for some mixing of blood. By tradition Denal males who are entirely hairless by the time they reach 9 years are seen as having great shamanistic potential. They are often adopted into clan Garras and taught the 'way of water and reed; spirit and soul'. Particularly gifted warriors, often anghenfil, are regularly adopted by clan Guran, the guardians of the Denia Marshes. Clan Edak, therefore, tends to have slightly fewer of the extreme characteristics found among the other clans.

Clan Guran

Guran 'Water Walker' is Druhn to the Denal Kubora and his clan occupies the western end of the marsh. The other clans send him some of their prime warriors to join the patrols he sends through the forest to the west of the marsh and along the southern and northern margins of the tribe's range. Clan Guran maintain the Denal's isolation and collects any gifts of sacrifice left by other Kubora at the 'Place of Farewells'.

Members of Clan Guran knows their range intimately and have prepared all manner of traps in the forest to deter visitors. Neighbouring Kubora either accept the risk of hunting above the Denia cataract or avoid the Denal range entirely. Those wishing to trade make camp at the top of the cataract and wait there for the Denal to come to them. Only the path leading to the 'Place of Farewells' is safe, and then only while escorting 'gifts' clearly identified by the necklace of bones they wear.

Nine households can be found at Guran's village with seven more divided between the two smaller settlements.

Clan Edak

Edak 'the Stalker' is Hanuhn to the Denal Kubora and his village of eight households lies at the centre of the marsh, near 'Heneryne's Glade'. The oldest woman among clan Edak becomes the Denal Kubora 'Crone' and she is responsible for tending the tribal glade. Any gift of sacrifice must be brought before Edak and the 'Crone' to ensure Heneryne has made it healthy and that it is worthy of Crador before it is passed on to Clan Garras.

There are four other households at each of the two smaller Edak settlements.

Clan Garras

The clan of Garras, 'Reed Weaver' serves Crador most directly. It is to the larger of the clan's settlements that any gifts of sacrifice intended for the god are taken. They feed the gift and care for it to ensure it is perfect for the god. Then they take it by boat to 'The Leave Taking'. The gift is left food for 3 days but anything else they brought with them, apart from their distinctive necklace of bones and the clothes they wear, is kept by the Denal. The path leading into the Broken Lands is pointed out to them, before the boat leaves, and they are left to the mercy of Crador.

Garras is Tenau and was adopted into the clan as a boy because he lost his 'birth hair' by the age of five years. His intelligence and wisdom are legendary.

Clan:	H/h	Population	Warband
Guran	17	102	39
Edak	17	102	29
Garras	16	97	32
Total	50	300	100

The Warband of Clan Guran:			
Warriors	Prime	Youths	Old
Anghenfil	9	2	1
Tenau	3	2	2
Others	12	4	4

The Warband of Clan Edak:			
Warriors	Prime	Youths	Old
Anghenfil	3	2	0
Tenau	3	2	2
Others	8	5	4

The Warband of Clan Garras:			
Warriors	Prime	Youths	Old
Anghenfil	3	3	0
Tenau	6	2	2
Others	8	4	4

The Place of Farewells

At the head of the Denia Cataract a clearing serves neighbouring tribes as a safe place for trade with the Denal. The path running from there, along the river's edge, to the Place of Farewells, is clearly signposted with the skulls of animals and humans. To stray off the path is to invite attack.

The Place of Farewells is a slab of limestone projecting out from the edge of the forest. It offers a view over a lagoon of open water some 400 paces across. The lagoon is bounded on all sides by packed reed beds between which breaks hint at routes into the marsh.

The Leave Taking

The eastern margin of the marsh is a jumble of limestone karst clothed in a thick mat of greenery. This, the rugged chaos of the 'Broken Lands', rises sharply from the marsh waters.

'The Leave Taking' nestles among the eroded limestone of the Broken Lands and shows some sign of human impact. Gifts, abandoned here over a millennium, often carve a last testament to their life into the limestone. Though erosion endlessly sweeps these records of sacrifice away more recent messages survive. They are all pictorial and typically show hopeful signs of figures standing under a sun alongside plentiful game. The limestone here is unusual in being tarnished with a rusty red deposit of some kind giving the place a bloody caste.

A DENAL SETTLEMENT

The Denal are unique among the Kubora for building out over the water of their marsh. Even the Utcin Kubora build traditional Kuboran round-houses on the edge of the bogs of Hohnam Marsh.

Good wood is difficult to find on the marsh and most is brought from the hills that enclose it. The roughly worked plank floor of a Denal hut is built on boughs driven into the mud of the marsh-bed. Those boughs also serve as corner posts for the rest of the building, with lighter boughs added as cross-bracing to give the walls strength. Walls and roof are of reed thatch, the latter supported by a central pole.

Running around each hut is a walkway and rough planks connect the huts to one another and to the communal raft. These can be kicked into the water in emergency to isolate the huts. Crude ladders run down into the water and it is here that the household's curuglau (coracles) are tied up.

1. Reed Beds

No Denal village is built far from an extensive bed of reeds. Further out in the lagoons the water is too deep to anchor their huts, but the centrality of reeds to their everyday needs also decrees there must be a ready supply at hand. Reed is used to build with and when soaked provides a rough fibre that can be woven into coarse blankets. The Denal even make their curuglau of reeds as the traditional Kuboran boat requires more, and larger, hides than the marsh can provide.

2. Household Hut

A household of between 5 and 7 can occupy one of these reed insulated huts. Reed mats cover the floor and walls and are also set across doorways and widows providing rough but effective insulation. Combined with the suspended ceramic fire pot, vented through the reed roof, they make the hut surprisingly cosy against the cold and damp of the marsh night. Wads of reed mats also provide bedding.

There is no discrimination among the anghenfil, teanu or other Denal; they share the household of their birth or adopted parent. If the hut is too crowded then the surrounding walkways provides extra room in warmer months. In the winter the more body heat a hut can generate, the better.

3. Shuntul Lodge

Shuntul is practised by the Denal even though they are different in so many other ways from forest Kubora. It is, though, the preserve of the clanhead rather than the shaman; there are more shaman than lodges among the Denal. It is here that the clanhead will welcome and house visitors unless they are particularly honoured and invited to his family hut.

4. Clanhead's Hut

Usually larger and slightly better appointed the hut is otherwise like any other. If the clanhead is the Druhn of the Denal then one or two household huts will be built for visiting warriors.

5. Central 'Raft'

This serves as the only communal space available to the clan; huts are private places to which invitations are rare. It is here that the women prepare communal meals; work the beaver and otter skins that are valuable in trade; and dry the fish that are the core of the Denal diet. It is also where children play together and learn adult skills and crafts such as pottery and woodcraft.

Larger timbers are brought from the forest around the marsh and driven into the mud to provide a framework which is filled in with smaller branches and brush. Finally the Denal layer the raft with reeds. Mud, and if they can get it turf, is then added to create an artificial island. The turf is valued as it allows some shallow rooted food plants to supplement the otherwise monotonous fish diet.

6. Heneryne's Island

With few trees near their settlements women cannot worship Heneryne as other Kubora do. Instead the Denal build a second, smaller, raft. Here a fire pot is kept alight within a ring of whichever spindly plants will grow in the hallow soil so that Heneryne knows the Denal honour her in the hope of a better future.

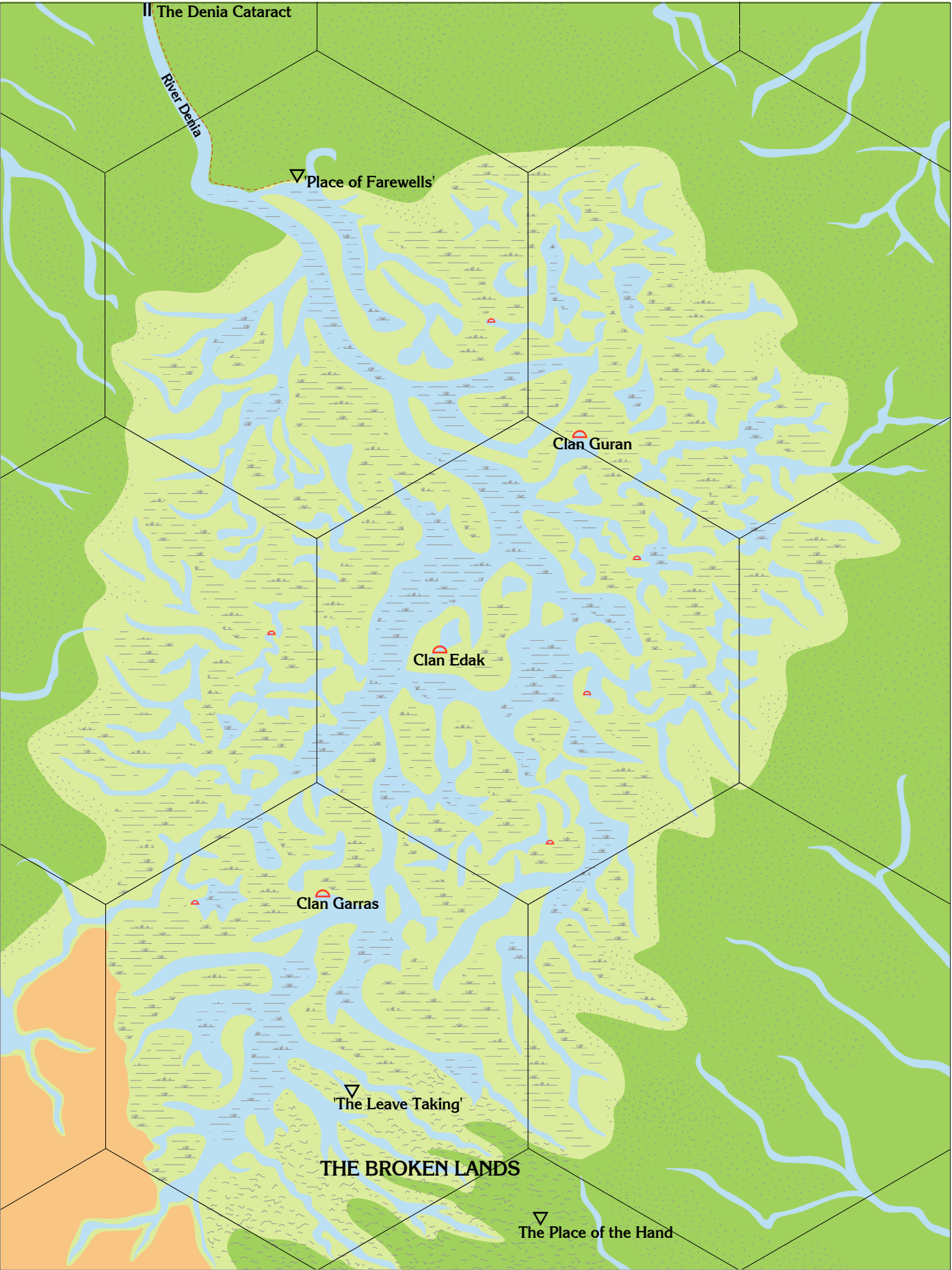
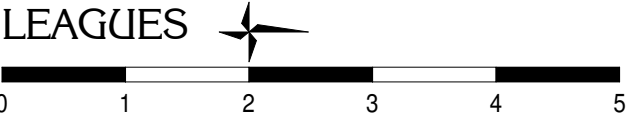
The Denal believe that Kemlar has forsaken them for their pursuit of his son, Crador, and that the mad god toys with them as a cat does a mouse. It is only Heneryne who has remained constant and she fills most of their spiritual needs. When they pray for a good haul of fish or waterfowl it is to the 'Hearth Mother'; when they go to war they seek the support of the 'Vengeful Mother'; when a child is born they seek the blessing of the 'Bountiful Daughter'.

There is, near the centre of the Denia Marsh, close by the village of the tribal Hanuhn, a naturally occurring island where there is enough shrub and spindly tree growth for the Denal to maintain a more typical Glade in honour of Heneryne. All Denal women travel there within a season of their first menstruation to pray to the goddess that their wombs are fruitful and their children healthy. 'Healthy' for the Denal being a relative term.

Depending on the needs of the clan at any time a healthy child might be anghenfil or tenau or neither. Other Kubora have an irrational fear of any birth defect and expose such children in the forest. If they survive then they are treated entirely normally. If not they are never spoken of again. The Denal never expose any child, valuing each, whatever form it takes.

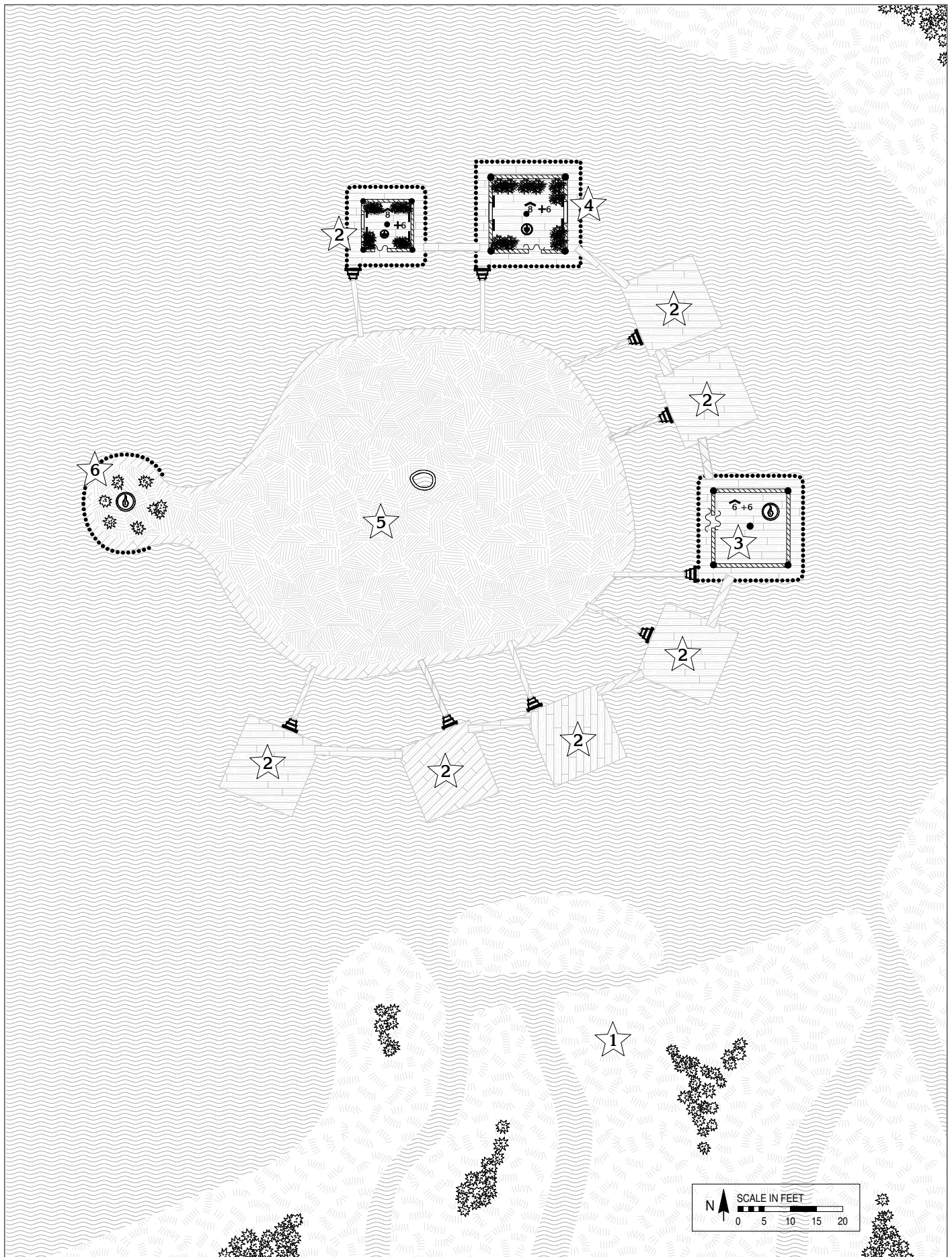
DENIA MARSHES

GM MAP



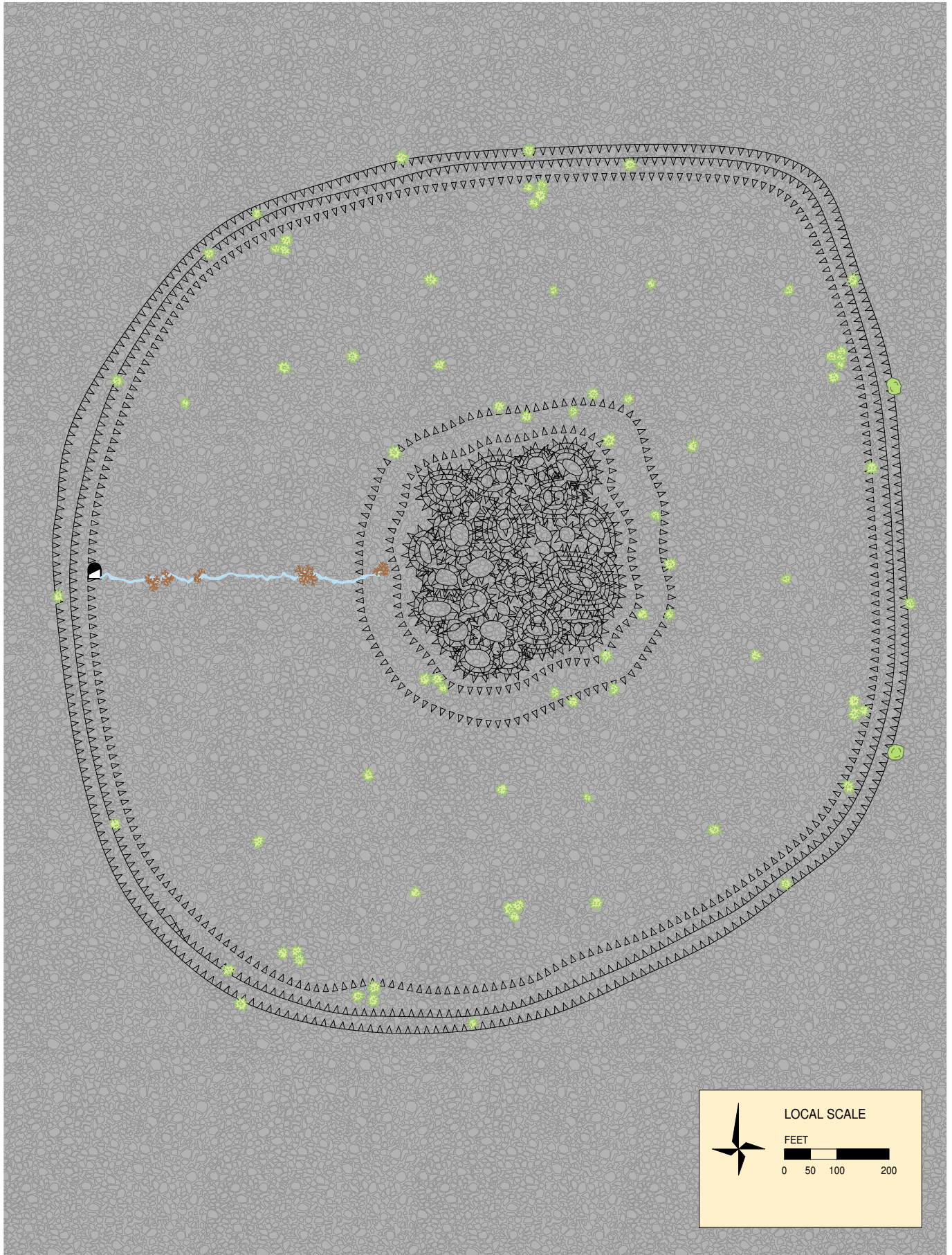
VILLAGE of CLAN EDAK

GM MAP



THE PLACE of the HAND

COMMON MAP



VILLAGE of CLAN EDAK

COMMON MAP

