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RATSKINS

**An examination of the tribal variations among
the Ratskin Peoples of Hive Primus.**

By Andrew Stickland.
(Andrew, get in touch! - Ed)

INTRODUCTION

Ratskins are something of an annoying enigma to the Imperium. In the early days of Imperial colonisation surveys were carried out by the Inquisition to determine whether they posed any threat to the Emperor's rule. Although far from being model disciples of the Imperial Cult, the Ratskins were judged to be harmless provided that their numbers were kept in check and the colonists quickly lost interest in these ragged tribesmen.

As the sprawling shadow of industrial development spread across the planet, the Ratskins were forced to adapt to life as Hive dwellers - finally settling in the depths of the Underhive, away from the prejudice of the Guilds. In their subterranean domain, the Ratskin's life is often short and brutal. He is assailed by all manner of foes from crazed Redemptionists to more basic enemies such as starvation.

Most citizens of the Hive would prefer not to think about these strange, tribal Underhivers, but it now transpires that one unbalanced individual has made a detailed study of them.

THE MANY TRIBES

In their own tongue the Ratskins call themselves Kuloq, literally - 'the people'. According to their mythology they are the descendants of Ku, 'the maker of the land and the sky'. When he had finished creating the world, Ku grew sad because there was no one with whom he could share the pleasures of his creation. For many years he wandered the new world in search of another living being, but he had created an empty, lifeless place and there were no companions to be found.

Finally, in despair, he lay down on the sterile earth and allowed his life to ebb away into the ground.

As Ku's body disintegrated all manner of living things came into being. From the five fingers of his left hand grew the Palpala, 'the Nonborn', from whom the Kuloq believe themselves to be descended.

Originally there may have been as many as sixty different Kuloq tribes living on Necromunda. Now their numbers are dwindling and no more than a handful of tribes have survived. Of these only four are found in Hive Primus: the Kuloqa, the Dapakkani, the Nassaq and the Ulenni.

KULOQA

The name Kuloqa is derived from the root word Kuloq. In the Kuloq language the -a suffix indicates a sense of importance or tradition, so an approximate tradition would be 'The True People' or perhaps 'The Original People'.

Certainly the Kuloq are the most traditional of all tribes. They believe that the maintenance of their ancestors' customs and religious practices is essential for the preservation of their people.

One such custom is the young warrior's rite of passage into manhood. The brave must venture, alone and unarmed, into the depths of the Underhive where he must track and kill a giant rat. Once he has killed the beast he must tear out its heart and eat it, raw and bloody, in order to gain its strength. The brave can then return triumphant to his tribe wearing the pelt of the rat around his head and shoulders.

It is from this practice that the derogatory term 'Ratskin' originates.

The Kuloqa are by far the most numerous of the Kuloq tribes and have had the most contact with the Imperium, although relations have been far from cordial. After enduring decades of interference and abuse the tribe's high elders decreed that all dealings with the Imperial were forbidden and any who tainted themselves by associating with outsiders would be banished forever. Outcast Kuloqa or Tsi-na-kagaq ('Badskins') are highly prized as scouts by Hive gangs since their knowledge of the Underhive is second-to-none. It is not unknown for a Badskin with a grudge to lead a gang raiding party on his former tribal settlement.

DAPAKKANI

The Dapakkani are the Children of Dapakk, the Kuloq god of hunting. In appearance they are almost identical to the Kuloqa tribe although they favour darker colours.

As their name implies, the Dapakkani are dedicated to the god of the hunt and pride themselves in their ability to track and kill anything that wanders through the Underhive whether it be a giant rat or a fully armed gang fighter. More than any other tribe the Dapakkani value marksmanship and do not settle disputes with a ritual knife combat as do other tribes, but with a shooting contest.

This bloodless solution reflects the Dapakkani creed which dictates that they may not kill one of their own unless he has been branded 'badskin'.

The Dapakkani's love of firearms is unparalleled, they have come to realise the value of understanding and maintaining these weapons and will take great risks in order to acquire imperial weapons technology. As a consequence they are the most technologically competent of all the tribes and their shamen fulfil a role reminiscent of the Imperium's tech-priests, though on a much lower level of course.

With their reputation as the finest hunters of the underhive, Dapakkani badskins have little difficulty in finding work as snipers and hitmen.

NASSAQ

Nassaq means 'black' in the Kuloq language. Strangely this has no bearing on the colour of their clothes but is nonetheless appropriate given the particular demeanour of this tribe. The Nassaq are brutal, cold-blooded killers who live only for battle and take great delight in torturing their prisoners before offering them up as a sacrifice to their bloodthirsty gods. For these savages a glorious death in battle is the only desirable end to a man's life. They believe that a warrior killed this way will have his spirit reborn into a new body so that he can wreak terrible vengeance upon his killer. To die any other way is to condemn the spirit to an eternity of shame, roaming the Underhive as a shadow.

Unlike other tribes, Nassaq warriors do not favour the ratskin head dress, preferring to enter battle bare-chested. They shave their heads and cover themselves in war paint depicting stylised versions of their bestial gods, believing that this will increase their fighting prowess and terrify their enemies.

Even more frightful than the warriors themselves are the Nassaq shamen who are able to commune with the dark spirits of the Underhive and blast their enemies with unholy power. It is the shamen who are responsible for the ritual torture and murder of all prisoners. Before a battle

the shaman will paint his face with the blood of a freshly sacrificed victim, this is the mask of Brakar, the Kuloq god of war and vengeance. Death is the summary punishment for almost every crime according to Nassaq law so badskin mercenaries from this tribe are all but non-existent.

ULENNI

By far the strangest of the surviving Kuloq tribes in Hive Primus, the Uleni are also the least common and the most secretive. They chose to live only in the deepest and darkest regions of the Underhive, in those places where Imperial settlers have yet to venture and where they can live out their lives in peace.

The Uleni rarely venture out into the open. Their entire society is based in and around the collapsed domes and sump pits which litter the very bottom regions of the Underhive. Their spiritual philosophy advocates sinking to the lowest level of existence, indeed the name Uleni literally means 'The Stones'. Unsurprisingly the Uleni are much paler in complexion than the other Kuloq people, this is accentuated by their ratskin hoods which are often taken from the mutant albino rats that live around the sump.

Life in the depths of the Underhive is, to say the least, harsh and treacherous. The Uleni have adapted to these conditions and are physically rugged though still remarkable agile. In spite of their evil habitat they are the most peaceful of all the Kuloq tribes and avoid conflict wherever possible. Nevertheless their powerful, muscular bodies and natural resilience make them formidable opponents if their homes are threatened. Unfortunately their adaptability to harsh conditions makes them highly prized as slaves and Uleni settlements are frequently raided by gangs looking to take prisoners who will be sold off for large sums of money to work in the Guilder mines.

SPECIAL RULES

KULOQA

As the most common Ratskin tribe, the Kuloqa are considered to be the most typical examples of their race. Kuloqa gangs use the standard rules for Ratskins outlined in the Outlanders rulebook.

DAPAKKANI

Starting Weapons: As the Dapakkani prefer to shoot their enemies rather than get in close and fight hand-to-hand, each fighter may be equipt with a stub gun at no cost instead of a club, maul or bludgeon. Additional weapons must be paid for as normal.

NASSAQ

Blood Sacrifice: Before any battle, a Nassaq shaman can attempt to appease the Hive spirits by sacrificing any one prisoner. The prisoner's gang must first be given the option of attempting a Rescue Mission. Otherwise the prisoner is killed and, as a result, the Shaman may add +1 to his leadership characteristic for the remainder of the game (up to a maximum of 10). In addition the unholy power emanating from the shaman allows him to cause Fear. All standard rules for Fear apply. Captured Ratskins from other gangs will never be sacrificed by the Nassaq and must be treated in the usual way (exchanged, ransomed back or sold). Spyrers are considered too dangerous to have around and will always be killed instantly. They may never be used as a sacrifice.

ULENNI

Toughness: The Uleni's natural resilience means that their fighters have a maximum Toughness characteristic of 5 rather than 4. However, the dark and cramped conditions in which they live is quite unsuitable for practicing with missile weapons, consequently an Uleni fighter may only increase his Ballistic Skill to a maximum of 5 as opposed to 6.

Slave Value: The Uleni are highly prized as slaves and if sold to the Guilders will fetch their total cost plus a bonus of D6x10 credits (not the usual D6x5).

TRIBAL SKILLS TABLE

KULOQUA

	Agility	Combat	Ferocity	Muscle	Shooting	Stealth	Techno
Brave	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Ratskin	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	-
Shaman	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	-
Chief	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-

DAPAKKANI

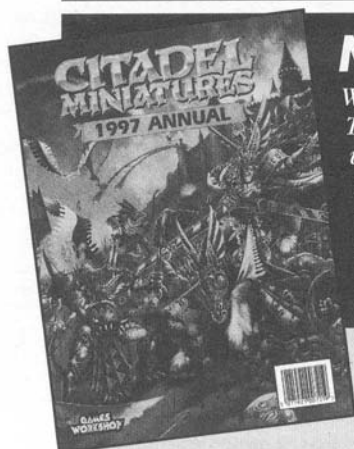
	Agility	Combat	Ferocity	Muscle	Shooting	Stealth	Techno
Brave	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Ratskin	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	-
Shaman	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Chief	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-

NASSAQ

	Agility	Combat	Ferocity	Muscle	Shooting	Stealth	Techno
Brave	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Ratskin	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-
Shaman	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-
Chief	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-

ULENNI

	Agility	Combat	Ferocity	Muscle	Shooting	Stealth	Techno
Brave	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Ratskin	✓	-	-	✓	-	✓	-
Shaman	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-
Chief	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-



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