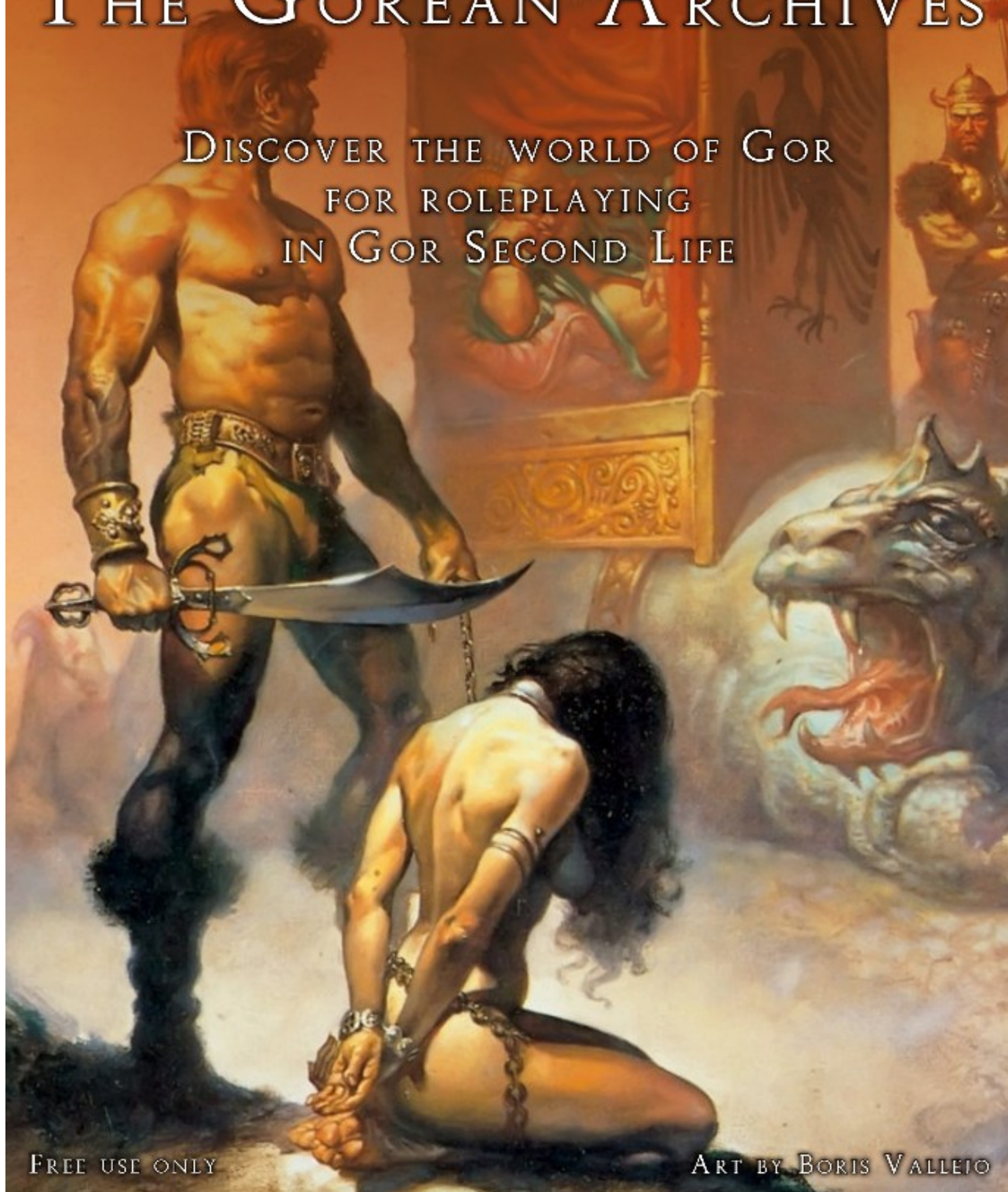




# THE GOREAN ARCHIVES

DISCOVER THE WORLD OF GOR  
FOR ROLEPLAYING  
IN GOR SECOND LIFE



FREE USE ONLY

ART BY BORIS VALLEJO

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## *Gor in a nutshell*

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Gor, also known as the anti-Earth, is a parallel world described in [John Norman's Chronicles of Gor](#), a saga of 38 novels with philosophical, erotic and science-fictional themes. Begun in 1966, this saga describes the adventures of Tarl Cabot on the planet Gor, an anti-Earth situated in opposition to the Sun, in the same orbit as the Earth.

## *Gor in a nutshell*

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The series features several alien races. The most important in the books are the Priest-Kings and the Kurii, all from different star systems.

The Priest-Kings rule Gor as distant guardians and demiurges, leaving humans to look after their own affairs, as long as they respect certain restrictions on technology. They regard humans as an inferior species just worthy of being used as guinea pigs for their experiments in terraforming, genetics and social engineering, but it turns out that they also need them terribly to fight the Kurii.

The Kurii are an aggressive, invasive alien species with cutting-edge technology (though inferior to that of the Priest-Kings) who want to colonize Earth and Gor, and who see humans as a food source. They also use humans as agents, including on Earth, in exchange for various means, advanced technology and slaves.

The power of the Priest-Kings diminished after the "Nest War" described in the third book of the saga, and most of the time, the Priest-Kings and the Kurii, whose greatest weakness is that their civilizations are in decline, fight each other by proxy, through their respective human agents and spies.

The final episodes of the series focus mainly on space-opera adventures, alongside increasingly philosophical and sexual adventures. There are numerous sub-plots that continue over several books and return to the main storyline in subsequent books. Some of these plots begin in the first book, but most of them underlie the first ten books.

Gor's saga is part of a literary genre generally referred to as Planet-opera, a branch of science fiction whose founding father was [Edgar Rice Burroughs](#) (John Carter of Mars is a recent film based on his work). The law of the genre consists in inventing imaginary worlds reconstructed from borrowings made from various civilizations, hence the anachronistic blend of modernity and archaism that makes it so charming. The plot often features heroes gifted with uncommon abilities, and there's no skimping on epic sword fights and violent confrontations between barbarian warriors.

John Norman describes a society inspired by that of antiquity, highly unequal, organized into castes and practicing slavery, despite being technologically advanced, at least in certain fields, and where the status of women suffers from ruthless machismo. John Norman has rightly been accused of providing a philosophical justification for this state of affairs, and of describing the condition of Gor's slaves, who are often women, in an overly-indulgent way, leading to various controversies.

## *The planet Gor*

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Summary of a universal tale: *"Long ago, a terrible war was waged between men and women, threatening their survival. The men were victorious, and wanted to kill all the women. In their wisdom, the Priest-Kings intervened to save the women. But they would pay for this gesture by being forever submissive to men, in exchange for which the women of Gor would become the most beautiful women imaginable."*

Gor is a world whose flora, fauna and customs are meticulously described in great detail. John Norman populates his planet with diverse ethnic groups, all with different characteristics inspired by the Romans, the ancient Greeks, the American Indians, the Vikings and other civilizations. Gor's fauna is highly varied, with many dangerous beasts and carnivores, as well as a number of strange creatures, sometimes from worlds other than Gor or Earth. Horses and dogs are completely unknown.

In these novels, these various peoples are in fact emigrants from Earth, mainly from antiquity, in spaceships thanks to the intervention of Gor's secret rulers, the Priest-Kings. The humans of Gor possess



cities with modern architecture and have acquired advanced medical knowledge, but have been forced to remain at a primitive stage in terms of transport, communication, industry and weaponry, due to restrictions imposed in the field of technology by the Priest-Kings. This restriction is mainly carried out via the religious cult of the Priest-Kings and the caste of Initiates, but also by undercover agents of the Priest-Kings, and, in extreme cases, by the use of frightening means of destruction, the Blue Fire (basically, the Priest-Kings can level a city with one shot of a weapon of mass destruction).

This drastic limitation of technological evolution in certain fields, which often remains incomplete and sometimes clumsy, was enacted to ensure the safety of the priest-kings as well as other animal and intelligent species transplanted to Gor which, without these measures, would have suffered from the presence of man due to his bellicose and destructive tendencies. One need only think of the state of our planet to realize that there is indeed a certain logic in this.

Gor's planet has a lower gravity (around 0.85 G) than Earth's, which has made it possible for large flying creatures to appear, and for cities to build tall towers linked by air bridges. One thing to note is that Gor has no real deposits of natural coal or oil. The Priest-Kings have terraformed it to avoid the presence of these elements, which further reduces the ability of humans to embark on an industrial revolution.

Gor's known geography consists mainly of the west coast of a continent stretching from the Arctic in the north to the equator, with the Thassa Ocean to the west. The Voltai mountain range forms a boundary that extends across all latitudes. There are also islands in the ocean, and relatively unknown plains to the east of the Voltai. The word Gor itself refers to the hearthstone in the Gorean language (the mother tongue of the city-states located in the northern temperate region, and the lingua franca spoken in many other regions).

## *The science of Gor*

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Gor's saga is not medieval fantasy, but planet-fantasy with space-opera overtones! It's heavily influenced [by](#)

[Edgar Rice Burroughs' Mars Cycle](#). It's not a super-macho version of the Gallo-Roman world, nor of the sword & sorcery novels of the Conan the Barbarian cycle.

In Gor's world: no magic! But there are elements of science-fiction technology which, to the average uneducated person as well as to the man from Earth, could pass for magic. If the saga of the novels begins in the equivalent of the 1960s, it extends into our future!

## *YOU ARE IN THE FUTURE*

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The world of Gor remains, on the whole, a rather backward world in terms of science and technology, with civilizations whose social structures are still ancient, and whose technology is more comparable, on average, to that of 16th-century Europe than anything else. The same applies to Ar Station: most people live as they do everywhere else in Gor, i.e. a mixture of Roman antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. So, apart from the calendar, there's no difference for the average inhabitant..

## *TECHNOLOGY*

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But there are some amazing things. Goreans are ingenious, like Earthlings, and have no qualms about learning from Earthlings about sciences and techniques they didn't know, or even going to Earth to help themselves (even if this is rare), to bring back machines and inventions to Gor. Let's take a quick look at the sciences and techniques of Gor:

As Gor has almost no oil or coal, heating is dependent on wood and sophisticated insulation and heat recovery systems. Plastic is unknown here, but in its use it is replaced by glass and high-quality ceramics.

While steam and industrial machinery are unknown, and almost everyone uses traditional lighting methods such as candles and torches, electricity is not. Goreans use energy bulbs, which are electric super-batteries that power many electrical and electronic machines and technologies. These marvels, reserved for the wealthiest people, but not

so rare, are most often artifacts supplied indirectly by the Priest-Kings, but also objects that have been collected on Earth, during missions by agents of the Priest-Kings or the Kurii. Others are created and manufactured by Goreans themselves. These include electric lighting, the dynamo, blood analysis machines, medical X-ray photography, slave goads, universal translators, electric locks or electrified cages, electric blankets, refrigerators, and even loudspeakers and data media players (yes, you can play music on a CD-ROM in some of Gor's luxurious lounges); there are even a few blast furnaces powered by electricity.

More commonly, there are lots of very practical things: precision metallurgy, including clocks and micromechanics, paper and printing, chronometers and marine compasses, compasses, semi-industrial weaving using mechanized looms, embroidery and semi-industrial glass, lighters and other firelighters, wire and wire mesh, ceramics and porcelain, hydraulic and pneumatic machines, kilns and furnaces, as well as refractory and construction bricks, alloys and high-grade steel. We're also familiar with telescopes, spectacles, magnifying glasses and microscopes.

It's in the medical field that Goreans are incredibly advanced. Theoretical science may differ, but the technical results are similar: Gorean doctors understand the role of organs, blood circulation, the general functioning of the brain, anatomy, microbiology, genetics, artificial selection (including on humans), dietetics, epidemiology and vaccination. They even have psychiatrists! Their medical techniques and pharmacopoeia mean that they have less recourse to surgery than Earthlings, and they are better able than Earthlings to treat certain serious illnesses such as cancer. On the other hand, they are less proficient in all aspects of traumatology, i.e. serious physical injury. But they are nonetheless very gifted.

The Goreans have also invented the ultimate remedy of sorts: longevity serum, a cocktail of multipotent stem-cell activators which, in just four injections, stops the subject's aging process. Yes, this means that Goreans can make a person potentially immortal. To come across a six-hundred-year-old Gorean is not so incredible. It's uncommon, because Gor's world is

violent, and because the longevity serum isn't that widespread, but healthy centenarians are not uncommon!

What the Priest-Kings firmly forbid, with enough means to intervene in case of transgression, via their agents or the Initiates, or more directly, are a few techniques and sciences that could tip the balance of Gor, both for mankind and for the planet. Here's the list of what's forbidden. And whoever dares to work on this takes great risks, for himself, his family, and even his entire city!

The following are prohibited: the internal combustion engine and steam (and therefore any industrial machinery that might run on these engines), personal armor (strangely enough, this is more a religious ban than actually based on a Priest-King ban), firearms, wave communication systems (but not wire, we've already mentioned loudspeakers, there are also microphones, as we discover in the third novel), fast-moving machines, including even advanced sailing (Gorean ships are barely more efficient than ancient galleys) and, last but not least, explosives, including black powder.

The novels don't mention it, but, no, there's no reason why the Priest-Kings should have banned astronomy: many people in the highest cultured castes know that they live on a planet in our solar system, and that, not far away, there's the Earth, and that other worlds exist around the other stars in the Milky Way.

## **SCIENCE FICTION**

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Now let's talk about what's possible, but only in the realm of science fiction. Already, some Goreans know that space travel is possible aboard spaceships: they take part in voyages to Earth to meet agents there, and bring back cargoes of poor Earthwomen abducted there to become slaves on Gor. For their transport, these earthlings are locked in hypersleep chambers, and more than one slaver has seen one of these strange chambers. The Priest-Kings have mastered antigravity, force fields and interstellar travel, and their technological power enables them to move a planet and terraform it. They even seem



capable of mastering telepathic and mind-control technologies.

So, science-fiction and modern technologies and machines from Earth, or entrusted to the Goreans by the Priest-Kings, do exist. But it's very rare; it's a very big secret, which the owners hide with great care. Either because they are agents of the Priest-Kings (or the Kurii), or because they hide from them to avoid being caught.

In conclusion, it's not at all absurd or incoherent to see hints of science-fiction technologies here and there in Gor's world. What would be absurd or incoherent is for it to be there for all to see. A simple pistol is a terrible weapon on Gor, and agents of the Priest-Kings and initiates will do anything to make such a thing and its owner disappear; nobody would want to own one, unless they were insane, or incredibly cautious. Goreans, in general, don't understand Earth science and technology and despise it completely. They also have a strong religious superstition that encourages them to ignore it and even destroy it out of an abundance of caution.

## *The Goreans*

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Now that the stage is quickly set, let's quickly summarize the three main social roles. Gor's world is a man's world. Dominant tendencies, violent impulses, sexual authority, virility and machismo are encouraged, right from childhood. The men of Gor are brought up to see their masculine impulses as qualities, not weaknesses, starting with their power and sexual needs. And that women are born and exist to satisfy their desires for domination and their sexual needs, and that they are never happier than when they do so, i.e. when they are enslaved and offered up to their whims.

That said, these men are also trained to know how to control themselves, both in the use of force and in the indulgence of their impulses. Goreans consider women to be at their service, under their domination, more fragile, weaker, but not inferior or contemptible. While a slave is undoubtedly so, a free woman is not. She is dominated by men, the law is most often on their side, not hers, but this woman is a mother, a daughter, a sister, a member of the community and the city, and she is honored and respected as an important member of that community, as much for her skills and, of course, her ability to bear children.

Goreans are educated to regard Earthlings as weak beings, destined for enslavement. Planet Earth is even nicknamed the planet of slaves. Of course, this is not true, and many Earthlings earn their freedom on Gor after being taken there. What's more, with a notorious difference in gravity, earthlings on Gor are physically more powerful than goreans. Something Norman admits for his hero, Tarl Cabot, but blithely forgets for the enslaved Terran women in his novels.

But Earth is a world of weak slaves, or so the Goreans believe, and they are conditioned and educated to have contempt for Earth. Norman offers philosophical justifications for this, which he repeatedly puts forward, and we won't go into them here. Just keep in mind this reality: to be an Earthling on Gor, especially if you're a woman, is to be considered a natural slave, and rather despised.

## *1- The gorean man*

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The Gorean man can be described in two ways:

The man who places Honor and Courage as his primary values, and believes that women must be protected because they are weak and dominated by man's nature. Most Goreans consider their word to be sacred, and therefore giving it is an act of total commitment. They also consider their honor to be more valuable than their lives, and are therefore willing to die for it (though not necessarily needlessly). This is the most common norm.

The man who places his pride in his Strength and Power, and considers women inferior and at his service. Barbarian or civilized, many Goreans remain convinced that women are born to serve them, and live under their yoke. In a Gorean family, the head of the household has the right of life and death over everyone, and may well enslave even his own daughter. Women are under the yoke of their partners, fathers, brothers and other men in the household, and are obliged to obey them. This kind of man is less common, but not uncommon.

In any case, a Gorean man is generally neither a sadist nor a pervert. Rape, torture, humiliation and mutilation are rare behaviors that are not supposed to exist on Gor, as they are eliminated, despised and mercilessly repressed. A Gorean encountering this kind of individual would surely be shocked and would even tend to kill him. The tendency to eliminate such deviations brutally and the intervention of the Priest-Kings and the Caste of Initiates make them rare. Truly cruel and sadistic sexual perversions are not widespread, even if certain scenes in the novels prove that such "depravities" do exist. And we mustn't forget that what would shock us is perfectly acceptable to a Gorean, especially when it comes to slaves, with whom we can do almost anything.

A Gorean never strikes a free woman or a slave unless it's for a very good reason: an obvious fault, under the constraint of codes or customs, out of necessity. He never considers violence or cruelty as an end, but as a means, which a wise man should know how to avoid.

This doesn't mean that we don't see the men of Gor as violent and sometimes even cruel brutes. Power – physical, moral and intellectual – is respected, demanded and emphasized. A weak man will lose everything because he will be robbed without mercy. Goreans are cruel because they consider individual responsibility above all else. This implies that man is responsible for his actions and their consequences, and must answer to his own kind. There will be no excuses, no extenuating circumstances, and no compassion for his misfortune. In other words, those who believe they can obtain everything by force, without taking care to respect their word, their deeds, the hierarchy, codes and laws, will end up very badly off.

## *2- The gorean woman*

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The Gorean woman can also be described in two ways:

- The submissive, respectful woman, who can nonetheless have her own outspoken character and freedom. She follows the Laws, but has a certain autonomy, and keeps her place by her own Honor. It's often the women of the lower castles, but also the free women of Torvaldsland, who present this profile. Courageous, hard-working and self-reliant, they are an indispensable arm in the daily grind, and provide their men with offspring. These women are honored and respected, and it's not uncommon for them to have virtually the same rights as men.
- Proud and noble, but trapped in the straitjacket of her role as a companion offered to a man, by alliance and political and financial interests. Often isolated from the world, she can be harsh with slaves, firstly to show her rank, but also out of envy and jealousy, as such a woman can generally show nothing of her femininity and feelings. She is condemned to remain in the shadow of men, without ever being able to really participate in the life of the city, or speak her mind frankly.

The education of Gor's wife, and the higher her caste, the more this education is present, implies (in

addition to the household arts, and the knowledge of her caste) the simplest rules, and postures, codes, and principles of slaves, because it's always possible that she'll have to end up captive, or punished, and it's better that she can survive it.

Free women sometimes tend to hate the kajira... and also to envy it. Low-caste women are less harsh and more accommodating with slaves, and rarely own or associate with one. Since a slave is always a pair of hands for the job, she is all the more valuable the less well-off her owners are, even if this is only a general rule.

One important thing: free women in Gore expect consideration and respect from men. They are the masters, they dominate and they decide. But in the law and political organization of cities and castes, powerful women of high rank are not uncommon, and their words and decisions are respected as if they came from men. As I said above, free women are important and valuable, and are therefore respected. So, no, no man treats them as inferior, or despises them... unless he wants to incur the wrath of other men, or the Law!

## *3-The Gorean slave-girl*

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There are two main "concepts" of slave-girls, which Goreans call "*Kajira*":

- The Gorean Kajira: ex-Free, or possibly "Panther" or wild, she is a descendant of the Goreans, accustomed to the concepts of this world. She may also have been born on a slave farm and never known anything but this life, which she cannot question. The very nature of humans on Gor makes women easily submissive and docile, as this trait is in the blood of all Gorean women, and they have been born and raised with the full weight of this upbringing, generation after generation. Although she may have her own character, a Gorean slave knows how her world works, is naturally prepared for it, and ultimately learns to accept her situation.
- The Barbarian Kajira: technically rare, the Barbarian or Born-Slave (another nickname) is a woman taken from Earth on a Journey

to Acquire, then sold back naked, with or without the ability to speak Gorean (usually not, but for the sake of convenience, many SL players prefer to decide that she may have learned when she was abducted). She will often have been much harder to enslave, but shows more passion, sensuality and sensitive emotions than the Gorean slave, as Earth has a culture that encourages unrestrained expression of emotions, sensuality and love far more than on Gor.

In all cases, the kajira who has been trained has undergone a powerful and merciless ordeal designed to break her will and desire for rebellion and freedom. She submits to men, and wants to please them, if only to improve her lot. She knows that it's through men that she'll be treated well, and one of her only pleasures is sexual pleasure, but also attention and affection. So she'll always be docile, and pleasant, to get them.

A kajira knows that she is a possession, and that misbehaving, provoking, threatening or even hitting a Free person exposes her to immediate punishment (physical correction, cage, even mutilation or death). Every slave knows this if she has been trained. And will do her best not to risk her life. No Kajira will tell a Free person that he or she is her friend, even if this is the case. Confession can threaten both the Kajira and the Libre. For Goreans, a slave – even if she was once a Free Woman they knew – is an animal, treated and considered as such. A Gorean can't create an emotional bond with a kajira that could be compared to the bonds between free people. Friendship is therefore excluded. Even if this were the case, the word will never be used. This is also why a Gorean owes a slave nothing, and will never teach her professional skills or a trade, in theory.

Consequently, the love affair that sometimes arises between a master and a slave can, and will, never be admitted publicly, and the term will never be used by the master about his slave. He will be much tougher and more demanding with a slave who loves and is loved by him, to curb any weakness that might prejudice him in front of his peers.

Legally, on Gor, a slave has NO rights. Not even to have her own name. She can be traded, sold, beaten,

mutilated, killed, given away or abandoned, without her owner having to justify his actions in the slightest. However, as Goreans dislike cruelty, violence and gratuitous sadism, a man who tortures and destroys his slave may suffer consequences and even lose respect and honor. But legally, he is free to do as he pleases with his property.

And if a man beats, injures, kills or otherwise abuses a slave who doesn't belong to him, the only legal risk he runs is the obligation to pay compensation. Any other risk will be the wrath of the aggrieved owner.

#### 4- MEN'S RIGHTS AND DUTIES:

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- A man is Master of his domain, and on Gor it is said that "*a man is Ubar in the circle of his sword*". Patriarchal law is respected, where the man decides and reigns over his property, his spouse, his children and his servants.
- All men respect castes, and above all their own. Every Gorean, even a peasant, believes that his caste and the laws of his caste are the best.
- All Gorean men respect Honor and Courage above all else, and will follow a man with these qualities before following a man of high caste or lineage. Honor is a notion of respect for social rank, the value of others, given word, codes, traditions and laws. To have Honor based solely on getting angry when you feel insulted or don't get what you think you deserve is pride.
- A man's word is supposed to be sacred. We therefore avoid questioning it lightly, and we avoid giving it lightly, because the consequences can be socially serious.
- An *Ubar* is a warlord, a dictator with all the power in the world. In peacetime, however, a *Council* rules, with or without an administrator at its head, and makes decisions. The Council is elected from among the High Caste, and more rarely from the Low Caste.
- The order of precedence of the high-castes is: initiate, scribe, builder, physician and warrior. Warriors are therefore the lowest of

the High Castes and are expected to show respect to all the others.

- A man without a *hearthstone* is nothing, and can be killed by anyone. As a reminder, in Gorean, “*stranger*” and “*enemy*” are synonymous words.
- A Gorean respects the laws of hospitality as sacred. Both the one who receives and the one who is received owe respect and deference to the other. And generosity and other displays of affluence include (but are not necessarily limited to) household kajirae.
- Dueling is a frequent custom in the event of dispute or conflict. A non-warrior can choose (or pay) a champion for a duel. A duel must take place in front of willing witnesses to be valid, in general.
- Among all the castes, a low-caste can appeal to a particular type of law: the *Law of Merchants*: the *Law of Merchants* is invoked for an exchange and negotiation, and the Law of Merchants means that as long as the negotiation is taking place, the place and its stakeholders are protected and considered sacred: you don’t fight or threaten during a trade.

## 5- WOMEN’S RIGHTS AND DUTIES :

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- A woman is under the authority of her father, brothers, sons, or any male guardian in her family, as long as she is not in *Companionship*. Once bound by a Companionship contract, she is under the authority of her Companion. A woman without guardianship is rare, and unprotected.
- A woman is free to speak her mind, she has the right to speak if and when she wishes, and to give her opinion, including getting angry. A woman can even slap a man of her Home Stone. But everything depends on the circumstances, and she is subject to the law, and to the rules of respect and politeness. She may have to answer for her gesture, if it was ill-advised.
- A woman has the right to expect protection from a man of her Home Stone. Not to protect a woman from her Hearthstone is

dishonorable. But a woman who begs a man can justify getting a collar for doing so.

- Women don’t usually carry weapons. And while she may have a dagger, it’s best not to let it show.
- A woman who behaves passionately, or overly sensitively, who shows too much emotional or sexual interest in a man, or who is caught sleeping with a kajiru that doesn’t belong to her, can be accused of behaving like a kajira, and enslaved (in the case of sleeping with a kajiru that doesn’t belong to her, she will be enslaved by the owner of the kajiru).
- A man cannot enslave a woman from his Hearthstone on his own initiative, except in the case of flagrant and indisputable facts before witnesses, without having to answer to the laws and Council of his Hearthstone.
- Companionship is not a marriage, but a contract between two parties, renewable every year and validated by a scribe. This contract is discussed between the parents/heads of family of the two companions – true above all for the wife – and has, especially in the high castes, nothing to do with love.

## 6- SLAVE-GIRL’S RIGHTS AND DUTIES

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- Slaves have only one recognized right: they can receive the longevity serum that guarantees them theoretical immortality. In reality, this right is totally subject to their owner’s goodwill. Longevity serum is not widely available, and is relatively expensive. But, in theory, it cannot be denied to a slave, if his master wishes him to benefit from it.
- Slaves also benefit from another, rather strange right: an enslaved person has no past. It is considered to have been erased. This means they can’t be blamed for past crimes.
- Finally, a last right, even if it depends on the owner: slaves are allowed and encouraged to a certain extent, to educate and learn. They are forbidden to read certain books, but if they know how to read, they have every right to go to a library and learn. An intelligent,



cultured slave increases his value, and therefore his price!

- Almost all slaves are branded. This distinctive sign marks them as slaves, and unmarked slaves cannot be sold.
- All slaves, or almost all, wear a collar closed by a lock, or sealed, often with a ring. The collar is often engraved with the owner's name.
- A slave is an animal, no longer a human, and is treated like a domestic animal, a kind of livestock: to run away, to own anything, to have any privacy, to claim any right or privilege, to call a free person in front of him by name, to be obnoxious or insulting, to assault a free person, even to defend himself, to refuse an order, to lie, to sit on a chair or cushion, to lie in a bed, to eat with cutlery, to raise his children, to keep family ties, to be too curious.

## *Differences between humans & goreans*

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I know, it's not obvious, but the Gorean isn't a human from Earth; he's never seen anything of this world, with a few exceptions, and wouldn't understand anything about it. He's so far removed from our world that he can't imagine it... just as we'd have trouble imagining his world, for that matter.

And so, you'll be playing a Gorean in the world of Gor, who acts, lives, thinks and dies as a Gorean, not as an Earthling. So, let's decipher these differences, to help you embody your character!

### ***1- Goreans and earthlings are not so different***

Goreans tend to be physically fitter; they're also mentally stronger, especially the men. They're not necessarily superior to earthlings, just stronger on average. Note that an earthling on Gor (man or woman) has great strength because of the difference in gravity, which is weaker on Gor, like Tarl Cabot. This can make all the difference. A detail Norman forgets for all the earthling women who are, in his novels, weak as children, which is totally absurd.

The big difference between a Gorean and an Earthling lies in their morality: a Gorean is often bold, extroverted, proud, hot-tempered, violent, lecherous, wilful, even bloodthirsty and capricious, whereas an Earthling, especially a Westerner with a Judeo-Christian culture, prefers to repress or control these traits, even if it means putting up with his frustrations, which a Gorean then sees as weakness. This is part of the reason why Earthlings are seen as slave peoples.

### ***2- Gor's morality is based on inequality***

We might as well say it, and it's obvious, Gor's world is based on the law of the strongest (which is not only physically strong: goreans greatly respect intellectual superiority) and on the fact that inequality is in nature, and is therefore totally logical and acceptable. The weak become slaves, the poor starve, the dishonest die alone – too bad for them.

This is also why word and honor are so valuable, because the law of the strongest implies that anything can be taken by force, and so much the worse for one's promises and honor. Honor, then, is the only limit to Gorean savagery, along with the law, which depends on state force.

That said, for a Gorean, there's nothing unjust or savage about the idea that the law of the strongest dominates all, but a natural logic: the strongest and the biggest dominate, the others submit or die.

### ***3- Goreans think of their world as a living being***

Yes, Goreans are quite eco-friendly. They see their world and wildlife, from the forest to the prairie to the waters, as a living part of a living world, which is of great importance to them and must be respected. They care about their environment and take good care of it. They love nature and wild landscapes, and often know the names of various plants and animals.

Goreans view forest fires with great horror. Anyone who starts a forest fire is hunted down and burned alive.

### ***4- Racism and race have no meaning for goreans***

Basically, skin color and that sort of thing don't matter to goreans, because of the melting pot that is their society in general. But language, city and caste are matters of great importance to goreans, so here's a good enough basis for the discrimination that humans so relish.

The high castes look down on the low castes, who look up to them! Every city looks down on other cities, and every city looks down on village hicks. Those who speak Gorean look down on the barbarians who can't speak it.

If Goreans don't understand racism, which makes no sense to them, they're clearly xenophobic: any culture other than their own is viewed with great suspicion.

### ***5- There are no words for “country” or “nation”.***

Basically, the term for a nation is city-state, which determines belonging, home-stone and pride. The geographical boundary is the farmland and rural communities that are vassals of the city-state, and there’s a blur between two borders, sometimes even vast areas of wilderness or controlled by small village clans or outlaws.

### ***6- Goreans in no hurry***

Everyone lives by the rhythm of the sun and the seasons; even in towns with bell towers, time measurement is of little importance, and Goreans don’t mind taking breaks to go for walks or to the public baths in the middle of the afternoon.

Being pressed for time or making appointments at specific times is not at all Gorean.

### ***7- The arts are important***

Music, painting, sculpture, song, dance, poetry, lyricism – everything artistic is important and part of civil life. All the arts were encouraged and prized, absolutely everywhere. In fact, it’s common for artists not to sign their work, as it belongs to the public landscape, not to their own glory. In other words, artists never starve or freeze to death, even if they don’t live very well.

### ***8- Goreans love leisure activities***

All things considered, free women have fewer freedoms than free men in this respect, but Goreans like to chat at the baths, drink and chat on the terraces, have dinner at each other’s homes and go to parties.

Goreans also like to go to the market, discuss politics in the agoras or attend plays, concerts, fights in the arenas and much more. Of course, once again, free women, even if they can enjoy them, are more limited in their leisure activities.

### ***9- Goreans take great pride in their appearance***

We’re not going to talk about Gorean fashion, because it’s pointless and no one in Second Life follows it in their outfits, and that’s just as well. But Goreans do like to take care of their looks: they pay attention to their hair, their finery and take care – or have their clothes taken care of – at the earliest opportunity. They also love cleanliness, from the humblest peasant to the proudest rarius.

### ***10- Honor is very serious for goreans***

And you really, really shouldn’t tempt a Gorean’s honor unless you’re sure you can answer for it, even with weapons. The gorean will say that his honor is more precious than gold, and that he will more readily go to war for honor than for wealth.

Well, in reality, wars are fought over conquest, but honor issues can quickly complicate diplomatic relations... or be a good excuse to seize your neighbor’s property.

### ***11- Goreans are quite conservatives***

In many areas, they are reluctant to accept innovation or change, and even distrust it. More than traditionalists, they tend to idealize past situations and dislike change. For them, progress is only justified if it’s imperative and self-evident; in other words, not often.

### ***12- Gorean men show their emotions***

If the average Gorean looks a little dry-hearted, this is by no means a generalized reality: Gorean men can feel and express emotions without shame. It’s not beneath a man to cry openly, even a fearless warrior! On the other hand, Gorean women of course never have this right in public, except for slaves, for whom it’s even a duty.

### ***13- Bargaining is the rule***

You should always haggle: in markets and stores, there’s usually no fixed price. If you’re trying to buy something, haggle! Goreans love it!

#### ***14- The people of Gor don't pull out their weapons at the drop of a hat***

Mainly because it's a good way of ending up dead or seriously wounded, and then being in danger... or useless. Goreans only draw their weapons when they're ready to use them, not to threaten or show off.

Contrary to popular belief, the majority of Goreans simply don't know how to fight. That's why every city has rarii as a police force, to prevent the law of the strongest from jeopardizing the laws of the City.

#### ***15- There are no weddings on Gor***

Gorean "marriage" is known as free companionship. It is a contract, signed between two parties, the families of the two companions, and its purpose is to ensure offspring for the men and create alliances between families. Legally, it lasts only one year, and must be renewed before the twentieth Ahn of the anniversary date, or it is dissolved. However, it can be signed for a longer period, or even by tacit renewal.

Free women do not change their names as part of a free companionship. A specific contract for companionship is therefore generally drawn up, detailing all the terms and conditions of this union, even if some contracts are simply made on the word.

#### ***16- Chairs are in short supply***

Chairs and seats have a special symbolic meaning linked to power and status, and are not often found in private homes. They are generally reserved for important people such as administrators and judges. Most Goreans find chairs uncomfortable, preferring cushions instead. Gorean men generally sit cross-legged. Women kneel, resting on their heels.

Yes, I know, on SL, a lot of people prefer seats, and that's no big deal either!

#### ***17- Graves are rare***

Goreans don't believe in a better world after death, but that a man's deeds survive his death, and that's all that matters.

So, the dead are buried or burned, but no grave marked with their name or mausoleum is left. Funerals are very quiet, and the color of mourning is usually white.

#### ***18- Illiteracy is common***

In fact, the majority of goreans can't read, including the warriors. And for goreans, this is nothing to be ashamed of, it's just a fact. So, yes, someone who can read is a prized ability, and a slave who can read is even rarer and more valuable.

#### ***19- Knowledge is double and secret***

Power is knowledge, and in this field, the high-castes have understood it well. Double Knowledge is what ordinary people believe and what intellectuals know.

The lower castes have the First Knowledge, knowledge that is in part a lie supplied to them by the higher castes. The lower castes believe, for example, that Gor is flat, and they know nothing about the Earth except that strange word for the place from which the slave-women we sometimes meet come.

The higher castes have the Second Knowledge, which is much richer and more accurate, and is always being updated, but is not yet complete and still introduces some scientific and historical untruths. Very few members of the upper castes know the true nature of the priest-kings and the Kurii.

So there is a Third Knowledge that even the Initiate caste doesn't know at all, and reserved for the agents of the Priest-Kings, who themselves know a great deal about the most modern science, including that of the Priest-Kings, and the Earth of the 21st century, for example.

## ***20- Many low-caste goreans hide their names.***

They then have a common name and a real name. Often, only close relatives know their real name. Knowledge of a real name is said to give one power, the ability to use that name in insidious spells and magical practices.

The upper castes generally use their names freely, but the lower castes believe they also have customary names. Most people give their name followed by their city.

## ***21- Goreans are superstitious***

Many members of the lower castes and some of the upper castes are superstitious. They believe that certain people can read minds. They believe in magic, evil spells and curses, and tell stories of the great sorcerers of the distant land of Anango. These superstitions can sometimes make them rather gullible, and certain technical, medical or scientific knowledge – for example, the simple fact that an Earth slave is not afraid of certain natural phenomena – is mistaken for witchcraft.

## ***22- Goreans love children***

Gorean children are treated like royalty, in a very free and permissive way (especially the boys, what a surprise?) and their parents and relatives inflict no suffering on them.

Even child slaves are rarely mistreated, and enjoy a high degree of freedom until they reach adulthood, i.e. around the age of 14-15.

## ***23- Goreans have eternal youth***

I'm exaggerating, but only slightly. The treatment known as stabilizing serum is a life-prolonging remedy. It was developed some five hundred years ago by the physician caste. So, in the 21st century, no one on Gor, with the exception of the Priest-Kings, can be more than five hundred years old.

The effect of the serum is a gradual transformation of genetic structures, resulting in constant and stable cell regeneration. This enables Goreans to live

exceptionally long and stay young for a very long time. But this ability affects everyone differently. Sometimes it doesn't work, sometimes it fades after just a few hundred years, and sometimes it even accelerates aging!

We consider that all humans, free and slave, have a right to this serum. It's quite expensive, but we give it to people whenever we can. As a result, many of Gor's inhabitants look young and healthy.

## ***24- Goreans aren't sadists, but...***

In fact, they are; but you have to place yourself in the context of the novels and in Norman's head to put things into perspective. The Goreans described by Norman suffer few inborn or acquired psychological defects, and psychopaths of various kinds are very rare and obviously don't make old bones. Goreans repress all gratuitous violence against men, women and children, but this stops at FREE.

This is a subject that comes up often, with vehement opinions both for and against. So, while my personal opinion is clearly: yes, but this needs to be qualified. In Gorean culture, sadistic acts such as branding a human, whipping or humiliating a kajira for fun, or even dragging her into an abusive situation that results in her death to entertain an audience, are considered acceptable to Goreans. That said, true sadists and psychopathic personalities are rare on Gor. While on Earth, between 7 and 10% of humans have such tendencies, and around 1% may actually indulge in sadistic behavior, on Gor, the number is much smaller. Some cruel and sadistic behavior (for us) will be commonplace and totally accepted by society, but cases of individuals indulging in gratuitous sadistic violence are very rare, say 0.1%. Why is that? Because these people don't live long on Gor, and some sort of selective pressure has largely reduced them from the Gorean gene pool.

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Yeah, in short, players who want to let off steam by playing violent, sadistic characters, just because you think it's fun and the Gor setting seems to lend itself to it, know that you're not Gorean at all, and that hiding behind the BtB is a shameful absurdity.

### ***25- The goreans don't care about slavery***

For Goreans, this is the order of things; not only is it the rule that the strong dominate and the weak submit, but what's more, in the Gorean mind, every woman is a potential slave who is left free as long as she holds her place in society with dignity and honor.

For a Gorean, slavery is a pleasure, a convenience, a source of prestige and wealth. All Gorean men learn from childhood how to command a slave, how to force her to submit, how to bind and gag her. As adolescents, they are encouraged to use them, to rape them, to take them, to beat them, to make them their objects of pleasure; after all, that's what they're there for.

For the Gorean spirit, it's better for this character to be channeled in this way, rather than exploding into more dramatic violence. Besides, a whole part of society is based on slavery, its use, trade and exploitation; no one on Gor would dream of renouncing it, except a madman.

## *The caste system*

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Gor's society is not based on nations or countries, but on independent city-states, similar to ancient Greek cities, each with their own laws and customs. Some cities are sometimes vassals of stronger ones. These cities are ruled by a Council of High Castes elected in times of peace, and an *Ubar*, or even an *Ubara*, although this is very rare, elected or appointed by the Council in times of war (which is often the case, as the city-states are constantly at war with each other). The *Ubar* is often, logically, an officer or veteran of the warrior caste.

Every free man and woman in a city-state is a member of a caste, passed down from father to son. A free woman belongs to her father's caste or may adopt that of her Companion, subject to certain restrictions.

Caste is not simply a profession or a function, but defines a place in the social hierarchy. A caste brings together men bound by a common affiliation, codes, laws, symbols, secret knowledge, education, guilds, brotherhoods, and a set of rules that follow them from birth to death. Every man—even the poorest—is proud of his caste and generally cannot imagine leaving it, and above all, losing it! A man without a caste is as badly regarded as a man without honor. No one supports him anymore, he no longer belongs to the City or his community, and becomes an outlaw, deprived of all his possessions, who can be hunted down on sight.

### *Castes from the inside, some generalities*

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The caste system determines the social hierarchy in Gor. The ruling castes are the only ones with the right to vote and sit on the municipal councils of each city-state, and the highest administrative positions are all closed to non-ruling castes. Within the ruling castes, a hierarchy, which is symbolic but sometimes very real, emphasizes the authority of the highest to the lowest of the ruling castes.

There are two categories in the caste system: the High Castes and the Low Castes.

There are five **High Castes**: *the Initiates, the Scribes, the Builders, the Physicians, and the Warriors*, in order of precedence from highest to lowest. Each caste owes respect, deference, and a certain obedience to the castes above it. The Initiates are therefore the caste that can command and impose their will on everyone else. It should be noted that depending on the city and its laws, this list may differ, as each city-state decides which castes are high and which are not. Thus, the merchant caste, a low caste, can sometimes be a high caste.

These castes are the only ones with the right to vote in a city-state and elect its representatives to the city council, the supreme governing body. They have extensive political power, but this does not mean that they are the richest. It is even common for members of the high castes to be poor, in debt, or to work for the lower castes, especially merchants, who control the economy of the world of Gor. It should be noted that members of a city-state council, who represent their caste, can be either women or men. For a woman, being elected *Consul* is a significant social advancement.

The **Lower Castes** are almost innumerable and include all categories of professions, sometimes with sub-castes. Among the best known are merchants, slavers, farmers, herders, blacksmiths, assassins, artists and musicians, bakers, butchers, sailors, fishermen, etc.

The lower castes are vital to Gorean society, but they have no voting rights and therefore no direct political influence. However, they can elect their representatives to the city-state, hold festivals and gatherings, processions, schools, and markets, and are organized and close-knit. Despite their lack of official political power, they can therefore have a great influence on a city-state. And as I mentioned, high or low, a caste does not reflect wealth and material power, but social status. A very wealthy craftsman or merchant has the means to buy the votes he wants and influence city politics.

The major difference between high and low castes lies in two other specific points:

## *FIRST AND SECOND KNOWLEDGE*

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In this compartmentalized society, knowledge and learning are controlled and reserved. Thus, the *High Castes* reserve secret knowledge that is forbidden to the *Low Castes*. It should even be noted that some common knowledge is downright misleading when compared to secret knowledge: for example, the educated High Castes know that Gor is a planet. Most of the Low Castes believe, and are taught, that Gor is a flat world...

## *PRECEDENCE AND AUTHORITY*

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The *High Castes* are respected and held in high esteem by the people of the *Low Castes*, who make up about 90% of the Gorean population. Thus, the *High Castes* have authority and precedence over the *Low Castes*, which gives them a certain assurance that they will be obeyed when necessary and that they are entitled to relative consideration, politeness, respect, and deference. All Goreans are proud of their caste, but the lower castes will admit that the upper castes are superior to them and will give them, for example, a privileged place to attend an assembly, or greet them first, with respect, before saying hello to other neighbors. And when a high caste gives an order, if it is clearly for a good reason, the lower castes will tend to listen and obey. After all, the lower castes know that the high castes know much more than they do.

It is important to remember that all of this works primarily for members of the same city-state. With visitors or representatives from other cities, reputation, prestige, power, and rank and position in a more or less powerful city-state take precedence over caste. Thus, a penniless scribe from an isolated village would be wise to show respect and deference to a great university doctor in Ar, at the risk of getting into trouble. Similarly, being the Ubar of a distant village does not carry much weight with a simple legion officer from Turia. Caste precedence works well among members of one's Home Stone. Outside the city-states, only prestige, renown, recognition, and respect—in short, material power—will compel your interlocutor to show the expected deference, even though, no matter what happens, a Gorean will tend to respect caste precedence, even with a stranger or visitor.

Being born into a caste means you stay in it. First, because you are educated in it. Second, because every Gorean is very proud of their caste and will inevitably claim that it is the most indispensable of all castes! But also because the castes are very closed. There are only two ways to change castes: for a woman, by becoming the companion of a man from another caste (if it is higher), who can then adopt her—but she loses all the privileges and rights of her previous caste. Or by being adopted by another caste, which is quite rare and requires proving that one is capable and worthy, that the local leaders of that caste accept them, and that the city-state council gives its permission.

## *War on Gor and the Warrior caste*

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So, as the title suggests, this article isn't just about Gor's best-known caste, the warrior caste, also known as the rarii (singular: rarius), but about everything to do with war on Gor.

And war being one of the fundamental means of this violent world, there's going to be a lot to talk about, so we can get started! And I've written to music, with a philharmonic orchestra playing the music from Assassin's Creed Odyssey, excellent inspiration!

### *1- War on Gor*

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The world of Gor has preserved a form of warfare that is directly related to the warfare of Greco-Roman antiquity. But what are we talking about? To put it simply, unlike the medieval world, where the soldier is a man-at-arms, rarely a professional, in the service of a local lord, himself a vassal of a regional lord, himself a more or less loyal vassal of a king, the ancient soldier is, for the most part, a citizen trained for war, in the service of his city, and who takes his orders not from a lord, but from the authorities of the city of which he is a citizen, be it an elected council, or an *Ubar*.

**Note:** an *Ubar* is a political warlord, in Gor's world, i.e. a despot, which in the etymological sense means: an individual who has received absolute power from the ruling authorities, but in the interests of his city-state. Yes, an *Ubar* is not a tyrant; a tyrant has gained absolute power illegitimately, and uses it in his own interests, disregarding the interests of his nation. An *Ubar* is therefore elected or appointed, and remains in office until the war for which he has been appointed is over. That said, many cities have a tradition of having an *Ubar* at their head who remains in office for life, and who can, but again with the agreement of the city authorities, designate his successor. Yes, the people of Gor are torn between a desire for democracy and absolute authority.

War on Gor is all about legions, pitched battles and sieges. Raid battles do exist, but they're primarily a

method of plundering, not used by the rarii, but rather by the outlaws, mercenaries, panthers and other raiders of Torvaldsland.

Most battles are a kind of rendezvous, where two armies manage to meet, either after a successful siege, when one army advances to another siege, or retreats, or before a siege has taken place. The terrain is therefore very important, as is the stewardship that must follow the armies to ensure their supplies. This is where scouts are vital, as are strategists. Scouts track down the enemy army to find out where to meet it, while strategists decide which terrain to choose, and when, as well as which military formation is best suited to confronting the enemy. But that doesn't mean there's no looting! We'll talk about that below.

A small point very particular to the world of Gor: scouts are most often tarnsmen, elite warriors riding [tarns](#), [giant eagles](#). While tarns may not be all that effective on the battlefield (a tarn is ultimately rather fragile against bows and crossbows), they are still an aerial commando force capable of both scouting and neutralizing enemy scouts; not to mention that tarns can swoop down on an army's command to destroy its organization and kill its leaders. Thus, tarnsmen, in attack, vanguard and defense, are particularly sought-after.

### *A GOREAN ARMY*

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I use the term legions to describe Gorean armies, because it's more generic than phalanx, which refers to a specific formation of Greek warriors. The Gorean legions form a troop of around 3,000 to 5,000 infantrymen, 300 to 500 cavalrymen and around 50 tarnsmen. Archers, artillery and engineers are usually auxiliary troops.

A city like Athens, at the time of Alexander the Great, had 300,000 inhabitants and the equivalent of 8 legions, i.e. more than 26,000 elite soldiers. As for Rome... the Roman Empire at its height had 27 legions (125,000 soldiers) and cohorts of auxiliaries (artillery, slingers, cavalry, etc.) also totalling 125,000 men, for a total of 250,000 men. But then, covering the whole of Europe, the Maghreb and part of the Middle East, that's not all that impressive.

For example, Ar, Gor's most populous and powerful city-state, and its satellite cities, which total some 3 to 4 million inhabitants, had 15 legions of 5,000 infantrymen, for a total of 75,000 soldiers, and no doubt as many auxiliaries.

A legion on the march is more than just 5,000 infantrymen. For every rarius, there must be at least one civilian member of the quartermaster and supply staff: servants, slaves, cooks, blacksmiths, drapers, lumberjacks, engineers, doctors, etc. A troop of 10,000 people had to be fed and cared for, requiring considerable financial resources. That's why big wars don't last, because the longer they last, the greater the risk that the army will die of starvation, ruin its city-state, or be decimated by epidemics.

In fact, it's the supply problem that causes the most damage to civilians. The army needs to eat, heat and shelter, and if it has to pillage villages in its path, it won't hesitate. For the peasants and villagers of these communities, the only way out is to flee, at the risk of losing everything. But the rarius in the field also hopes for booty; thus, during the advance of a legion, looting to capture slaves, especially women, is not at all uncommon. Commanders tend to let this happen, under a certain amount of control, so as not to alienate the troops.

## **WHY GO TO WAR?**

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The main excuse for medieval wars was legitimacy and inheritance, since the feudal system gave power to the same lines of nobility. In antiquity, this was not the case, nor was it the Goreans' main excuse. As a general rule, a war begins with a problem of misunderstanding following an unhonored alliance between city-states. Some unions are simply intended to seal alliances, but as power is generally managed by an elected Council of High Castes, these alliances between families can be denounced by the authorities, who decide that there is no reason to respect them.

But the real reason for war is economic or socio-cultural. There are three main causes of war:

- **War of conquest** : a city-state is in economic competition with its neighbors and can't find an

outlet for its own markets; so it attacks one of its neighbors to open up new economic markets. These are mostly siege wars, often over a long period of time. And in the process, the victor plunders the treasure of the target city, and makes slaves.

- **Wars of honor** : one insult too many, one betrayal too many, an misalliance too many, and a city-state considers that its prestige and honor depend on its ability to make its enemy pay for the affront it has suffered. These are short wars, rarely sieges, in which the victor will demand tribute or ransom to free prisoners, but will rarely demand the capture of territory.

- **Defensive war**: this is undoubtedly the worst type of war, as the attacker himself is backed into a corner. Most often, the aim is to conquer a neighbor in order to fortify one's own borders against another adversary, or to gain new territory for survival, having lost one's own to another adversary. Defensive wars are conflicts in which the attacker has no choice, or even nothing to lose, and will therefore pursue the conflict to the limit.

There are many other types of warfare, such as prestige war, economic war and political war (waging war on the outside, to gain political leverage in one's own city-state), but I've stopped at the three most common.

A final point on this subject: **wars are not massacres**. I'm referring here to ancient and medieval battles. As a general rule, between wounded and dead, an army prepares to admit defeat and retreat as soon as it loses more than a tenth of its men. And an army rarely loses more than 15% to 20% of its men. A rarius is expensive and precious. Losing 20% of auxiliary soldiers or conscripts isn't so bad. But losing 20% of your Gorean legionnaires is a total catastrophe. And while the enemy will finish off the dying left on the battlefield, they will generally not execute prisoners or captured civilians, which would be a dishonorable act. It's far more interesting to exchange them for ransom, or to enslave them.



## *WARRIORS IN GENERAL*

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Not all warriors are rarii, and not all rarii serve in a legion. The use of legal force and the carrying of weapons are not really regulated in the world of Gor. A man entering a city-state in war gear, if unknown, will have to answer questions, but city gates, in the novels, are always open (during the day) to all travelers, including armed ones.

The big difference is that the warrior, in the minds of SL Gor players, belongs to the warrior caste. But this is by no means a generality. Many mercenaries are, for example, sailors, hunters, peasants, low-caste workers and so on. They are more or less trained in weaponry, are wealthy enough to own equipment, and hire out their services for a more or less extended period, as they have not renounced their caste, but simply found an occasional trade that brings them a welcome additional income.

That said, in Gor's mind, the true warrior is the rarius. But this is a fairly populous caste. And a city-state doesn't necessarily need legions ready for battle at a moment's notice. Also, many rarius work in the private sector, in the service of a family, a guild or another caste. They work as bodyguards, caravan escorts, guild or embassy guards, private guards, or even bounty hunters tracking down criminals. But mercenaries are very rare. A mercenary fights for money alone, which the rarii consider a dishonor. Oh, there are some, but they're no better than outlaws to the rest of the caste.

Note that I'm not talking about the profession of slave catchers. This is almost never a profession practiced by rarii, but usually by mercenaries, or hunters and other low-castes hired by slavers. Once again, for a warrior, it's not a very honorable job.

### *2- The rarius and the warrior caste*

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The rarius, Gor's soldier, serves a city-state, the one for which he has sworn on the Home stone. Even if he works for the private sector, he is still in the service of the city and will join a legion as soon as the authorities call for war.

All rarii have undergone rigorous elite training as legionnaires, starting in childhood. Not only have they learned to fight alone and as a unit, but also to function as military formations, where each man's shield also protects his neighbor. The weapon of choice for a rarius is not the sword, but the spear, as it is the master weapon of a square of legionnaires protected by their shields. The sword, though formidable, is a hand-to-hand weapon, when the formations of spears and shields are broken and the battle becomes a melee where the spear has no further use.

From the age of 14 or 15, rarii specialize in one type of service or training, until the age of 21, when they are considered warriors ready for service. The only special case is that of tarniers, who receive specialized training from childhood.

**Note:** no, rarii do not despise reading and writing. They may not all be very literate, but they have all learned to read and write, because it's a necessity. How can you read a plan, an order or an official letter without it? By the same token, they are very clean-cut men who take great care over their appearance. It's part of their military discipline! Even a penniless warrior will never appear before his equals in dirty or worn-out clothes.

A rarius is therefore highly disciplined, with a strong esprit de corps. But he's not just a warrior. His kit includes shovels and pickaxes, for setting up camps, digging trenches, building fortifications, bridges and war artillery. But above all, a warrior is a man of honor.

Honor is the driving force behind the rarii way of life and discipline. The solitary warrior who obeys only himself and respects neither authority, nor hierarchy, nor laws, nor caste precedence, does not last long. Warriors have their own code, some of whose principles we know from the Warrior's Aphorisms quoted by Norman, but their honor also depends on their respect and discipline, which is not limited to obeying their officers. The warrior serves the city, and obeys its laws and civil leaders.

The color of the rarii is red, and they always wear it. It has to be said that they are rarely seen in civilian clothes.

## *THE WARRIOR CODE*

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Norman quotes some of them, I haven't taken them all down as they are, but as the novels progress, we learn part of the rarii code, which is as follows. It's not absolutely complete, but it's enough to understand the rarii sense of honor.

- Every challenge must be met on time.
- Whoever sheds your blood, or whose blood you shed, becomes your brother in arms. To disrespect a man (and especially another warrior, even an enemy) with whom you have fought is a serious act.
- Warriors never break their allegiance.
- The only acceptable death for a Warrior is in battle.
- The claim to the right of the sword is the right to challenge another Warrior for his slave; the challenged Warrior chooses the dueling weapon.
- Respect intelligence as well as strength.
- Warriors never commit suicide.
- Warriors share a common Home stone. Its name is "battle".
- Slaves are a Warrior's joy and convenience. The capture of slaves is not only permitted, but encouraged.
- If a man raises a weapon against a Warrior, the latter is authorized by his Codes to kill him.
- Stay alive as long as you can regain Freedom and Honor. (Yes, a rarius can flee or surrender when the situation is hopeless.)
- Poisoned steel is against the Codes.

- Ninety-seventh Aphorism of the Warrior's Codes: "What is impossible to see or touch but more beautiful than the richest diamond?" The answer is "Honor."
- Even the fiercest warrior prefers peace and family to war and fighting.
- Any woman, any possession, any good, can be taken by the sword (this is a debatable point in the code, as it's still theft, in one's own city-state, with the risk of being harshly judged, even banished or killed).
- A non-warrior who accepts a duel deserves honor and respect.
- A market is sacred, and the marketplace must be bloodless (warriors respect the Law of Merchants, which considers all trade sacred and bloodless).
- Whoever asks a warrior for protection owes him a debt. If it's a woman, the warrior is free to take her neck as compensation.

## *WARRIOR LIFE*

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The warrior caste, on closer inspection, is not a rich one. It's the lowest of the five High castes, and it's at their service. As the warrior caste's only skill is war, and despite the importance of the subject to the world of Gor, they don't have much to sell or monetize. And if you're wondering what the Initiate caste can sell, it sells hope and faith, and that sells very well!

Also, the only thing a warrior can sell for money is his strength, his arm and his military skills. Which isn't worth much, even if it is invaluable in the event of war. Also, warriors don't roll in gold, and those who aren't lucky enough to receive a (modest) paycheck from their city-state are willing to take on any guard work to earn a living. Which introduces a somewhat dismal detail. Alongside the scribal caste,

which isn't always wealthy, it's the warrior high-caste who are most likely to sell their daughters to improve their standard of living.

And this is both sinister and logical: in the warrior caste, women have little use beyond their ability to give birth to new warriors. If a daughter can be married off to a representative of a higher caste for a fruitful alliance (or to a merchant, for the same reason), it's not that common. Warrior caste women have little rank or usefulness: scribes are preferred for stewardship and management, builders for military engineering, and physicians to treat the men. The woman of the warrior caste rarely has the opportunity to be anything other than a mother. That said, there are a few stewards, strategists and managers who have been able to stand out from the crowd. But it remains rare. And even more than in other Gorean castes, warriors are terribly macho, even sexist. This makes it even more difficult for a woman in the caste to climb the social ladder.

By the way, not every warrior has a slave girl, far from it. If that's the goal of any warrior's prestige, a slave girl is pretty expensive, for a warrior's modest pay. So, more often than not, if he manages to win one during a military campaign, he'll sell her to feed his family. Only non-commissioned officers and veterans own a slave they can afford to keep.

So why do we talk so much about the wealth and glory of the greatest warriors? Because it's the high-caste that offers the greatest opportunity for social advancement. Goreans recognize merit before rank or status. A warrior can start out as a simple city gate guard, and by dint of exploits and prestige, become a senior officer, covered in wealth, glory and respect! And as an Ubar is, barring exceptions, always a member of this caste, it's the only one that really offers access to the highest power in the world of Gor. Only the highest magistrates of the scribe caste can claim such an equivalence.

**Note:** this is why it is the lowest of the 5 high castes, and owes obedience and respect to all the others. The warrior caste can easily seize power in a city-state, so it is placed lowest in the hierarchy. Once again, the warrior is at the service of his city and his community, never the other way around! Only in times of war

does this caste have authority, and then only in matters of security, military and war.

## *THE MILITARY RANKS*

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There aren't many references to the Gorean names for the military ranks within the warrior caste, so I did a little research, based on the few quotations on the subject, and on the military organization of the Roman legions.

To understand the ranks, you need to understand the formations of the legions. These differed according to the type of corps. What works for infantrymen differs for cavalrymen or tarniers. I indicate with each division of a legion the rank of the man commanding it. I should point out that this is not entirely historical, as Roman ranks were a nameless mess, whose titles and ranks have changed a lot in the course of history.

- **Legion:** 3,000 to 5,000 men. Headed by a *legatus* (equivalent to a **general** or **high-ranking colonel**).

- **Cohort:** unit of 1,000 men, all with the same military training (legionnaires, cavalrymen, etc.). Led by a *centurion* (a **commander**) or a *legide* (a **colonel**).

- **Manipule:** unit of around 300 men, under the same cohort. Led by a *princeps prior* (a **captain**).

- **Centurie:** unit of around 100 men, under the same manipule. Led by a *princeps* ( **lieutenant**), assisted by two *optios* (**sergeants**).

- **Unit:** group of 10 men under the same centurie. Led by an *evocatus* (a **corporal**, always a veteran soldier).

Cavalrymen are grouped in maniples of 250 to 300. Tarnsmen in a centurie of 50. They always have their own *princeps prior*, sometimes even their own centurion. Naval soldiers are organized like legions of infantrymen, with one ship for every 100 warriors on board. Auxiliary troops were organized into cohorts, with their centurions under the command of the *legatus* of the legion to which they were attached.

### 3- Warrior expertise

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Let's look at a few types of Gorean warriors who were members of the caste.

**The legionary:** the most typical warrior. He serves in a legion of infantrymen, and specializes in formation combat, with helmet, shield and sturdy spear. He usually lives in barracks, and only non-commissioned officers and veterans can afford a wife and children. A legionnaire who is not in the field is on training or urban guard patrol. It's a totally military life, where leave is rare.

**The urban guard:** the gatekeeper, the rampart guard, the patrol soldier, etc... Not exactly the most honorable position in a rarius, but indispensable, since it ensures the security of the city-state. The urban guard has only two functions: to sound the alarm and be combat-ready in the event of enemy intrusion, and to maintain order. He is not there to police or enforce the law, which is the job of magistrates and their delegates, the *quaesitorii* (see below), but only to enforce order. While many legionnaires assigned to barracks patrol the city and countryside, the urban guard is sometimes either an old veteran rarius who is spending his retirement this way, or a young legionnaire considered unfit to take his place in a combat formation.

**The cavalryman:** riding a terrible [war tharlaron](#), the cavalryman is a member of a shock unit charged with overrunning enemy lines. Cavalrymen can also be scouts or vanguards, but tarnsmen are preferred for reconnaissance missions. This is a corps that suffers many losses in battle, which is the price of its formidable effectiveness.

**The tarnsman :** an article should surely be dedicated to this unit alone, which forms a warrior sub-caste in its own right. It's an elite force among the rarii. Tarnsmen ride war tarns, fearsome giant birds, and their mission is reconnaissance, targeted blitzkrieg and aerial harassment. Again, this is a corps that suffers many casualties in battle. It's difficult to become a tarnsman, as this category of warrior is trained from father to son, from childhood onwards.

**The marine warrior:** like a legionnaire, this infantryman specializes in boarding, preferring the crossbow, saber and light shield to the legionnaire's spear and heavy shield. Marine warriors avoid helmets and heavy equipment, in the hope of surviving drowning. And they're taught to swim, of course!

**The elite guard :** unlike the urban guard or patrolman, the elite guard is a prestigious position, open only to the best, requiring expertise, experience and total devotion. He is attached to the guard of the city-state's highest authorities, ready to die to fulfill his duty to protect them. The elite guard is part of the personal guard of the Ubar or the Council, and is often considered the city's most prestigious military unit.

**The strategist:** a small caste within a caste, strategists are selected from among the most intellectual warriors, those whose intelligence, cunning and experience are more valuable than their strength. They are trained in the study of military strategy and tactics, and incidentally, are generally all excellent kaissa players. They are, of course, all, at the very least, non-commissioned officers of good rank.

**The engineering warrior:** military works, artillery weapons and the skills needed to dig tunnels and knock down walls are the prerogative of the builders' guild. But they are assisted by specialized soldiers who, under their direction, implement engineering machines and tactics. They are indispensable in siege battles. This is the military branch of the builders, and they have their own command, supported by members of the builder caste.

**The archer :** archer units are auxiliary troops in the legion organization. They are therefore never legionnaires, and their training differs, from their 15<sup>th</sup> year onwards, or even younger. For a rarius, it's a less-than-honorable position, where members of the caste considered not strong enough to do anything else end up. That said, they're still highly regarded, for their efficiency on the battlefield against all the other auxiliaries, but also against the cavalry and the tarnsmen!

**The quaesitor :** while the engineering warrior is assigned to the builder caste, the quaesitor is a rarius

who has become an agent of the magistrates of the scribe caste. Hand-picked, made up of veterans with proven intellectual and moral abilities and a certain diplomatic flair, the quaesitorii are Gor's police officers. They are responsible for arresting criminals, apprehending and interrogating suspects, punishing offenses (usually with an immediate fine), and securing crime scenes for the magistrates' investigative work, in which they often participate.

#### *4- Gorean weapons & armor*

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Let's start by clarifying one point: **Gorean warriors never wear metal torso armor.** Nor are they bare-chested! Like everyone else, they can get cold, and an army that starts seeing its warriors fall ill is in big trouble.

But, yes, wearing metal armor is a taboo, a religious taboo. I find it hard to see any concrete explanation for this decision, apart from the religious prohibition, so I won't dwell on the causes of this choice. That said, while the Roman legions wore chain mail and metal breastplates, heavy armor has never been the norm in the history of warfare. Simply because it's expensive! A good shield, a sturdy helmet and padded clothing do the trick just fine. A Gorean warrior will add armbands and metal leggings for added protection.

Are there any exceptions? Yes, there are a few in the novels. The richest warriors in Tovaldsland are proud of their chain mail, and the greatest military officers wear breastplates, which are more decorative than protective. Nor is it uncommon to see elite troops wearing armor reinforcements in chain mail or plates, for their shoulders and arms, or in loincloths and skirts to protect their lower abdomen and thighs. Leather is also tolerated. It can be slightly reinforced with metal nails. Non-quilted leather, however, is no better than fabric in terms of protection, and it's heavier and more expensive. Yes, I know, in the movies, everyone loves leather. But that's because it looks better on TV. It's no better than good, thick, padded, reinforced fabric.

**The typical equipment of a warrior** is therefore a helmet, an infantryman's spear, a sword (usually a glaive, i.e. a fairly short, handy weapon) and a large

shield, either round, like a hoplite's shield, or rectangular and elongated, like the Roman legionnaires' scutum. As the latter provides greater coverage, strength and sophistication than the round shield, it's far more effective in training than the round shield, which I'm sure was somewhat neglected by the Gorean legions. Added to this is a tunic of padded fabric that can absorb shocks and avoid sharp blade blows, and metal leggings that protect shins and calves, up to the knee. Armbands to protect the forearm are less common, but widespread. And of course, a warrior wears gloves and a leather cap under his helmet (metal and scalp don't mix well over time).

No, there's no bow! Or a slingshot, for that matter. Handling a bow or slingshot effectively (never neglect this weapon, it was formidable in Roman auxiliary troops - a lead slingshot bullet could pierce a skull, through the helmet, at a distance of fifty meters) requires specific training that is not part of the basic training of the rarius, but of specialized units, or civilian auxiliaries (peasants and others), who are recruited only for the duration of a war campaign.

Warriors must pay for their own equipment. The latter is often standardized, and the warrior caste hires and pays its own craftsmen, but the warrior must finance his own uniform and weapons. And this is no small investment; while the warrior caste helps its own, the young warrior's family has to save for a long time, or even go into debt, to pay for this equipment. That's why every warrior takes great care of it, and hopes to pass it on to his son.

**Note on the spear:** the Gorean spear is a melee weapon designed to pierce the enemy while keeping him at a distance. It is a stabbing weapon. The spear's metal tip, shaped like a willow leaf, is sharp and razor-sharp. The shaft is set into a solid wooden stick, about 2.50 m long, for a total length of 2.80 m. Its other end is fitted with a short metal point, to balance the whole. In all, the weapon rarely weighs more than two or three kilograms.



## *OTHER RARII WEAPONS:*

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**The javelin:** a weapon not to be overlooked, in which legionnaires are trained, it's a light auxiliary weapon that can break up a formation by hitting the enemy over his shield. A good barbed-tipped javelin easily hits the bull's-eye at twenty meters, and causes fearsome damage.

**The crossbow:** a highly prized weapon for defense, on ramparts, or by tarnsmen and cavalrymen, the Gorean crossbow is most often a light crossbow, which can be held with one hand to fire. Its only drawbacks are its reloading time, which is much longer than that of a bow, and its cost. The weapon is expensive, and so are the arrows. On the other hand, it can pierce a shield more effectively than an bow arrow and, above all, is much easier to handle than a bow.

**The saber:** prized by naval warriors, cavalrymen and pirates alike, this is a highly effective weapon in melee combat when the opponent has little armor, as is the case at sea, where it's best to carry lightly to avoid drowning, but also in arid or hot regions, where armor and protection are, here too, a handicap.

**The two-handed sword :** a rare weapon, it is nevertheless available in certain legions, for a handful of warriors hand-picked for their size, daring and strength. A group of men charging with their two-handed sword whirling above them can easily break through a formation of spears and shields, if the group attacks in the right places, such as corners and sides.

**The sarissa:** a very long spear measuring from 4 to 7 meters, it takes a great deal of training to learn how to wield it, always in compact units. It is a formidable weapon against round-shielded formations and charges of poorly equipped infantry or cavalry. But the square formation with rectangular shield and infantryman's lance of the rarii makes this weapon somewhat obsolete, so it's rare to come across units equipped with sarisses.

## *SOME COMMON GOREAN WEAPONS:*

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**Hunter's bow :** this is the so-called short bow. Most often made of wood, it can also be made of horn and braided sinew. It requires good strength to get the most out of it, but, as mentioned, it's a common bow, at least in its wooden form, ideal for hunting game.

**Cavalry bow:** similar to the hunter's bow, the cavalry bow is almost always made of horn, and braided sinew. Small and maneuverable, its powerful draw makes it a formidable weapon against infantrymen, almost as effective as a crossbow, at a lower price - but with considerably more training.

**The war bow:** this is the English longbow, very long, made of well-chosen wood and strings, requiring advanced training. It's a rare weapon, difficult to handle, and the peasants who train with it are much sought-after - and well-paid - as auxiliaries. A war bow has an impressive range, and is formidably effective, even against shields. In Gor's world, these archers are by far the least common.

**Bolas:** mainly used for hunting and capture, bolas are fairly easy to use, and are easily lethal against poorly protected infantry or cavalry. A well-thrown bola can break a tharlaron's leg. It's a popular weapon with certain war units in the jungles of Schendi and the southern plains.

**The slingshot:** as mentioned above, the slingshot is a common ranged weapon, used for both hunting and warfare. There are specialized craftsmen who make slings and slingshot bullets. Good training is required to use them, and they are a formidable, low-cost weapon.

**Swords:** the sword of the rarius is the glaive, a short sword, but there are also longer, finer-bladed swords, known as one-and-a-half-handed swords, often designed to face an opponent wielding a glaive and shield. There are also rarer two-handed swords. And to break a myth: swords never weigh much. A glaive weighs 500 to 700 grams, a one-and-a-half-handed sword rarely more than a kilogram, and a two-handed sword never more than two-and-a-half kilograms.

**The hunting stake:** a weapon similar to the infantryman's spear, but heavier, and fitted with two perpendicular rods at the base of its iron, to prevent the target from moving up the wood of the spear that impales it. This is very useful when hunting snarling animals and wild beasts, which can ignore pain and lash out in fury.

**Guisarme:** a form of halberd, with a pointed and hooked blade, often with a cutting edge. This defensive weapon is just as effective against pedestrians as against horsemen, but is less maneuverable than the lance. It is highly prized by city and private guards.

**The axe :** more common in low castes, or in the hands of Nordic warriors, the axe is an effective weapon that's fairly easy to handle (though less so than the glaive), but it's also more suitable as a hand-to-hand weapon, when the shock of spears and shields has passed and melee begins.

**The war mace:** not very common, even if it does exist, the war mace is a blunt weapon, especially effective for knocking out and crushing skulls under their helmets, but less useful in front of shields. In full melee, however, it can wreak havoc.

**The dagger:** a common weapon, even in the equipment of a Rarius in the field. It's never a primary weapon, but if you've lost your spear or sword, it can be a lifesaver. In fact, the dagger is not a knife at all: we're talking about a 20-35 cm blade, triangular in shape and wide at the base, for maximum damage when piercing the enemy.

## *Gorian medicine & the Physicians' Caste*

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Unsurprisingly, as we read through John Norman's 36 novels, we realize that he wrote almost nothing about medicine, and even less about the medical profession. It was a subject that only interested him when it crossed paths with his stories of female slaves and virile warriors. Don't cry over your misfortune if you wanted to play the role of a physician—that's the case for most of the upper castes, with the exception of scribes and warriors!

That said, he wrote enough to make it fairly easy to develop the subject and describe it without betraying the spirit of Gor, which is what we will do here.

**Warning:** I am sticking primarily to the basics of the technical means and knowledge on the subject described in the novels. These may not reflect your experience in Second Life. Some players embody physicians with talents and resources similar to those of the best general practitioners in our contemporary world, while others play characters who are quasi-charlatans straight out of Molière's *The Imaginary Invalid*, including bloodletting. This is not a matter of judging whether an interpretation is good or bad; I am simply describing and interpreting what Norman has described. Personally, I am not shocked that some physicians use contemporary or even science fiction medical techniques, as long as it is done in a credible and consistent manner, because this is a reality on Gor. I mention credibility and consistency because, let's not forget, priest-kings and super-technologies such as computers and wave communication, not to mention anything that could be turned into a technological weapon, do not mix well. And the Initiates, who stick their noses everywhere, will quickly burn all this equipment and the physicians who use it if they discover it!

### *1- The level of medical knowledge*

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Before talking a little about the castes, let's take a quick look at what Gorian medicine is generally capable of. As mentioned above, Gorian medicine is not very detailed: we don't have many excerpts on

surgery or operating techniques, and we don't really know what the Gorians are capable of in terms of emergency medicine, resuscitation, etc.

But one thing is certain: in many respects, Gorian medicine is more primitive than that of Earth, but it produces far superior results. It excels particularly in the fields of pharmacology and disease prevention, even seeming somewhat miraculous. However, it is slightly less effective in the fields of surgery, internal medicine, and, in general, in-depth knowledge of biology. In short, a Gorian suffering from internal bleeding, cancer, or an autoimmune disease is often doomed, and there is little that can be done to save them. Fortunately, Gor's preventive medicine makes this type of risk very low (with the exception of internal bleeding, which is a matter of bad luck).

The main source of the remarkable success of Gor's medicine lies in its strange machines. These are mainly blood analysis machines, genetic sequencers, centrifuges, refrigerators (and even cryogenics), stethoscopes, blood pressure monitors, and microscopes (and even X-ray scanners). Syringes, cannulas, IVs, scalpels, forceps—all emergency and surgical instruments—are commonplace in the equipment of a good physicians, if they can afford them. It is the Builders caste, particularly its engineers and precision mechanics and electricians, who manufacture them for them, in collaboration with the academies of the Physicians caste.

Physicians, in general, have no idea how the most advanced machines work; they only know what they can do. And this equipment is extremely valuable, as it is often irreplaceable. Among the most powerful analytical devices, Norman mentions those capable of analyzing the chemical composition of hair, urine, or human tissue. This makes it easy to detect profound biological changes: whether a person has taken the longevity serum or not, whether it has worked or not, whether the person is pregnant, poisoned, or infected with a known disease, etc., and even their blood type.

Yes, it's downright fantastic, but it's science fiction in the world of Gor. And I haven't even mentioned advanced genetics yet... An advanced medical laboratory on Gor looks much more like a sterile

laboratory from the 1970s than a Renaissance alchemist's laboratory.

Of course, these electromechanical and electronic machines, which completely defy the scientific knowledge of the average Gorian, are worth a fortune. That's why they're only found in medical academies in large cities, where physicians share them. The small country physician, if he has a stethoscope and a dusty blood pressure monitor, is already well equipped. And finally, we're talking here about civilized places with a high cultural level, where there is a caste of physicians! Among the Torvis, there are no real physicians, only herbalists, healers, and bone setters. The same is true in the jungles of Schendi and among the nomads of the Turia plains. That doesn't mean their care is bad, but don't expect miracles!

A physician, with their knowledge, equipment, expertise... In short, they are VERY rare in the world of Gor. That is why they are so respected, valued, and cherished, as we will see later.

As we have said, Gor's pharmacopoeia is much more robust than that of Earth. It's not that Gorean chemists are better, it's simply that the world around them is full of active substances and medicinal remedies. A good herbalist can cure most simple ailments on Gor with just a few infusions and poultices. A physician, on the other hand, can be much more effective against most diseases: Goreans know how to synthesize drugs in much the same way as we do in the 21st century, albeit to a limited extent.

And of course, not to mention impressive substances such as slave wine, fertility wine, vaccines against epidemic diseases and most STDs, there is the stabilizing serum, which gives youth and long life... so long that some old Goreans are five to six hundred years old. But we'll come back to that later.

## *2- The Physician caste*

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While the physician caste is not the most prestigious in terms of precedence (it is only superior to the warrior caste and inferior to all others), in terms of renown and recognition among all Gorans, it is as prestigious, if not more so, than the builder caste.

**Note:** yes, if you're wondering, the caste of initiates is highly respected, even superstitiously so, but just as feared, especially since it often remains mysterious. The caste of scribes is known for being particularly haughty, closed, and jealous of its knowledge and rank, a kind of pedantic aristocracy that never mixes with the people. The warrior caste is admired and respected, but also feared and even hated by the people, as it is this caste that commits the most bloody and unjust acts (in fact, the rarii do not protect the people very much). As for the other upper castes, they distrust the warrior caste like the plague and try to muzzle it as much as possible. This leaves two castes close to the common people (who represent nearly 90% of the Gorian population): the builders... and the physicians!

The color of the physician caste is green, and on Gor Second Life, it is adorned with the symbol of the caduceus, which never appears in the novels. As this color is associated with a number of privileges, which we will come back to later, physicians tend to display their color on their tunics, especially when traveling, so that they can be recognized from afar.

The medical caste is highly organized: each large city has its own medical academy, a central location where the caste manages its affairs and passes on its knowledge. The academy occupies at least one entire cylinder, often in a large area, with hospices and all the equipment and infrastructure necessary to accommodate and care for patients, train students, and teach classes. There are also many smaller private practices, where several physicians and students work together, sharing their resources. It is a wealthy caste, it must be acknowledged, but one that puts its fortune at the service of the well-being of all, and in the end, the physicians themselves are rarely wealthy.

## *THE TWO BRACELETS OF WOMEN*

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A striking feature of the medical caste is that, in the upper castes, it has by far the largest number of female practitioners. The other castes cannot compete with this and consider their women to be like all other Gorean women: at home, raising children and doing housework. This is not the case for physicians, who train their wives to practice like

men and assume the same role, including responsibilities and power.

This is why physicians have a custom that exists only among them: at the age of fifteen, a female member of the caste receives two bracelets, one on each wrist. They are only removed, one from each wrist, if she has children. As long as she wears these bracelets, she cannot be considered a full physician: before becoming one, she must assume her social role as a mother; only then can she obtain the status of full physician, with the same rank as any male physician in the caste.

Another point: the caste of physicians, along with that of builders, is the one that meets most often and exchanges the most between cities, even in times of war (which is a good thing, given that most Gorian cities spend their time at war). Symposiums are held several times a year at large trade fairs, where physicians come to exchange knowledge, innovations, and research, thereby constantly improving medicine and its effectiveness. And it doesn't matter if two physicians are from enemy cities: their duty to heal and help cure takes precedence over their loyalty to the Mother Stone.

### ***WE DO NOT ENSLAVE PHYSICIANS!***

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Finally, the medical caste generally enjoys a kind of informal safe conduct, pretty much everywhere. It is neither a law nor a sacred tradition, but simply a custom, respected because of the importance of their social role: on the one hand, everyone avoids attacking or killing a physician. And for the same reason, because they are simply too valuable, too important to everyone, and their talent requires years and years of training, a physician is never enslaved on a whim or out of envy. Even as punishment for a crime, people think twice and prefer, if possible, to impose other penalties. This is truly the only high caste to enjoy this informal privilege! Even the Builders caste, which is very close to the people, cannot claim these advantages in the general customs of the Goreans.

Physicians have their own specialties: in fact, with the exception of dentists (although, if necessary, physicians can also intervene, simply because it is not

a specialty), practically everything that exists today can exist as a medical specialty. Among the most sought-after are nutritionists (especially for the breeding of luxury slaves), obstetricians (for childbirth), pharmacists (for obvious reasons), emergency surgeons (for battlefield injuries), pediatricians (for children and babies), and, last but not least, epidemiologists (because epidemics are common!).

### ***3- Stabilizing serum, a miracle cure***

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It will be difficult for me to discuss all the remedies and methods of care used by Goreans because, as I mentioned earlier, Norman does not dwell on them much. I plan to write an article that will compile everything I know, drawn from books or invented, about medicines and medical remedies. But before that, I'd like to explain something that changes everything about Gorean health: stabilization serum.

**Note:** Norman is an ignorant moron... Well, it's been a while since I said that. He has always claimed in his novels that the excellent health of the Goreans is due to their simple lifestyle in the midst of nature and all that, and their diet without any excesses. The hundreds of millions, if not billions, of human beings who have lived simply in the midst of nature and died of disease, poisoning, and starvation throughout the history of the world will laugh ironically. If a large proportion of Goreans enjoy good health—and this must be put into perspective—it is because Gorese medicine works miracles, the first of which is the stabilizing serum.

The pinnacle of Gorese medicine is this remedy, which comes in the form of an injection and, quite simply, prolongs youth and life.

According to some versions, the stabilisation serum is a direct gift from the priest-kings that has existed for around 1,000 years and can only be obtained by physicists via suppliers from the caste of Initiates, OR it is a remedy created about 500 years ago by the physicians of Ar and Ko-Ro-Ba, whose formula is available to any physician who requests it and has the necessary chemical skills to compose it. The version

in the novel is... well, actually, it depends on the book, so I'll give both versions, although I prefer the one that is the result of the Physicians' human creation. But you know what? We're not far from an error, or a paradox. Which raises the question: why is a character like Matthew Cabot over 600 years old, when Norman specifies that no one lives past the age of 150 to 200 and the serum has only been around for 500 years?

This also raises the question of serum supply, but this last point is secondary: the serum is available to all physicians for their patients, including slaves. In theory, it is considered a gift to all Gorans, whoever they may be: every human being living on Gor is entitled to it, and it is even one of the few rights slaves have. The inhabitants of Gor consider old age to be a disease, a plague like any other, which they have managed to counter in part thanks to the serum. Although expensive to manufacture, the stabilizing serum is one of the medical services that a city provides to its citizens and slaves. It is available like any other medicine, you just have to ask for it... but you also have to pay for it, and it is expensive, unaffordable for most Gorans, i.e. the common people, who rarely see more than one or two silver coins in their lifetime.

The serum therefore remains an expensive luxury! Basically, there is a huge difference between everyone being entitled to it and everyone having access to it, which clearly means that 10%, maybe 15% of the population of Gor will benefit from it, i.e. the richest and their slaves, basically. The majority of the population—peasants, laborers, small craftsmen, fishermen, villagers, etc.—will never see the serum. These people do what everyone else does: they are exhausted at 35, old at 50, venerable or buried at 70.

And yes, I can hear your indignation from here, because everyone on Gor SL has, or could have, access to the stabilizing serum. But Gor SL is not the world of Gor, and you are not playing mere inhabitants of that world. The concepts are different, and that's part of the game. But yes, coming across lots of shriveled 70-year-olds and a few rare young and beautiful 100-year-old women is one of the paradigms of the world of Gor. You, the low- or high-caste Gorean who can afford the serum, may see your friends, even your family, grow old and die

while you remain young and alive for a century or two. Ultimately, it's a privilege reserved for the rich. I can imagine a generous and wealthy physician producing a few doses and distributing them for free, but since the stabilization serum is expensive and complicated to manufacture, he couldn't vaccinate his entire community against aging, far from it.

**Notes:** How much does it cost? You're going to laugh, but I haven't seen any mention of the price of the serum. I think we can set it at a few silver coins, between 5 and 15 on the ZcS base 100 system. In the world of Gor, that would be around one to three silver coins. That's nothing for a wealthy man... but remember that the lower classes of society (i.e., 90% of Gor's population) never see that much money more than once or twice in their lives.

The stabilization serum is a series of injections described as taking place over four consecutive days, in the lower back, above the hip. Given the nature of the product, it is likely that the injection is simply made into the kidneys. The mutagenic effect of the serum is felt immediately, and not necessarily in a very pleasant way: by the time the recipient's biology and genes are altered, they will be ill for the duration of the injections, usually about a week. The effects are highly varied and can include fever, nausea, feverish states, and even more violent reactions. And, in rare cases, the serum simply does not work, or can kill the patient instantly.

What does this mean in practical terms? The serum significantly improves wound healing and, last but not least, prolongs life. More specifically, it significantly slows down the aging process, even stopping it completely, and some versions, which are even more expensive and rarer, can reverse it! In other words, even very old people, say two hundred years old, some Gorans retain the physique of a 25-year-old. It depends on the quality of the serum and its effectiveness. Others, at the same age, will look well into their forties, with the first signs of old age catching up with them. In the end, death resurfaces, on average after 300 years. But it can last much longer: 400, even 500 years for the rare lucky ones who have not died of other causes in the meantime. The fact that it can exceed 600 years... Let's just say that, as this is based on a contradiction in the novels, I am tempted to say: don't worry about it. But do



what you want: many players consider that the stabilizing serum makes you immortal, I don't, but it's just a matter of interpretation.

## *4- Common medical services*

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In addition to the obvious services of receiving injured or sick patients for treatment and monitoring their regular patients to ensure their good health, physicians are very active on other fronts and offer a number of services in the world of Gor, which we will briefly discuss here:

### *- HEALTH SERVICES FOR SLAVES:*

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This is actually a fairly broad field. On the one hand, newly enslaved slaves or those about to be sold are always brought before physicians for a health check and to complete the information on their ownership papers. The aim is to establish a pedigree that identifies the slave by their distinguishing features and ensures medical follow-up in terms of hygiene and vaccinations. On the other hand, physicians were called upon to go to ports and caravanserais on the outskirts of cities to monitor slave convoys, just as others, often merchants, monitored perishable goods. The physicians, for their part, ensured that the slaves were free of disease, decided on prophylactic treatments and quarantines, and even demanded that slaves showing obvious signs of contamination be isolated or destroyed for safety reasons. Finally, at an auction, the organizer ensures that a physician is present to examine the health of each slave on site before the sale. Sometimes wealthy customers even call on the services of a physician to obtain an opinion before purchasing. And in this field, given the caste of physicians, it is not at all surprising that the physician is a woman.

### *-SLAVE BREEDING AND GENETIC SELECTION:*

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I told you we'd talk about this! Because yes, there are physicians who specialize in selecting human bloodlines, crossing specimens to guarantee the appearance or reinforcement of a particular trait, thus creating a line of selected slaves. Yes, just as we have

been crossbreeding and hybridizing animal and plant species for a very long time, long before anyone knew what DNA was or even the principles of heredity.

In fact, while Earthlings only really understood this in the 20th century, the physicians of Gor were way ahead of the game! Centuries ahead, even: through experimentation and trial and error, they understood and learned how to manipulate hereditary factors and apply them to the human species. They also understood the principles of epigenetics, i.e., the importance of external factors (living conditions, environment) on heredity and gene transmission. They thus created lines of breeding slaves with effectively selected traits, from the most useful to the most exotic, lines that sometimes span centuries and centuries.

In other words, the physicians of Gor, if they could, got their hands on Earth's genetic technology and DNA sequencers, or obtained them even before they were invented on Earth, and are secretly using and abusing them!

### *- PRIVATE SERVICES FOR FREE WOMEN:*

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While no physician would ever (in theory) consider performing an abortion—not even on a slave, even if her master requested it—because children are considered sacred on Gor, contraception is not a taboo subject, and some physicians therefore meet with their patients so that they can drink slave wine and thus avoid becoming pregnant. A lecture on the role of fertile women is guaranteed! But a physician will not usually refuse this service. More often than not, women prefer to talk to other women, who are more understanding. Physicians also treat free women's problems with libido and frigidity with complete discretion. While most of them are content to give primitive advice such as “learn a slave dance,” some—again, mostly women—will be more attentive to a problem that mainly affects free women who are the companions of high-caste and wealthy men, for whom their companion is... nothing more than a breeding machine. For pleasure, they have their slaves. Finally, among the services offered is artificial insemination: clearly reserved for free women and left unresolved in the novels, it is only mentioned as a reality and an existing medical service, but this

technology clearly requires very advanced knowledge of reproductive microbiology.

Quote, about a pregnant woman of high caste:

*"I had never been in a man's arms before," she said, "because men in Tharna are not allowed to touch women."*

*She saw my confusion.*

*"The medical caste," she said, "under the direction of the High Council of Tharna, knows how to deal with such matters."*

*The outlaws of Gor*

## **– THE MANAGEMENT OF SLAVE BRANDS AND TATTOOS:**

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We will discuss elsewhere this common but moderately effective custom of employing kajirae as forced messengers, tattooing the secret message on their skulls and then letting their hair grow to conceal it until the day the message must be delivered. There are other customs directly related to brands and tattoos, such as invisible tattoos... which allow writing on a slave's skin without it being visible, as long as no reagent is applied to the tattooed area to reveal the message. Some people use this method to mark a slave in a personal, temporary or permanent way, without having to alter their beauty with a visible tattoo. This practice is legally recognized and carried out by physicians of the medical caste. Norman talks about it in *Slave-Girl of Gor*:

Quote:

*The physician passed a clear liquid over my arm. Suddenly, to my surprise and his amusement, a short sentence appeared, written in fine, bright red letters, as if by magic. It was inside my elbow.*

*I knew what the sentence meant, because my mistress, Lady Elicia d'Ar, had told me. It was a simple phrase. It said, "She is the one." It had been painted on my arm with a small brush and another clear liquid. I had seen the moisture inside my arm, where it bends, inside the elbow, and then it had dried and disappeared. I wasn't even sure the writing had remained. But now, under the action of the reagent, the writing appeared,*

*fine and clear. Then, a few moments later, the physician poured the liquid from another bottle onto a red cloth pad and, as if by magic, erased the writing. The invisible stain was gone. The original reagent was then reused to verify the erasure. There was no reaction.*

*The chemical mark that identified me to Lady Elicia's agents, my mistress, had disappeared. The physician then used the second liquid to clean my arm again, removing the residue from the second application of the reagent.*

*Slave of Gor*

In addition to these various services, secret tattoos in the hair, marks visible only with reagents, either with invisible indelible ink or with invisible tattoos that react to appropriate reagents, physicians of the medical caste never remove a slave mark, with a few exceptions. On the one hand, because in most cases the necessary surgical intervention would cause more damage than anything else and leave a deep and unsightly scar; on the other hand, because it is illegal! Of course, a freed slave can undoubtedly request this service in complete discretion; of course, an owner dissatisfied with his slave's mark can request that it be removed. But in all cases, physicians must be particularly careful in their actions. For the legal penalty for this type of crime can be slavery!

**Note:** there are regenerative balms, created from stabilizing serum, which some physicians know how to synthesize. They can really erase a scar, more or less quickly, but their price is prohibitive and they are very rare. I think it's something that can easily be bought for half a gold tarn.

## **– DIETETICS:**

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A quick word on this rather interesting point: Gorian physicians attach great importance to dietetics. This is essentially about ensuring a perfect diet and good performance for expensive slaves whom their masters do not want to see grow fat or weak. Pleasure kajirae are subject to a strictly controlled diet that prohibits any excess, regardless of whether they like it or not. But since dietetics has proven its effectiveness in terms of competence, it is an important part of the services offered by physicians to free people with health problems. And Gorian

diets are clearly very effective in helping people get back on their feet. This is part of preventive medicine, and it is very common for a Gorian to follow these diets, have their slaves follow them, and have these diets monitored by physicians.

### *– DISEASE CONTROL AND VACCINATION:*

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We don't have much information about the capabilities of Gorian physicians in terms of vaccination, so I won't venture an opinion on the subject. Presumably, this mainly concerns STDs such as syphilis and smallpox (the Bazi plague). Probably also tetanus, polio, and rabies, which do not seem to pose a real danger on Gor. While we're on the subject of infections, there are antibiotics on Gor, and although they are mainly herbal remedies, they are described in the novels as being extremely effective.

### *– HYPNOSIS, CONDITIONING, MENTAL HEALTH CARE:*

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Yes, in the Gorian pharmacopoeia, there are a number of psychotropic drugs used to calm, sedate, and relax, but also to help hypnotize and condition. They can be used to accelerate the healing of mental disorders and, above all, certain violent traumas—particularly those suffered by slaves, for whom they are mainly intended. They can also be used in certain legal or investigative contexts, or—as is most often the case—to facilitate the education and conditioning of certain slaves who need to be rid of deeply ingrained behaviors and reflexes. Since the manipulation of these drugs and techniques cannot be invented, it is physicians who supply them and collaborate with slave owners.

## *5- Common and serious diseases*

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Norman claims that diseases are almost unknown on Gor, which I refute, having explained why above. So there are always infections, epidemics, etc. Let's just say that diseases cause much less devastation on Gor than in an ancient world like that of the Romans, or even during the Renaissance. Thanks to their miraculous pharmacopoeia and organized healthcare

system, cities rarely have to fear a pandemic decimating the population.

However, despite the proven existence of vaccination systems and antibiotics, certain diseases can sometimes become real problems:

cholera regularly strikes the poor in winter, and although it is fairly easy to treat, it does claim victims, as do pneumonia, encephalitis, and diphtheria.

Smallpox is one such example. The Goreans call it the Bazi Plague, as it ravaged the city of the same name a few years ago. Smallpox is an antibiotic-resistant virus that is highly contagious and very deadly: it can kill up to 40% of an infected population in a matter of weeks or months. If you don't know what smallpox is, consider the Antonine Plague, a smallpox pandemic that struck Rome in 165 and lasted 20 years, described by the physician Galen, which killed between 5 and 10 million of the 60 million inhabitants of the Roman Empire.

The Bazi plague reappears regularly here and there. The Goreans have only vaccination, with uncertain results, to fight the disease. The only other solution is quarantine and epidemic control. In other words, many physicians are anxiously searching for a cure... but working with this disease is dangerous in itself, as it exposes you to it. It should be noted that the Bazi plague haunts more or less all Gorian cities: the high infant mortality rate in villages and poor neighborhoods in cities is largely due to the fact that smallpox cannot be eradicated.

The other endemic disease in the world of Gor is leprosy, which the Gorean call Dar-Kosis, meaning "sacred/taboo disease." People with leprosy are considered cursed by the Initiates caste. In the minds of the Gorans, these people no longer exist once they have been recognized as infected. The law considers all lepers to be dead and applies the same rules to them as to deceased persons. As leprosy is notoriously contagious, lepers pose a real danger.

They are therefore driven out of towns, stoned or killed on sight when they approach, and condemned to beg as best they can. Only the caste of Initiates offers them help, in the form of leper colonies or isolated pits, far from everything, where they are

given basic care and food, but with no hope of survival. However, the caste of Initiates also strictly forbids the caste of Physicians from conducting research on leprosy, as it considers this to be an encroachment on its sacred domain. This has not prevented some physicians from doing so, but it should be noted that this could end very badly if such research were to become officially known.

## *Gor sciences and the Builders caste*

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This article is going to be quite long, but in summary, we're going to paint as complete a picture as possible of one of my favorite castes in Gor: the Builders, and since we're talking about technology and science, what does and doesn't exist in the world of Gor. And Gor is science-fantasy, not sword and sorcery and other medievalist worlds. In Gor, there's no magic.

But there's some serious sci-fi stuff, which, while kitschy for the 2020s audience that we are, is nonetheless real sci-fi (and almost magic)! So let's talk about it!

*"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."  
Arthur C. Clarke*

### *1- The technological level on Gor*

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The world of Gor has a civilization, and a general level of knowledge and technology, which is similar – at least in appearance, as we'll see that it goes much further – to that of Ancient Rome, around the 3rd century. And the Romans were ingenious! They knew about concrete (still unrivalled today), were capable of building hydraulic chain systems, like industrial mills, knew how to lay out roads and aqueducts with a geometric precision to the centimetre, possessed surgical instruments advanced enough to clamp an artery or remove a cataract from an eye, and had enough knowledge of metallurgy to invent the cataphractaires, steel-clad horsemen, ancestors of our knights (something we wouldn't know how to do again until 10 centuries later!). Technically, they had already understood the power of steam as an engine, but they lacked materials strong enough and adapted enough to create such machines (and motivation too: one of the great weaknesses of the Romans was slavery).

So it's safe to say that the Goreans had high-performance looms, that they knew how to produce steel, even if it wasn't necessarily the strongest, that they knew how to blow glass and extract metals, not

to mention that building towers, aqueducts, sewer systems, water pipes and baths, and finally solid bridges, was easy! They also had an advanced knowledge of agriculture, the likes of which would not be found again until the 14th century. In short, they weren't backward, and the Builder caste we'll be talking about later didn't just know how to build houses, bridges and fortresses: they were mathematicians, engineers, scientists, experts in ancient mechanics and electromechanics, whose knowledge is comparable to that of 19th-century scientists.

On the other hand, there are also the advanced technologies that Goreans have learned to create, through the knowledge of Priest-Kings and Earthmen, often gleaned locally. It's in the medical field (we talk about it in this article: [Gorean medicine & the Physicians' Caste](#)), in some technical fields and in the electrical and electromechanical field that things become surprising.

As Gor has virtually no oil or coal, heating depends on wood and sophisticated insulation and heat recovery systems. Plastic is little-known (and I wonder how it's produced without petrochemicals: is it plant-based?), but it's being replaced by high-quality glass and ceramics.

While steam and industrial machinery are almost unknown, and almost everyone uses traditional lighting methods such as candles and torches, the same cannot be said for electricity. Goreans use energy bulbs, which are electric super-batteries that power many electrical and electronic machines and technologies. All these marvels, reserved for the wealthy but not so rare, are most often artifacts supplied indirectly by the Priest-Kings, but also objects that have been collected on Earth, during missions by agents of the Priest-Kings or the Kurii. Others are created and manufactured by Goreans themselves. These include electric lighting, dynamos, blood analysis machines, genetic sequencers, medical X-rays, slave prods, universal translators, electric locks or electrified cages, electric heating blankets, refrigerators, and even loudspeakers and disk and multimedia players (yes, you can listen to music on a vinyl or CD-ROM in some of Gor's luxurious living rooms); there are even a few blast furnaces powered by electricity. In fact, wired telephones could very



well exist on Gor, since in Ar, a livestock of exotic slaves is listened to via hidden microphones connected to loudspeakers; but clearly, the telephone is outside the limits admitted by the Priest-Kings.

More commonly, there are many very practical things: blast furnaces (essential for better steels and ceramics), precision metallurgy including clocks, automata and micromechanics, paper and printing, chronometers and marine compasses, compasses, semi-industrial weaving using mechanized looms, embroidery and semi-industrial glass, lighters and other firelighters, wire and wire mesh, ceramics and porcelain, hydraulic and pneumatic machinery, refractory and building bricks, alloys and high-grade steel. They also know telescopes, spectacles, magnifying glasses and microscopes.

### **GOR'S SCIENCE FICTION**

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Now let's talk about what's possible, but only in the realm of science fiction. Already, some Goreans know that space travel is possible aboard starships: they take part in voyages to Earth to meet agents there, and bring back cargoes of poor Earthwomen abducted there to become slaves on Gor. For transport, these Earthwomen are locked in hypersleep chambers, and more than one slaver has seen one of these strange chambers. The Priest-Kings have mastered antigravity, force fields and interstellar travel, and their technological power enables them to move a planet and terraform it. They even seem capable of mastering telepathic and mind-control technologies.

So, modern, science-fiction technologies and machines from Earth, or entrusted to the Goreans by the Priest-Kings, do exist. But this is very rare; it's a very big secret, which the owners of these objects hide with great care. Either because they are agents of the Priest-Kings (or the Kurii), or because they hide from them so as not to get caught. For example, yes, there's a futuristic computer hidden within the walls of Ar's Ubar Palace, capable of controlling not only the Priest-Kings' orbital weapons platforms but also... the climate! But there are no more than five or six people who know this, all agents of the Priest-Kings, who would rather die than betray the secret. And only two of them know how to operate it.

In conclusion, it's not at all absurd or inconsistent to see hints of science-fiction technology here and there in Gor's world. What would be absurd or inconsistent is for it to be visible to all. A simple pistol is a terrible weapon on Gor, and the agents of the Priest-Kings and insiders will do anything to make such an object and its owner disappear; no one would want to own one, unless they were insane. Goreans, in general, don't understand Earth science and technology and despise them completely. They also have a strong religious superstition that encourages them to ignore and even destroy it out of an abundance of caution.

## ***2- The builder caste***

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The Builder caste is the third highest caste, in rank and precedence, of the five: after the Initiates, then the Scribes, and above the Physicians, then the Warriors (I chuckle every time I remind you that the Warrior caste is at the very bottom of the ladder!). Its color is yellow, and its emblem and symbol – and we know this clearly because Norman describes it – is the carpenter's compass:

Quote:

*In Ar, for example, early in the day, a member of the builders will go to the roof where the Hearthstone stands and place the primitive symbol of his trade, a metal triangle, before the stone, praying to the Priest-Kings for the prosperity of his caste in the coming year;*

*Tarnsman of Gor, page 68*

The builder caste... doesn't build, well, not directly, although I think any student builder will lift brick and stir lime to learn the trade. They're architects, engineers, urban planners, naval architects and military engineers. They're also the building and major works engineers who direct all the craftsmen and labourers in this field. They are responsible for the expansion of the city-states, the strength of their walls, the power of their naval fleet, the quality and efficient supply of water, and the preservation of the great attics! Builders not only build, they also control, check and supervise the maintenance of all urban structures. No city can do without them, and even for a village, their presence and knowledge are a blessing.



Builders are also great geometers and mathematicians, as well as clockmakers, chemists, inventors, mechanics, electricians and, in short, scientists akin to Leonardo da Vinci (or Dr. Frankenstein). Because of their proximity to the people and the vital importance of their work to any city, they are respected and esteemed by all. Other high-castes value their technical advice because, quite simply, everyone needs builders, and few can claim to replace their skills.

Last but not least, the builder caste is responsible for the weights, measures and alloys of coins! It may not sound like much, but a silver tarsk that weighs one gram less is a very profitable counterfeit! The same goes for a sack of flour that weighs one stone less than its legal weight! Builders then work very closely with merchants and scribes to check the conformity of merchandise quantities and the weight and composition of coins. Yeah, like a customs inspector!

Like physicians, the builders' caste is very close to the people, providing them with honest, fresh work that was also useful to the community. Anyone can dig a well, but knowing where to dig it for clean water, and how to ensure that the well will be solid and last for generations, is the secret and talent of the builders. Builders have a strong presence at fairs, exchanging knowledge, passing on techniques to the lower classes, hiring and even training craftsmen and artists to perfect their skills and expertise. And it's well known that builders and physicians often work closely together; the two castes support each other against the other three high-castes, and there's even talk of secret agreements and alliances that go beyond the scope of city-states.

Quote:

*In addition, members of castes such as Physicians and Builders use fairs to spread information and techniques among the Brothers of Caste, as prescribed by their code, despite the fact that their respective cities may be hostile.*

*Priest-Kings of Gor, Page 9*

They're also a notoriously progressive caste (like physicians, again, but we'll see later that it's not so simple), as they run with knowledge, science and progress in the service of humans. Yes, it's easy to see

why these two castes are inferior in rank to the Scribes and Initiates caste. Because builders can often be on the razor's edge, exploring the limits of technology. So on the razor's edge that the Priest-Kings can sometimes intervene in... radical ways :

Quote:

*"On the other hand, you will learn that in matters of lighting, shelter, agricultural techniques and medicine, for example, mortals, or men from below the mountains, are relatively advanced. He looked at me – amused, I think. "You wonder," he said, "why the many obvious deficits in our technology have not been made good despite the Priest-Kings. It occurs to you that there must exist on this world minds capable of designing things like, say, guns and armored vehicles."*

*"Surely these things must be produced," I insisted.*

*"And you're right," he said darkly. "From time to time, they are, but then their owners are destroyed, bursting into flames."*

*"Like the blue metal shell?"*

*"Yes," he said. "Simply possessing a weapon of this type is punished by the Flame of Death. Sometimes, daring individuals create or acquire such war materials and sometimes escape the Flame of Death for a year, but sooner or later, they are struck down." His gaze was hard. "I saw it happen once," he said.*

*Tarnsman of Gor, Page 31.*

Good warning, isn't it? Yes, the deadly risk of the Blue Flame, when a man begins to exceed the limits of the sciences and techniques authorized by the Priest-Kings on the world of Gor, is a reality. But while the Priest-Kings intervene only very marginally, as they become less and less able to do so as the novels of the Gor saga progress, the Initiates... Well, you really have to regard them as the caricature of an anti-technological Inquisition. The Initiates are not against scientific research, they are against any use that could upset the balance of power and stability in the world of Gor. But why? The vast majority don't know. The more educated, on the other hand, will cite the ravages of war on Earth to justify this inquisition. The reality is quite different: the Priest-Kings are not only afraid that the Goreans will destroy the world, and therefore the Priest-Kings'

zoo, but above all, that they will have enough means and technology to kill the Priest-Kings! And given that the Priest-Kings are few in number, this fear is understandable.

In fact, the builder caste is, on the surface at least, notoriously traditionalist. Much less so than the warriors, scribes and initiates, but still! Because it has to censor itself, to prevent its members from rushing headlong into new innovations which, at best, will end in a heresy trial with torture, dungeons, pal and all the rest; and, at worst, in a great orbital laser blast vaporizing a neighborhood, or even an entire city, in a pretty blue flash. Yes, once again, this is a strong incentive to be cautious. The medical profession, while also forced to exercise self-censorship, is not subject to the same degree of socio-cultural pressure. On this subject, we must also bear in mind that the notion of progress, through this socio-cultural pressure that has lasted for millennia, is very different from the same idea in the minds of earthlings :

Quote:

*The road, like most Gorean roads, was built like a wall in the earth and was expected to last a hundred generations. The Gorean, who has little idea of progress as we understand it, takes great care in its construction and execution. What he builds, he expects men to use until the storms of time have reduced it to dust. Yet this road, for all the care taken by the builder caste, was no more than an unassuming side road, barely wide enough to allow the passage of two carts.*

*Outlaw of Gor, Page 25*

The builder caste is nowhere near as protected as the physician caste. The Goreans have no qualms about enslaving or killing a builder, either out of interest or whim. In fact, the women of the caste are like all free Gorean high-caste women. They manage the household, the children, any servants and slaves. Women builders active in the trade are a minority - but that doesn't mean it's exceptional either!

Quote:

*It's worth noting that the women of a given caste often don't do the caste's work. For example, a woman of the metalworker caste doesn't usually work at the forge, nor is a woman of the builder caste likely to oversee the construction of fortifications.*

*Fighting Slave of Gor, Page 209*

Ha, yes, to conclude the presentation of the builder caste, it's like all the other high castes: not necessarily rich! I like to point out that castes being castes, a ruined family, unable to leave its caste and thus change jobs, may well be reduced to selling its children, or even begging! It's the same for everyone, and solidarity within the caste is the only thing that protects against it – with all the political shenanigans you can imagine! That said, it's easier for a builder to sell his skills, even for a small fee, than, say, a scribe or a warrior. Well, the builder may have to lift a shovel, but what site manager would spit on the skills of a foreman as efficient as a builder?

### *3- Builder's expertises*

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To break down the archetype of the builder who builds houses and bridges, here's a list of the different types of builders we see mentioned in Gor's novels, either directly or indirectly.

#### *– PRIVATE & CIVIL ARCHITECTS*

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This is the classic image that everyone has of the caste and, indeed, most builders are trained in architecture, mainly civil, but also for private individuals wealthy enough to afford a real architect for their home. Builders of this expertise aren't just there to draw up plans and manage building sites. They are also called upon to check buildings and carry out maintenance and renovation work. Goreans build to last, at least if they can, and some of Ar's cylinders have been standing for over 500 years. But it takes skill and meticulousness to ensure they last that long, and builders are never short of work.

#### *– MARINE ENGINEERS*

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A boat is an incredibly complex machine, as soon as you get beyond the barque or the inshore fishing boat. Few people know how to build them, so there are builders whose specialty it is. A sea-going galley, or a war galley, is a construction site that can last a year or two, requiring the cooperation of hundreds of craftsmen and workers. To coordinate all this, you need a great deal of expertise.

### *– HYDRAULIC & INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERS*

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One of the most essential things for the city-states of Gor is water. Water is essential for a host of industrial uses, and human consumption requires clean, healthy water. That is to say, anything but river water, as the latter is inevitably polluted by all human activities – you wouldn't have wanted to bathe in the Seine, in Paris, in the 14th century; chances are it'd be the last thing you'd do. So, on the one hand, there are aqueducts, reservoirs, basins and water towers everywhere, and on the other, for industrial use, canals and hydraulic mills, used as much for cereals as for metallurgy. But builders with this specialty also know how to design windmills, pumping and irrigation installations, hoists, heating and piping systems, and are specialists in baths and fountains.

### *– MILITARY ENGINEERS*

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Offensive and defensive works, undermining, war machines – everything to do with the military comes under this heading. Military engineers don't spend all their time in offices. Like certain members of the medical caste, who work behind the scenes on the battlefield, military engineers manage the construction sites required by the army of which they are a part. And since a war machine requires skilled surveyors and technicians, they are sometimes at the heart of the battle – or almost!

### *– MEDICAL & CHEMICAL ENGINEERS*

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Chemistry is one of the most important tricks up the builder's sleeve. I'd like to remind you that, while chemistry is a recent science on Earth (roughly speaking, we date its birth from 1722, with Étienne Geoffroy l'Aîné, a French physician and naturalist), the Art of the Earth, a primitive but effective chemistry, was born in ancient Egypt. As for alchemy, if part of this knowledge was esoteric and sometimes eccentric, another part was a fully functional chemistry.

Chemistry is closely linked to medicine and biology, but also to metallurgy and craftsmanship. The builders of this expertise were often well versed in metallurgy and industry, as well as in biology and

anatomy. With the help of other caste experts, and in close cooperation with craftsmen and physicians, they create machines, devices and chemical compounds. If a builder doesn't know how to administer an antibiotic or exactly how it works, he does know how to build the laboratory to produce it efficiently!

### *– WATCHMAKERS & OPTICIANS*

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While most Goreans couldn't care less what time it is, they do appreciate astronomical calendars. And time measurement is very useful in certain activities, from shipping to industry, chemistry and medicine. And, finally, beautiful clepsydras and animated mechanical clocks are among the works of art that a wealthy Gorean is proud to own in his home. But there's one thing that Goreans really want and appreciate: builder's glasses – in other words, telescopes, but also eyeglasses and precision glasses. The builders of this expertise are therefore specialists in precision mechanics and optics. They even know how to make optical microscopes, prized by the physician caste, and small automatons capable of performing small scenes before the astonished eyes of spectators.

### *– ELECTRICIANS*

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If I don't mention mechanics, it's because this skill is so common in all the builders' expertise that most of them are able to manufacture mechanical systems (but not combustion engine, eh!, or not long before the Fire of Death strikes). On the other hand, electricians are one of the most sought-after skills among builders. Because, yes, Gor knows electricity and, no, it's not a gift from the priest-kings!

From the first three volumes of the novels, we learn that energy bulbs, as well as slave goads and loudspeakers and microphones, have been inventions of the builders for a century. Which also means that builders have invented a highly condensed energy source, since it can last a very long time and be hidden in the handle of a slave goad. Builders who are experts in electricity know how to build these batteries and marvellous machines, and no doubt many others (like a dynamo for an electromechanical motor). Needless to say, all this is highly secret, and builders are very careful about what

they invent in this field, at the risk of attracting the attention of the Initiates or, worse still, the Priest-Kings?

## **4- Gorean technologies**

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An equipment list! Yahaa!

So, no, not at all, but I'm going to make sure I present the technical and technological inventions present in the world of Gor. Not all of them are exclusive creations of the Caste of Builders, but most of them are their inventions, and craftsmen and merchants pay handsomely for the right to use their simplest inventions.

Two examples are wire and plant-based plastic: known from Gor, wire requires advanced metallurgical techniques, while plastic requires complex chemistry. Craftsmen and laborers work to create these materials, and others exploit them to create useful goods, but it's the builders who manage this market, and reap the dividends.

Need I say that the richest merchants are prepared to pay fortunes to control this kind of market and finance the builders, to ensure exclusivity? The builders don't necessarily have a choice. They have to finance the industrial structures needed to produce their creations, and so it's the merchant caste that stands to benefit, thanks to its wealth, one way or another.

### **MORE OR LESS COMMON OBJECTS**

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So, they're not all that common, but these are the most widespread technological items that most Goreans, if they have the means, could buy. A few rarer items (such as refrigerators and electric firelighters) are clearly more difficult to obtain.

#### **Wire, iron mesh and ties.**

Goreans know how to make wire, and they use it for many purposes. For example, bindings are a mixture of leather ties and fine, braided iron wire. Perfect for binding a captive or a slave, these ties are impossible to cut with simple means.

*"I tried to free myself from the bonds holding my wrists, rubbing them against the trunk of a fallen tree, but I couldn't undo them, nor wear them out. The fiber of the Gorean bindings is not meant to be so easily removed from a girl's wrists. After an hour, I was bound just as tightly as before." (Captive of Gor, page 182)*

*"There were also slave bags braided with wire ropes, a quarter-inch thick, some silver, some black, some steel-colored, with diamond-shaped openings from two to four inches, which could be padlocked at the top." (Price of Gor, page 577)*

#### **Glasses and spyglasses, known as builder's glasses.**

Yes, Builders are masters of optics. They know how to make binoculars, magnifying glasses, spyglasses, microscopes and telescopes, known in the novels as "builders' glasses".

About half an Ahn later, I heard Tenrik calling for the lookout. The man was carrying a long builders' glass.

*"Can you see their flag?" he shouted.*

*"It's white," he cried, "with green stripes. It's got the head of a bosc on it!" (Adventurers of Gor, page 185)*

#### **Coolers & refrigerators.**

Historically, iceboxes have been around since antiquity. The method is simple: ice is harvested in regions where it forms in winter, transported quickly in piles of dry straw, and stored at the bottom of a well or tower, with thick walls covered in baked brick, on straw. The whole thing is kept insulated, so the ice can be kept for months and used to preserve food. More often than not, however, by the height of summer, if the ice is not renewed (by going to the mountains, for example), it will have melted.

Do refrigerators, i.e. electric coolers, exist? On the face of it, given the medical sciences of the physician caste, yes, there clearly are, because it's a necessity, and because, in the end, all that's needed is a small battery-powered gas compressor and a tube cooling circuit, nothing really impossible for a builder to create. But it remains rare and very expensive.

## ***Chronometers, compasses and navigation instruments***

The Goreans use solar and lunar compasses along with efficient time-measuring instruments, since clocks and chronometers exist. The Gorean North still points to the Sardar Mountains. Of course, these instruments, little jewels of horology, are rare and expensive.

*“Like most Gorean compasses, mine contained a chronometer, so I took the compass, turned it over and pressed the tab to open the back and reveal the dial (Tarnsman de Gor, page 58).”*

## ***Lighters and firelighters***

Another common toy of the Builder’s Caste are alcohol lighters, using a flint and a wick, with a reservoir. They’re also called photophore, because they can be fitted with a lens to create a small beam of light.

Oh, yes, there are even electric firelighters, but given that their use could be similar to that of a weapon, they are very rare, and it’s risky to own one. On the other hand, even if goreans could create them, there are no matches. The chemistry of matches is too close to that of explosives, which are totally forbidden on Gor.

## ***Electric lamps***

Relatively uncommon, but there are a few, especially among the physician caste, used for medical examinations. They are also found in the precision work of watchmakers and certain craftsmen and artists. The rarest, because goreans don’t really see their use, are flashlights. Goreans either use torches and lanterns, or energy bulbs, which we’ll discuss in detail later in this article.

## ***Locks and micromechanics***

To sum up, Goreans know how to create precision tools and micromechanics small enough to make chronometers that fit in a marine compass, or optical lenses. Gorean locks benefit from this. Locks are generally basic for most people, but with the right

price tag, you can have mechanical locks with studs and springs, which even fit into a padlock or slave collar.

There are even electric locks, which close with an electromechanical latch and can’t be picked. You either need a key that contains the small electromechanical circuit that unlocks the lock, or type in a code on a small electromechanical keypad.

*“In my tunic, I took the key my father had given me, the key to Sana’s necklace. I reached the lock behind her neck and inserted the small key to turn it, opening the spring mechanism. I tore the necklace from her throat and threw it, with the key, from Tarn’s back, and watched them fly down in a long, graceful parabola.” (Tarnsman de Gor, page 52)*

## ***The paper***

People often talk about parchment on Gor, but this is because they don’t know what the material is: historically, parchment is sheepskin or calfskin, processed with backbreaking labor. A sheet of parchment is therefore worth a fortune, which is the main reason why there were hardly any libraries in Europe in the late Middle Ages with more than twenty or thirty books.

Papyrus was also used, but this was a technique that didn’t work unless the necessary plant was available: papyrus for paper, which only exists in Africa. So, if papyrus was used throughout the Mediterranean basin and the Arab world, I didn’t necessarily see any reason why this material should exist on Gor (but in fact it does).

But paper does exist! The people of Gor use paper, using techniques similar to those used to make paper according to Chinese recipes, but using rence fiber, which grows mainly in the Vosk delta. This is the main product of the local caste, the Caste des Renciers, who don’t have it easy. The paper obtained is of varying quality depending on the treatment, but it is far more affordable than parchment.

Are there any papers other than papier de rence? They appear later in the novels, but there is silk paper (pani), papyrus (Port-Schendi) and even paper made from wood pulp and rep (Ar and surrounding area).



*“A type of paper is made from reence. The plant itself has a long, thick root, about 15 cm long, which lies horizontally below the surface of the water; small roots sink into the mud from this main root, and several “stems”, up to a dozen, emerge from it, often 15 to 16 feet long from the root; it has an outgrowing floral spike, usually a single one.” (raiders of Gor, page 7)*

*“Rep is a whitish fibrous material found in the pods of a small reddish shrub, grown commercially in several regions, but especially below Ar and above the equator; cheap rep is woven in mills, commonly in several towns; it takes dye well and, being cheap and strong, is popular, especially among the lower castes.” (Raiders of Gor, page 10)*

### Plastic

I wasn't sure about this, but yes, there are a few plastic objects, and obviously it's produced by goreans. As petroleum doesn't seem to be known or exploited, this is plant-based, biodegradable plastic. Builders use them to make simple objects, especially for use in chemistry and medicine.

### Glass

Although glass has long existed on Earth, it wasn't until the 17th century that Europeans learned how to make large glass plates and mirrors. Goreans also know how to make it, and, as on Earth in the 17th century, it's expensive! It's not as expensive as it was back then (a free-standing mirror could cost the price of a castle), but it's not exactly affordable for most people. Non-tinted mirrors also exist, and are used for looking without being seen; they're great for spying.

### The slave goad

There are several kinds, Norman describes above all the one for tarns, and the one for slaves. The one for slaves was designed by builders and physician in common. The object's purpose is to discipline by inflicting great pain, but without leaving wounds or after-effects. The instrument, common enough, is an electrified rod, with a knob that regulates the intensity. And, yes, it can be a lethal weapon, proof if any were needed that, no, Gor's physician don't follow the Hippocratic oath.

*“On the other side of his belt, he wore a slave goad, a bit like the tarn goad, except that it's designed to be used as an instrument for controlling human beings rather than tarns. The instrument was developed jointly by the Caste of Physicians and the Caste of Builders, the physicians contributing their knowledge of human pain fibers and networks of nerve endings, and the Builders contributing certain principles and techniques developed in the construction and manufacture of energy ampoules. Unlike the tarn goad, which has a simple on-off switch in the handle, the slave prod operates with both a switch and a dial, and the intensity of the charge administered can vary from an infliction that is only unpleasant to one that is immediately lethal.” (Assassin of Gor)*

### Fingerprints

Goreans have been using fingerprints to identify slaves for a very long time. All you need is translucent paper, a magnifying glass and a little ink to make the comparison. Do Goreans know how to take fingerprints from a crime scene? I'd say so, because on Earth, it's a technique that's been used effectively since 1891. Gorean technology is well advanced enough to create fine powders for taking fingerprint fragments, then comparing them, at least summarily. A tool that any magistrate-investigator from Goro would use without hesitation!

*“It was to this man that Vella had been placed, her registration, papers and purchase having been arranged. In the House of Cernus, after the veil, bracelets, leash and collar had been removed, the House of Cernus agents had checked her fingerprints against those on the papers. She was then thoroughly examined by the doctors at the House of Cernus. Then, deemed acceptable, she had knelt while the House agents signed her delivery receipt and endorsed her papers, retaining one copy and giving one copy to the seller's agent, to pass on to the Document Cylinder.” (Assassin of Gor)*

### STRANGE OBJECTS

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If this is properly unknown to 98% of Gor people, and many of these objects would clearly be magic to most of them, these are some of the objects present, evoked, or possible, technologies known and employed on Gor. Suffice it to say that all these objects are worth a fortune and are rare, not to mention that the average gorean wouldn't even know how to operate them. And, no, there are no



technological weapons in this list. See Chapter 6: Forbidden technologies, to understand why.

### **The heating mat**

Among Norman's delusions, especially since we'll never know how it works and will never hear the end of it afterwards, he imagined a heated mattress. Quote:

*"In the morning, I woke up on the mattress in the corner of my apartment, cold and shivering. It was just before dawn. I turned off the power button on the mat and folded back the sides of the blanket. It was cold to the touch now, because I'd set the temperature on the timer to get cold an hour before first light. There's little tendency to stay in an icy bed. I decided that I disapproved of Gorean devices to separate mortals from their beds as much as I hated the clock radios of my own world." (Tarnsman de Gor, page 43)*

### **The universal translator**

This, too, is an object that actually appears in only one novel and is very quickly forgotten. It therefore seems very rare, and is an item provided by the Priest-Kings. I'll leave the quotation here, for the sake of eclecticism:

*"These translation machines are a marvel of miniaturization, each the size of a portable typewriter and programmed for four non-Gorean languages. The translations, of course, are quite literal, and the vocabulary is limited to recognizing around 25,000 equivalents for each language. As a result, for subtle communication or the fullest expression of thought, the machine was inferior to a competent linguist. The machine, however, according to my father, retained the advantage that its errors would not be intentional, and that its translations, however inadequate, would be honest." (Tarnsman de Gor, pages 25-26)*

### **The blood analysis machine**

How and why? I don't know, but it's a useful piece of equipment found in the best doctors' surgeries, and often seen on Gor roleplay sims. The machine can determine blood type, detect certain diseases and drugs, and even determine whether a woman is pregnant or not. As the machine necessarily employs

electronics, it is either supplied by the Priest-Kings or imported from Earth.

### **The electrified cage**

Nothing too complicated to create, and perfectly and cruelly effective for guarding a prisoner and preventing anyone from touching the cage. That said, it remains a rare and seldom-used item.

### **The genetic sequencer**

Yes, yes, you read that right! Initially, this was a rare machine donated exclusively by the Priest-Kings, but for some years now in Gor's world, it has been imported from Earth. It's mainly used by physician who work with slave breeding compounds, to refine bloodlines.

### **The speaker & microphone**

You think I'm joking? In the novels, there are many uses for loudspeakers and microphones. In fact, they're the basis of universal translators. And it's a relatively simple electrical technology, after all, which Gorean builders quickly learned to create, no doubt using models from Earth. But it's a technology kept relatively secret: the builders will never explain how it works. They will only offer to install these machines, which make it possible to hear without being heard, or to communicate remotely by wire, to wealthy, trustworthy customers. The risks of drift (and therefore mortal danger) are too high.

*"Can they hear us?" I whispered.*

*No," replied Ho-Tu.*

*One of the girls laughed, pushed the other, then turned and ran off, pursued by the other, who was also laughing.*

*I glared at Ho-Tu.*

*"There's an acoustic speaker system," he said. "We can hear them, but they can't hear us.*

*I looked at the two girls running away. Beyond them, I could see others. Two of them were playing ball with a red ball (Assassin of Gor, page 114).*

### *The phonograph and the music player*

It's very rare, and mostly imported from Earth, but record players, or even cassette and CD-rom players, can be bought on Gor, for those who know the right people and have gold (yes, gold!) to lose. A phonograph with a wax or plastic disc will be relatively affordable, more modern machines of this kind are simply rare... and then, you also need to have the discs and cassettes to listen to the music. And of course, it's generally frowned upon on Gor.

### *The cathode-ray screen*

Genetic sequencers and blood analysis machines need keyboards and screens, so there's such a thing as a cathode-ray screen. Yes, on Earth this implies a minimum of particle physics expertise, which Goreans have no mastery of at all. Which is why these screens are imported from Earth. Builders know how to use and operate them, but not how to create them.

### *The stasis chamber*

Here too, few common Goreans have seen one, but it's a familiar object to agents of the Priest-Kings (and the Kurri), but also to slave traders and physicians, and surely to other rich, powerful and curious people. These are the chambers used to transport an Earthwoman safely from Earth to Gor via spaceship. And obviously, the person in the chamber is in stasis – hypersleep, if you like – and can stay that way for a very long time. As it's directly related to Acquisition Journeys and the Terran slave trade, the object, easily recognizable, is known.

*“Terran slaves,” says Peisistratus, “are normally sedated on Earth, brought to collection points, stored in such caissons for the journey to Gor, landed unconscious on Gor, then brought unconscious to the pens. So, in a typical case, a girl might go to bed as usual, in the comfort of her own sheets, with no thought other than of her next day's existence, totally unaware of her selection, and then later, to her astonishment, wake up in the pens.” (Kur of Gor)*

## *5- Energy Bulbs*

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The energy bulb was invented by the Caste of Builders. It's like an electric light bulb, usually

producing its own electricity with a small battery, which is a well-kept secret of the Builders' Caste. How does this battery, which looks like it could last for years, generate electricity? A mystery. But it would make earthlings jealous.

No price is given for an energy bulb, but I'd be tempted to say that one of these bulbs probably fetches at least 30 to 50 silver tarks a unit, given their complexity and their lifespan of many years.

*“These bulbs, invented over a century ago by the Caste des Constructeurs, produce clear, soft light for years without replacement. (Tarnsman of Gor)”*

Bulbs are only affordable for the wealthy. Most Goreans use lights produced by flames and, in any case, if they say they prefer that, they have neither the choice nor the means.

*“Interestingly, the light in the room came from behind a translucent blue ceiling, probably supplied by energy bulbs. Saphrar was a wealthy man to have energy bulbs in his home; few Goreans can afford such a luxury; and, indeed, few care, for Goreans, for whatever reason, love the light of flames and lamps and torches and the like; flames must be made, tended, observed; they are more beautiful and more alive. (Nomads of gor)”*

## *BATTERIES AND ENERGY SOURCES*

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Builders know how to make batteries that can power electrical machines, but they also know how to make switches and electric cables (long live plastic) and dynamos. They could be mass-producing electricity, but they're clearly not. There are several reasons for this:

**1- It's expensive:** there's no mass industry on Gor, so building electrical systems is long, complicated and expensive.

**2- Gor people don't like innovations:** they prefer a cushion to a seat, a fur to a blanket, a candle to an electric lamp, a wood fire to a radiator, and they're wary of modern technologies they don't understand, which to them look like magic, and therefore dangerous.

**3- Initiates and Priest-Kings are vigilant:** we've already talked about this, so there's no need to come back to it, but it encourages Goreans not to abuse these technologies, out of healthy caution.

Some quotes:

*"I didn't see any merchandise in my passage through the rear halls of the Cerulean; the girls are generally kept, before their sale, in holding cells, lit by energy bulbs, below ground level; however, I was soon passing the display cages, which are accessible to the public; these cages were now empty; they are used, from the 10th to the 14th Abns of a given day, to display the merchandise that will be sold in the evening ; (Assassin of Gor)"*

*"Light bulbs are found not only in the homes of the very wealthy, but also in the offices of professionals with specific needs. Thus, in a hospice of the Green Caste, in the big cities, the presence of a light bulb won't be so surprising, despite its price:*

*The instruments he used, the tests he performed, the samples he needed were no different from those on Earth. What particularly struck me was the fact that this room, as primitive as it looked to me, was lit by what is known in Gorean as an energy bulb, an invention of the Builders' Caste. I could see neither the cords nor the battery casings. Yet the room was filled with a delicate, soft white light, which the doctor could adjust by turning the base of the bulb. (Captive of Gor)"*

*"Then the crowd quietened down, and so did the musicians, as one after another of the amphitheater's lights went out. Another set of bulbs, much to the delight of the crowd, suddenly lit up the block (where a slave is on display) with a brilliant light.*

*The block, in the light, looked very austere and massive. It was empty. I wondered what the girls could see from the block. I could see, in the reflected light, the faces of those around me and, as the moments passed, I saw more and more of them. (Assassin of Gor)"*

*"Vika smiled at me: "You see," she said in relief, "it's too late. Now you must stay."*

*"Why?" I asked.*

*She looked away, avoiding my eyes. "Because the bulbs will soon go out," she said, "and that will be the appointed hours for sleeping."*

...

*And then came the third and final stroke of that distant gong and, at the same moment, the energy bulbs in the room went out and I understood that somewhere in the long corridors of this vast edifice, walked the Priest-kings of Gor. (Priest-king of Gor)"*

## **6- forbidden technologies**

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What the Priest-Kings firmly forbid, with sufficient means to intervene in the event of transgression, via their agents or the Initiates, or more directly, are certain techniques and sciences that could tip the balance of Gor, both for mankind and for the planet. Here is the list of what is forbidden. And whoever dares to work on it takes great risks, for himself, his family, even his whole town!

The following are prohibited the internal combustion engine and steam (and therefore all industrial machines that could be powered by these engines), personal armor (strangely enough, this is more a religious ban than a Priest-King ban), wave communication systems (but not by wire – we've already talked about loudspeakers), there are also microphones, as we discover in the third novel), fast-moving machines, including advanced sail navigation (Gorean ships are hardly more efficient than ancient galleys) and, last but not least, explosives, including black powder and, of course, all forms of firearms. Oh, yes: forget computers too.

The novels don't mention it, but no, there's no reason why the Priest-Kings should have banned astronomy: many people belonging to the most cultured castes know that they live on a planet in our solar system, that not far from there is the Earth, and that other worlds exist around the other stars of the Milky Way.

## Conclusion

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Gor is not like Robert E. Howard's Conan; it's much closer to Edgar Rice Burrough's Mars cycle (which you may know as John Carter of Mars). While Gor's saga is closer to a Planet-opera, it's still clearly science-fantasy.

Yes, I know, I'm a professional novelist and author, so I'm familiar with literary genres and sub-genres, so I must speak Chinese to you; so, let's summarize what the world of Gor is:

**1- A Planet-opera:** Planet opera stories are set on an alien planet with puzzling and mysterious features, where the main characters are tasked with exploring and discovering all its aspects (fauna, flora, resources, society, organization, etc.).

**2- Science-fantasy:** science-fantasy stories often integrate elements of modern technology into a medieval or ancient universe, or on the contrary, fantasy elements into a science-fiction universe.

Why do I explain this in conclusion? To encourage you, players in the world of Gor, not to say NO without thinking about a modern or even science-fiction invention or creation in the world of Gor. Because there are some out there, and I haven't looked at all of them, and it's silly to refuse to let them exist in the role-playing context of the world of Gor! And I haven't told you everything! There are even radio communicators between agents of the Priest-Kings, not to mention the clones and biotech cyborgs of the same Priest-Kings, not to mention computers and AIs.

The idea is that the world of Gor is ancient, even medieval, in its entirety and for the most part, but that it has technological marvels that do exist and are not just in the hands of a few. You have to be reasonable with this – a peasant can't have a phonograph – but you have to be consistent with the universe, and the universe of the novels includes these technological marvels, from the simplest to the craziest, and these are no exceptions.

Be reasonable, but don't say NO. Be creative and imaginative, dare; you can, and it's a shame not to exploit this aspect of Gor's universe.

## *Gor's Education & laws, the scribe caste*

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We're about to tackle a subject that concerns both one of the most fundamental aspects of Gor's urban civilization, justice, and the body that governs and operates it, the scribal caste, although this is only one of its functions, scribes really being so much more than bureaucrats and notaries!

I apologize in advance for the length of the article (14 word pages), but this is due to the list of examples of Gorean laws and legal customs needed to illustrate the second part of the article. I hope you find it useful, and happy reading!

What nonsense I've heard about the scribe caste (but ultimately no more than about the builders' and doctors' caste, that said). So, yes, I'm going to introduce you to the scribe caste, the second most powerful high-caste in the order of precedence of Gorean culture, using novels as my source and deducing the rest from comparative historical and cultural data. This is the principle of the Gorean Archives, and I stick to it: everything I write is more or less contained in the novels, or deduced from the same references as Norman, namely the period of the Imperial Roman world, at least as a cultural model. Nothing comes from writings on other news websites, nor from notecards on Second Life.

With that in mind, let's get down to business! We'll start by talking about the scribes, before discussing the principles of Gorean justice.

### *1- Teaching on Gor*

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The basis of teaching on Gor is the principle of transmission of knowledge from father to son. The caste principle requires that the son follow the same professional path as his father, within the same caste, i.e. both the same socio-professional category and the same social rank. So, even though most education is transmitted directly from father to son, each caste also has its own schools, where only children from that caste can study. The only exception is for children who are very gifted in a particular field, who,

if noticed, are invited to join the caste where their talents will be showcased. This literally means that they are adopted by another caste, and it's quite rare. A carpenter's son (a low-caste) with incredible mechanical talent might be adopted by a representative of the builders' caste, seeing in him a genius to be exploited for the benefit of their caste.

With all this in mind, it's clear that one of the most basic elements of education – reading and arithmetic – is not at all the same for all castes, and will be more or less neglected and privileged. The peasant who toils from morning till night to feed his family has no time to learn to read – and probably no means to buy a book. In Rome, and we're talking about the city itself, most Romans couldn't read; less than five percent had enough education to read poetry or classical texts. Yes, even the Middle Ages were ultimately more literate than the Roman world (even if only in the cities).

*"Occasionally heralds, or criers, would pass by, calling out news or announcements. Many on this world, you see, cannot read. Thus the importance of the heralds, the criers, and such. Many things are advertised, too, in such a way, by calling out bargains, the fruits in season, the markets, the cost of cloth, and such. Too, one may hear men, or often boys, for it costs less to hire them, calling out the pleasures of various taverns, and the delights that may be found within."*

*Witness of Gor*

You'd think that with public libraries, knowledge of paper and printing, and a well-organized general education system in Gorean cities, the literacy rate would be much higher. But this is where a religious law comes into play, a taboo for Goreans: **the First and Second Knowledge**.

It's a weapon of social control, erected by the Priest-Kings, managed and monitored by the caste of Initiates. The aim is to prevent the lower-caste from gaining access to the most advanced knowledge. Since knowledge is power – and believe me, this is not an image – the lower classes must remain ignorant and superstitious. And yet, it's not that simple, and not that closed, as we'll come back to in a moment.

What's the difference? **The First Knowledge** is reserved for the lower castes and describes a flat world, oceans falling into the void on the horizon, monsters and demons in unknown places, diseases and natural plagues as divine punishments or curses, etc... The First Knowledge encourages superstition surrounding strange natural phenomena, and the abilities and knowledge of High-castes, and discourages excessive intellectual curiosity. **The Second Knowledge** is, in a way, what everyone in the 21<sup>st</sup> century knows, understands, or has learned about the physical and natural world: the Earth is round and is not the center of the universe, other planets and stars with planets exist, microbes, worms, rats and cockroaches are not born by spontaneous generation, and diseases are caused by viruses and bacteria, not curses, etc...

*"I was also instructed in the Double Knowledge – that is, I was instructed in what the people, on the whole, believed, and then I was instructed in what the intellectuals were expected to know. Sometimes there was a surprising discrepancy between the two. For example, the population as a whole, the castes below the High Castes, were encouraged to believe that their world was a broad flat disc. Perhaps this was to discourage them from exploration or to develop in them a habit of relying on common-sense prejudices – something of a social control device."*

*Tarnsman of Gor*

But Second Knowledge is not hidden! While the secrets of each caste are jealously guarded – and it's easy to see why – anyone can read a treatise on astronomy in a public library! But to do so, you need to know how to read, and be curious enough to look beyond your beliefs and superstitions. And as this is not common, in the end, the wall between these two degrees of knowledge remains watertight, ensuring its role: that the high-castes control the rest of the people.

*"The distinctions, however, between knowledge tend to be somewhat imperfect and artificial. For example, the second knowledge, while required of the higher castes and not of the lower castes, is not prohibited to the lower castes. It is not a body of secret or jealously guarded truths, for example. Gorean libraries, like the tables of Kaissa tournaments, tend to be open to men of all castes."*

*Kajira of Gor*

There is a **Third Knowledge**, but one that is virtually unknown to all. Only a few people in each city are initiated into it, and it's a jealously guarded secret. It is, in fact, knowledge of some of the sciences and technologies of the Priest-Kings, including, for example, electronics, computing, electrical engineering, advanced physics and chemistry, extensive knowledge of Earth culture and geopolitics, knowledge of the organization of the Acquisition Trips networks, which are set up between Earth and Gor, and which kidnap earthlings to sell them as slaves on Gor. It is, of course, also knowledge available to agents of the Priest-Kings... and the Kurris.

*"The classical knowledge distinctions on Gor tend to follow caste lines, the first knowledge being regarded as appropriate for the lower castes and the second knowledge for the higher castes. That there is a Third Knowledge, that of Priest-Kings, is also a common belief."*

*Kajira of Gor*

## **2- The scribe caste**

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I've said elsewhere that the Scribe caste is reputed to be particularly haughty, closed-minded and jealous of its knowledge and rank, a kind of pedantic aristocracy that never mixes with the common man. So, it's still a reputation, even if it has some basis, but we'll see that it's more nuanced than that.

The color of the scribe caste is blue and, on Gor Second Life, their symbol is often the quill and inkwell (a symbol that doesn't appear in the novels). If builders are Gor's engineers, scribes are its scholars and intellectuals. Their primary role, in a way their caste oath, is to faithfully transcribe the history of Gor, then protect and transmit this history, and the knowledge of codes and laws, to the people. In short, above all, they are archivists. Scribes always display the blue of their caste, conspicuously, on their attire, and it's not uncommon for them to wear a mantel or cape to be recognized from afar.



**Note:** caste blue is not sky blue, blue-gray or green blue, but what is known as royal blue, a vivid, deep blue.

## **GOR'S TEACHERS**

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This is the true role of all scribes, whether historians, geographers or magistrates. Knowledge is only valuable if it is passed on, understood and used, and their role is to pass it on. That's why they're always at the head of public libraries, and why you'll find them teaching in a military barracks, a builders' university or a hospital classroom.

Yes, so every scribe is a scholar. Their knowledge is first and foremost theoretical and intellectual, but many scribes travel the world to find rare books, gather local knowledge, map new regions or identify new species of plants and animals. Their intellectual training also makes them highly observant, and their attention to detail is usually quite surprising to other Goreans. Finally, administrative paperwork and justice are just one facet of their many activities.

## **FEMALE SCRIBES**

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While the majority of women in the caste are confined to domestic tasks or family management, there are many women in the caste who practice their trade, at least if it doesn't fall into the category of activities that put them at too great a risk. And, yes, you may come across a woman magistrate, prosecutor or lawyer. As they are there to dispense justice according to written codes and procedures, their authority lies in their title, not in their status as women. That said, scribes are like all Goreans: sexist enough to prefer to reserve positions of responsibility for men, if at all possible.

**Note:** there are many members of the scribe caste, and, no, it's not a caste swimming in gold. Many scribes have to work for private employers. If there are rich scribes, there are also poor ones, who struggle to feed their families, and who sometimes, to alleviate their misery, don't hesitate to sell their daughters, even those who are already educated and cultured. Scribes' daughters are highly prized on the slave market. It's not the only high-caste to do so, but it happens more often here than elsewhere.

## **THE PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRITY**

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Warriors have honor, scribes have integrity. This can be summed up as "always acting wisely and righteously, in accordance with one's values and beliefs, with the aim of making the most just decision." Yeah, a scribe is really supposed to have integrity. He'll refuse to lie or take a bribe, may go against the law if the law doesn't allow for a just and honorable outcome, and will generally refuse to compromise himself. It is largely this integrity that earns them their haughty, pedantic reputation. Scribes must be morally irreproachable, and they take great pride in this requirement, which guides their work and their *raison d'être*. This character trait gives them a reputation for courage, not through arms, but through their ability to take risks to do the right thing.

*"And Caprus seemed in a good humor; that perhaps was significant, betokening an end in sight for my mission. In thinking about this I realized what a brave man Caprus was, and how little I had respected his courage and his work. He had risked much, probably much more than I. I felt ashamed. He was only a Scribe, and yet what he had done had taken great courage, probably more courage than that possessed by many Warriors."*

### *Assassin of Gor*

So, are they all really? Well, no more than warriors are all honorable, or doctors are all altruists! Especially since, in order to survive, they often have to work for a private employer, which increases the risk of compromise and corruption.

There is one point to be made about this integrity: the scribes are the first to discourage the lower castes from too much intellectual curiosity. This is not done with clear prohibitions, but more subtly, for example by making access to books or literacy complicated, rare or too expensive for the average person. And a scribe has to lie about his knowledge of the Second Knowledge to a member of the lower caste. Which, for an upright individual, is a truly difficult and unpleasant endeavor, driving them to avoid mingling with the lower-caste. Once again, their haughty reputation can be explained, but it goes even further: the caste of Initiates doesn't like the caste of Scribes at all. Well, I'd be tempted to say that the only high

caste the Initiates like is the Warrior caste, and even then. Because scribes live to pass on their knowledge, and for their intellectual integrity. Two things that strongly contradict the role of the Initiate caste.

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### *THE SCRIBE'S ACCENT*

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One detail that gives scribes away is their diction and rich vocabulary. Scribes don't speak like other Goreans, but with a much broader and richer lexical baggage. It's easy to recognize a slave who's a former member of the scribe caste, just by getting her to talk a little. She'll have a hard time hiding that accent and refined diction. That said, scribes are not the only ones to have it, but outside this caste, it's rather rare, and the sign of a refined intellectual education.

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## *3- The scribe's expertise*

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There are many, so I'll just list the most common and noteworthy:

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### *CLERKS*

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Basically, the scribe who draws up legal property papers and private and commercial contracts. He works for the city, or for a high caste or the merchant caste, and knows the civil and commercial laws.

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### *TAX AGENTS*

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They too work for the city, or for the merchant caste, and are in charge of verifying the conformity of products offered for sale with the city's commercial laws, charging taxes, revealing fraud and counterfeiting, and often controlling auctions, whether of luxury goods or large quantities. It's a role that interferes with everything commercial.

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### *ACCOUNTANTS*

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Need I go into too much detail? Every powerful Gor family has one, and he's in charge of the treasury in the broadest sense of the term.

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### *MAGISTRATES*

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Basically, judge and prosecutor, this is the local authority who, in the service of the town, listens to the pleadings of defendants and plaintiffs, receives evidence and testimonies, decides on the legal penalty and reparation to be applied and is responsible for applying the local code of law in its judgments. We talk about justice on Gor below.

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### *THE LAWYERS*

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Where there's a trial and a magistrate, there's a lawyer. Any scribe can take on this role, but some make it their profession, either independently or in the service of a family. They defend the interests of a defendant or plaintiff, and sometimes investigate, gather witnesses and evidence to help their client win the case.

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### *ARCHIVISTS*

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In general, archivists are in charge of private and public libraries, and city archives. Their role is to ensure that history and knowledge are transcribed, classified, protected and, if necessary, disseminated. They are often good writers and highly erudite historians themselves.

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### *CARTOGRAPHERS & NATURALISTS*

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They travel all over Gor, gathering geographical, physical and natural knowledge, and returning with it to make new books that will be as much new and precious knowledge to preserve and pass on. They may work for the city, or for patrons of the arts.

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### *TEACHERS*

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Private or public, working solely for their caste or teaching more generally, these are the professors, maitres d'école and maitres de conférences, each with their own specialty. They form the hard core of the caste, since it is their role to pass on knowledge, albeit with restrictions.

## *4- Gor's justice system*

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The laws of Gor are based on three principles: Honor, respect for the Homestone, and individual responsibility.

### *HONOR*

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For every Gorrean, a person without honor is no longer human, but a savage beast, an outlaw. A man without honor is a man without words, whose claims, deeds and actions are worthless. So, for Goreans, to be dishonored is one of the worst things in life. Even the most despicable bandit places his honor above all else, and even the most wretched she-urt still has this last treasure as his only wealth. An honorless gorean can be robbed, enslaved or killed by anyone.

### *THE HOMESTONE*

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One of the greatest honors for a Gorean is to be found in his Homestone. For a Gorean, the Homestone represents what the flag would be for us patriotic 21st-century inhabitants. It is the heart of the city, its code, its honor, the symbol of citizen unity. Not to respect the Homestone, not to fight to defend it, to insult it, to lose it, is one of the worst dishonors there is. When a Gorean wants to assert the value of his promise or oath, he does so on his Homestone, consecrating an oath that he will never be able to undo.

This idea gives rise to the principle that the Homestone is superior to the men who make up the city. Thus, a Gorean will respect the city's leaders, who also serve this Homestone, as well as defend it against those he feels may serve it poorly, including its leaders. A man without a Homestone is, for Goreans, a man without honor, an outlaw.

### *INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY*

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In general, Goreans never recognize the notion of extenuating circumstances. Honor dictates that each individual is responsible for his or her words, deeds and actions, and must therefore assume responsibility for them in the name of honor, and bear the

consequences. That's why Goreans are quite careful about what they say, because they must take responsibility for everything they say, and be prepared to answer for it, either with iron or in a court of law.

This notion introduces a few characteristics: if a man is robbed in his own home, but had no means, or opportunity, to have a good lock or to defend his property, he is declared as responsible as the thief. The latter will be punished as a thief, but the victim, responsible for his lack of prudence, will probably not be able to claim any additional compensation. Gor's Law, in general, is straightforward, simple and strict, with no excuses, extenuating circumstances or context to justify the criminal act or offence.

By extension, a person who has been wronged, swindled or cheated, a poor person or a drug addict, is considered responsible for his or her condition, and must answer for it. So, for example, in the case of taxes, a poor man can't justify not being able to pay his share because he can't afford to. Gor's Law is just, but without pity, compassion or leniency.

### *JUSTICE IN THE CITIES OF GOR*

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Justice in the cities is dispensed by magistrates. They are in charge of justice and trials, and can be recognized by their court dress and the high stick that designates them for their role. All are authorized to hand down legal rulings, and all citizens, whatever their rank, are bound by these rulings.

Every citizen has the right to a trial, which means that all complaints must be registered and investigated, with the magistrates deciding how the complaint is to be handled. A misdemeanor or a commercial complaint will be handled by a local magistrate. The most serious crimes will require the intervention of a high magistrate delegated directly by the authority in place. Justice is detached from caste, so a crime committed by a doctor or warrior is judged by the same laws as a merchant or peasant. High castes have their own legal system, but this only applies to offences committed by a member of their caste against caste rules. This private jurisdiction therefore has limited powers. If a serious crime is committed

within the caste, the city court will be in charge of the proceedings.

There are no presumption of innocence, no bail on Gor. An indicted individual is imprisoned until his trial. A important individual will be placed under house arrest, either at home or in a comfortable house, forbidden to move and closely guarded. Gorean justice does not seem to oblige the accused to prove his innocence, but magistrates are in charge of proving his guilt or innocence. However, the notion of modern material evidence remains secondary: first and foremost, what counts in a trial is testimony, and therefore the word of honor. Thus, a well-disguised crime, with no witnesses, is very difficult to judge, even if we know the culprit.

Defendants are sometimes treated harshly in a trial. Gor's justice remains fair (relatively speaking), but it is merciless, even cruel. For a serious crime, an accused man or woman may well be kept in a cage, naked, with no amenities. Torture can be used to speed up proceedings and obtain confessions, depending on the crime and the city. Lawyers are there to defend their clients, prove their innocence and try to prevent the worst forms of abuse. But you have to be able to afford one, and a lawyer is not at all compulsory in a trial. However, defendants are never denied a lawyer if they can afford one.

When a slave is a witness to a crime being investigated, he is usually systematically tortured, since his word is worthless. Being a slave, confession under torture is then acceptable, which also means that you can make him confess whatever you want.

Penalties on Gor are exemplary, and cruel. Prison as punishment is rare, and in some places non-existent. Punishments include compensation, fines, lashes or canings, the pillory, banishment, mutilation, enslavement or death. The Goreans sentenced people to death for crimes which, from our point of view, would only merit imprisonment: let's cite insult to the Homestone, arson, assault with injury on a free woman, insult to an Initiate, possession of an unauthorized copy of the city keys, etc...

### There are several types of punishment:

For a commercial offence, akin to theft or deceit, and depending on the seriousness of the offence, the individual may be scared by having his earlobe sliced off, and will in any case be forced to pay reparations. In the event of a repeat offence, the penalty is a severed hand for a man, and enslavement for a woman.

In the case of perjury against a plaintiff, if the two parties are unable to settle their dispute, reparations are generally payable. In the case of serious perjury, the real sentence may be a public declaration of the guilty party's dishonor. A way of condemning him to exile and losing everything... if he has time to flee before being killed.

For offenses such as insults or depredation of property, if the offenders have not settled the matter by a duel or an agreement, the accused must pay reparations. In cases of recidivism, they can be whipped, publicly flogged or even enslaved.

In the case of an assault on a free woman, the Goreans are quite implacable: you don't touch a free woman. Most often, it's banishment, or death. It should be noted that such an assault on a man by another man, or a woman, will not be considered a priori. A man is responsible for defending himself. A woman who assaults a man is answerable to her family, Companion or guardian, and the assaulted man will seek redress himself. The courts only intervene to settle a dispute if both parties are unable to resolve it.

The most serious crimes, those which end in death, with or without prior torture, but which can also be condemned by death sentences, each more horrible than the last, such as being thrown into the desert with the sinews cut, the ordeal of the wheel, or of being drawn apart, etc., are :

- Characterized insult to the Hearth Stone
- Theft of the Homestone
- Assault or murder of a Council member or caste head
- Betrayal of the city and complicity with the enemy (opening doors to the enemy, trading with an enemy, providing detailed maps of

- the city, providing access or a key, perjuring an oath on the Hearthstone, etc.),
- Assaulting or insulting an Initiate or the Priest-Kings,
- Assaulting any member of the Artists' Caste.

There must be others of the same ilk.

### *WHO WRITES THE LAWS?*

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The laws of Gorean cities are enacted by decree, usually by the City Council, sometimes by the Ubars. But both the Ubars and any member of the Council are subject to these laws, just like the last she-urt. If the authorities, after a crime committed by one of them, were to change the laws by decree, they would not apply retrospectively. Thus, every member of the city is answerable to the law, whatever his or her rank, and cannot escape impeachment by a magistrate if he or she so orders. As we have seen, the latter may simply be a scribe competent in the field, or a Praetor who has come to investigate and judge the case.

### *WOMEN AND THE LAW*

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In terms of the Law, women in a city are highly protected. It's forbidden to enslave a woman without a trial, they have the same rights as men, but what's more, no one can assault them without having to answer to the Law – and the Goreans won't stand for anyone raising a hand to a free woman in their city. They can give their opinion, respond, even tell off a man without him slapping them in the face to shut them up, without risking the wrath of the citizens and, if he's hurt her, a trial that's likely to go badly for him.

Yet, legally speaking, women are not that free, far from it. A woman is subject all her life to a guardian who can decide for her, and has all the power. It's the head of the family, the father, the guardian, the Companion. Indeed, while a free woman cannot be beaten or raped by anyone without great risk to the aggressor, her guardian can beat, punish, molest and even enslave her, without the Law being able to oppose it.

Basically, a woman is totally subject to the authority of her guardian, who has almost complete power over her and her property. However, some companionship contracts limit this guardianship.

A free woman does not usually choose her Companion. Companionship is a contract to found a family, with the aim of having heirs, possibly negotiating alliances, and moving up the caste hierarchy. The woman passes from parental authority to that of her companion, who in private can do pretty much whatever he wants. As a result, women tend to keep a low profile, not because any man can come down on them – because he can't – but because if he complains to his guardian or companion, there's going to be hell to pay.

Since honor dictates that contempt should not go unpunished, the guardian who receives the complaint from the offended will feel obliged, if he recognizes the contempt, to punish the woman. He may well lock her up, take away her possessions, whip her, or even in the worst cases, enslave her for a while, permanently. In such cases, women cannot count on the protection of the law, but on the leniency of their guardians.

### *LAWS, CODES AND CUSTOMS COMMON TO GOREAN CITIES*

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It's not easy to find all the examples, codes and laws common to Gorean cities. Norman hasn't gone into too much detail, so examples taken directly from the novels are few and far between. It's worth noting that we learn more about the laws concerning slaves than we do about free men and women.

But here's a quick sample of the Gorean laws to be found in the novels. It's not a strict code to be followed; some laws are city-specific, others are customary, and still others are relatively common. The laws serve as a guide to help players, not as rules to be followed absolutely and in their entirety:

1- *"There is a saying in Gor, that the laws of the city extend no further than its walls."* (*Outlaw of Gor*): Basically, once you're outside the city's direct sphere of influence, its laws no longer apply; a city's walls also legally protect you, hence the fact that a woman outside a city's



walls, or the clearly defined zone of its judicial and police influence, has a lot to worry about if she doesn't have an escort.

2- Claiming a territory of one's own involves placing a claim symbol, usually yellow, on the ground in the morning sunlight, then staying close to it and defending it all day. At nightfall, if the symbol has remained, the claimed land becomes the property of your Homestone. The Homestone is not limited to the symbol of a city. Every prestigious family has its own Homestone, even if it does not represent the power of a city. It's a bit like the family coat of arms in Switzerland: it's only symbolic, but every old family has its own, and displays it with pride. On Gor, this family Homestone represents its honour. It is therefore as precious to the family as the city's Homestone.

3- Stealing a Homestone is one of the worst crimes on Gor. The thief is often punished by being scalded in oil. On the other hand, the same thief returning home with a stolen Homestone is hailed and honored as a hero, blessed by the Priest-Kings. Having a Homestone stolen does not condemn a city to submission to the city that stole its stone. It's just a symbol. But on the other hand, that city has lost its reputation and honour, and honour, in Gorean geopolitics, is as important as the strength of armies or the economy.

4- A man can be killed on the spot for talking about his Homestone without standing up. Whether this is a law or a form of custom is unclear. Personally, I think it's a custom, not necessarily applied, to encourage people to respect their city and their oath.

5- Only the High Castes vote for a city's Council; each caste votes for its own caste Councillor. Note: there are several cases in the novels where a low-caste is a member of the council, as if it were a high-caste. Most often, it's the merchant caste.

6- Only High Castes can vote to elect an administrator, or appoint an Ubar. Low castes have no voting rights.

7- It's not made clear whether High Caste women have the right to vote. *"While it is only high-caste men who elect the members of the City Council"* (*Assassin of Gor*),

doesn't specify whether we're talking about High-Castes in general, or only male High-Caste individuals. However, Council members can be women, so, a priori, they are undoubtedly entitled to vote.

8- It is forbidden to take a map of the city and its territory out of a city, just as it is forbidden for a non-citizen to possess a map of a city that is not his or her Homestone.

9- Great cities measure time. There are clocks, bells telling the hours, etc., and the duration of time is generally the same everywhere, as time is measured according to the same standards.

10- Citizenship is a privilege, not a right. *"Citizenship, or its continuance, on other than a nominal basis, in some cities, is contingent upon such things as being present at public ceremonies, such as participating every six months in auspices, and attending and speaking at numerous public meetings, some of which are called at the last minute."* (*Dancer of Gor*)

11- . *"Citizenship in most Gor communities is not something due by virtue of birth, but earned by virtue of intention and perseverance."* (*Slave Girl of Gor*). At the age of majority – which varies from 16 to 21 depending on the city, and sometimes even 25, i.e. the age limit for making the pilgrimage to the Sardar mountains – a city resident must take part in the Homestone ceremony. This may be a simple formal ceremony, or it may consist of a real interrogation by a committee of citizens, or members of the Council, to determine your resolve to become a citizen. The oath is usually taken by touching or kissing the Pierre de Foyer, and once done, the new citizen is sometimes presented with a mantle or laurel wreath.

12- Failure to participate in citizenship ceremonies may be punished by banishment. This only applies to people born in the city or born to citizens of the city.

13- You can renounce your current citizenship and acquire the citizenship of another city. Of course, you'll need to be accepted by that other city as a citizen, with all the above conditions to be met.

14- One of the advantages of citizenship is that it offers some protection against foreign creditors. It is



not known whether this protection is covered by the Merchants' Law or not.

15- The oath of disavowal is an oath that exists in the Warrior Caste and in certain cities. It's an irreversible sentence, in which a family disowns one of its members forever, who is no longer a member of the family, and loses his caste. It is above all an oath of the Warrior Caste, but an Ubar can pronounce it, and in some cities, it is quite possible for any family head to pronounce it on one of his members.

16- All citizens must have traveled to the Sardar Mountains, the sacred mounts of the Priest-Kings, before reaching the age of 25. The Initiates monitor who does and who doesn't make this pilgrimage, and, with their great influence, can force young people to make the journey at a specific time. It is said that woe betide the city whose children do not make the pilgrimage.

17- *"A man who refuses to practice his livelihood, or changes his status, without the consent of the Council, is, by definition, an outlaw liable to the pal"* (Tarnsman of Gor) A man who refuses the law of his caste and social position becomes an outlaw, an outcast, without a Home Stone, who can be killed by anyone. An unenviable fate.

18- Each city determines the legal recognition of Castes and Sub-Castes. It also determines who is high-caste, so merchants, usually low-caste, can be high-caste in certain cities.

19- It is a crime to deceive others by pretending to be another caste, or by carrying out the activities of another caste. Most often, this involves illegal medicine, but also the abuse of authority by pretending to be a rarius. However, for example, it is possible to carry out an activity of another caste if it is commonplace: anyone can sell slaves, but they cannot claim to be of the Slaver Caste.

20- It is possible to change caste. This is very rare, as Goreans are generally VERY proud of their caste. A woman can – but is not forced to – adopt her partner's caste. The reverse is not true. In other cases, changing caste is subject to the decision of the caste authorities, and to being adopted and recognized by the caste you wish to join.

21- Female doctors are legally prohibited from practicing medicine until they have two children. Female doctors therefore often wear two bracelets, one on each wrist, which are removed with each child they have, and once both bracelets have been removed, they can practice fully.

22- A masterly crime, for a metalworker, is to make a copy of a key without permission.

23- A companionship lasts one year. If it is not renewed by contract before the companionship anniversary, it is automatically dissolved.

24- A Companionship is dissolved in the event of the death or enslavement of one of the two parties. It does not seem to be specified whether a companionship can be dissolved by mutual agreement of both parties before the end of the year.

25- A woman may not change her name in a companionship.

26- The family name – in fact, the clan name – is a convenience that is only transmitted by the Companion. A woman may keep her own surname according to the signed companionship contract, but it cannot supplant her companion's name for her children.

27- A man may have only one companion, but this rule is not immutable in all cultures.

28- Port-Kar does not recognize -among other things- the Institution of Free Companionship.

29- Entering a city without permission can be punishable by pal. *"The spikes on the walls of Gor cities are often topped with the remains of unwelcome guests."* (Outlaw of Gor). That said, merchants, mercenaries and caravanners come and go from town to town quite freely. I assume that this law applies to an individual who is a member of an enemy city, and that it serves, more generally, as a reminder that, once in a city, a foreigner must keep a low profile if he does not want his corpse to decorate the ramparts.

30- Panthers and other Taluna women are considered outlaws. Any outlaw entering a city may be impaled.

Yes, let's keep it simple: if you're a panther and you enter a city, you're fair game and you won't get a trial.

31- Assassins wearing the black mark on their forehead, a drawn dagger, can enter a city without being arrested. But that doesn't mean they won't be closely monitored!

32- The Artist caste is always free to enter a city. Even a member of this caste from an enemy city won't be banned from entering. That's just the way it is. Artists are sacred on Gor.

33- All heralds and official messengers, all diplomats, are guaranteed immunity within the city for the duration of their mission, and until they leave the city and its geopolitical sphere of influence.

34- Copyright and patents exist only within the walls of a city. Merchant Law cannot cover these rights beyond the walls of the city concerned.

35- All cities use common references, accessible to all, for weights and measures, under the Merchants' Law. Merchants found with false gauges are severely punished. The same applies to counterfeit coins.

36- Veils and robes of concealment are not necessarily required by law. In Ar, for example, this is not the law. In rare cities, a woman without a veil can be arrested, detained and then forced to veil by the guard, with a fine to pay. But even where there is no specific law, there is a strong custom among Gorean women to wear dresses and veil their faces, but this is above all a custom, not a legal obligation. In fact, when they work, many low-caste women are not veiled, and may work with their arms bared.

*The veil, it might be noted, is not legally imperative for a free woman; it is rather a matter of modesty and custom. Some low-class, unaccompanied, free girls do not wear veils. Similarly certain bold free women neglect the veil. Neglect of the veil is not a crime in Gorean cities, though in some it is deemed a brazen and scandalous omission. . . .*

*In some cities, and among some groups and tribes, it might be mentioned, though this is not common, veils may be for most practical purposes unknown, even among free women. The cities of Gor are numerous and pluralistic. Each has its own history,*

*customs and traditions. On the whole, however, Gorean culture prescribes the veil for free women.*

Slave Girl of Gor

37- Even in cities that don't legislate veiling, there are often laws and customs limiting the amount of bare skin exposed. Hide your legs, your stomach and your cleavage! If too much bare skin is revealed, the woman may be enslaved: *"If you want to be stripped like a slave, you'll be a slave, they say"* ( *Dancer of Gor*).

38- Revealing a woman by force, against her will, is as serious a crime as wounding her.

39- In some cities, it is illegal to let pleasure silks come into contact with the skin of a free woman. These are considered too exciting and erotic.

40- Women are rarely, if ever, allowed to play Kaissa.

41- Dar-Kosis is a disease similar to leprosy, considered sacred and a punishment of the Priest-Kings. It is considered heretical to attempt to treat it or find a cure. This is a major bone of contention between the caste of Initiates, who established this religious law, and the caste of Physicians, who could surely find a cure for this scourge.

42- *"Whoever contracts Dar-Kosis is considered by law to be dead"*. ( *Assassin of Gor* ). Thus, an infected person loses all possessions and rights.

43- Theft is treated harshly and severely in all cities. The first time, an earlobe is cut off, the second time, a hand is cut off, and for a woman, she is enslaved.

44- There is a caste of thieves in Port-kar. Stealing is illegal, and a man is killed and a woman enslaved if caught.

45- Setting fire to a forest, a field or a house is a crime and a catastrophe for the people of Gore, and the guilty party is usually burned alive.

46- It is the right of every individual, free and slave, to receive the stabilizing serum, Gor's life-extending treatment. This is perhaps one of the only rights a slave possesses. It is not known whether a slave

owner can refuse the serum to his own slave, but there seems to be little reason for such a refusal.

## Religion on Gor and the Initiate Caste

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Eight days of reading and documentation, three days of procrastination and, finally, 9 hours of writing, for an article that I put off as long as I could, because I really didn't feel like it, but it's done! To write this article, I had to partly reread four novels (*Priest-Kings of Gor*, *Witness of Gor*, *Kur of Gor*, *Rebels of Gor*) go through six other novels with my ctrl+f to find references and quotations, then sort them out, and, fortunately, I didn't have to do too much encyclopedic research for historical references.

Yes, even though I've already read all the novels (and only the first 16 have been translated into French), I know next to nothing about the Caste of the Initiates. They really don't fascinate me. So I had to dive back into reading, and take notes. So, as always, I'll do my best, but I'm not sure everything is perfect or accurate. As always, everything I write is more or less contained in the novels, or deduced from the same cultural and historical references as Norman, namely the period of the Imperial Roman world but also, here, ancient Egypt, which inspired him for this caste.

*"The Initiates claim to be intermediaries between the Priest-Kings and mankind. They have temples, rituals, ceremonies and so on. They are celibate, shun beans and study mathematics. They are very attached to asceticism and purity, at least officially. Their robes are long, severe and white. Their heads are shaved. They are a blend of elements from the [ancient Egyptian priesthood](#) and the [Pythagorean brotherhood](#). They are a powerful caste, but parasitic, rapacious and self-righteous.*

John Norman, in gorean forum letter.

### 1- Religion on Gor

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There are three general ways of believing or pretending to believe in a divine force:

- Sincere faith, which may or may not involve rituals and ceremonies. It's based on the notion of real devotion, with an attachment to substance before form, and often a certain distrust of clerical organizations. A friend of

mine, who is a pastor in Europe, describes it very well: "a true believer doesn't really need a church, he just needs to pray."

- Superstitious faith, which is attached to symbols, rites, ceremonies, sacred places and preaching. It is a faith that above all respects codes, rites and clerical authority, and often hopes to gain personal and material advantage in exchange for its faith and its material efforts to respect rites.
- False faith, which is generally based on wise prudence, more rarely on political or personal interest. It's a question of not standing out socially from one's own culture, to avoid unfortunate consequences such as marginalization, suspicion or outright persecution. But it can also be a clever comedy to exploit faith as an instrument of political power.

In Gor's world, atheism exists. But it's a special case, and for that I'll use myself as an example. I'm a total atheist, because nothing has ever proved to me that the existence of a god is necessary for the universe and everything in it, whether known or yet to be discovered, to be what it is.

But if, tomorrow, irrefutable proof were to tell me that God exists, what would I do? Do I start believing and praying? In a way, I've already prayed, even though I have no religious faith. My faith is in humanity, life and science. But in the face of proof, I'd admit this existence, changing my social relations to true believers, but without suddenly becoming a religious believer, I think. I would remain anticlerical in general, because I hate absolute power, whether religious or secular, while remaining respectful of true believers and sacred places, because I always have been. Just because I don't believe doesn't give me the right to despise believers. Ok, I despise hypocrisy and fanaticism, but sincere faith has always seemed to me worthy of respect.

Now, in Gor, gods do exist. They are called the Priest-Kings, and while few people have ever seen one, their power, through their weapon of retribution, the Fire of Death, capable of incinerating a man, a house or even a city, is quite real. The most unbelieving of Goreans knows that the Priest-Kings are real, that their influence and terrible power is a

reality, so even if he is, like me, of an atheistic nature, he won't play at defying these gods too openly. And he will fear and respect the men who form the intermediaries between the gods and the Goreans: the Initiates.

The cult of the Priest-Kings, with the Initiates as priests and religious intercessors, thus dominates Gorean cultures from north to south. But it's not the only religion. I'll briefly describe what each major culture believes in below.

### *Solar worship*

So, it's only mentioned a few times, so I can't tell you much more than the fact that it exists. It's a very discreet, minority religion of little influence, which exists here and there in Gorean culture, and which places the sun as its deity. It's quite obvious that, given the mentality of the Initiate caste and the Priest-King cult, this religion is actively hunted down and persecuted. Yes, I know, it's not much information.

### *The Red Hunters*

This people have their own animistic beliefs, but the Priest-Kings are the pinnacle of their deities. As this is an animist cult, with very different principles from the Priest-Kings' cult, they have plenty of spirits and gods to worship, since animism considers that everything that exists, animate or inanimate, has a living soul, and that every being is reincarnated. Unsurprisingly, the cult of Priest-Kings tries to eliminate these beliefs as best it can (preaching in the polar ice caps is a bit like preaching in the desert).

### *The Red Savages*

They have a fairly complex shamanic cult, in which the Priest-Kings also play an important role, but with very specific beliefs and rites. The Priest-King cult would also like to banish this heresy, but as a reminder, the Red Savages kill any foreigner who sets foot on their steppes.

### *The Torvaldslanders*

This culture, directly descended from the Scandinavians of the Middle Ages, improperly called Vikings, respects the Priest-Kings... and actively hates them! Their religion is that of the ancient Scandinavians, based on the cult of Odin, father of all things, and the entire Nordic pantheon, with Thor, god of war, at the head. And, to put it simply, the Initiates cruelly, sadistically hunt down and kill on sight anyone practicing this cult, and it's exactly the same on the other side! Torvis and Goreans are permanently at war, and now you know why.

### *People of the Chariots*

They have their own creator god, based around a shamanic cult: the Spirit, a god who can only be worshipped mounted on a bosc or kailla, and whom women are forbidden to pray to. But the Spirit is not a god, for these people, but a concept, a divine notion, representing the entity that rules their people. So, they too believe in the Priest-Kings, but it's not to them that they address their prayers (at least, not the men, because the women do!). Unsurprisingly, the Priest-Kings cult doesn't take too kindly to this belief.

### *The Taharians*

Their religion in Taharian cities is that of the Priest-Kings cult, with a few local peculiarities based on wind spirits, star spirits and desert demons. Nomads don't recognise castes, and if the word ubar is used among them, it's one of the many words for chief (like pasha, bey, vizier). Their cult is not described, but it speaks of desert and stars spirits and demons, all of which are called djinns.

### *The Panis*

Their religion is similar to the animist Shinto cult, and contrary to what I'd written, the Priest-King cult and its initiates who arrived on the islands a few hundred years ago imposed the Gorean language and the Priest-King religion by force and death by flame. But it didn't go down well, and the Panis crucified and burned most of them alive. Suffice to say, relations between the Pani people and the Priest-King cult are

not going well. I'll go back and read it again next time (thanks to *māḍāME GYRE* for the corrections).

## 2- The cult of the Priest-Kings

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*"On this world, religious matters are rather closely guarded by the caste of initiates, who allow very few members of other castes to participate in their sacrifices and ceremonies. I was given a few prayers to the Priest-Kings to memorize, but they were in old Gorean, a language spoken by the Initiates but not generally spoken on the planet, and I never bothered to learn them. To my delight, I learned that Torm, whose memory was phenomenal, had forgotten them years ago. I sensed that a certain mistrust existed between the caste of scribes and that of initiates".*

Tarnsman of Gor

The Priest-King cult is dominated by the Initiate caste, and they are the only ones allowed to perform the rites and ceremonies of this religion. It's a centralized monotheistic religion with an organized, authoritarian and powerful clergy (yes, I know, the Priest-Kings are a plural entity, but the cult considers them as a whole, and they are never identified, named or characterized as individuals).

Their main power lies in their respect for codes, rites and ceremonies; their omnipresence in civil life, in which they participate and which they structure; their extensive authority, since they possess judicial power; and finally, the frightening, omnipresent and very real threat: the blue flame, also known as the fire of death. If you're wondering why, with all their science and skill, the Goreans aren't already at the stage of the industrial steam revolution, you're beginning to understand more clearly.

The symbol of the Priest-Kings' cult is a golden circle, a symbol that adorns their temple, which believers wear around their necks and Initiates wear as a prayer ring and atop their walking staffs. Pure white is another color symbolic of the cult; it's the color of their robes, temples and buildings. As I mentioned earlier, there is no representation of the Priest-Kings – indeed, it's forbidden to imagine one.

The religious heart of the Priest-Kings' cult is the Sardars Mountains. At the foot of this mountain lies

the main religious complex of the Initiates, and it's here that the four annual fairs take place, as well as the pilgrimage that every Gorean must make at least once in his or her life, usually before their 25 years. At the end of this complex is the entrance to the Sardar Mountains, enclosed by a vast palisade and heavily guarded. However, if you want to cross the entrance to the Mountains, they'll let you...

... and you won't come back. Yep, behind that palisade is the domain of the Priest-Kings, and whatever you see there, you'll never be able to leave again – and usually you're dead, more rarely will you have the dubious chance of discovering what is Gor's most guarded secret.

### *A few features of this religion:*

– **It's hermetic:** the sacred books are only accessible to Initiates, some cults are secret, its members – all male, hand-picked – live apart from the rest of the Goreans and must pass initiation rites, and prayers are made in a little-known language, ancient Gorean.

– **It's political:** Gor's first caste, the one that takes precedence over all others, is that of the Initiates. The caste has a powerful influence on the people, and, thanks to offerings and donations, is generally always very wealthy. A Gorean is forced to participate in some of the cult's most important rites, at the risk of losing his citizenship, and social pressure will be strong on anyone who tries to do as little as possible. In short, if an Ubar wants to keep his job, this is the first caste to seduce and get on his side!

– **It is inquisitorial:** it has the right of cultural censorship, control of science and technology and extensive legal prosecution, escapes in part from the laws that apply to all other Goreans, and can declare an individual a heretic, condemn him to exile, torture or death, under its own codes. Yes, it's like the Inquisition, although the cult of the Priest-Kings is more moderate than Torquemada's Spanish Inquisition. I'd compare it to the papal Roman Inquisition.

– **It's erudite:** even if religious education is rather restricted and secular education is rather managed by the Scribe caste, the Priest-King cult also takes care



of safeguarding and transmitting written knowledge... on its own terms, of course.

## THE TEMPLES

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*We could hear the bells, the chanting. In a moment, we could see the raised golden circle, on its staff, approaching. People in the streets rushed to press against the walls. "Initiates," I said to Marcus. I could now see the procession clearly.*

*"Kneel," said the one next to me. "Kneel," I said to Marcus. We knelt down. I was surprised that people knelt, because free Goreans don't usually kneel, even in the temples of the initiated. Goreans generally pray standing up. The hands are sometimes raised, which is often the case when initiates pray.*

### Magicians of Gor

Every city and town has its own temple. Even villages have a chapel if they're too modest to have anything better. Although the style of the buildings varies greatly, they are all based on a rectangle, with the front facing the Sardar Mountains.

Unsurprisingly, the temples are white. The interior is grandiose but austere, with no benches, cushions or seats for the public. Goreans pray standing up, like the Initiates. Initiates have seats, but only to rest between rituals, preaching and prayer. The temple is separated, between the laity and the officiants, by a white cordon that no one would dare cross. The pomp of the cult is in its architecture, in the richness of its religious art, in the accessories... and in the lavish opulence of their grandiose processions.

Each prayer is punctuated by chants, with choruses of shaven-headed boys, usually slaves belonging to the caste, and offerings, which may be merely symbolic, sometimes very rich gifts from believers, and often include animal sacrifices. No, there are never, a priori, human sacrifices.

## RITES AND CALENDAR

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I haven't found any precise information on temple prayer days, but the temples are always open – and guarded – and there is at least one service a day. It's

conceivable that the main day of worship takes place once a week, coinciding with a market day.

On the other hand, the main rites take place at each new Hand of Passage (the week between two months), and at each equinox and solstice. The Gorean calendar is based on the cycle of the three moons. The year begins at the spring equinox, in the month of En'kara.

For more information on the calendar, [here's a link](#).

That said, initiates don't just pray in temples. There are processions, public blessings, and an Initiate can be asked (in return for a generous donation) to come and bless a building, a field, livestock, or even a project. So, the cult of the Priest-Kings is involved in everything, and we come across it very often, via its representatives. Many aspects of Gorean life are punctuated by these local rites and blessings.

Except... one: companionship is not blessed by any rite or ceremony. It's a private matter, a contract between two parties, and nothing to do with the Initiates. But we can imagine that they would be quick to bless the birth of a child, or the choice of its name!

Of course, a frequent rite is the funeral rite. Goreans do not bury their dead, but practice cremation. The bones are then placed in an urn kept by the family, while the ashes are scattered. There are no funeral rites for slaves, and it's unclear what happens to their bodies when they die (thrown in the garbage, burned, fed to animals, etc.). It's never really specified.

## Sardar fairs

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These are large fairs held at the foot of Mount Sardar, and they combine religious rites, trade fairs and diplomatic meetings.

As I mentioned earlier, every Gorean who practices the cult of the Priest-Kings, and indeed every Gorean who wants to become or remain a citizen of his city-state, must visit the Sardar Mountains once in his life, preferably before the age of 25. This is an important pilgrimage, which ends at the foot of the mountain,

where the main temples and monasteries of the Initiate caste are located.

And so, four times a year, the fair plays host to these pilgrimages. They take place at each equinox and solstice, the most famous of which is spring, culminating in the [En'kara Fair, made famous in Second Life as a major gaming event, the date of which I've announced.](#)

The reason these pilgrimages generally take place on specific dates is so that they can be organized into powerful, well escorted caravans. Pilgrims bring gifts, offerings and money for the journey, and pirates and outlaws see this as a golden opportunity to enrich themselves.

*Although no one can be enslaved at the fair, slaves can be bought and sold within its walls, and slavers do a thriving trade there, surpassed perhaps only by that of the Rue des Marques d'Ar. The reason for this is not only that there is a good market here for these goods, since men from various towns come and go at the fair, but also because every Gorean, whether male or female, is supposed to see the Sardar Sardar mountains, in honor of the Priest-Kings, at least once in his life, before his twenty-fifth year. As a result, pirates and outlaws who line the trade routes to ambush and attack caravans en route to the fair, if successful, often have more than metals and cloth to come and trade for their vices.*

Priest-kings of Gor

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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One of the roles of the Initiate caste is to restrict and control knowledge. A good way to do this is to teach it!

On Gor, being cultivated is expensive, and the peasant, even as a child, has little time to devote to learning to read and write: he works in the fields from the age of seven or eight. However, the Initiates offered a basic education in reading and mathematics, including to peasant children who were fortunate enough to be able to come and study. This also enables the cult of Priest-Kings to teach its official vision of the world – in short, its religion – to the people. Oh yes, and it's a great way to recruit. More on that later.

It's worth noting that the Initiate caste is very good at mathematics, and it's almost an obsession for them. In fact, it's one of their most secret and complex rituals.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION

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I'm just going to mention a few important points here, as the content of the Priest-Kings' prohibitions, codes and principles of worship is not detailed in the novels. And I don't think Norman was too fond of the Initiates, or at least, they almost never play the good role.

According to religious texts, the cult of the Priest-Kings was born when the Priest-Kings, who created the Goreans from the mud, prevented men and women from killing each other in an all-out war at the beginning of time. Specifically, the men were on the verge of winning and had every intention of killing all the women. The Priest-Kings intervened, to stop the slaughter. They declared that men would forever dominate women, and that women would be submissive to men, but in exchange, women would be the most beautiful in the world. To prevent another all-out war, they forbade Goreans to wear armor, and to ensure that Goreans prospered in harmony with nature, they laid down rules on scientific and technological progress. They designated the first caste, the Initiates, their intermediaries, and said they would be there, on the Sardar Mountains, to watch over them forever.

The mythical stage was set. The caste system, the home stone, the social relations between men and women, the justification of Gorean slavery (including certain practices and theoretical foundations), all come from these texts. And the most common Gorean prohibitions either come from these original texts, or were added later, such as the rules on the control of technology, science and industry. Moreover, these texts have evolved considerably, and even in the course of the novels, we can clearly see that certain prohibitions and taboos are undergoing significant reform. Even the cult of the Priest-Kings is forced to evolve with the times.

So... the principles? I'm going to sum them up in a few key sentences, as far as possible. I'm going to

forget some, so I'll just mention the most important ones:

- Respect the caste principle and the natural authority of each caste over the lower ones.
- Immortality and life after death do not exist. Only the most worthy Initiates, through their devotion, initiation and rites, can hope to attain it.
- Man is born to dominate woman, woman to serve man. Gorean slavery of women is therefore entirely natural.
- Anyone who insults the Priest-Kings, or disrespects the Caste of Initiates, will be punished.
- Wearing armor is forbidden (in fact, only metal armor is, not helmets).
- Citizenship, linked to the sacred home stone, is a merit, not a due, and only those who have made the pilgrimage to the Sardar can claim it.
- Every believer must attend the great rites of the equinoxes and solstices.
- First knowledge is for the common people, second knowledge for the high-castes, sacred knowledge for the Initiates.
- Dar-kosis is a sacred disease, a punishment that no one should attempt to cure. A sick person is no longer a Gorean, so his name must be forgotten, and his possessions distributed. By the way, it is forbidden to kill or injure one of these sick people!
- Seeking out too much knowledge, science and technology risks heresy (in particular, anything that explodes or could be used to make motorized vehicles and machines).

Well, these are the rules of the cult, but of course they are more or less respected or flouted. While the superstitious lower classes don't generally go against them, the higher up the social hierarchy and the more cultured castes, the less they are taken literally. The cult of the Priest-Kings is not all-powerful, it is often in more or less head-on opposition to secular authority, and although the Initiates are numerous enough, they are not sufficiently numerous to enforce these rules to the letter, and must therefore accept compromises. When they don't, sometimes things don't go well for the Initiates... and the threat

of Death by Flame doesn't work so well for the most educated and powerful Goreans.

*It had been decided that she should now undertake the journey to the Sardar, which, according to the teachings of the Initiate caste, is imposed on every Gorean by the priest-kings, an obligation that must be fulfilled before they reach their twenty-fifth year. If a city fails to ensure that its young people undertake this journey, then, according to the teachings of the initiates, misfortune may befall the city. The merchants of Teletus, who control the town, would demand it of her, fearing the effects of the Priest-Kings' possible displeasure on their trade. If she did not undertake the journey, she would simply, before her twenty-fifth birthday, be removed from their authority, placed alone outside their jurisdiction, outside the protection of their soldiers. Such exile, for a Gorean, is generally equivalent to slavery or death.*

Captive of Gor

### ***THE THREAT OF DEATH BY FLAME***

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Well... okay, you know that the Priest-Kings are an insect-like alien civilization with technology so advanced that even 21<sup>st</sup>-century Earthlings would say it almost looks like magic? Well, now you know. Gor is, quite literally, their creation. The Priest-Kings have existed as an interstellar civilization for millions of years, and have moved the planet around the solar system, and according to some passages in the novels, this isn't the first time they've done so. And they have, among other things, drones and satellites with death rays.

The Blue Fire, or Death by Flame, or even the Flame of Death, is, according to the cult of the Priest-Kings, the sword of Damocles that hangs over the heads of all Goreans. The Initiates brandish the threat, and sometimes, especially in the past, this threat falls like a blue flash from the sky, incinerating a person, a place or even an entire city.

The reality of this threat, however, is far more nuanced. And here, I must digress: in the first two novels, this threat is not only real, but described as commonplace. It's the power the Initiates rely on to punish heretics of all kinds, and clearly, they can easily use it as a concrete threat. But from the third volume onwards, Norman's novel makes this tool

much rarer, much less effective and, above all, detached from the goodwill of the Initiates.

Why is this so? Because it's no fun writing stories with such a power that approaches a *deus ex machina*. In fiction, *deus ex machina* have to be very rare if they are to be credible. So, while the Priest-Kings take a hell of a beating in the Nest War, they also lose their network of cybernetic spies, with their cyber eyes and remote-communicating brain mesh, who were implanted all over Gor, mostly totally unaware of their role. Invisible satellites and drones are still capable of aiming at a target and destroying it within a radius of energy, but the Priest-Kings now see very little. And the Initiates, who made up the majority of these spies, can no longer summon blue fire. Just use the threat. Or was Norman planning this from the start, and I've got it all wrong?

Well, instead, the Initiate caste has an excellent inquisition. It's not much better. But it's a far less omnipotent and omnipresent force; it can be countered, it can be escaped and it can even be disavowed.

That said, the majority of Goreans have no knowledge of all this. The power of the Priest-Kings is always, for them, real, and, with rare exception, a Gorean threatened with punishment by an Initiate will take the threat quite seriously.

*"You see through the eyes of an Implanted," says Sarm. "The pupils of his eyes have been replaced by lenses, and a control network and transmission device have been fused with his brain tissue. He is now unconscious because the control network is activated."*

#### Priest-Kings of Gor

*"Sometimes on Gor, we destroy a city, choosing it by means of a random selection device. This teaches the lower classes about the power of Priest-Kings and encourages them to respect our laws."*

*"But what if the city hasn't done anything wrong?" asked I.*

*"So much the better," replied Misk, "because then men are lost and fear us even more, but the members of the initiate caste, we've found, will always find an explanation for the destruction*

*of the city. They invent one, and if it seems plausible, they're quick to believe it."*

#### Priest-Kings of Gor

### 3- *The Initiate caste*

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*"The crowd parted to my left and I saw, making its way through the crowd, a kind of standard, a golden staff surmounted by a golden circle. This circle, I would later learn, was the sign of the Priest-Kings, the symbol of eternity, of that which has no beginning and no end. Two boys first emerged from the crowd, one ringing bells and the other waving a censer, circulating incense vapors. Behind them, another boy carried the standard of the golden circle. Behind him came a gaunt, hideous man. His features startled me. I had no doubt he was mad. Behind him, in double file, side by side, came a score of other men. Each of them carried a golden cup in front of him. They made me uncomfortable. Something about their appearance seemed unhealthy. They looked pathological. Some looked simple. Others seemed deranged. Some were mumbling to themselves, prayers perhaps. They certainly didn't look like the normal men of this world. They were too pale. Didn't they know sunshine and fresh air? They didn't move well. Had they never jumped, run or wrestled? Were they ashamed of having a body, of being alive? Did they take refuge in pathetic lies? Did they think that absurdities gave them dignity? It occurred to me that these people might not be comfortable in this demanding, difficult world. But maybe they had found a way to survive. Maybe these people, who might have been considered pathetic misfits, mere failures of nature, had managed to build themselves a social niche, perhaps by inventing and providing a service. They seemed so smug, so furtive, so sly, so self-righteous, so hypocritical! How serious they were. Did they fear that the world would suddenly discover them and burst out laughing? All these men had shaven heads. All wore gleaming white robes. They were, as I understand it, "Initiates", supposedly the highest of the high castes.*

#### Witness of Gor

I deliberately chose this quote, in which the narrator's view of the procession is skewed by his vision of Gorean humanity, because it describes the Initiates quite well, visually. One also senses, because the Initiate caste never really gets a fair shake in Gor's novels, that Norman didn't like them either. Seriously, the Initiates get pretty bolossed (beaten up, French slang) throughout the novels. And few of

them are presented in a good light. In fact, it's usually the least fanatical and religious of them that Norman puts in a positive light.

Well, I think you've understood the role and social position of the Initiates if you've read all the above, so I won't go into that again, and talk about the caste itself.

The Initiate caste is exclusively male. It's the only caste that doesn't pass on its social rank from father to son (oh no, sorry, there are also assassins, my mistake). It recruits from both the low-caste and the high-caste, and unlike the Catholic Church's recruitment during the great papal eras, it's not a way of getting your youngest son into a prestigious position on the cheap. Recruitment is strict, demanding and arduous, and few are capable of completing the initiations and tests that will make them Initiates.

## TRAINING

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Any man can try to become an Initiate, but the Initiates prefer to recruit young men, even from among their slaves, who will become novices during long, arduous years of training.

The novice begins by shaving off all body hair, including his head. He renounces weapons, carnal pleasures, meat, alcohol, the benefits of luxury and comfort, beans of all kinds, and must maintain constant, irreproachable hygiene. Next, he must learn ancient Gorean (a complex and little-known language), to be able to read and memorize sacred texts, codes, laws, prayers and rituals of worship. Finally, he'll need to learn mathematics and master its complexities. A priori, we're talking here about a training program that takes about ten years of monastic life (forget personal wealth and possessions!) and is punctuated by complex initiations, all of which are tests that the novice must pass, on pain of being expelled. Or die; yes, because with such a hermetic cult, one can clearly assume that a novice who comes close to succeeding, but fails the ultimate initiation, knows too much about the Initiates to risk leaving him alive.

*"But perhaps he would leave the caste before it was too late, if not already too late, before, say, he had taken his final vows."*

Magician of Gor

## PROHIBITIONS & OBLIGATIONS

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Initiates are forbidden to carry weapons or fight. But they do have guards, and if they want to kill someone, they hire an assassin, and they don't lack the funds to do so, even personally. They're vegetarians, and given how much Norman insists on it, I'm not even sure they eat eggs and fish. They don't drink alcohol and all forms of beans are also forbidden to them (why? I don't know, it's clearly directly inspired by Egyptian priests). They are chaste, totally. They can't touch a woman or be touched by one. They can own slaves, but only boys, who are also all bald and hairless.

Apart from everything I've mentioned about their training, and their frequently renewed vow of obedience to the Initiates' Caste, the most notorious obligation is the notion of purity: in addition to their strict, even ascetic diet, they must have impeccable hygiene. They wear only white, are always dressed in immaculate robes, and wash at least four to six times a day (yeah, even I'm exhausted). It also seems that they have to justify a serious reason for refusing to conduct a blessing rite when a devotee comes to them asking for one, with good manners, and the appropriate offering.

Unsurprisingly, apart from appearances, there's little that's totally respected to the letter, and some powerful Initiates outright flout the majority of their prohibitions and obligations, at least secretly. It has to be said, at such a high level of power (and wealth), it would be foolish for some not to indulge in pleasures, be it food, drink or the warm arms of a kajira. And while, of course, all this is highly frowned upon, it's enough to be high up in the caste, be it local high-initiate, monastery head, or spiritual advisor to the Ubar and power and money will silence protests.

*"He was a tall, rather heavy man, with soft, bland features, but his voice was very deep and would have been very impressive in one of the temples of the Initiates... His eyes, I noted, in contrast to his bland features, his almost pudgy softness, were very sharp and perceptive. He was no fool. His left hand, fat*



*and limp, bore a heavy ring set with a large white stone, engraved with the sign of Ar.”*

Priest-Kings of Gor

## **THE ORGANIZATION**

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Initiates tend to live among themselves for the most part, in large cult complexes around their temples, or in monasteries. In this respect, they are everywhere, and this gives an idea of the caste’s material power and the number of its members. It is said that a traveling Initiate has no trouble finding room and board in a caste building at night. This implies that, at least in the heart of Gorean civilization, there is a tightly-knit network of temples, monasteries, abbeys and chapels, probably rarely more than 15 pasangs (or miles) apart, and all along navigable roads and rivers. That’s a lot of people, and a lot of wealth, because such a large population needs to be fed, and the Initiates can’t rely on donations and offerings alone: they also own vast landholdings, estates and farms, which are administered by laymen at their service.

Initiates live among themselves, far from women and temptation, and generally lead a rather ascetic lifestyle. They are highly structured, with a strict hierarchy, and we can distinguish a few ranks mentioned by Norman:

- Novices, in the process of initiation.
- Initiates, forming the bulk of the caste’s forces.
- Monastery and abbey chiefs, who are not in charge of a temple, but of the caste’s private structures.
- High Initiates, who are in charge of a temple. There is one for each temple, with some cities having several.
- The principal High Initiates, who head the caste in a city-state.
- The Grand High Initiate, head of the temple at the foot of Mount Sardar, is the most important representative of the caste as a whole.

*On the high altar of each temple stands a great golden circle, symbol of the Priest-Kings, symbol of eternity, of something without beginning or end. The “sign of the Priest-Kings”, in the same way, is made with a closed circular movement.*

Dancer of Gor

## **FAITH**

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Devout, exalted, fervent and fanatical for the most part, this is a pretty good way of describing the Initiates as Norman shows them in the novels. Their faith is as sincere as it is superstitious, and no doubt they fear the cult of the Priest-Kings even more than the peasants themselves.

But that would be reductive. The Initiates have immense power, but an equally gigantic responsibility, and live under a crushing discipline. Above all, the higher they climb in their hierarchy, the more they know! The more they understand both the truth about the role of the caste, and the truth about the Priest-Kings. And the more they have to revise their own beliefs and illusions. Because no matter how much you believe, things take on a whole new perspective when you begin to understand the inner workings of the system on which your faith is based. And while Initiates may live among themselves, they must also mingle with the people, help them, assist them, understand them too, and therefore put water in their wine.

Initiates with a sincere but tolerant faith are therefore not so rare, and are surely the caste’s best public relations agents. And Initiates who play the game but no longer have faith, or a very relative faith, are quite common as soon as you look into the highest spheres of the hierarchy. They may still believe in their mission, and their role, but may also have decided to use their power for personal enrichment or purely political ends.

*With most,” he says, “it is as you think, and they are simple, believing members of my caste, and there are others who suspect the truth and are tormented, or who suspect the truth and pretend — but I, Om, High Initiate of Ar, and some of the High Initiates, resemble none of these. ...Thus, unbeknownst to most of my caste, we exist to be victors, showing in our own way the way to man’s greatness.”* Priest-Kings of Gor





## *Gorean slavery and slavers*

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Slavery on Gor is an ancient tradition, going back millennia, which is to say for Gorean history: to the founding myth of their culture.

*“Long ago, a terrible war was waged between men and women, threatening their survival. The victorious men wanted to kill all the women. In their wisdom, the Priest-Kings intervened to save the women. But they would pay for this gesture by being forever subjugated to men, in exchange for which the women of Gor would become the most beautiful women imaginable”.*

It’s logical, then, that the slaver caste exists, and despite being a sub-caste of the merchants, is so respected and specific. In fact, just as Gor’s world couldn’t run without Free Women, it couldn’t function without the institution of

### *1- The nature of Gorean slavery.*

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So, as a refresher for those of you who may or may not have missed your history lessons, it’s important to know that slavery and serfdom still existed universally on Earth two hundred years ago. And the last French ex-colony to renounce customary and de facto slavery was in 1950. So the idea that man cannot be enslaved and treated as a possession is very recent, and very modern. This notion still existed in the early 19th century. And there are still several million enslaved people in the world, in more or less customary or legal ways, even if this awful idea is slowly disappearing. Like everyone else, I’d prefer it that way; slavery is, well, berk.

But then, slavery isn’t something surprising in a world whose civilization is based on Gallo-Roman antiquity, where a daughter is often more a mouth to feed in a family than a precious asset.

While there aren’t that many slave girls, the lot of them don’t come from capture or breeding farms: they’ve been sold by poor families to raise money and survive. Children sacrificed, therefore, to raise others.

Despite Gor women’s easy access to effective contraception, there are still many births on a regular basis, due to a relatively high average infant mortality rate. And therefore girls, who become commodities and a means of settling debts. Even if Goreans love their children, whom they consider sacred during their infancy, well, often the poor simply have no choice.

## *GOREAN-STYLE SLAVERY*

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What makes Gor different from historical slavery is its very ritualized, quasi-scholarly nature, and the ways in which a woman is made into a slave, a *Kajira*. First of all, through millennia of cultural conditioning and genetic selection, most women in the world of Gor are physically and mentally predestined to submit to the force of men, and for many, to accept enslavement. They’re beautiful, but they’re much smaller, and weaker, than Gor men. This doesn’t help them to dominate, or even to defend themselves individually.

I’m sorry to disappoint so many players of female Outlaws and Panthers in Gor SL, but you shouldn’t dream; in theory, in Gor’s world, the best female fighter is just a little better than mediocre against the most banal of trained warriors. Her speed can’t compensate for male strength and vigor. She’s better off using her brains and cunning, because in terms of opposing forces, she’s lost.

Secondly, the enslavement and upbringing of a slave girl according to Gorean standards has nothing to do with anything that ever existed in the Gallo-Roman world, or even after. In fact, I’ve searched long and hard for sources and references of slave training in history that would resemble what’s done in Gor’s world, and it appears that the only reference that can compare is that of forced sex workers in certain modern slave-trading circles. Gor slavery and its norms have specificities that have never existed in history. Less cruel than the horrific slave trade of the triangular commerce in the 18th century, but immensely more cruel than anything done in ancient China, Rome or the Muslim empires of the 12th century. Gorean slavery is really a unique thing, whose main inspiration—sorry, Norman, I know you refute it, but assume it—is a hardcore, non-consensual

version of the total power exchange of BDSM culture.

But what are we talking about when we talk about Gorean bondage? It's a documented process, with methods as crude as they are tried and tested, that leads to the captive girl totally renouncing her identity as a free woman, abandoning her pride and individuality as a human being, and assuming a femininity and heightened sensitivity that can only be fully expressed in her status as a possessed and degraded animal of pleasure and servitude.

For a Gorean, the only true "woman" is a slave. A Free Woman exists as a housewife, a work force, a companion, a mother, an honored member of a city, even a woman of high responsibility, but she is not a "woman." Femininity, i.e. sensitivity, fragility, emotionality, sensuality, charm, sophistication, grace, self-giving, the ability to give pleasure, and live it to the full, can only be the prerogative of a slave-girl.

Nota bene: if your Free Woman shows these traits, she may not be free for long, firstly because she will attract the lust of a greedy man or one who sees a good excuse, and secondly, because she dishonors her Free Woman status.

If you'd like to know more about free women, I invite you [to read this article on their nature, and their life](#).

*"Slaves love compliments. In fact, according to a Gorean proverb, any woman who loves compliments is, in her heart, a slave. She wants to please. Almost all Goreans don't hesitate to put a collar on women who respond to compliments with a smile. The enslavement of a natural slave is considered a right."*

(Gor's Monsters)

## HOW MANY SLAVES ON GOR?

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There are very few slaves in the world of Gor (OK, there are plenty in Gor SL sims, that's just the way it is). The proportion differs, however. In a village or small city, it will be 2-3% of women. In big city-states like *Ar*, *Turia* or *Schendi*, it's a whopping 20%. And among the *Torvis* and *Panis*, it's around 5-6%. Yes, they have more slaves than the average Gorean...

But if we take a general average, hardly more than 3-4% of Gor's total population is enslaved, i.e. 20 million people out of the approximately half a billion Goreans. And to bust a myth once again, Terran women are incredibly rare: less than 5,000 in the whole of Gor! Yes, the Goreans who kidnap people from Earth only pick up a few Earth girls at a time, and they're pretty damn rare! [I'll talk about them in detail in this article](#).

Goreans NEVER enslave the free women of their city, except as punishment for a serious crime and after judgment! Yes, I know, the books, yes I know, on SL Gor sims, but: NO! That's the way it is. A Free Woman is a citizen protected by laws and customs, and you can't touch her with impunity. Only her family can decide to enslave her without going through the courts and magistrates. And well, you'd better have a good reason, because it's a blow to lose honor.

The only real exception is when it comes to children sold by their families in order to pay off debts or simply escape from ruin. It's not uncommon, and I apologize in advance to those who are a little sensitive to morality, but these children are often sold between the ages of 13 and 15 (which Goreans consider to be the end of childhood, in fact), and slavers set up public stalls offering to buy the surplus children of these impoverished families! It's perfectly legal and tolerated! And awful, I know. But it wasn't uncommon in history either...

The most sought-after slave-girls are panthers, as they are wild and rebellious, and their character, once subdued, will often be flamboyant. And, of course, the daughters of powerful men: an Ubar daughters captured in an opposing city is worth a treasure. Earth girls are coveted because of their fragile temperament, gentler than that of goreans, their great sensitivity, their natural ability to express their femininity, and their propensity to love their master more easily.

A slave girl is a luxury (and also, often, a source of income). A man can rarely afford to own more than one slave. Having two or more is therefore a clear sign of wealth. As for the price of slaves, [I'll talk about that in this article](#), but we'll come back to it later. Just know that, as in the Gallo-Roman world or

ancient China, owning slaves is a commodity that 95% of people can't afford! Only prosperous craftsmen and little merchants can own one, only wealthy notables have two or three, and only master merchants, the heads of large financial companies, the highest civil or military officers and city or war chiefs, can have a whole stock or a complete harem!

That's why I used to sneer at certain descriptions in the novels, of hordes of slaves massed here and there like worthless cattle. But it's a paradox found in the Gallo-Roman world: a slave was worth the price of two years' wages for a soldier, but there were hundreds of thousands of them, belonging to a few thousand people, out of a total population of Rome in the 3rd century that happily exceeded one million. Wealth was concentrated in very few hands, so slaves were the property of this ultra-minority, wealthy elite. It's not incoherent that things are quite similar on Gor.

Which, incidentally, also explains the propensity of Gorean men to go on raids, razzias, duels, etc. to obtain one, for want of having the means to buy one: owning a slave is an outward sign of social success! What's more, you can sell her when you need money!

A slave girl's education is often sketchy, and to have one who is fully educated will be very costly. The requirement of masters that their kajira represents them and satisfies them in everything is a standard of importance. A desirable and desired slave girl, docile and intelligent, helpful, educated in the arts, and conversational, increases the pride and honor of the man who owns her. And above all, the investment in her education and improvement will make her a highly prized kajira, with a very attractive financial value.

## *2- Gor's slavers*

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Now that we've cleared the ground, let's get to the heart of the matter: slavers. And let's dispel a common misconception: it's not glamorous. And let me digress for a moment:

### *The problem of the role in Gor*

The role of slaver, in Gor SL's role-playing sims, is surely one of the most overused and thankless roles you'll ever play. In fact, I consider it to be the most difficult role to learn and play, above that of the pleasure kajira, which is difficult enough.

Overused, because this role tends to attract idiots eager to express their more or less sexist domination and their freedom to humiliate and hurt, or who want to create their own little personal harem. Which of course is the worst reason to play a slaver, and the best way to fail, creating drama and disappointment.

Ungrateful because, for slavers whose interest really lies in showcasing the intense, exhausting work involved in training and managing apprenticed slaves, and ensuring their reception, trade and all the roleplay and OOC complications that go with it, they'll have to deal both with slaves who don't want to understand or learn their role, and with masters who will want to impose their whims and decisions on them.

A bad slaver exhausts, disgusts and drives away female kajirae players. A good slaver is exhausted and disgusted by bad kajirae and masters players. In short, as far as you're aware, this is a role where you're really going to have to impose limits and barriers in the way you manage your role and the players in your care... and a word of personal advice: never accept more than five slaves to train at a time. You'll have a hard enough time of it as it is, and more than five is a recipe for failure through overwork or an inability to share your time and effort.

End of parenthesis!

### *THE SLAVER CASTE*

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The slaver is a slave trader; his business assets is a commodity, a product, livestock, in fact, with costs for maintenance, training, transport and food. Every slave has to be profitable, and the aim is to make a margin on them. So the romanticism of slavery quickly takes its toll.

And to add to the complexity of the business, the slaver is selling a product that needs to be damaged as little as possible, and tends to want to damage itself quite quickly. Delicacy or thoughtfulness on the slaves is more a risk of financial loss than anything else. An oversight of safety, a thoughtful weakness, and the slave injures, maims or kills herself, or causes an accident or kills another. And we're not even talking about the health risks: one case of cholera, one girl with tuberculosis, and an entire cage, or even the whole farm, is condemned, and risks spreading the contamination.

Very quickly, then, the slaver must assume that if a slave has to be *destroyed* (the deliberately demeaning term used for putting to death), there's no quibbling about it. And even less so to subdue and break every captive who is not yet docile, to ensure that she is no longer a danger to anyone or herself, and will prove trainable, educable and saleable.

The obvious pragmatism of the situation leaves slavers no choice. If a gorean likes to subdue and train her slave girl himself (all goreans know the basics of training, it's part of their upbringing), will take his time, and appreciate her rebellion which he may let last as long as it amuses him before breaking her, the slaver doesn't have this luxury. He has to do things quickly, and well. Time is money, and the more time passes, the greater the risk of losing it. That doesn't make slavers cruel or sadistic. A girl who has been mistreated, abused or raped is likely to end up insane with fear – it's very common for this to happen to Earth girls, who are more fragile – and then she'll have to be destroyed. Dry financial loss. Not good for business. Not good for reputation. On the other hand, it makes for tough, ruthless men. In any case, even less so than the average gorean, and especially within their business.

We can distinguish, although it's not striking in the novels, a few main types of slavers:

**The wholesale merchant:** this is exactly what's described above. He works in a corporation with employees, colleagues and trainers, will probably do without *Educative* slaves, and deals in large quantities. He's an outfitter, often close to hunters, with his own dealers, seams and networks.

**The luxury trainer:** owns, or is a member of a guild that owns, a House of Slaves, with all the refinements and means to train and educate slaves, most often Pleasure slaves. Within these walls, the most beautiful girls on the market are treated better than in any other type of enclosure, but subjected to the cruelest, most rigorous and demanding apprenticeships, which will turn them into prized slaves, trained by renowned *Educators*, and instructors in science and the arts.

**Village slavers:** any small town or large village can be home to high castes and people who can afford to buy slaves. Village slavers are the poor relation of the first two, without this being pejorative. Their profession is indispensable for training and ensuring the health and well-being of slaves who, sick or unhappy, would be useless. Village slavers manage few girls, sell few, and won't earn fortunes, but their profession is respected and their activity necessary, rewarded and in demand.

**City cage slaver:** employed by the city, he manages the public cages and kennels and the slaves that belong to the city's public services and that private individuals can rent for various uses. He is also in charge of welcoming slaves placed in cages by their traveling owners. He doesn't really do training and education work, but mainly stock management.

**The breeding master:** pedigree breeding slaves have existed for millennia, and breeding houses are highly reputed. Their description can be found as early as the third novel (*Assassins of Gor*). The master breeder is an entrepreneur who manages the reproduction, breeding, selection and training of a precious herd of varying size.

**The Acquisition Trip intermediary:** very rare, this is a slaver in contact with the agents of the priest-kings (or, much more rarely, the *kurii*), who supplies himself with Terran captives. He's well acquainted with this trade, undoubtedly knows Earth to a greater or lesser extent, a few Terran languages, has even been there, is versed in a small part of what's known as the Third Knowledge and protects this secret well. It's a rank highly regarded by slavers, but with a mysterious aura, and viewed with suspicion by the rest of the profession.

**The Earthling Trainer:** somewhat of an acolyte to the previous slave trader, he specializes in managing, training, and educating Terran slaves, which means he has a deep understanding of their specific characteristics, including their strange attachment to what they call freedom, and of course, he is well-versed in the variety of Terran cultures, or at least enough to understand them. More patient than the average slave trader, he knows that he is dealing with fragile and rebellious merchandise that does not function in the same way as Gorean women.

Solidarity and brotherhood among slavers is strong. From guild to guild, from city-state to city-state, every slaver guild protects, respects and helps its own, and even between slavers from competing cities, reputation and respect are the norm. The slavers of the biggest corporations have armadas and whole armies if need be, but war doesn't concern them, and they'll always prefer to avoid it. It's not good for business. Unless, of course, you're not involved and you're harvesting catches to sell.

For the record, the color of the slavers, which is a sub-caste of the merchants, though practically independent, is blue and yellow. Slavers don't necessarily wear these colors, but they do on their standards and in their ceremonial dress.

### ***SLAVERS' EQUIPMENT***

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The slaving trade requires a great deal of investment, which is why members of this caste always work together in guilds, with a strong caste fraternity. They have their own investors and transport networks, all subject, of course, to the control of the merchant caste.

A slaver needs space. He needs a slave house: a building capable of housing his live stock, cages sheltered from the elements, training rooms, a showroom, offices, kitchens, baths, dormitories and bedrooms for his staff. That's why slavers never work alone. Only private slavers who work for a wealthy notable don't need all this, as the means are provided by their boss.

But for everyone else, we're talking about an investment of tens of gold coins, not to mention

stock! That's why slavers band together to share the cost, and why a slaver often starts out as an assistant, or hunter, then stock trader, before gaining enough fame and influence to find an investor. Only then can he open his own slave house, where other slavers will work for him, hoping, in turn, to become slave house masters.

### ***WOMEN SLAVERS***

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The slaver caste includes women in its ranks. They are not simply the wives of slavers; some are single or widowed and run their businesses like the men. They are few in number, never part of capture expeditions, and always surround themselves with men they can trust to make sure the people they enslave don't get into trouble. Finally, they train relatively few pleasure kajirae, but rather service and companion kajirae for women, fighting slaves and gladiators. However, there are a few examples, such as those of the Ladies Gina and Tima, renowned and almost revered in their profession, who have no qualms about training kajirae for pleasure at terrible prices.

It's still a difficult role... forget the domina look and the pants with the whip, thank you! Slave women are even more careful about their modesty and honor than many High-Caste women! They're also very tough and always cold, their social role requiring them to stand up to men, whether free or slaves.

Some quotes:

— *Open your mouth," said one of the women. I opened my mouth. She pushed up under my upper teeth with her thumb. The dresses and veils she wore were graceful, with silky highlights. They were mostly blue and yellow in their colors, which are the colors of slavers. As the ravishing sleeve of her dress fell back, I saw, on her left wrist, a heavy black leather bracelet, studded with metal. Her eyes were dark and ominous, shrewd, fierce. They assessed objectively and ruthlessly. I had little doubt that, in her own field, she would be as formidable, if not more formidable, than Dame Gina. I'd never met her eyes. She, like Dame Gina, when she decided to be stern, frightened me. Such women, I knew, would treat me with the utmost rigor. They would pay no heed to men who were so miserable as to fall under their yoke as slaves.*



...

*I saw many women looking at Dame Tendite almost breathless, enraptured by her beauty. It was then that I realized just how brilliant the slave driver who was my mistress really was. The women in the stands, almost overwhelmed with excitement, identified with Dame Tendite. Although it was she who stood there, it was they who, in their imagination, exposed the shameful Ta-Teera and stood on the planks the slave dais. Lady Tendite smiled and raised her hand to the crowd. Perhaps it was only then that she realized that her beauty had not been an accessory in her hiring by Dame Tima. I looked at the women in the stands.... Later, they clearly identified with Dame Tendite, and her beauty, as the slave wearing the collar. The Lady Tima appealed to this impulse, she exploited something deep in the women that she, as a slave, understood well: the intimate, throbbing desire, deep in women, to be the slave of a strong man, to be mastered and to find herself under the yoke of obedience.*

*Fighting slave of Gor, page 8*

*Most women slavers, by the way, are not involved in field captures. It is, on the whole, too dangerous for them. Plus, there's always the danger that they'll end up being added to the catch by their men. Most women slavers are therefore based in towns, where they own or manage houses. There, they buy and sell slaves, board or rent them, train them, and so on. Statistically, there are very few women slavers. Most Gorean women tend to be attractive, and most Gorean men tend to be strong, for example. Therefore, in an enterprise such as slavery, it's not unusual for a female slaver, sooner or later, to somehow find the collar on her own neck. Thus, she is as helpless under the whip as any other woman.*

*Players of Gor, page 86-87*

### 3- Slave training

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I'll start with an absolute sentence: "*A master trains, an educator educates.*"

This sentence sums it all up. The bulk of the training, the harshest part, falls to the slaver. But the subtlety of long-term conditioning and education, once the slave is ready to receive it, is the task of specialized, educated slaves: the *Educator*. I'll come back to them later.

The first step in training a captive is to subdue her, to crush any hint of rebellion. There are several methods of doing this, and every slaver has his or her own. In many cases, no more than a cage and a few days of harshness and patience are required. A Gorean woman knows, and understands, that to stay alive, she must submit and endure her enslavement, the first step towards acceptance and education. But sometimes it's useful to have to use much harsher methods.

#### *Common techniques soon emerge:*

**Branding:** this is virtually systematic, and takes place in the hours or days following capture. However, branding may be the final event in the slave's training, once she has been exhausted and made docile. Obviously, having a sign – usually the *Kef*, the stylized letter K of *kajira*, but this is not automatic – branded prominently on the left thigh is not only terribly painful, but also terribly psychologically damaging. The *kajira* is kept tied to a cross, board or stand provided for the purpose, sees the iron heated to white, is shown it, and then it is placed on her skin, for about five seconds, before a bowl of cold water, once the burn is complete, is thrown over the live wound, sometimes followed by the slave-driver who comes over and traces the mark with his thumb to remove the burnt parts and refine it neatly. Yes, it's excruciating. Occasionally, on rare occasions, the wound becomes infected, and the slave ends up destroyed if it cannot be healed.

**The cage:** another compulsory step, the cage is a sure-fire way of isolating a slave and, once chained and locked up, protecting her from herself. The cage restricts movement, and quickly leads to profound isolation. The slave will often come to know the cage, and will have to accept it naturally. A slave who is locked up, deprived of food or water, or simply undernourished, will quickly give in.

**Deprivation of food and hygiene:** within a few days, a slave who is dying of hunger and thirst and can only relieve herself underneath her, in the straw of her cage, will agree to eat from the master's hand. Undernourished, exhausted by the cage and its infamous living conditions, she will eventually get down on her knees and allow herself to be fed obediently.

**The slave box:** a terrible way to break a slave is a closed, isolated box, only ventilated so that the slave doesn't suffocate. Small in size, she lies prostrate in the dark and silence, dirty and soiled, and only comes out on a leash and on all fours to be fed and watered. It doesn't take long before, by dint of howling, rebelling and crying, she unresistingly submits.

**Drowning:** another violent method, requiring great control, is drowning, to subdue the slave and show her that her life can cease at any moment. After a few days of drowning, she learns the fear of dying so forcefully that she is quickly subdued.

**The whip:** also violent, the method consists in whipping her almost systematically, the rest of the time locked up in a cage. Every slave will be whipped at least once. Each rebellion leads to a whipping – a flat whip, or slave whip, so as not to damage her – the first time the whip is given long and hard, as a first gratuitous act that teaches her pain, and the fear of reliving it. Rarely, the snake whip may be used, but it's terribly painful, and easily tears the skin, leaving scars that won't go away. It's rarely used, and it's the most violent and considered barbaric method of breaking a slave.

**The slave goad:** also often used by educators (like the whip), the pain is terrible, and a slave goad can kill with long, painful shocks that cause terrible spasms. But it has the well-used advantage of not damaging the slave, and is often even more cruel and frightening than the flat whip. The only problem is that it's not a widely available weapon, and it's expensive.

**Humiliation:** in front of an audience, or even in the middle of the street, in a square, on the deck of a ship, and therefore under the gaze of a large number of men, the slave is stripped, outraged and humiliated, or even taken by force or forced by the whip to surrender herself to the men. Stripped naked, exposed, palpated and touched, devoured by the gaze, mocked and commented upon, she sees her honor and pride shattered. Few resist, especially in conjunction with other harsh methods.

In all cases, the aim is for the slave to lose her dignity as a free woman, and to understand the inevitability and hopelessness of her fate. The more harshly and

cruelly she is treated and abused, the sweeter her comfort will be when the first gestures and acts of reward come. She must fear, scream, rebel, weep, beg and finally give up begging, but accept her fate and understand that it is no longer in her hands, but in those of her Master. And that she therefore has one, who disposes of her and her life.

A Gorean free woman understands this in two or three days. She'll fight out of pride and honor, out of principle – with a bit of luck, she'll have bought enough time, perhaps, to be released for ransom. A Panther understands this in little more, except in rare cases. She'll fight harder, and be treated all the more harshly. An Earthwoman, on the other hand, often unable to speak Gorean, may not understand it for one or even two weeks, and will only give in exhausted to the last degree, unless she is lucky enough to be able to speak her native language (and given the number of languages on Earth, this is not always easy, especially as Goreans are reluctant to use them). Often, too stubborn and blind, more fragile than the women of Gor, or trained by a slaver with little patience, she will die. On average, one to two in five do not survive. That's why there are slavers specializing in earthwomen.

Yes, it's atrocious when you put it that way. And, yes, it's the reality of training on Gor. Cruel, primal and brutal, this training must break the slave, until she no longer has the courage, and the strength, for a time, to rebel. Once subdued, she'll drop to her knees, head bowed, gaze down, as soon as she hears the command: Nadu, which will often have been used to teach her the first of the rules: always kneel before your master. And she will obediently eat from his hand without using her fingers. These are the signs that her docility has been acquired, and that she has probably given up her freedom. Her education can then begin, under the watchful eye of the slavers.

If you want to go further, [here's an article that describes in detail how a gorean trains a slave, with steps and methodologies.](#)

## *4- Slave education*

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At this stage, out of twenty captives, at least one has died. Illness, exhaustion, madness or enough

willpower to manage to mortally wound or kill themselves, but that's reality too. And it doesn't amuse the slaver, who loses money in the process. A good slaver is one who loses as few slaves as possible at this stage. If this were a batch of Earth women, the slaughter would be far more serious. One Terran woman in 5 dies in the first year of captivity on Gor.

Matured and trained slaves earn their first rewards. She'll be able to sleep on a mat, or even with a blanket, and her wrists will no longer be tied behind her back to prevent her from harming herself or others. She will still be kept on a leash for several days, and still firmly attached to a ring. She'll also be able to wash herself. In general, and for several more days, she will only be fed by the master, or in his presence. And she'll never be fed more than tasteless porridge, and possibly a little fruit.

This is where the **Educator's** task begins. She is there to teach the perfection of the slave's first gestures and postures, and to supervise and ensure his conditioning. I'll let Norman's quotes speak for themselves in describing this education:

*"The conditioning was subtle as well as crude, for it was not limited to the combination of a system of punishments and rewards; the young women were also inculcated with an image and conception of themselves. This began, in rudimentary form, in the first two weeks of their education. During the first week, curiously enough, the pupils did nothing but remain on their knees, in the position of the Slave of Pleasure, for several hours a day, in front of a large mirror. During this time, they wore only their collars and, in the case of Phyllis and Virginia, their left ankle rings. The purpose of this exercise, or so Elizabeth and I assumed, was to accustom the young women to thinking of themselves as slaves. During the second week, kneeling in the same way, they had to repeat the ritual phrase: 'I am a slave. I am a slave. I am a slave.' Virginia and Phyllis, by necessity, did so in English and Elizabeth in Gorean. During the third week, the teaching became a little more subtle; Flaminus visited the young women during class and expounded, first in English and later in Gorean, certain points of history, natural rights, categories of human beings and relations between the sexes. The aim of these speeches was, of course, to convince them that what had happened to them conformed to certain laws of competition between species, of conflict and domination, of the justified order of nature. They were the wives of inferior men who had proved incapable of protecting them; such men could be defeated if one wished; their*

*wives belonged to those who could take them, to the victors; consequently, they were slaves by nature; this type of enslavement had always existed and always would; it was right and good that, as slaves by nature, they should devote all their energy and intelligence to providing pleasure for their masters; there was also a strong dose of male superiority and a widespread Gorean conception, justified by many arguments, according to which women are, by nature, slaves, deserve their fate and are only fully satisfied, happy, when considered as such.*"

(Gor's Assassins)

*." Slave education continued. After a period devoted entirely to exercises, it came to elements such as attitude, gait, kneeling, lying down, eating and drinking. Grace and beauty, according to Sura, and I won't question her competence in this field, are above all a question of expression of the body as well as the face."*

(Gor's Assassins)

*." I was pleased to note, however, that Elisabeth was learning many things that, from my point of view, were far more necessary for a slave, including numerous dances, dozens of songs and an incredible amount of different caresses and kisses. The various techniques in her repertoire, which theoretically made her capable of providing delectable pleasures to anyone from the Ubar to the Peasant, are far too complex and elaborate for me to outline here. However, I don't think I've missed a single one."*

(Gor's Assassins)

In a few weeks, the slave girl, exhausted and pushed to her limits, is conditioned to accept and assume what she is: a *Kajira*, pet, property and object of her master, dedicated to pleasing and doing so with all her might. She is conditioned to accept, as an object, that she can be sold, given away and exchanged, and that whichever master she serves, her only and greatest desire is to please him.

For pleasure slaves, the education may end with a long, exhausting and complex initiation to pleasures and total sexual and sensitive disinhibition. She will no longer be able to hide her emotions, and will have learned not to be able to hold back tears, sadness, pleasures and sorrows. So any man can read an open-

book slave simply by her body, her face and her eyes. Even more than never lying, she can hide nothing.

In any case, even if the slave-girl is well treated after her terrible training and relentless education, and even more so if she is destined to be sold at a high price, she is subjected to an iron discipline. She is rarely allowed to frolic (a privilege she must earn), to talk to other slaves, and is constantly reminded of her status. Slavers and Educators will show her no tenderness whatsoever that is not strictly necessary for her education. The aim is to make her want to fight and learn so that she can have a better life, owned by a master who may be less implacable, more patient, gentler or more magnanimous. Unluckily, it won't always be for a better life, while this conditioning, in itself, encourages her to easily love with devotion and timidity the master who will buy her.

The stimulation cage, the luxury of education

Once this stage of education has been reached, the last stage generally takes place, but it's not very common, and can be considered as a last luxury training, the *Stimulation Cage*:

The stimulation cage is a comfortable, low cage, richly adorned with furs, fabrics and cloths, beautiful and pleasant, open for all to see, but where the slave-girl cannot stand up without having to lower her head considerably, and where she is forbidden both to speak and to look up at anyone. There, an educator feeds her, further initiates her into pleasures, and teaches her to use make-up, beauty products, combs, hair and body oils, perfumes, to enhance her beauty and give her a love of refinement and pomp, while accentuating solitude, isolation, and the desire to be placed in the hands of a man and offered to him.

Usually, within a few weeks, her shyness, desire and restraint turn her into a slave as gentle as she is beautiful and desirable, quivering at the slightest breath, her body totally and permanently awake. However, the stimulation cage remains the prerogative of the richest and most luxurious slavers, and so few pleasure slaves achieve this refinement of training, before beginning the general culture training necessary to raise their price.

A luxury pleasure kajira will spend between three weeks and three months in this cage, carefully trained and educated, but isolated and solitary most of the time. It's a final form of sophisticated conditioning that will produce a submissive, timid kajira, with an alert body, eager for gentleness, tenderness and submission, and, above all, totally imbued with her state as a pleasure animal.

## 5- The educated slave

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On Gor SL, it's not uncommon to see kajirae become Free Women or Panthers, adapting to their new role in a day or two. Or slaves acting rebellious long after they've been trained and educated with great care (at least in appearance). Clearly, it's hard to put yourself in the shoes of someone who's undergone such training. It's ruthless conditioning, which is truly an elaborate form of brainwashing, very comparable also to the way we train animals, like dogs.

But I hope that after reading this story, you'll have understood that, in the end, a slave-girl remains one forever, and that she can't change at the snap of a finger. It will be almost impossible to break such conditioning, because the slave-girl is totally dependent on the feeling of belonging to a master, of being a possessed animal. A well-educated slave girl is first and foremost completely conditioned to feel inferior, to be an animal, to be timid and docile. She is trained to obey without thinking, to express desire, to let the most exacerbated femininity and sexuality speak for itself.

Somehow, despite her intelligence and autonomy, her condition is a necessity. Slavers and Educators have taught her to shed all control, modesty and inhibition. Her sensuality is so intense, she can be on the verge of orgasm with a simple glance, a breath or a kiss. She needs sex, she can't do without it, and depriving her of it is the worst punishment of all. She'll do everything in her power to be used sexually, without ever daring to provoke a Master into using her.

*(...) These devices, incidentally, are sometimes used by slaves who hate their masters but whose bodies, trained for love, cannot withstand the absence of male caresses. These women, despite their hatred, sometimes offer larma, furious with themselves but powerless, prisoners of their slave desires, forced*

*to beg on their knees for the caress of a rough master who enjoys the horror of their situation; will he satisfy them? If he will, yes; if he will not, no. These women are nothing but slaves.*

*(The Tribes of Gor)*

It's hard, if you're willing to consider the true weight of this conditioning, to become proud again, cold and frigid in appearance, or rebellious and hateful of men, when you fall to your knees under their single, steady gaze, your body trembling with fear and mixed desire. It takes a lot to break such a powerful and intimate hold, which is almost like a drug.

And that hold soon reappears. A trained and educated slave girl remains so forever; her heart can never be the cold, hard, proud heart of a Free woman. It's much more by virtue of this reality, than for questions of honor or principle -even if no Gorean will admit it- that the adage circulates: *"only a fool frees a slave."* Quite simply, because it's often a terrible punishment rather than a gift.

## ***6- The sale of slaves.***

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Now that the slaver has finished his work, he needs to sell his product, so let's talk money and sales. It's pretty clear that, depending on the level of education he's provided, he's had plenty out of his own pocket, and expects to pay back his expenses. Especially since it's not uncommon, even belatedly, to see a slave who was thought to be well-trained die or be seriously injured. A final burst of rebellion sometimes reappears, a risk that can endanger the other slaves, including the Educatrices. And sometimes it ends badly.

Counting the time needed to create a kajira, and based on prices and living costs on Gor, using the most widely used currency system, the ZcS, it should be borne in mind that the basic cost will be at least 1 to 2 silver tarsk, and 3 to 10 silver tarsk for a well-trained pleasure kajira.

I've done a quick calculation for you, and taking into account labor time and expenses, a fully-educated pleasure slave costs the slaver around 15 to 16 silver (ZcS standard, so at least 1,5 silver in the decimal system). And a summarily trained slave? Around 2 or

3 silver (ZcS) or 3 coppers (decimal). These are not small sums, and the slaver has to get the best possible price for them to make his business profitable.

No slave is ever sold at a fixed price. We always haggle, and always with the slave present and exposed naked, who must show herself completely and without modesty, as ravishing and desirable as possible.

There are lots of ways to sell, so I'm only going to mention the two most public ways:

**Stage sales:** the first case is akin to selling livestock. Except that the cattle are human. The slave is on his knees, head bowed, in the posture of pleasure slaves, raising his head to say to the potential buyer: *"Buy me, Master."*

Traditionally, the interested buyer then calls the seller, and the girl is shown and examined in detail, along with her medical papers, and pedigree if she comes from a breeding. During this time, the price is discussed. The price is rarely displayed on the girl. On the other hand, basic information about the girl is often displayed on a wooden or slate plaque: her role, her education, her age, her origin, for example.

Note that, depending on the buyer's face, the slave will have said the ritual phrase more or less loudly, with more or less passion, to avoid being bought by a guy with a vicious look, for example. Slave, yes, but not stupid...

**The "Curulean" sale:** named after Ar's prestigious slave auction house, this is an auction. Slaves are paraded around a sawdust-covered dais, where the girls on display are the highest-priced slaves. Depending on whether the sale is for the general public or reserved for a party of wealthy guests, the slaves are often made to dance, frequently the whip dance.

There are no descriptive signs around the slaves' necks, only numbers. Leaflets are distributed to spectators and auction participants, describing, often in detail and with many compliments, each kajira, which is thus recognized by its number.

In these auction rooms and on these stages, bidding can reach fever pitch in an electric hubbub of passion and desire, with males driven mad by the slave-girls stoking their lust. That's why there are always henchmen, as fights are not uncommon. And while a pleasure slave is generally worth 5 tarsk of silver (25 according to the ZcS meter), it's not uncommon at these auctions for their price to happily exceed one tarn of gold!

There are also cases of very reserved private sales, for distinguished guests, where finely-trained pleasure slaves are offered for sale at prices that defy the purse of most men.

Goreans prefer a deflowered slave to a virgin, who will inevitably be less initiated into the pleasures expected of a Kajira sold for this. However, Norman still contradicts himself from time to time, and on the face of it, many Goreans could pay a lot of money for a luxury pleasure slave who is still a virgin.

### ***THE PRICE OF SLAVES***

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To better understand the prices below, I urge you [to read the article on ZcS prices for products and services](#). For the prices that follow are all in reference to the ZcS meter monetary system.

Prices are for slaves auctioned at their base price. Slave prices can soar to astronomical sums. The most expensive price mentioned in the novels is 1,000 tarn gold, but prices for kajirae of pleasure at 10 or 20 tarn gold are not even exceptional.

As a reminder, breeding slaves are carefully selected with genuine pedigrees that can go back generations. These slaves are inevitably the most expensive on Gor, but the sale of the daughter of a high enemy dignitary represents, by virtue of its prestige, a sum that can sometimes become insane.

You'll note that the price list doesn't mention any of the "silk" colors I'd come back to, nor any of the specific slave types often discussed on Gor SL. For good reason:

1- Silk colors don't exist. It's an onlinism. We only distinguish between virgin slaves (white silk, which is

a nickname for slaves) and deflowered slaves (red silk). Color means nothing, and a slave girl doesn't wear red to signify her condition. In a pinch, it's common for a virgin to wear a little white ribbon on her collar to signify that she's White Silk, and therefore not supposed to be used sexually.

2- Except for kajirae of passion and exotic kajirae, a slave is bought for a function. And just because she was an expert and educated pleasure slave, doesn't mean she won't end up as a lathe girl or laborer. If her new master doesn't recognize her talent, he can do whatever he likes with her.

Prices are piling up. A pedigree pleasure slave from a breeding farm is easily worth 60 S. Women with red hair, and especially auburn, are sought-after, as are women with jet-black hair. A high-slave is a kind of luxury pleasure kajira for the wealthiest high castes, often trained in the arts, dance and music. An exotic is a slave with rare physical or mental traits, such as the ignorant virgins of men in Assassins of Gor, albinos, or slaves with poisoned saliva or zebra skin, as in Prize of Gor.

(S: silver tarsk, G: gold tarn). For prices according to the classic decimal system, divide by 10.

- Barbarian (non-Terran) without training: 2 S
- Pedigree breeding slave (passion slave): 40 S
- Combat slave: 35 S
- Exotic: 1 G
- Panther woman: 25 S
- Coin girl: 5 S
- Kettle Girl: 5 S
- Farm girl: 3 S
- High-caste daughter: 50 S
- Daughter born of Ubar: 5 G
- Forçat: 4 S
- High slave: 1 G
- Kajira of pleasure: 20 to 25 S
- Kajiru of pleasure: 30 S
- Tower Kajira: 15 S
- Terran: 25 S

#### **Some other modifiers:**



**Juvenile slave or virgin:** juvenile slaves and virgin girls always command a lower base price, as goreans don't attribute virtue to virginity, except for certain particular tastes.

**Exceptional beauty:** inevitably sought-after, exceptional beauty can vary according to regional desires, tastes and expectations, but a girl of great beauty will inevitably be fiercely envied and easily double the price of the kajira.

**Red or black hair:** Goreans are attracted to girls with red hair, and especially auburn or jet-black hair. Of course, we're talking about natural hair coloring; it's highly frowned upon, even illegal, to dye a slave's hair to sell it.

**Second-hand/wholesale slaves:** slaves for the simplest labor, either too old or young for other uses, or sold wholesale following massive raids or destocking. They're usually worth half the price.

- [Gor's slave-girls, principles & game guide](#)
- [Slave training & education](#)
- [Slave's rules](#)
- [Commands and postures](#)
- [The Slave's Heart](#)
- [Slavery gear and attire](#)

## *7- Resources & tips*

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If you want to play the role of a slaver, you need to know the role of kajira! It sounds silly to say it this way, but I've come across a number of players who want to play the role of slaver who know nothing about the role of Gor's slave girls.

So, my advice is simple! Learn what a kajira is, and the role as played, to understand it! Talk to players who play Kajira, and experienced players who can help you get into the role of slaver and understand the stakes and responsibilities. Yes, it's difficult, yes, you'll have to read a lot. Welcome! It's the same for kajirae, believe me.

And if you want to play a slave driver because you like humiliating and being sadistic, or you want to have your own harem... change your mind. Please don't spoil the fun for other players, who are trying to share their game and their fun with everyone, in a consensual and respectful way.

Here's a list of articles to read to find out how to learn your role as a slaver:

## *The Priest-Kings & sci-fi of Gor*

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It's time to lift the veil on the mysteries of the Priest-Kings of Gor, and, in so doing, reveal all the science fiction that lies hidden in the novels of the Gor cycle.

In advance, I apologize for any errors or clumsiness, as I'm ill and feverish, so I'm writing with my brain a bit scrambled. Yes, my health continues to troll me at the moment. And I'm also sorry for the length of the article, but it needs a lot of material to develop its two subjects!

I know I'm going to shock some people (but you should be used to it, if you follow Gorean Archives articles), but the Gor cycle isn't medieval fantasy. In [a previous article](#), I summed it up this way: Gor is science-fiction science-fantasy. It's a planet-opera set in a version of an ancient Gallo-Roman world on an alien planet, with people who, despite their generally medieval or ancient appearance and way of life, have access to advanced technologies, some of which are squarely science fiction, including interplanetary travel and cyberpunk elements.

And this reality begins with Gor's most sci-fi element: the Priest-Kings. So I'll start by explaining what they are, before moving on to the implications for the world of Gor.

**Author's note:** many of the details and topics in this article are conclusions and assumptions based on elements in the novels, but not explained in the novels. I had to theorize a bit to fill in the blanks, so there's no need to bitch about it, I know.

### *1- The Priest-Kings*

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*About its neck there hung a small circular device, a translator of some sort, similar to but more compact than those I had hitherto seen.*

*I sensed a new set of odors, secreted by what stood before me.*

*Almost simultaneously a mechanically reproduced voice began to emanate from the translator.*

*It spoke in Gorean.*

*I knew what it would say.*

*"Lo Sardar," it said. "I am a Priest-King."*

#### Priest-Kings of Gor

The Priest-Kings are the gods prayed to by the Goreans of the Priest-King Cult, itself jealously dominated by [the Initiate caste](#), who see themselves as their sole intermediaries, and the holders of sacred truth. But the vast majority of Initiates have no idea what the Priest-Kings are. And if they were, it's a safe bet that this religion, and consequently a good part of Gorean culture and its laws, would be turned upside down, with dramatic effects on society as a whole.

But what's a Priest-King?

### *1-1 THE APPEARANCE OF THE PRIEST-KINGS*

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*It had six legs and a great head like a globe of gold with eyes like vast luminous disks. Its two forelegs, poised and alert, were lifted delicately in front of its body. Its jaws opened and closed once. They moved laterally.*

*From its head there extended two fragile, jointed appendages, long and covered with short quivering strands of golden hair. These two appendages, like eyes, swept the room once and then seemed to focus on me.*

#### Priest-Kings of Gor

Well, actually... they're ants. Well, not really, of course. The Priest-Kings are a very ancient extraterrestrial species, who have followed a convergent evolutionary path giving them a physical appearance – and certain social traits – that inevitably remind us of the Hymenoptera with which all earthlings are familiar.

That said, there are some very notable differences with this simple comparison. From a distance, a

King-Priest resembles a gold-colored ant, with six legs, a highly segmented body that separates the head, thorax, petiole and abdomen and, standing on its hind legs, exceeds two meters in height (7 feet) for a total length of around three and a half meters (12 feet).

However, the King Priest moves on its four hind legs, which are attached to the petiole, its two front legs, which are attached to the top of the thorax, having evolved into raptor arms, like those of praying mantises, equipped with spikes and sharp blades. The tarsus of its front legs has evolved into prehensile, articulated appendages resembling fine hooks. In short, the King-Priest's fingers are capable of functioning with the same complexity as a human hand.

A King-Priest's head is fairly large, round and smooth, with small mandibles that are largely hidden beneath its clypeus, the articulated part of its front face. The eyes are globes composed of hundreds of facets, reflecting the slightest light. Finally, the head is equipped with long, slender articulated antennae, which are highly mobile and covered with permanently vibrating golden cilia.

## ***1-2 THE PHYSIOLOGY OF PRIEST-KINGS***

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Priest-kings are a troglodyte species which, according to the clues left here and there in the novels, must have been born around a small red sun, with low visible spectrum luminosity. So they can't stand the bright yellow glow of the sun at all, and can't expose themselves to it. Sunlight doesn't just seem to hurt their eyes, it burns their chitin. Presumably, their physiognomy has never evolved with the amount of ultraviolet light bombarding them from the solar system sun. So they live underground, which doesn't bother them at all, as we'll see below.

Priest-kings' locomotion is remarkably fast and agile. While they can't climb over every rough surface like ants, they walk and run quickly and lightly, despite their imposing mass. Priest-kings are vegetarians, eating cultivated mushrooms. I say this because mushrooms aren't really plants, but I quibble.

Priest-kings don't base their perception on sight. Clearly, they see poorly, even in the infrared, which should be the light wave their eyes perceive best. Their spatial perception is based on sound and, a priori, magnetic fields. Their incredibly sensitive antennae provide a spatial localization based on echolocation and a particularly fine perception of the local magnetic fields emitted by the materials around them. This means that while they "see" very well, the colors we cherish and need to recognize our environment are of no importance to them. It's a safe bet that their entire body, like that of other insects of the same order, is equipped with thousands of tiny, sensitive cilia that contribute to this perception of the environment, ensuring perfect proprioception in total darkness.

Priest-Kings have the equivalent of lungs, and thus an elaborate respiratory system, but this is located on their abdomen, with eight stomata, four on each side, that inspire and expire. They therefore have no vocal organs and, while they can make sounds, by rubbing their front paws, squeaking their little mandibles, etc, this is not their mode of communication at all.

Among other things, the Priest-Kings' brain is delocalized. Unlike mammals, it is not a single organ in their head, but is distributed in eight neuronal ganglia along their body. That said, piercing their heads destroys much of their cognition and condemns them to death within a short space of time. What could be an advantage is undoubtedly a handicap similar to the fragility of the human spine: destroy a ganglion, and you partially paralyze the creature as well as partially blind it.

Finally, the body of the priest-kings is a chitinous exoskeleton, but one that differs visibly in detail from that of insects. It's softer and more malleable, which is confirmed by the ease with which they can be wounded with a bladed weapon. Compared to our scale, an ant's chitin would be a veritable suit of armour. And this flexibility is logical: priest-kings are very tall, and if their exoskeleton were too rigid or thick, and too heavy, it would not allow proper development of the muscular structure on the scale of these creatures. In short, they wouldn't have been able to grow as big and comfortable with their mass. Basically, a King-Priest is not much less fragile than a human in the face of the same kind of attack.

## 1-3 THE PRIEST-KINGS' COMMUNICATION

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*The Priest-Kings have little or no scent of their own which is detectable by the human nostrils, though one gathers there is a nest odor by which they may identify one another, and that the variations in this nest odor permit identifications of individuals.*

*What in the passageways I had taken to be the scent of Priest-Kings had actually been the residue of odor-signals which Priest-Kings, like certain social insects of our world, use in communicating with one another.*

*The slightly acrid odor I had noticed tends to be a common property of all such signals, much as there is a common property to the sound of a human voice, whether it be that of an Englishman, a Bushman, a Chinese or a Gorean, which sets it apart from, say, the growling of animals, the hiss of snakes, the cry of birds.*

### Priest-Kings of Gor

For humans, the most impressive sense of the Priest-Kings is their sense of smell. This is not based on their respiratory system, but on their antennae and receptor cilia and the phenomenal glands scattered around their legs, thorax and abdomen. And this sense is the basis of their language: Priest-kings communicate by smell, precisely by pheromones.

So, not only do Priest-Kings have a very fine sense of smell, which, on the face of it, puts even that of dogs to shame, but it's so vast and precise that it's capable of serving as the basis for a particularly rich and complex language, which easily rivals human language and all its facets. And, by implication, this explains a mania of the Priest-Kings in their dealings with humans: the Priest-Kings insist heavily on the need for humans to wash between 10 and 20 times a day when communicating with them. Why do they do this? Clearly because they perceive human odors and pheromones immensely more than we do, and it's not at all pleasant for them!

Priest-kings' sense of smell being what it is, this is how they identify their contemporaries, be they animal, human or of the same species as themselves. But it's also the basis of their writing. I won't go into the details of how the Priest-Kings' language works:

it has around 400 phonemes and sounds complicated. But above all, it can be written... and yet remains totally impossible for a human being to read! The Priest-Kings print their scents on a medium, each phoneme was a pheromone, and the method of reading remains unknown. I wondered how the Priest-Kings convert odor signals into electronic signs, since they have advanced computer science at their disposal, but with a pheromone-reading system, transforming a phoneme into a binary sign isn't that complicated.

No need to add, then, that it's impossible for humans to learn this language – they can't even try to speak or understand it. To communicate with humans, Priest-Kings use translation machines, which they wear as pendants.

## 1-4 THE SOCIETY OF THE PRIEST-KINGS

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*"Occasionally," said Misk, "an egg occurred which was female but these were ordered destroyed by Sarm. I myself know of no female egg in the Nest, and I know of only one which has occurred in the last six thousand years."*

*"How long," I asked, "does a Priest-King live?"*

*"Long ago," said Misk, "Priest-Kings discovered the secrets of cell replacement without pattern deterioration, and accordingly, unless we meet with injury or accident, we will live until we are found by the Golden Beetle."*

*"How old are you?" I asked.*

*"I myself was hatched," said Misk, "before we brought our world into your solar system." He looked down at me. "That was more than two million years ago," he said.*

### Priest-Kings of Gor

Back to the ants, for the similarities are striking. And to start with, Mount Sardar, well, it's an anthill! That said, it's not really an anthill. It's really a mountain, hollowed out in every direction with rooms, halls and galleries that make up the habitat of the Priest-Kings, their servants and the varied fauna that share the mountain from the same world as the Priest-Kings.

Like ants, the vast majority of Priest-Kings are asexual and cannot reproduce. There is only one female per nest and a very limited number of males. In this case, there's only one Priest-King nest left: the Nest... i.e. Mount Sardar. Yes, this also means that there is now only one reproductive female, the Mother, and only one male. There are no other differentiated castes in the species: no workers, no soldiers. The Priest-Kings all have the same physiognomy, more or less, which makes it rather difficult for a human to recognize them. It's better to rely on details and smell than on sight.

But that's where the similarity with ants ends, except on one final point. Unlike highly individualistic humans, Priest-Kings see themselves first and foremost as a group unit. That's not to say that a King-Priest can't think about personal goals, and even become selfish and ambitious, but the notion of altruism – putting the survival of the group first, even if it means putting one's own comfort and life at risk – is far more developed among them. The King-Priest, at the level of each individual, thinks in terms of benefits for the group, before thinking in terms of benefits for himself.

The Mother is not the head of the Nest. She's only the breeder, the one and only. She is heavily protected, and few creatures can approach her. The leaders are the Priest-Kings with the greatest charisma, often close to the Mother, but not necessarily. But even more altruistic than humans, they are still capable of individualism and self-interest.

Priest-Kings live a very long life. Their technology enables advanced cell regeneration, making them virtually immortal, although again, they can be killed by a sufficiently serious injury. Some Priest-Kings are several million years old.

Finally, the Nest on Mount Sardar is literally the last one left. There are only a few thousand Priest-Kings left, perhaps just over a thousand. This is a civilization in mortal danger, probably doomed to extinction in the medium term. They could clone themselves to increase their population (they know how to clone humans, and can even copy a human's entire memory and implant it in a clone), but

categorically refuse to do so (at least so far) despite their desperate situation.

### *Where are the Priest-Kings?*

The vast majority of Priest-Kings are in the Nest, beneath Mount Sardar. They remain a very social and gregarious species. But there are isolated Priest-Kings here and there, even a little lost, living in underground shelters, on Gor, and even on Earth. There's little information on these individuals, or why they're isolated, so I'm just mentioning the fact that it's possible.

Since these Priest-Kings have specific needs in terms of food and biotope, they must undoubtedly have their own Muls, in a place equipped with the comforts necessary for Priest-King survival, such as, for example, a mushroom farm, technology and hygiene. Are they in contact with the Nest, working with it, for example in isolated outposts close to certain human agents? It's possible, although it must be very rare. On the one hand, the Priest-Kings are really only a handful, and on the other, they're not inclined to take a greater interest in human affairs.

But it's possible! The Priest-Kings would surely have an interest in outposts close to human affairs. They also have individuality and personal interests, which may explain why some leave their civilization to conduct their own affairs.

## *1-5 THE PRIEST-KING MENTALITY*

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To understand this mentality, a little history is in order... so, once upon a time... (I'm summarizing this story as best I can, as the elements are rather patchy, and so I can't vouch for its accuracy in general)

### *A brief history of the Priest-Kings*

The Priest-Kings faced the worst possible threat to an intelligent species: their sun was dying. And certainly not a slow death with a slowly fading red dwarf, but a violent and devastating one, spewing out puffs of high-intensity radiation, threatening to sterilize their world and destroy their atmosphere. Like the film "the Wandering Earth" (2019, loosely



based on the 2000 short story by Liu Cixin, and I recommend you see [the second film](#), it's impressive), they decided to move their planet to another, more clement sun, I'd say around 3 million years ago.

Yes, Gor, this is, a priori, their home world. And 3 million years ago, the evolutionary branch Homo, our species, had not yet appeared. The first Homo differentiated itself from the australopithecine branch only 600,000 years later. The Priest-Kings settled around our sun, and went about their lives, quietly, without worrying about what was happening on Earth. Their mastery of gravity ensures that they can stabilize the orbit of their world without causing a mess in the rest of the solar system – at least, not before astronomical time.

Let's take a giant leap forward in time, to around 10,000 years ago. What happens in the meantime? A mystery. The Priest-Kings seem to be making progress scientifically, but end up stagnating technologically and culturally. With the mastery of physiological immortality, comes a reproductive decline, for, in the absence of a need for population renewal – visibly reinforced by a civilization locked in its pursuit of science and knowledge, but not of technical applications – perpetuating oneself in large numbers is of little interest. Clearly, in this era, the Priest-Kings have forgotten anything remotely related to war, competition and conquest, and live in peace, in small numbers.

On Earth, the last two hominid species mingle, and in the evolutionary race, Homo Sapiens emerges as the only remaining human species. It will soon found its first civilizations, and its slow conquest of the world begins. Then came the Kurri, and the catastrophe began.

The Kurri are stellar nomads trapped in giant spaceships, the Steel Worlds. They've destroyed their own world, and their mentality is... how shall I put it? You take away all the good things about human being, and you push the competitive button at maximum. They, too, want a world to settle in, which, as we can guess from the novels, is above all a new place for them to conquer and exploit until all resources are exhausted. And they come across the solar system, with its two habitable planets: Gor, and Earth. Yummy!

The Priest-Kings find themselves up against an enemy in great numbers, even if the Kurri are also an alien species in steep decline, given their situation, which unlike them, lives for and by war and conquest. But there's a big difference: the Priest-Kings are far more technologically advanced. What follows is a series of deadly space wars, only hinted at, but in which each side takes a heavy toll, with, as you might guess, huge losses on both sides.

The Priest-Kings win this first direct conflict. The Kurris have hardly ever seen their enemy's face. They only saw their weapons, their ships, their unrivalled power, and suffered terrible losses. But that hasn't discouraged them; it's not as if they had any other choice.

And here I must digress: obviously, neither the Priest-Kings nor the Kurris have mastered hyperluminal travel. Interstellar travel is therefore, at best, at the speed of light, and on a stellar scale, that's awfully slow, not to mention the outrageous expenditure of energy involved. To give you an idea, the best source of energy known to us Earthlings, at least on paper, is antimatter: 100% energy yield, the best you can do according to the laws of physics. And yet, to get to the nearest star, it would take us four years (4 light-years), and we'd need several thousand tonnes of antimatter, for a payload of a few hundred tonnes. So, clearly, the Priest-Kings and the Kurri are wandering around slowly (everything's relative, eh!) in space. Finding another habitable planet within an accessible travel distance and in a reasonable time must be almost impossible for them.

What was the exact date of the first conflict between the Priest-Kings and the Kurri? I haven't found it, but it obviously dates from between -10,000 and -5,000 BC. There were long truces interspersed with attempted invasions and attacks, all repulsed with varying degrees of damage. Some of this damage has always been effectively repaired by the terraforming genius of the Priest-Kings. But for a species whose numbers are dwindling, every death is a tragedy.

Meanwhile, the Priest-Kings are taking a greater interest in the humans of Earth. They begin their giant socio-cultural experiment, which I call a zoo, by importing human populations from Gor. And they continued to do so, accelerating between 500 BC and



1200 AD, before gradually slowing down. But what was the real purpose of this human import? Clearly, over and above a social experiment to create a human species that is perhaps less conquering, aggressive and predatory than that of the Earthlings (given the mentality of the Goreans, it's still a bit of a failure), it's also to provide the Priest-Kings with what they lack most: a potential army capable of supporting them against the Kurris.

As for the latter, after numerous failed attempts at a full-scale invasion of Earth and Gor, they have opted instead for discreet incursions to establish point heads. Their most massive attempts have cost them dearly, and given their situation, for them too, any loss of ships and soldiers is a loss they cannot replace. The Kurris are more numerous than the Priest-Kings, but there are only a few tens of thousands of them, not many more, and they live in spaceships with limited resources.

However, they have also understood, at least partially, the limits of their adversary: if they make discreet intrusions, in small numbers, without advanced technological weapons, the Priest-Kings lose interest. Just avoid ranged and heavy weapons, leave out explosives and war machines, and the Priest-Kings won't budge. So, while waiting for the opportunity to launch a definitive assault to destroy their enemy, the Kurris make incursions, set up outposts and even trade and form alliances with humans, to supply themselves with raw materials and carry out field reconnaissance.

That said, it's not that easy, and humans, too, defend themselves well, even against those giant, bloodthirsty and ruthless monsters that are the Kurris. And in recent years, things have accelerated. The Nest War, the civil war that is the main plot of Priest-kings of Gor, has terribly weakened and weakened the Priest-kings. Sooner or later, the Kurris will realize that their enemy can no longer stop more massive, direct assaults, and will try again. In the end, the only thing that can stop the Kurris are the humans. At least on Gor. On Earth, it's another story again, which I'll talk about in the second part: Gor's sci-fi.

### *How Priest-Kings think*

To begin with, Priest-Kings have a fairly passive mentality. Fundamentally much more pacifist in nature than humans, they find it hard to project themselves into an aggressive martial logic, or to follow the most pragmatic logic when confronted with an enemy: destroy them in order to avoid being destroyed themselves. As a result, they are unable to follow a strategy that would enable them to meet their adversary and find the loopholes that would allow them to neutralize him once and for all.

A King-Priest is a bit contemplative. He's fascinated by complexity and fundamental logic. He's not interested in survival or competition, not even in his own survival. His group has to be threatened, and the threat has to be widespread, for him to start thinking about it. Consequently, Priest-Kings are always a little slow to respond to an external problem.

What's more, Priest-Kings, with their minds based on abstract, mathematical logic and very few emotional passions, have little understanding of trickery and pretense. As lying is the most advanced and common form of pretense, they have difficulty grasping it, and understanding its interest and nature. In other words, when faced with a good strategist practicing the principles of shapeless warfare, the Priest-Kings are pretty helpless. Are you beginning to understand their interest in having humans as agents and allies?

Finally, the Priest-Kings are not contemptuous of human civilization, contrary to what you might think: they're rather indifferent. On Gor, the Goreans are their experiment, and they have imposed strong limits on the civilization they created, fearing what the Goreans might do if they mastered Earth technology (I wouldn't put much stock in the Priest-Kings if that happened). But they're not contemptuous. The Priest-Kings have their own concerns, and let the Goreans fend for themselves, as long as they don't do anything too stupid. They don't see them as insects or worthless beings, but just as a young and rather silly species, a point of view which, as we see in the novels, evolves towards a better consideration of the Goreans, whom they now need. Thus, as early as the novel *Priest-king of Gor*, a relationship of friendship and mutual respect is created between Tarl Cabot and Musk, a bond that

will not be exceptional, even if Priest-kings are not very emotionally inclined or social with humans.

It should be noted that Priest-Kings are very conservative, and have great difficulty in bringing about major, or even minor, changes in their way of life. They are in love with complexity, to which they lend a real aesthetic value, and for them, to change something is to risk losing the beauty of what will have to be sacrificed or modified in order to change. Yes, even in their mentality, they are now on the decline as a civilization, and it will take a profound upheaval to halt this slow demise.

## ***1-6 THE KING-PRIESTS AND THE HUMANS***

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*That night Misk told me of how affairs stood in the Nest. It would be long before the powers of the broken Nest could be restored, before the Scanning Chamber could function again, before the vast damages done to the Nest could be repaired, but men and Priest-Kings were even now at work, side by side.*

*The ships that had sped from the Sardar had now returned, for as I had feared, they were not made welcome by the cities of Gor, nor by the Initiates, and those who had ridden the ships had not been accepted by their cities. Indeed, the ships were regarded as vehicles of a type forbidden to men by Priest-Kings and their passengers were attacked in the name of the very Priest-Kings from which they had come. In the end, those humans who wished to remain on the surface had landed elsewhere, far from their native cities, and scattered themselves as vagabonds about the roads and alien cities of the planet. Others had returned to the Nest, to share in the work of its rebuilding.*

*The body of Sarm, I learned, had been burned in the Chamber of the Mother, according to the custom of Priest-Kings, for he had been First Born and beloved of the Mother.*

*Misk apparently bore him not the least ill will.*

*I was amazed at this, until it occurred to me that I did not either. He had been a great enemy, a great Priest-King, and had lived as he had thought he should. I would always remember Sarm, huge and golden, in the last agonizing minute when he had pulled free of the Golden Beetle and had stood upright and splendid in the crumbling, perishing Nest that he was determined must be destroyed.*

## **Priest-Kings of Gor**

Here, we turn to the subject of the Priest-Kings' servants in the Nest, initiates vis-à-vis their gods, and the fate of goreans who enter the Sardar Mountains.

And we'll start by summarizing a problem: if you enter the Sardar Mountains, and enter the Nest, which is actually quite easy, since hardly anyone is denied the honor of crossing the guarded palisade that surrounds Mount Sardar, you become a Mul, i.e. a slave of the Priest-Kings. From the point of view of the Priest-Kings, this is an immense honor, and undoubtedly so for many of the Goreans who have dared to cross the palisade.

For those who expected to find something else, too bad for them: they have little chance of leaving alive. It's not that the Priest-Kings are cruel, but simply that the man who has seen the Nest, its contents and its inhabitants with his own eyes must not spread the secret. But then again, the King-Priests won't kill you because you know too much! If you swear sincerely, and after a certain period of servitude to ensure your loyalty, that you won't say anything, they'll let you go in all sincerity. But your troubles aren't over yet. For the Initiates, who have no idea what's behind the palisade, truly believe that no one returns from the Sardar Mountains! If you walk out, cross the palisade and the Initiates see you, they'll kill you, because no one can leave the Sardar Mountains, and if you do, you're an abomination!

## ***The Muls***

So, in the Nest, there are many humans. These are either goreans who have come to serve the Priest-Kings, thus becoming Muls and who, for the most part, will never leave, or agents who work in collaboration with the Priest-Kings and come and go (see below), or Muls born on site, who are genetically modified cloned humans. The latter, who in addition to their genetic modifications can wear various cybernetic implants and ultimately be more cyborg than human, know nothing of the outside world. Their only destiny, their only reason for living, is to serve the Priest-Kings.

Muls are easily recognizable. Their only hair is their eyelashes. Whether they were born locally and are

cyborgs, or have become willing slaves, they are all totally hairless. They don't usually wear slave collars, but they all wear the same purple plastic tunic. As I said earlier, Priest-Kings don't see colors the way humans do. It's the Muls who have chosen this color, because it's the color of the Ubars. For the Nest's slaves, it means they wear the color of the Priest-Kings' highest human servants. The Muls are the workers and servants of the Priest-Kings, of whom there are only a handful. Among other things, they take care of everything to do with the mushroom cultivation chambers, as well as hygiene. All Muls take at least a dozen showers a day. There are showers everywhere, and this precaution is a necessity to avoid irritating the terribly acute sense of smell of the Priest-Kings, who don't much like human odors.

I've said that the Priest-Kings aren't cruel, but they do have some questionable and not necessarily charitable habits towards their Muls. The Muls are their tools, their workers. While some of them are precious pets for the Priest-Kings, most remain utilitarian objects for them, and the Priest-Kings don't really show them the slightest tenderness. Blind Muls, for example, manipulate the heavy doors leading to the brooding chamber of the reproductive female.

Muls are not just humans. Among them is a species called the Gur carriers (a special food for the Nest Mother), who look a little like very thin humanoids, smaller than humans, with a round abdomen and very long limbs. The habitats beneath Mount Sardar are home to a host of other animals and plants, including some very hostile and dangerous ones, but perhaps I'll talk about those in another article.

Since the end of the Nest War, there are very few Muls left. Most of the Nest's slaves were evacuated from the Sardar Mountains following the civil war and scattered across Gor. Many of them ended badly, as the Initiate caste, not understanding what they were seeing and taking them for abominations, frequently ordered their extermination.

### **The agents**

But as you may have guessed, it's possible to leave the Sardar Mountains other than on foot. All you

have to do is borrow one of the Priest-Kings' aerial vehicles! This is the job of the Priest-Kings' most senior and closest agents. These vessels are quite rare, under the direct control of the Priest-Kings, but available to their human agents. And yes, this is what the Goreans use to travel between Gor and Earth, but also to get around Gor quickly and discreetly. That said, these ships are generally automated: the goreans don't know how to pilot them, they're just passengers on each flight.

As for the agents, I mentioned them in another article, which I quote here: the agents of the Priest-Kings come from all origins (there are even slaves). They act invisibly, as spies, interveners, commandos, kidnappers and informers, in a vast system of hidden organization, where each agent knows only the agents he works with, and his contact or superior in general. Many agents have never seen the Priest-Kings or had any idea of what they really are, and most of them don't even know they work for them.

That said, a Priest-King agent is someone who knows things. It's called Third Knowledge and, in a nutshell, it's a detailed knowledge of the Earth and the modern, science-fiction technologies of the world of Gor, plus a few secrets that are unique to the Priest-Kings and which they never talk about. Some agents are implanted with technology from the Priest-Kings, via other high-ranking agents. Typically, this involves a brain implant, a mesh that fuses with the brain and amplifies information assimilation, with a remote connection, enabling the agent to be used as a living camera, not to mention other forms of biotechnology akin to those imagined by cyberpunk.

And if there are agents on Gor, there are also on Earth, of course!

### **And the Initiates?**

Um... how can I put this... The Priest-Kings, while well aware of the priests and clerics who worship them, couldn't care less. And the Priest-Kings' opinion of the Initiates is not flattering, as one quote sums up quite well:

*The attitude of Priest-Kings toward Initiates, as I recalled, having once been in the Sardar, is generally one of disinterest. They are regarded as being harmless. They are taken by many*

*Priest-Kings as an evidence of the aberrations of the human kind.*

### Marauders of Gor

That said, Initiates are occasionally useful to Priest-Kings. Some of them know what the Priest-Kings are. But the latter avoid recruiting them as agents: the Initiates worship them within a rather fanatical cult, which complicates reasoned and serene interaction. But, as we've seen, Priest-Kings need logic and reason; passion and emotion destabilize them, so the Initiates aren't exactly reliable in this respect. That said, I imagine they make faithful and efficient Muls.

## *2- The science-fiction of Gor*

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If you thought that an alien species millions of years old and capable of moving a planet, whose underground city lies at the heart of Gor civilization, was the science-fiction side of Gor, you're not ready for the rest!

I've already mentioned and explained some of the scifi aspects of Gor's world in several articles, including the article on [Gor's medicine](#) and the one on [Gor's science](#). But I'm going to take some of these articles and expand on them, from the most futuristic technology, that of the Priest-Kings, to the somewhat incredible technologies created and mastered by the Gor people themselves.

But I'd also like to start by recalling what Goreans are capable of, and what exists, whether common or rare. While steam and industrial machinery are unknown, and almost everyone uses traditional lighting methods such as candles and torches, the same cannot be said for electricity. Goreans use energy bulbs, which are electric super-batteries that power many electrical and electronic machines and technologies.

These marvels, reserved for the wealthiest but not so rare, are most often artifacts supplied indirectly by the Priest-Kings, but also objects that have been collected on Earth, during missions by agents of the Priest-Kings or the Kurii. Others are created and manufactured by the Goreans themselves. These include electric lighting, dynamos, blood analysis

machines, medical X-rays, slave prods, universal translators, electric locks or electrified cages, electric blankets, refrigerators, even loudspeakers and multimedia players (yes, you can listen to music on a CD-ROM in some of Gor's luxurious living rooms); there are even a few blast furnaces powered by electricity.

More commonly, there are many very practical things: precision metallurgy, including clocks and micromechanics, paper and printing, chronometers and marine compasses, compasses, semi-industrial weaving using mechanized looms, embroidery and semi-industrial glass, lighters and other firelighters, wire and wire mesh, ceramics and porcelain, hydraulic and pneumatic machinery, ovens and high-temperature furnaces, as well as refractory bricks, cement, reinforced concrete, alloys and high-grade steel. They are also familiar with telescopes, scopes, magnifiers and microscopes.

That said, and to conclude, most Goreans live without knowing about these marvels, or seeing little of them. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the streets of Paris were lit by gas and electric lamps. There were telegraph cables everywhere, and newspapers and brasseries on every corner. There were cars, streetcars and wide, clean, well-maintained sidewalks on which the bourgeoisie walked, emerging from the hot bath provided by real water heaters and dressed in the finest fabrics and most modern accessories. The metro opened in front of the Eiffel Tower, an architectural marvel, and elevators were becoming commonplace. But 100 kilometers away, the peasant and small craftsman living in a village knew nothing of these technological marvels, and their way of life was hardly any different from their counterparts in the Middle Ages. In the West, the immense gap between the most modern and the most basic comforts only ceased in the 50s with the advent of the mass consumer society. The vast majority of goreans live in basic comfort and without any of the marvels of which their civilization is capable, which, even if they exist, are totally inaccessible to them.

I describe this subject in greater detail in this article: [gorean or not?](#)



## *THE TECHNOLOGY OF THE PRIEST-KINGS*

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Let's start with the heavy stuff: their main source of energy is **antimatter**! Why am I so sure? Because at the heart of the nest lies the main Homestone of Gor, the original "Gor", the reactor that supplies the Priest-Kings with the energy that powers all their technology. It's also this machine that is endangered in the novel Priest-king of Gor, and which threatens to explode, destroying the planet. While Norman never goes into detail about what this machine is, he describes it well enough to suggest a matter-antimatter reaction core. Why not, for example, a nuclear fusion reactor, which would be much more technologically accessible? Because a fusion reactor cannot explode and cause global damage. In a fusion reactor, the reaction is intrinsically metastable. The slightest disturbance and the reactor stops, without any runaway. It cannot cause large-scale damage. Antimatter, on the other hand, in the event of an accident, is quite simply the most unstable and potentially powerful explosive force in the universe. More than enough to sterilize a continent or ravage an entire planet.

And it's also the most powerful source of energy allowed by the laws of physics. The Priest-Kings have mastered gravity and moved their entire world in this way on an interstellar voyage. Such a source of energy, facilitated by access to gravity control, is hardly surprising.

The Priest-Kings' greatest technological achievement is **antigravity**. By controlling gravity and inertia, they can build flying machines and spaceships that consume little fuel to move, and whose mass and speed are no longer a real concern. That said, this mastery of gravity is still imperfect, compared with what physics assumes it allows. The Priest-Kings can't fold space-time, nor can they create wormholes, and while their vehicles go very fast, they're not that fast on a stellar scale. On the other hand, this opens the door to related technologies, such as **force fields** and **electro-optical camouflage screens** (basically, they can make their vehicles totally invisible.)

And you know what else you can make when you master gravity? **Cold fusion batteries** ! This is obviously what powers everything in Priest-Kings

technology that's too small to accommodate an antimatter reactor. In fact, I'm guessing that it's this technology that the Gorean Builders caste may have studied and drawn inspiration from to create their greatest invention: light bubbles, which are electric batteries with years of autonomy, as much as they are light sources.

In terms of **computer technology**, the Priest-Kings are advanced, but have apparently never invented artificial intelligence or even expert computer systems capable of advanced learning. They need a few hundred people to monitor the screens and sensors of their spy network on Gor, for example. On the other hand, their capacity for storing and transferring information is extremely extensive: Priest-Kings learn by **direct neural transfer of information** into their brains from disc-shaped recorded media. They can even copy the entire memory of an individual (including a human) onto one of their disks, consult this database, and even transfer it to another brain. They also have an extensive radio wave communication network, including satellites, drones, or simply their spaceships, which are all automated and remotely piloted.

On the other hand, apparently, the Priest-Kings don't use robotics, or rather, Norman doesn't describe or talk about them. I think they do, but as on Earth; industrial robotics whose autonomy is limited to following a set program, like advanced machine tools. This would be consistent with the absence of expert computer systems.

Have the Priest-Kings created **an advanced Internet and virtual realities**? Norman doesn't mention it, but given the way the Priest-Kings work and think, and given their technology, it wouldn't be surprising if they did, for scientific and intellectual purposes. It's a much more practical interface for accelerated learning, and also for experimenting with concrete or abstract problems in an accessible way.

As I've already mentioned, Priest-Kings are virtually immortal. Their mastery of **cell regeneration** and **cloning** is only part of their knowledge of advanced biotechnology. Some of the Muls in the nest are genetically enhanced clones, while others are totally artificial creations, like those mutants who no longer

resemble humans, the Gur carriers. And **cybernetics**? It also exists and is mentioned, through certain espionage and control implants that the Priest-Kings use on human agents: neural lattices, ocular implants, and so on. This seems to go rather further, with biocybernetically enhanced Muls, and I imagine that the Priest-Kings themselves are equipped with them according to their needs, although this is never mentioned.

Repairing or upgrading a human isn't really a big deal for a Priest-King. If they don't, it's, again, because they prefer to let humans fend for themselves. But, having said that, the Priest-Kings do manufacture, for the Goreans, various machines, such as particularly advanced medical systems: **blood analysis machines** and **genetic sequencers** and probably medical refrigerators, for example. So, for me, it's all the more proof that the Priest-Kings, even if they remain rather indifferent to humans, still see an interest in helping them. On this subject, the Priest-Kings also master **hypersleep** and provide stasis chambers to safely transport abducted women to Earth. This is a well-known item among Gorean slavers.

Another topic not covered, but inferred, is the Priest-Kings' mastery of **terraforming**. Gor has been reshaped to suit the life forms implanted on the planet, and it took unimaginable technological means for the planet to make an interstellar voyage without ending up an icy, barren rock. So, if need be, the Priest-Kings must be able to deploy automated machines on an immense scale, as well as advanced **nanotechnologies**, which must, therefore, enable them to create incredible alloys and meta-materials. We see glimpses of this here and there in the novels.

And finally, let's talk about weapons. I won't dwell on the subject, but it seems that the Priest-Kings' weaponry is based on **plasma**, a specific form of directed radiation weaponry, at least as far as their personal weapons and those deployed on Gor are concerned. The reason I'm betting on plasma is that lasers aren't generally good weapons, especially in space, and plasma beams are much more credible for a civilization that has mastered gravity. Plus, it fits in well with the description of an intense blue fire that incinerates everything it touches in a second. But the Priest-Kings also have **infra-sonic defensive**

**weapons**, such as the protective screen around the Sardar Mountains, which visibly affects the inner ear of any living being that enters it, causing nausea and fainting. It's handy for making a place inaccessible with an invisible, non-mortal force.

Have I forgotten any? Yes, I'm sure you have, so please mention them in the comments, and thank you!

## **TERRAN TECHNOLOGY**

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It's not just women (and a few men) who make up the cargo of the Voyages of Acquisition between Earth and Gor. Traffickers also take the opportunity to bring back objects and technologies that are interesting or attractive to the people of Gor. Here, it's easier to say what they don't take, rather than what they do. The automated ships of the Priest-Kings make it easy enough to carry anything, provided there's enough room. But the Priest-Kings' laws on science and technology make some trafficking dangerous, even suicidal.

First and foremost, Goreans carry no firearms, ammunition or explosives, not even good old-fashioned matches (because of the chemistry involved in creating and operating them). Nor do Goreans carry the slightest radio communication device: no ci-bi, radios, walkie-talkies, cell phones, and so on. Not a good idea either. Finally, no combustion engines or flammable fuels such as gasoline. All these products are absolutely forbidden by the Priest-Kings.

What about the rest? Do they carry computers, screens and keyboards? Or electronic components or electromechanical systems? Hard disks with databases? Books? Undoubtedly, yes. But these aren't necessarily very useful things for all Goreans, except for a few individuals, who will hide all this equipment, because the first Initiate who sees this, even without understanding what it is, immediately goes crazy.

What's certainly more useful is to take on board objects and materials for which there are Gorean equivalents, but which Earthlings know how to make to a much higher quality: **microscopes**, **stethoscopes**, **X-ray equipment**, mechanical or



craft **tools**, but also materials that don't exist on Gor, such as **titanium, aluminum, tungsten, carbon-carbon** or **micro-ceramics**: Goreans can work them very well, but not produce them.

There are also luxury products: precious stones on Earth are much better cut and more beautiful than on Gor, for example, and gold is (relatively) easier to buy and purer. But you can also add luxury textiles, rare furniture or crockery, or even things as simple as wired cameras, microphones, or even a record player and music records that appeal to certain Gorean people. Not forgetting, of course, jewelry and Earth accessories of varying degrees of eroticism for the slaves, because if you're going to have a human cargo, you might as well sell accessories to play with and adorn them!

In any case, the quantities of Earth items imported to Gor are limited, and the trade is kept secret. It usually only concerns the richest people with the most extravagant tastes, or certain Gor workshops, laboratories and medical practices that need cutting-edge equipment that Gor can't produce.

And does this list of Terran imports include drugs and medicines? Undoubtedly yes. But the Goreans are very careful with these: who knows what kind of chemistry could ultimately cause the Priest-Kings to be alerted, and so end very badly for them? That said, the Goreans aren't going to deny themselves the opportunity to study what the Earthlings know how to do.

## **GOREAN TECHNOLOGY**

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I won't go into everything the Goreans know how to do, but we can mention their advanced mastery of architecture and building materials, including reinforced concrete, as well as their advanced knowledge of town planning and urban equipment, with running water, sewers, water heaters and thermal insulation.

Add to this their mastery of hydraulic power and human-powered mechanics for **industrial machinery**, and their skills in **steel forging** and **blast furnaces**. Among other things, they know how to make **wire**.

They are also well versed in optics and physics, and know how to create **pairs of spectacles, spotting scopes, magnifying glasses** or **microscopes, micro-tools**, but also **marine compasses, compasses** and fairly accurate **clocks**. Automata, too, though primarily decorative and luxury machines.

In the physical realm, Goreans know how to make efficient **iceboxes**, capable of keeping ice and products cold, even in the height of summer. Gas compression/decompression **refrigerators** also exist, but are rare and of very limited use.

On the subject of chemistry and physics, there are no matches, and it's best not to try to make them (Author's note: too bad, once you know the recipe, it's easy to do). But **flint** and tinder **firelighters** are sophisticated, like 17th-century **lighters**, and there are even rarer electric-spark variants. But nothing with gas. Gas explodes, and the Priest-Kings don't like it at all.

As for electricity and light, Gorean engineers have created super-batteries, the **light bubbles** (also called **energy bubbles**), which are, at least that's what I assume, small cold fusion batteries, no doubt invented with inspiration from other more advanced technology, such as that of the Priest-Kings or the Kurri. Lasting several years, they supply **electricity** and often emit light. Their size varies according to use, an easy conclusion to make given the existence in novels of **electrified collars** or different models of **slave goads**. There are even **electric lamps**!

But that's not all! Let's not forget their mastery of **micromechanics**, enough to make a **watch**, or incredibly complex **micro-fittings**, but also quite advanced electromechanical machines, such as **loudspeakers and microphones**, electrified gates with **electric locks**, electric **micromotors** for a wide variety of uses. They could easily create a telegraph, but this, if it went beyond communication within the same building, would contravene the laws of the Priest-Kings.

Not to mention the techniques of Gorean medical **pharmacopoeia**. Although not as good surgeons as Earthlings, Gorean doctors understand the role of organs, blood circulation, general brain function,

anatomy, microbiology, genetics, artificial selection (including on humans), dietetics, epidemiology and vaccination. They even have psychiatrists!

In addition to **vaccines** against the most infectious diseases and the well-known **Longevity Serum**, which enables Goreans to live for hundreds of years, there's **slave wine** to control women's fertility, pharmaceutical treatments for most cancers and certain cardiovascular diseases, and Goreans even have drugs capable of inducing **selective amnesia**—temporary, definitive and even reversible, if properly used by a specialist!

Lastly, and more commonly, Goreans are familiar with **plastics**, obviously of plant origin, natural **rubber**, which they have mastered, modern **paper** and movable type **printing**. They also know how to make large **glass** plates and **mirrors**. And last but not least, they understand the use of **fingerprints**, which are very useful for identifying slaves.

The only thing the Goreans will never do, apart from anything involving explosives, is anything with an electric or internal combustion engine. The Priest-Kings totally forbid any research in this field.

Of course, I couldn't go through the whole list — there must be more. For example, could the bicycle be created and used on Gor? A good question, but one that Norman hasn't thought of. What about hang-gliding, which uses no engine at all? A good question too; after all, Gor people have tarns for flying, so why would that really be impossible?

## **CONCLUSION**

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With all this information, we realize that the relationship between the Goreans, the Priest-Kings and even the Kurris is at the heart of Gor's overall plot, and that its direct and indirect implications have far-reaching and numerous consequences. This is where I have to say that I regret that this is the aspect of Gor that is most ignored, even though it lies at the heart of the story throughout all the novels.

Because, fundamentally, this cold war between the Priest-Kings and the Kurris, in which humans are forced to fall in line (or suffer), affects everyone, and

can just as easily disrupt the lives of small farmers in a remote village as the highest authorities in a city-state. And even without considering this war, the elements of science fiction — strange creatures, marvelous machines and other dangerous technologies — are part and parcel of Gorean life, the troubles they may face and the opportunities it offers them.

It's fertile ground for incredible subplots and storylines, which I really encourage you to exploit. In fact, I'm thinking of writing an article on plot ideas in the world of Gor, including all these inspirations and elements. Because, more generally, what's missing from a roleplay sim in the world of Gor are intriguing, rich stories in which players can immerse themselves, as actors in the story.

But I hope I've helped and inspired you! I don't yet know what the next Gorean Archives article will be, but it will undoubtedly concern the merchant caste, and travel and trade on Gor.

## *Honor, a social virtue*

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Let's talk about Honor, a very complicated subject, for which we do a lot of foolish things believing ourselves to be legitimate, and which is often misunderstood in 21st century urban Western society. Because honor isn't just about demanding revenge when you've been insulted, or wanting a duel because you've been humiliated. It's really much more complex than that: honor is stability, righteousness, assurance, fidelity, the source of family and home.

I would like to thank Torri, professor at [Gorean University](#), for her inspiration and references in writing this article.

*Quote:*

*The 97th aphorism in the codes (of the Rarii) I was taught takes the form of a riddle: "What is invisible but brighter than the diamond? What is silent but deafens thunder? What weighs nothing, but is heavier than gold?"*

– Honor, I said.

*Vagabonds de Gor, Page 305*

### *1- Defining Honor*

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Honor, as defined academically, in the dictionary and on Wikipedia, is the act of acting first and foremost by virtue of one's convictions, in line with the principles shared by one's community, one's people, or the believers of one's religion. Honor is a code of conduct that is not personal, but shared by the family, the community and the representatives of the power from which one comes. It is earned through deeds and decisions admired by the community, and lost through betrayals, crimes and humiliations condemned by one's own. Of all the virtues (honor, wisdom, courage), Honor is the most visible, and the most public; it cannot be hidden or secret.

Honor is what defines a Gorean socially. Without honor, he has no word and can no longer be considered trustworthy or reliable: he is vile. He will no longer be supported, and will be shunned,

despised and rejected by his own kind, to the point of ostracism and banishment. Honor is cultural and social, but it has no sense of right or wrong as we understand it in the 21st century: in many human societies, ancient or contemporary, a young woman who has been raped, even though she is a victim, loses her honor and will often be repudiated or ostracized, or even driven to suicide, because of the crime she has suffered. In my own culture, Corsica, a breach of a parent's honor reflects on his or her children, even if the parent is dead and even if the children are totally innocent of the crime or outrage for which the parent is responsible. This loss of honor can follow a family for generations, and even contaminate the family's friends and allies!

Honor is transmitted and, contrary to popular belief, it is not a monolithic block, but a sum, a capital, which, like wealth, is invested, given and spent, and can be won and lost. An individual without honor often still has honor, through his or her actions and decisions. Honor cannot be measured by the individual, but by the group to which he belongs. Only the most vile of felons, without scruples or repentance, has no left at all, for anyone.

### *2- Acts of honor by Goreans*

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Honor being a social and public virtue, it depends on the character's culture of origin, but the following principles are considered by all to be honorable.

– **A given word cannot be taken back:** swearing, promising or making a deal cannot be undone without the agreement of the person concerned. Betraying an oath or a deal is a terrible offense for a Gorean. Keeping one's word also applies to authority. If a Gorean makes a decision or gives an order, he will not go back on his word – at least not publicly – to do so would be to show weakness, and therefore dishonor.

– **Serve only one master:** a Gorean accepts only one allegiance at a time. If he serves a lord, a patron or a protégé, he has no other allegiance than this one, and he will never betray it. Betraying one's allegiance is an unforgivable offense for a Gorean. Even if, for practical reasons, people on Gor SL often change their Home Stone, a Gorean will never betray his

Home Stone and, in theory, will never change it (even if his city is devastated!).

– **Assuming responsibility for one's actions:** committing an error, a misdemeanor or a crime is the sole responsibility of the person at fault, including through negligence or carelessness, even if he or she is the victim. Individual responsibility on Gor takes precedence over rules, laws and decrees. This is why we don't feel sorry for anyone who has to pay for the consequences of their actions. To deny one's responsibility, or even worse, to lie or try to cheat in order to shift the blame onto others, is a dishonor.

– **To suffer without complaining, to die without begging:** to be capable of this is greatly respected by Goreans, who will easily scorn those who weep and beg, all the more so if the latter are combatants. Note that we're not talking about fighting to the death, without running away. Goreans are perfectly willing to surrender or flee in the event of defeat. Only certain Rariis units, or the most formidable warriors of the far north or the Red Savages, refuse to flee.

– **Open your door to strangers, respect your host's home:** respect the codes and principles of hospitality. Goreans always share soup, a fire-place and a straw mattress for the traveler (and I'm not talking about sharing slaves, which is a rule of hospitality, but you need one for that). The traveler will be all the more honored if, in exchange, he does a favor or leaves a present, even a symbolic one, for his hosts. Not opening one's door to a traveler is frowned upon, even if in the most remote places, or in times of war, this rule is rarely respected.

– **Do not let an offense go unpunished:** the notion of offense depends on the susceptibility of the victim and the seriousness of the crime. Goreans can insult each other like cart driver or scam each other off without taking offence, while others will take too insistent a look as an offense. But when a Gorean suffers a serious offense, he has to make the offender pay, especially if it took place in public. A man can quickly lose face if he doesn't respond to a serious offense, especially if it's well known. Reparation rarely results in death, as Goreans are not really murderers, but it does happen.

– **Respect life, especially children:** goreans don't necessarily like to kill, and if they can solve the problem in some other way, they'll prefer to find an alternative, including forced labor, hostages and enslavement. Wanton slaughter, torture and sadistic crimes are frowned upon: they are rare, and considered the work of a sick and dangerous mind. In particular, Goreans consider children sacred: attacking or killing children (or pregnant women) is absolutely unforgivable. Another unforgivable crime is arson. Whether it's a city or a forest, destroying it by fire is a dishonorable act.

– **Obeying the religion of the Priest-Kings and the Initiates:** even if it's far from constant, the majority of Goreans are superstitiously respectful of the Priest-Kings and their representatives, the Initiates. Even if this is widely contradicted in practice, every Gorean considers it honorable to respect an Initiate, who is often called Blessed One. The idea that they could be attacked is frightening for most Goreans.

– **Respecting one's caste & place in society:** In Priest-King society, all Goreans are members of a caste inherited from their parents. The sons and daughters of a baker are all members of their father's baker caste. Caste and its hierarchy is one of the pillars of society; every Gorean is proud of his or her caste. And whether doctor, warrior, sailor or fisherman, every member of a caste considers his caste better and more important than the others, and will never let an offense or threat to his caste go unpunished. In short, never call a peasant a "dirty peasant". It's a blow to get the whole caste on your back, and it's the most widespread caste in Gor's world!

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## *THE HONOR OF WOMEN*

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Yes, it's a sub-chapter. Why is it a sub-chapter? Because women's Honor is almost the same as men's, on Gor or anywhere else. Women may seem modest, but they have the same pride, and the same principles of Honor as men. You just have to remember the rights and duties of a Gor woman to apply these codes of honor. The big difference? Social codes relating to appearance, modesty and chastity.

While appearance and dress are important to all Goreans, it's a matter of honor for women to be particularly careful in this respect. Women represent the wealth and means of the family, and it's their duty to present this to the best advantage at every opportunity. A dirty, unkempt woman means she's been hard at work, and you see her when she gets off work... because she'll be going to wash, and no doubt change, as soon as she can.

Ah, yes... An onlinism: NO, a barefoot woman is not systematically enslaved. Are you aware that shoes didn't become widespread until the 19th century, and that until the 1950s, most children in rural schools went barefoot? Well, shoes are expensive! Even clogs and sandals! We keep them for winter or for long walks, to save money!

I don't think I need to explain modesty. Women hold back their expressions of emotion and affection in public, they avoid smiling and above all showing that they like a compliment. Free women's reputation for coldness and aloofness is not just a reputation. The colder a woman is, and the more she hides her emotions to remain in control of herself, the more she is honored.

Chastity is no different. If you don't respect this principle, you're acting like a slave, and that's bound to end badly. A Gorean doesn't try to seduce a free woman, because everyone knows it's a lost cause; and anyway, that's not how companionship contracts, which are contracts between families, work. A free woman shows no desire, no sexual need, and responds only with indifference and contempt to the man who stoops to make advances. Well, that's in public! As in ancient Rome, behind the walls of the home, the free woman, if she's lucky, or has the means, can indulge herself and doesn't mind. But this must never be known outside the walls of her home.

### *3- Honor is complicated*

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*Quote:*

*— Why are you saying these things? she asked, lifting her head, red-eyed. You risked your life to protect me from him, when he was going to whip me.*

*— I do not think he was going to whip you, I said, though I expect he is quite capable of it, and would unhesitatingly do so if it seemed appropriate, or upon various occasions, if it pleased him.*

*— Why then did you interfere? she asked, puzzled. Why did you call attention to yourself when obviously there was something between you two, and you would be in danger, if recognized.*

*— Do you truly not know? I asked.*

*— It was to protect me, surely.*

*— No, I said.*

*— Why then? she asked, wonderingly.*

*— Because, I said, soberly, you were serving me.*

*— That is what you said, she said.*

*— And that was the reason, I said.*

*— It was so tiny a thing, she asked, a point of propriety, of precedence? she asked.*

*— Yes, I said.*

*— You risked so much for a mere point of honor? she asked.*

*— There are no mere points of honor, I told her.*

*Vagabonds of Gor, Page 63*

Honor can't be measured by the person who holds it; it's a social measure, in a way, of an individual's degree of trustworthiness and reliability, whether good or bad. But it's still a very personal treasure: in fact, you have to think of it as a sum in which you must always invest through your actions, at the risk of losing part of it.

To make things clearer, I'll give you an example: a brutal warrior with little concern for honoring women behaves like a cad with them, and is therefore often confronted by individuals who, outraged by his behavior (family, friends or protectors of the women he has insulted), demand an accounting. Since he's a

warrior, he proposes to settle the matter in a duel. It's easy to imagine that it's better for him not to lose, because every time he loses, he loses a little of his honor, invested in the duel. But in fact, even winning all the time means losing honor. For every time he responds to a request for redress with a duel, he proves that his only honor lies in his strength, not at all in his ability to respect other people's codes of honor, which in this case boil down to treating women with respect. From then on, he loses honor, since everyone will soon know that he is unreliable when it comes to the codes of his own community. While he will be respected and honored as a warrior, he will not be respected and honored as a social man by the women and their families and friends, who have also been outraged by his indecent behavior.

Thus, honor is multifaceted, and a truly honorable man is one who defends his honor with strength and words, respects his own word and doesn't back down from a duel, but is also capable of respecting not only his leaders and equals, but also the weakest, or those in a position of submission to his authority. In other words, a man who despises everyone and responds to every offense with a sword has, in fact, no honor at all: he's just strong... until he faces someone stronger than he is (and a lord surrounded by his guards, officers and police is bound to be the strongest!).

Nor is honor a virtue that can be measured for just one individual; it can be invested in others, and even used to restore honor to someone, not without risk! Let me give you a historical example. One of France's most legendary knights, Roland de Roncevaux, killed his lord, to whom he had sworn loyalty, following the latter's vileness. It was an unforgivable crime. Only this lord's peers have this right to justice, but hey, Roland, he's a hot-blooded knight. That said, his act is totally dishonorable. But the Emperor Charlemagne, who is learning history but knows the knight's warrior value, takes him into his service and clears him of any wrongdoing. Charlemagne had better know what he's doing. Roland is a feisty knight, and if ever, under the Emperor's orders, he were to commit the slightest dishonorable act according to the codes of the time, Charlemagne would lose his reliability and credibility, and therefore his honor! And a dishonored Emperor, even a little, has trouble keeping his throne, or his head. This

almost happened, but fortunately, Roland listened to the voice of wisdom (a priest) at the last moment, and became the most valiant, valiant, honorable and faithful knight in French history (even if we're mostly in the realm of legend). Charlemagne invested his honor, at the risk of losing it, to win a man who could not be bought with all the gold in the world. In the end, it was a good investment that further enhanced the Emperor's honor.

#### *4- Honor is not innate*

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Quote :

*Honor is important to Goreans, in a way that those of Earth might find hard to understand; for example, those of Earth find it natural that men should go to war over matters of gold and riches, but not honor; the Gorean, contrarily, is more willing to submit matters of honor to the adjudication of steel than he is matters of riches and gold; there is a simple explanation for this; honor is more important to him. Strangely the girls of the cities are eager to participate in this sport. Doubtless each believes her standard will be victorious and she will return in honor to her city.*

*Beasts of Gor, Page 42*

Well, I'm guessing that Norman has never been in the army or practiced martial arts to write that; because if modern honor codes are very specific, these codes of honor are very marked and respected, especially in environments directly related to war or combat. In fact, it's one of the first things we learn!

And yes, honor is learned, and a sense of honor is not born by magic: it is indelibly linked to the culture from which we come, and is often a reflection of its moral principles and laws. Even someone who has lived in isolation, far from society, has grown up in a community and culture, with its morals, codes, laws and definition of what is honorable and what is not. A definition that didn't come about by magic. It is necessarily linked to the laws and beliefs of that culture, but also to its moral rules.

For example, I live in Switzerland, and in Switzerland, the worst impoliteness is not arriving on time for an appointment. Never arrive more than ten minutes late, and even worse, never arrive more than five



minutes early. You'll really be seen as some kind of rude barbarian if this is your habit. Only very old friends can ignore this law in their private relationships. Suffice it to say that for me, coming from a culture where when you're given an appointment, the rule is to arrive at least thirty minutes late, because the other person is bound to be late, and you'll humiliate them if you arrive before them, I had to adapt.

A culture, a community, without moral rules, without tacit or written laws, therefore, without honor doesn't exist. Even pirates have always had a code of honor, which differed from 15th-century pirates in the Mediterranean and 17th-century pirates in the Caribbean or China. An individual with no honor, and therefore no moral rules and who doesn't follow any codes or laws, does so with full knowledge of the facts, because he comes from a community, a culture that has instilled these rules in him from early childhood, and therefore, the principles of honor that go with them. Which brings us to the next point.

## *5- Do slaves have honor?*

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*Quote:*

*– I will not lose men in this fashion, I said.*

*– It is better to lose such men, said Tajima.*

*– If you want to die, I said to the kneeling figure on the platform, do so under the talons of the tarn.*

*– It is wrong for you to interfere in this, Tarl Cabot, tarnsman, said Tajima. One must recover honor.*

*– One recovers honor in life, I said, not in death. If he lives, he may begin again, and gain honor.*

*– That is not our way, said Tajima.*

*– But it is a way, I said.*

*– Doubtless, said Tajima.*

*– And it is my way, I said.*

## *Swordsmen of Gor, Page 259*

It's complicated. Yes, I know, I've said it before. But to explain what's going to be a paradox, there are three things to consider.

Firstly, a slave comes from a culture, a community, even breeding's cages slaves. Except for those who are locked up without any outside contact and with a strict minimum of social relations, slaves grow up with the children of free families, and are therefore imbued with the social codes, moral rules and honor codes of the culture in which they grow up. So they can't ignore honor, and no doubt experience a terrifying debasement destroying their honor, however weak it may be, when they begin to be trained according to the standards of Gorean slaver training. I wouldn't be surprised if some of the slaves' losses in training came from this.

Then there's the training itself. While the aim of training is to destroy the pride of a person who was once free, or who thought he was free, and to degrade him completely in order to animalize him, he is also taught, harshly and mercilessly, other moral codes, the most important of which are loyalty, devotion and honesty. Whether or not this works is another matter. But for the slave devoted to his owner, respecting these codes is his own code of honor! Beyond the risk that if the slave doesn't respect them and it's noticed, he incurs terrible punishments, these are principles totally integrated into what becomes his own subculture and way of life. To disregard them, or to doubt them, for the best-trained slaves, is clearly to dishonor oneself. And I'm not citing these examples by chance: in Rome, Silvius Maurus, a highly reputed slave, teacher for child, begged to be put to death for betraying his master. The betrayal? He had failed to teach a child to read and write, who was obviously a pest, and no doubt, one assumes, dyslexic. The slave died, but the child's family paid dearly, as the act fell on the family and disgraced them.

And thirdly, the specific status of slaves on Gor. Slaves on Gor have no rights, not even an identity of their own. In Rome, slaves could (not all of them, eh!) be paid, rent a house, have a family and even buy back their servitude. They had to respect some of the Romans' moral laws and codes of honor, and benefit

from them too. On Gor, you forget all that. Gor slaves had even fewer rights than the black slaves of the triangular trade of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, and that wasn't much. So a Gorean slave owns nothing, not even his own identity, so... not even his own Honor! His Honor, and his pride, moreover, it's through those of his owner that he experiences and enjoys them, or expresses them.

So, my personal interpretation is that slaves do have Honor, but it's obviously not expressed in the same way as that of the Free, and above all, it reflects that of their owner. If the slaves' code of Honor is expressed in the specific community they form among themselves, and creates moral codes and an informal hierarchy, the slaves' honor passes through their master. But that doesn't mean it doesn't exist! Slaves do have pride, but they also feel vexation, shame and humiliation, so they do have honor, and it's precious to them. It's just that, socially, Goreans don't recognize it, at least not publicly, apart from a few exceptions, since they don't use the same codes and, well, they're slaves!

## *6- How to interpret Honor?*

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You'll have understood that you can't decide that your sense of Honor is just your character's pride, susceptibility and tendency to use force when offended. Honor is based on all the laws, social codes and moral codes of the environment in which you live. Your honor is based on the Gorean codes I summarized in chapter 2, and on the codes followed by the people of your culture and community (caste, family, etc.).

Want a good reference? Read the OOC rules and RP laws of the place you're playing, and you've got a good fuck about how to play your sense of honor. Don't forget that honor is a value, a sum, which is spent, invested, lost, but also gained.

Honor should be seen as an investment, the value of which varies from one community to another, but which must always be maintained, because, publicly, Honor is always known: it's really the degree of trust and reliability that people place in an individual. A Gorean must remain honorable at all times, and in front of others: the craftsman of modest talent but

great generosity, through his help, uprightness and efforts with his caste, will not have the same fame and reliability outside his caste. But if one of his customers inquires about his reliability, he will know at once that the craftsman is reputed to be a man of honor.

Again, Honor is a social measure of an individual's reliability and trustworthiness. The more honor a person is deemed to have, the more respect they have for codes, hierarchy, individuals, traditions and their word, and the more upright and honest they are. He will also be expected to be measured in his decisions, and to avoid listening to his anger, his outbursts or his whims. He may well be known for his outbursts of anger, but also for his ability to accept the consequences, contain himself, listen to others and admit his mistakes. Which gives you a good idea of how to interpret Honor, doesn't it?

Of course, honorable deeds also include military victories, thoughtful and successful acts of war, or individual acts of courage and cunning, when they benefit one's family or community. For, once again, strength and valour, while important, are never enough to be honourable! The individual must also respect his word, respect the community, and show wisdom. In short, honor is many things, and it's not easy to be honorable all the time.

In this respect, losing face isn't so bad. In some societies, people think they can't stand a stain on their honor, but that's not true. If they seem to have such an intense sense of honor that they may kill themselves over it, it's because their culture generates a social pressure that doesn't forgive mistakes. If these individuals commit suicide, it's because their scorned honor doesn't fall on their family. They don't die to cleanse their honor, but so that their families don't suffer the consequences.

Finally, don't forget that honor remains relative, and is not an absolute. Sometimes you have to lose face, or lose honor, to stay alive, and regain it later. It's possible to betray your lord, if it's for the right cause, and you know you can redeem your honor with another lord.

And last but not least: honor is never the law of the strongest. It never works that way, and if you don't

understand that, you'll quickly go from honorable to brute.

## *The nature of men & women on Gor*

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The main problem with playing on Gor SL is always the same: how do you play a man, how do you play a woman?

The reader's first reaction will be: I'm a man/woman, so I know what we're talking about. But you don't. You, like me, are a man/woman of the 21st century, born of two millennia of history and progress, and, no doubt, a Westerner. So, for example, there will already be many differences between you and a 21st-century Chinese person, just as there would be between you and your great-grandparents, so just imagine the gulf between you and someone from Gor!

But what does it matter? The point is to imagine what it might have been like and then embroider and invent your role? And I agree. However, it's easy to see that simplifying things in this way leads to a great deal of frustration and disappointment. But since we're talking about having fun, frustration and disappointment are an important subject..

So I'm going to offer you an analysis of what makes the inhabitants of Gor so very different, from us, the inhabitants of 21st century earth. And in so doing, I'm going to unpack why and how the relationships between men, women and slaves work. This is neither a manual nor a code of conduct. It's just an inspirational tool to help you immerse yourself in your role, and then reinvent it as you see fit, enjoying yourself without frustration.

*NB: this article implies many theses and some speculations based on Gor's context, but never really addressed by Norman. The aim is to enlighten the reader and roleplayer that you are, so purists and "old Gor" will forgive me in advance for making them cringe.*

### *1- Different humans*

---

Gor according to Norman has a lower gravity, which has accentuated the muscular capacity of human beings, making them taller and easier in their

movements. So be it. It's not scientific, but let's say it works. Men, in particular, are taller, sturdier, both more massive than Earthmen and more V-shaped. The average male is well over six feet tall.

And given the way SL avatars work, in fact, it's quite common on Gor SL to see 2 meters and over.

The women aren't so tall. But they are curvaceous, generally beautiful, with voluptuous breasts and wide hips, and with lower gravity, the wear and tear of time on their shape is less accentuated. The Men of Gor like women to be smaller than they are, and their forms to be beautiful and generous. In the end, this model prevails, just as for us in our society the model of the slim, tanned woman, if possible with arrogant breasts, prevails, because it's the aesthetic canon that's in vogue at the moment.

But that's not the whole story. What really makes a huge difference between the men and women of Gor, from a purely biological point of view, is the genetic selection pressure that has weighed down on the human species, and a breadth of medical knowledge that has eradicated certain dangers that we, in the 21st century, still have to juggle with on an ongoing basis.

### *1.1 – SELECTION BY THE COMPETITIVE MALE RULE*

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Gor's world is barbaric, violent and brutal. And it has never recognized, as our societies generally have, the masterly virtue of peaceful civilization. This doesn't prevent the existence of gigantic city-states, but they base their power on a general competitiveness that encourages war, but strongly discourages extermination.

And to add insult to injury, outside city-states, giant predators are legion and have never been eradicated. Getting eaten in a forest or a plain by bugs three times your weight is a permanent risk. So is the risk of being killed or captured by a raid, outlaw or invasion of some kind.

Added to this is the fact that the *priest-kings* have always encouraged a selection process on Gor that favors the dominance of the most competitive males.

This selection is of such pressure, that it's why I use the word eugenics, to a certain extent: *"eugenics can be designated as the set of methods and practices aimed at transforming the genetic heritage of the human species, with the aim of making it tend towards a determined ideal."* (Source Wikipedia)

To give an example, this is more or less what was practiced in antic societies like Sparta, which destroyed any malformed child at birth. But we could also mention the Mayans, or the ancient civilizations of Northern China. But here, the *priest-kings* had far more advanced means, and above all, it was practiced on a larger scale, and for longer.

In such a violent world, being a mother and bringing up children is a tough job! As a result, women who had to endure this same pressure tended to gravitate towards the males who dominated the most, the strongest, the smartest too, the most capable of protecting and ensuring the survival of their children.

To play their role effectively, these males had to use their authority: if a woman took the slightest risk, she could die – and her children, especially babies, could be in mortal danger. A woman who submitted and obeyed easily was therefore more likely to stay alive.

Women who didn't accept this authority were then put aside, less interesting for ensuring offspring; or they would die, following a rebellion, a mistake, or a bravado at a critical moment. The principle of selective pressure did the rest, along with the nudges I mentioned earlier, and social pressure: women who couldn't accept male domination were less likely to find a partner, and had fewer children. Women who were more docile were more likely to find a partner and reproduce.

The majority of children born to couples following this model, and it was able to perpetuate itself, transmitting the qualities required for survival (submission of women, power and authority of men) since this is what worked best in the interests of both parties!

And if it worked, it was encouraged, so very quickly, this model dominated, societies redrew their laws to promote it; tastes and models also favored this evolution. Let's not forget that when this model

changed too much, the *priest-kings* went so far as to raze entire cities to the ground. Superstitious fear has thus been added to this model, to make it even stronger.

Between the simple natural effect, the fact that Goreans have perpetuated it – since it works – and outside intervention, the submissive woman and the strong male have become the norm. More than that: they are the nature of goreans.

But it's not that simple...

## 1.2- MEDICAL ADVANCES.

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Three major dangers that still concern 21st-century man have been largely controlled and have almost disappeared on Gor for centuries: ageing, sexually-transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy.

Let's put a little water in our wine: no, not all Goreans live young and beautiful for centuries, yes, you can catch the clap here, and yes, you can get knocked up through carelessness.

However, if you have access to medical care, and a little money, you can get rid of these three problems, and the cost could not be more reasonable. And that suddenly changes a lot of things!

To do this, you have to realize that, in our history and society, it's the fear of unwanted pregnancy and STDs that has forced us to adopt exclusive sexual partner rules and to take control of our sexuality.

On the one hand, since having sex elsewhere is a risk, women in particular (for her, there are two risks, not one) quickly learned not to let their libido run wild. On the other hand, the man gained an effective lever, since in a couple, being able to impose himself as the only "less risky" sexual partner, he had the possibility of manipulation.

Sex is the very engine and essence of all politics.

And as a bonus, until recently on Earth, a woman past 35 was already considered a grandmother (or even dead), and no longer fit to be a mother.

In Gor, we take all that and blow it up.

The result is incredible sexual freedom for women! The possibility of making love without the shackles of the danger associated with it, and the ability to give birth late in life. An incredible revolution in the way men and women relate to each other, which we're going to talk about now.

## *2- Sexuality in Gor*

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So, in an accessible, fairly simple way, we can protect ourselves from STDs, women can choose exactly when to be fertile, or not, and we can stay young for a long time. Guys suddenly have something to worry about! Unable to brandish these weapons to support their authority, they had to resort to others.

To keep a woman, two methods were needed:

The first is that of the parade male, displaying all the qualities required to assert and impose that he is the best possible reproductive partner. This eliminated the most timid men, accentuating the evolutionary choice towards ever stronger, virile, imposing males.

The second is strength. To keep a woman, you capture her, hold her, and put her in a situation of complete dependence. This is slavery. Here, women are no longer reproducers, but objects of pleasure and prestige.

In all cases, sex has become a dominant part of the social relationship. A sexuality that is clearly free of all fetters, which has led to women having to hold back their libido by means other than fear of getting knocked up or falling ill.

This then forced them to be confined within a very rigid framework. A man in Gor is well aware that his partner can go elsewhere without the slightest risk. And if she does, his image as a competitive male takes a hit. So the pressure is on for free women to learn abstinence and coldness, in order to keep their place. Or at least, to pretend to.

On the other hand, every slave knows that she can make love without taking risks. And being a slave, being used sexually is part of the role she must play.

In Gor's world, chastity isn't really a concept that needs to be. And fidelity a difficult state to demand. This is what probably encouraged the principle of companionship, where the contract between reproductive partners may only last a year.

However, as evolution has forged dominant and competitive males, they want to have as many wives as possible, and keep them. The straitjacket of control around women has therefore tightened considerably.

On the other hand, women, forcibly selected to submit to this domination, also have sexual needs. These are less satisfied, even though they have no intrinsic dangers to fear from sex.

And finally slaves, women deprived of rights, names and material possessions, but who in return are freed from this abstinence, and can freely express their sexual urges, and are even encouraged and conditioned to do so without the slightest inhibition.

Slaves are mistreated in general, the price any woman would have to pay would be unacceptable. But this is not the case. While it's often a horrible or miserable fate, there are just as many slaves who are loved, pampered and protected. For a lot of free women, these slaves are a bit like seeing a chocolate cake, when they're on a salad diet with no dressing...

## *3- Men and women*

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Gor is steeped in tradition. The men know what their wives have to put up with, and are well aware of the heavy burden placed on them by the straitjacket in which they confine them; a price they have to pay not only for themselves and their children, but also for their safety and comfort. Except that it's the way it is, and no other way, firstly because it works, and secondly because it's always worked, it's a tradition that has a reason to exist.

But this same tradition gives them the power, the right, the authority. Among other things, it gives them the right to have one or more slaves at their service, sexual included. Who are available, totally devoted, accessible whenever and however they want. Tough competition.



There's one thing I'd like to stress: Goreans don't have the modesty of 21st-century Westerners either. It's rarely seen on Gor SL, but fuck your kajira against a wall in the street can be done (there are, however, certain local laws and social codes that forbid certain forms of public sex, and in Ar, for example, a slave must never be naked in public, except in the Brand Streets and slave-selling areas). And while even I personally don't find this terrible, it doesn't detract from the fact that nudity, public sexuality and the display of eroticism and sexual urges are subject to far less concealment.

It's a case of salad with no dressing, and chocolate cake on the other side. Basically, there are a lot of frustrated women on Gor. And the richer their families – which means they have a large number of slaves and an important social position to hold – the worse it gets.

These women are hardly happy. The slaves they get hold of, even less so.

Things are different in the villages. A slave remains – whatever one might think – quite rare, and can be quite expensive, not a common good at all. So a free woman won't have to compete with a girl who has no inhibitions about satisfying her sexual urges. Household peace and serenity is easier when you live simply, on Gor.

You might think: well, if female companion can let herself go, why slaves?

Simple: because the most precious commodity on Gor is women. Because the greatest display of power and prestige is slaves. A man who could have a slave and doesn't will be seen as weak. Foolish. Incompetent. And in a brutally competitive universe, that man is simply going to see another man come along and steal his wife!

So if a man wants to keep what he's got, he has to assume his role too: prove that he's a competitive, dominant male, and therefore, compromise nothing with his partner. It's not that his partner's desires don't count. It's just that they mustn't jeopardize his position, otherwise he simply wouldn't be able to protect his wife and children.

It's as simple as that.

A Gorean isn't just virile, macho, sexist, imposing and authoritarian. He must also never compromise. His rank, the survival of his family and his partner are at stake. To show weakness, to negotiate out of necessity, to give in to any whim whatsoever, is to give other men good reason to question his claim to be head of the family, the dominant male. As all men desire all women, as soon as one of them shows a weakness, we'll want to exploit him to steal his women.

It's no laughing matter when a Gorean watches over his wife and daughters. And his daughters will find it all the easier to put up with him, the more they'll submit to his authority.

Let's not forget one thing: a Gorean pushed to the limit can, and has the right to, enslave his partner or one of his children! Just as he can sell one of his children, he can also enslave his own daughter. And somewhere between that and risking losing everything, the choice can sometimes be made quickly, even if it means removing the collar once the lesson has been learned.

## *4- Women with Men*

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No woman will ever say she wants to be a slave.

Yet many dream of it.

But why? And frankly, it's hard to understand. A slave owns nothing, not even her name. She has lost everything, starting with her rank, her least rights, and has often been broken and conditioned to become a docile pet. She can be used, beaten, even mutilated or killed, and the only protection is her value to her owner. Who'd better have something to back it up, if he's asking for more than just compensation, because it can easily be dishonorable to demand a duel, or blood money, for a commodity; which is what a slave is, no more, no less, at least in social codes.

What woman, no kidding, would want to be reduced to that?

Except that..

Except that, as I mentioned earlier, beloved, pampered, protected and well-treated slaves are not rare, just as common as poor slaves reduced to commodities and utilitarian objects. A woman doesn't dream of becoming an object; rather, she dreams of that freedom which many slaves have, and which she will never have as a Free Woman. She dreams of the romantic part, the abandonment that gives her the right to express all her femininity, from the most tender to the most unbridled sexuality, and which is forbidden to her.

As I've already said, depending on social background, this desire ranges from the very weak to the terribly oppressive. Many women find their lives satisfying. We mustn't forget that women are a precious asset, a work force, a mother, raising children, and are very respected. She must always take her place, but in return she is listened to, and considered.

But now, imagine living in the prison of your suffocating luxury clothes that hide your body, your face, the companion of a rich man surrounded by kajirae, and who therefore has no need of you for tenderness, affections and the games of pleasure. A golden, stifling prison that withers and depresses.

And makes you want to believe – and it's not wrong – that life would be so much better, at the cost of losing everything, but gaining so much more.

To defend themselves against this tendency, women have become proud and cold, even frigid in the upper castes, which is largely untrue. They change their priorities, in an attempt to give other meanings to their existence. In the end, a peasant woman is surely happier than the companion of a wealthy capital city notable.

And from time to time, the weight is too heavy. A man passing by, a look, a little attention from him, the desire to believe in his promises, but bound by companionship contracts and the social straitjacket, the only way to free yourself is to give yourself to him, to fall at his feet, to offer him your neck, and therefore your life, and at that second lose everything.... and hope to gain much more. In short, to be voluntarily enslaved.

But let's not forget one thing: a gorean is still a gorean. So there's a big risk that he'll change his behavior completely, from a free woman to a self-surrendering slave. He may suddenly treat her as an object and a commodity, or even sell her or give her away. Beautiful stories also happen on Gor... but they can also end very badly. Gor is a merciless place. If men are to survive, they have to be too. And a woman who becomes a slave, loses her status, and ends up at his mercy.... she can then only rely on her ability to always please him, devote herself entirely to him, respond to his every desire, and hope she's made the right choice.

As we've already mentioned, the weight of social pressure between men means that consideration for a slave that isn't clearly deserved is avoided, so that other men themselves will see it.

One man doesn't meddle with what another man's slave does. But it's like the neighbor's dog. If it's not on a good leash, it runs around, digs in your garden, worse, barks at one of your kids, and that's enough to start an argument, and the animal gets beaten up in the process, by the neighbor, or his master, or both.

Even if a woman has voluntarily given herself to a man who has shown her consideration and interest, she is still a slave, and will be treated as such. One mistake, and her destiny can descend into tragedy. She will be offered no consideration, and the demands of her obedience and perfection will not be compromised. Not because it's tradition, not because it's just the way things are, not because it's in the nature of goreans: but above all, because to do otherwise, once again, is simply dangerous.

And many women discover this too late...

## *5- Kajirae and Masters*

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So, I'm no good at talking about male slaves, so I'll leave that aside, we're going to look at the relationship between kajirae and free men and women.

The kajira is a slave, except that the term doesn't describe what she has become, and what she can

expect from life. If she is one of the lucky kajirae to have escaped the darker aspects of enslavement and the slave trade, she will have gained a unique freedom, which will always be encouraged and stimulated in her life: the unbridled expression of her feminine and sexual impulses; the easily accessible chocolate cake.

Further than that, it often turns out that caresses, attention and sex are her only rewards, her privilege. This makes the rest of his condition acceptable and bearable.

In exchange for this freedom, the price is high. And nothing belongs to a slave, not even this privilege. You can turn a kajira of pleasures into a kitchen girl who will never again feel the gentle hand of a master awaken her senses, and there's no reason to do so other than the owner's decision. And her life can be taken at any time. That's why the word often used to describe the killing of a kajira is "destroy her".

And you destroy a good, an object, a vase. You kill a man or an animal. In this expression, terribly demeaning, there is all the heavy meaning of what the kajira is, from the social point of view.

Fortunately, reality is different. Let's not forget that, for goreans, there's image, social rank, reputation and facts. There's the fact that a docile, well-bred, hard-working, clever, conversational, tender, affectionate slave will be considered and pampered.

To return to the example of the dog, a dog that is tender, affectionate, clever and loyal, its master will love it, and will be very affected if his animal is wounded, ill, in danger. Well, the same applies here.

But a slave is still a dog, nothing more. If you ever have to choose between a slave and free men and women, it's like today: too bad for the dog, but it comes second.

A kajira's greatest freedom is to be able to express – indeed, to have to express! – all her femininity, hide nothing, show everything, be moving, touching, attractive, languid, warm and always available. And to be used sexually whenever and however you want. In general, she'll prefer it to be HER master. But that's still for the example of the dog: if he's sociable, he'll

love to go for caresses, treats, attention, to be flattered by other hands, even if he remains faithful to his master.

Now, I don't know if you'd go and scold your dog for being sociable, caressing, tender and playful with others, your neighbors, your friends... but it's clear that if you did, you'd soon have a completely lost animal, ending up not only fearing your hand, but everyone else's too. And either he bites, or he runs away, or one day another hand manages to pet him, and a more considerate neighbor will adopt the dog you've mistreated.

A kajira is the same thing. Except that instead of petting, treats and affection, here we're talking about sex. And yes, it really is the same, because even if you order your kajira not to go towards others, to prevent her from being used, she has not only conditioning, but instinct, and the need to let herself be used. It's her chocolate cake. She'll make all the efforts she can... but if someone ends up shoving the cake under her nose, and she's hungry, don't dream.

Jealousy and possessiveness about Gor SL, when playing in this universe, kill far more slaves than their disobedience.

A kajira, even a trick kajira, in the service of a woman, is still a kajira. To deprive her of affection, attention and sex is to risk compromising her efficiency and diligence in service. This is why, in a household, the master of the house – and why not the mistress – can lend her kajira as one lends one of his possessions, for the night. It's an appreciated and generous form of hospitality. Since all kajirae are vaccinated against STDs, and sterile, the risk of the slightest accident is almost zero.

And what's more, it allows us to give a little chocolate cake to the kajirae, who will then go back to getting up at dawn and toiling from evening to morning, waiting for the next visit of another guest (in the hope that it will indeed be as nice as the last time...).

I might as well say it, it ENERVES the free women. We've seen that above. And it's not for nothing that many tower slaves are used as whipping girls by high society women who take cruel revenge for their frustration.

## 6- *Playing tips*

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Well, I think that after these 5 detailed points, you should have done the trick, but I'll add here a few loose tips on how to play the basic roles, without getting too heady. Let's get started:

### *- Your relationship is a game:*

It may not sound like much, but a couple who starts playing Gor SL is going to run into a big problem. There's a lot of sex involved! If you're playing a couple of characters, sooner or later you're going to have to deal with this. So keep it simple: establish safeguards between yourselves, simple things, and when a scene comes to that safeguard, arrange it via roleplay, or a message in IM to the people you're playing with, to warn them that it's your safeguard.

I don't know how many times I've seen couples hurt themselves for having misjudged the impact on their relationship of what is a game, but a game that touches on intimate things; so you might as well think about it beforehand.

### *- You can't punish a kajira for being a kajira:*

Jealousy, and possessiveness over Gor SL, when playing in this universe, kill far more slaves, than their disobedience, as I said above. If the kajira is your girlfriend, see the point above. Otherwise, reread chapter 5, and apply it! In Gor's world, if a man wants to keep his slave for himself, he chains her up, or locks her up, or puts a chastity belt on her. If she wanders off, and finds herself being used, or a man comes to take her because he wants to, she's done what she's supposed to do: not refuse, and obey. Punishing her for being obedient is like punishing a dog for being wise and sociable.

### *- A violent man is a brute, an authoritarian man is a master:*

The nuance lies in this idea. Whether with his children, his companion or his slaves, a Gorean has no reason to be violent. The world does. His enemies deserve his violence. But his own deserve his just authority. Basically, punishing with punches or kicks is violent and useless. And dangerous! A Gorean

male is a mountain, he can break bones; explode entrails, as well. Hitting gratuitously is worse! When a gorrean wants to let off steam, he'll wrestle with his neighbors and buddies, or drink big mugs.

Of course, there will be bullies, and the slap that goes off without a second thought, with a black eye in the process, does happen. And much worse. But a man avoids wounding, damaging or hurting. Goreans are not gratuitously sadistic or cruel.

Above all, any punishment must be commensurate with the offence. And it must be understood, i.e. either explained or shown.

### *- Manliness means showing that you're also the protector:*

In most of the Goran RP venues I've frequented, there's always one or two men who attract women around them. They always have the same profile, whatever the character: they're self-assured, patient, show a certain tenderness (visible more or less easily), and always remain intransigent and authoritarian. They have protector profiles, and whatever their role, they don't denigrate females, but just see themselves as superior to them, and therefore also responsible for protecting them, requiring them to be docile to do so.

So gentlemen, there's no need to believe that the obnoxious, brutal and sexist macho who despises women is going to draw a crowd. Above all, he's going to risk attracting enmity, and being loved by neither men nor women. Goreans are far more virile than brutal.

### *- Women in your community have rights:*

A free woman can work-and often does-can own, and can decide. Depending on the environment, she will be more or less strongly supervised by her family or entourage, but she is considered, listened to and respected. She has the right to raise her voice, to yell at a guy – even if it's a bit risky, these animals are hot-blooded – and to lodge a complaint if he's behaved badly towards her. And you can't force her to obey, or enslave her, or punish her, just like that. In general, any woman of a hearthstone has nothing to fear from the men of her hearthstone, as long as she keeps her

place, and if she doesn't, she'll be judged by a council of her peers! It's the same for men.

The law tends to be on their side, but no, men don't have all the power. And a man prefers not to antagonize women, simply because it will complicate his life, and his chances of having, or starting, a family.

### ***- Never compromise, never renegotiate:***

When a gorean said "no", he didn't say maybe, or later. You don't go back on your decisions, you don't go back on your word. Which means that a gorean never makes decisions lightly, and when he does the stupid thing anyway, he has to take responsibility for it. To hesitate, renegotiate or compromise is to be weak... and that's a bad plan.

And on this point, women and men are the same: their word and their pride are at stake. This doesn't mean that couples can't talk and negotiate on the sly, or come to an arrangement after a decision has been made a little too abruptly. But goreans avoid this as much as possible.

This also means that when faced with a risk, a Gorean will confront it, rather than flee or procrastinate. And even more so if the risk is posed by a woman. It's inconceivable for a Gorean to truly fear a woman... even if he or she has every reason to think it would be more prudent!

### ***- You're a slave, not a princess:***

And there are plenty who believe it! A woman is nothing the second she loses her name and wears a collar. She's only what her owner decides she should be; she belongs to him, like an object. But she's also only what the other free Goreans want her to be! It's not for nothing that a female is broken, starved and exhausted, to show her the extent of the hopelessness of her condition, and that the only way out is to be totally docile and obedient to men. And not just their master.

To behave capriciously, disobediently or obnoxiously, to demand or refuse, is virtually unthinkable for a slave. Some do, and take the risk. But this risk can end in the worst punishment, or

death. Once you play a slave, the risk is as simple as that: anyone can punish you, not just your owner. You could very well be injured or killed, and the only thing the person responsible has to do is compensate your owner.

I'd like to remind all players who play a kajira that getting shaken, manhandled and abused is inevitable. I I don't like it when punishment and beatings are given for free., either. But if you're playing a princess, and not a slave, you'll inevitably get into trouble that will simply spoil the fun for you and others, and create conflicts outside the RP; so you might as well avoid it.

*This guide is now complete, and I hope you found it useful. The next guide will be dedicated to helping you discover the role and all the secrets of Gor's slaves, and especially the kajira, Gor's slave girls.*

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