

Tarn

A reptilian species native to the Beta Quadrant, the Tarn fought an undeclared war with the Federation in the 2160s. The creation of a Neutral Zone ended the conflict, but left many issues unresolved. In the 24th century, negotiations have allowed the Tarn to return to the galactic stage, but the future is uncertain, at best.

Personality

Outsiders generally regard the Tarn as insular, prideful, and suspicious-almost-to-the-point-of-paranoia. Cultural and evolutionary pressures have created a society in which trust is generally limited to one's own "circle" (loosely defined as one's extended family, clan, or organization). This pressure- along with the (literally) cut-throat nature of Tarn internal politics leaves little room for trust of- or concession to- the outsider.

Tarn social interactions tend to be formal-even ritualized- with an emphasis on dominance and/or submission gestures and honor/status. For example, subordinate Tarn must not allow their shadow to touch a superior, nor address a superior first. The subordinate must keep his or her head lowered and avoid eye contact.

Formal greetings or welcome must be conducted (in as much as possible) peer-to-peer and inferiors must be introduced to their superiors before being addressed or even acknowledged (lest the superior "lose face" in the exchange).

Except among the closest of friends, even peer-to-peer interactions are ruled by clan politics, personal honor and a quest for (at least the perception of) dominance.

Tarn ethics are supremely utilitarian- defined by the simplest of rules: succeed or die. To a Tarn, there is nothing more honorable than Success, and no deeply-held principle can excuse failure.

Social Structure

Tarn society are rigidly defined by one's honor and one's "circle"- the latter being somewhat loosely defined.

The most basic and fundamental definition of a Tarn "circle" is one's family- both immediate and extended. One's primary loyalty is to this circle- and any insult to one is an insult to all. A dishonorable act committed- or defeat suffered- by one dishonors all. Failure or defeat are often answered with ritual suicide (as partial "atonement" for the dishonor).

Larger "circles" demand their own rigid loyalty, though they do not supercede previous duties/oaths. For example, a Tarn sailor is loyal first to his family, then to his clan, then to his shipmates, then to the Tarn Imperial Navy and the Tarn Empire as a whole). Atop these (often competing) loyalties is a mantra of rigid obedience to one's superiors and the (often fatal) consequences of disobedience.

Failure (particularly defeat in battle) or other defeat means becoming *abduli*- "outcast", not only for oneself, but many times for one's circle, as well.

For any Tarn to speak to an outcast (particularly members of a "broken" circle) is considered repugnant, and disgraceful, if not an overt dishonor).

Redemption (both for oneself and one's circle) is possible- usually through avenging the insult, righting the wrong, or defeating the once-victorious foe- but is rare. Ceremonial (usually temporary) redemption may also be granted by a ritual cut at the nape of the neck, drawing blood.

Ties of blood (both literal and ceremonial) bear the greatest weight and are legally/morally binding in Tarn culture. As in the Klingon *rustaii*, the Tarn may cement their closest relationships or swear their deepest bond or oath by dabbing themselves in the blood of another.

Tarn

Physiology

The Tarn are a tall species (averaging well-over six feet (nearly 2.5 meters) in height). Unlike most lizards, Tarn are endothermic. Like most lizards, however, they thrive in hot, dry climates.

The Tarn have two genders and lay live eggs to reproduce.

In addition to powerful and taloned arms and legs, the Tarn also possess a thick, muscular tail and a strong line of small spines down their backs which react to strong emotions such as fear or agitation.

Both because of their size, physical power, and reptilian nature, most humanoids find the Tarn imposing and fearful on an instinctive level- impressions which Tarn attitudes and behavior do little to dispel.

Homeworld

The Tarn homeworld is hot and dry, with unusually competitive Darwinian pressures. The modern Tarn were once the lesser of two sapient species on the planet, overcoming their more technologically advanced oppressors and hunting them to extinction before turning on one another and then to interstellar expansion to survive.

Government

The Tarn government is led by the First Circle (part of the larger Royal Family) and governed by the Council of Circles, which functions as an hereditary parliament or legislature.

Competition within and between these groups is never-ending, and intrigue (economic, political, and personal) are endemic, vicious, and Machiavellian. Government policy is less-often determined by what is wisest or most-productive than by the machinations of the various politicians and circles based upon their own immediate self-interest.

Interstellar Relations

Sometime prior to 2165, the Tarn fought a brief brush war with the Klingons, and then (following First Contact in the early 2160s) with the Federation. The latter brief, undeclared war ended in a 2165 Armistice that left most of the original issues and conflicts unresolved. Between 2165 and 2367, the Tarn were almost completely isolated on the galactic stage by the Tarn Neutral Zone, which forbade entry by ships from either side, limited interstellar commerce, and severely curtailed Tarn expansion.

In 2367, long-standing negotiations secured the opening of the Neutral Zone, but has also reopened the issues left unanswered by the original cease-fire.

Despite two centuries of (enforced) isolation, many Tarn still believe that ruling the galaxy is their manifest destiny. While the Tarn Empire is not currently expansionist, their internal politics are unstable at best.

For the moment, the Tarn seem content to establish new diplomatic and economic ties- though the Official Policy may change as quickly as the Ruling Circle's perceived self-interest.

Technological Summary

Despite two hundred years of galactic isolation, the Tarn are (generally) comparable to the Federation and Klingon Empire- a parity they will no doubt wish to expand following the opening of the Neutral Zone.

Tarn Circles

Tarn Circles are analagous to Klingon Houses and may be created using the rules on pg 136 of the STA Klingon Core Rulebook.

Tarn

Species Adjustment

+1 Presence, Fitness, Reason

Trait: Tarn. Large, imposing, reptilians, Tarn trigger an instinctive fear among most humanoids. Suspicious and outcome-driven, Tarn thrive in hot dry climates.

Talents:

Predator's Insight- Tarn have a tendency towards ruthlessness pragmatism, always seeking either an advantage or to undermine those they see as foes.

When you attempt a Task to identify the weaknesses or flaws of an enemy, or matters they are particularly sensitive or protective about, you may reduce the Difficulty by 1. If the enemy has a trait which reflects this weakness (such as an advantage you've created, or a complication they're suffering from), you may re-roll a single d20 on the next attack or *Persuasion* Task you attempt against them.

Prehensile Tail- All Tarn have some control over their tails, but this character has (through practice and repetition) gained sufficient control over the appendage to the point of it becoming fully functional. This provides the character with the ability to hold and operate an additional piece of equipment, like an additional hand. In addition, the character gains a bonus d20 to any *Fitness* Test to maintain balance or to climb.

Suspicious Minds- Tarn are suspicious of any apparent concession or accommodation, often interpreting it as a sign of weakness. Rather than taking things at face value, they look for hidden motives or underlying scheming to create a hidden advantage.

When trying to understand a matter involving intrigue or guile, a Tarn may roll an additional d20 when attempting to decipher the hidden meaning behind the action, but the Complication range is increased by 1.

Ties Of Blood- Dabbed in the blood of another, this Tarn has forged the deepest bonds of loyalty with or joined the circle of another. This Talent grants the Tarn an additional Value, which must reflect their relationship with the ritual sibling. In addition, whenever the Tarn assists, or is assisted by another in this circle, the character offering assistance may re-roll their die.

Suggested Values:

"I wanted a war, and for my sins the gods gave it to me."

"There are but two conditions in war, return with victory or die."

"My comrade, my circle, not yours."

"Victory is within our grasp."

Notes

The Tarn represent both a challenge and an opportunity for the Gamemaster and the Player Characters. Tarn history represents a wealth of story-telling possibilities, while their present instability and wide-open horizons provide ample opportunity to present them as friend, foe, or both.

The initial story which introduced the Tarn dealt with an unresolved war on a world "lost" to both sides. Are there other such worlds out there?

The "War of Federation Aggression" left the Tarn isolated in their Neutral Zone- interrupting a concerted Tarn effort at expansion/conquest. Are there worlds that were spared by that interruption which are once again in Tarn crosshairs?

The chaotic nature of Tarn internal politics provides the Gamemaster with ample opportunity to sow doubt and confusion amidst his players- are the actions/conduct of the antagonists those of a small faction or of the Tarn government; official denials notwithstanding...?

The Tarn first appear in the Star Trek: The Next Generation Novel "The Forgotten War". STA RPG adaptation by Roger Taylor and Carl Stark. Based on the descriptions therein, one reader has likened the Tarn's physical appearance to that of the Vesk species from the Starfinder RPG.