

THE ART of

SHARDA

RPG™



The People of Dárdünah



Shard Studios is proud to present *The Art of Shard*, a collection of concepts and final pieces from the *SHARD* RPG reflecting the efforts of art director Scott Jones and the collaborative works of artists Joe Fontenot, Jay French, Laura Jennings, Darrin LeBlanc, Denis Loubet, and Eric Willman.

We begin the journey with a glimpse at the faces and forms of the various animal folk that inhabit Dárdünah, World of the False Dawn. *SHARD* calls these denizens Zoics, anthropomorphic beings that are the heart and soul of the setting.



Above: This acrobatic monkey was modeled after the character of Sun Wukong in the ancient tale *Journey to the West*. The image illustrates the basic human form that is a defining element of the visual style of the Zoics.

To the right: The hand of a gray wolf holds two glowing Stones of Rabíshu, rough-cut gems that emit both light and heat. This image was one of the many initial studies done when we first attempted to nail down the physical details of our Zoics' bodies. When dealing with anthropomorphic animal forms, which can be visualized in a wide variety of ways, deciding upon these details is important for achieving a consistent style. We finally settled on a more "realistic" artistic approach.





Illustrating ritual behavior was important in achieving a culturally rich feel for the peoples of Dárdūnah. The rituals surrounding the use of Dárdūni magic were excellent subjects for a variety of images. On this page we see several Dárdūni sorcerers, called sir'hibasi, engaged in magical rituals and surrounded by the tools of their craft.





We made decisions early in the design process to create the broadest selection possible for the character races of Dárdūnah, and few things are as diverse as the animal kingdom itself. The *SHARD* RPG features both common animals often depicted in tales and legends, such as foxes, bears, and rabbits, as well as more unusual animals, such as aardvarks, emus, salamanders, and secretary birds.

Above: A tiger martial artist attacks his opponent.

To the left: The moon Rrísí illuminates a twisted and sadistic killer, an illustration for the rules pertaining to insanity.



Above: Some of the earliest paintings, such as this lion and genet, were meant as simple thumbnail impressions to get us on the right track artistically for our designs of the Zoics' forms.

To the right: Later, more complex illustrations emerged, like this wedding and the Duel Dance on the next page.

These pieces explore both the anatomy and facial structure of the Zoics as well as the visual variety offered by Dárdünah's cultural paradigms.





Along with the obvious “day-to-day” visual flavor of the cultures, we also began to explore the various mythic heroes and characters that enrich Dárdūnah’s history.

To the left: The legendary jackal hero Pundárikam. One of the mystic Talons of Kramah, the Lord of Battle, Pundárikam was granted sacred powers that enabled him to fight the terrible demon foes of the Twilight Wars.

To the right: Heroes of the Twilight Wars, the white lion Aytáhti defends his sister Ambhānu from the Sarpah terror troops during the war’s final battle at the gates of the dreaded fortress known as Jirñanúgarrüm, the “Rotting City.”

As images like these were created, close attention to details consistent with the world’s fiction became a focus. Note the hardened and cracked skin of the jackal, testament to the price he paid to wield the power of Kramah’s Shield.

The lion and fox both bear the forms of the deities they are believed to have represented as avatars, while their eyes are the colors of Dárdūnah’s holy suns.

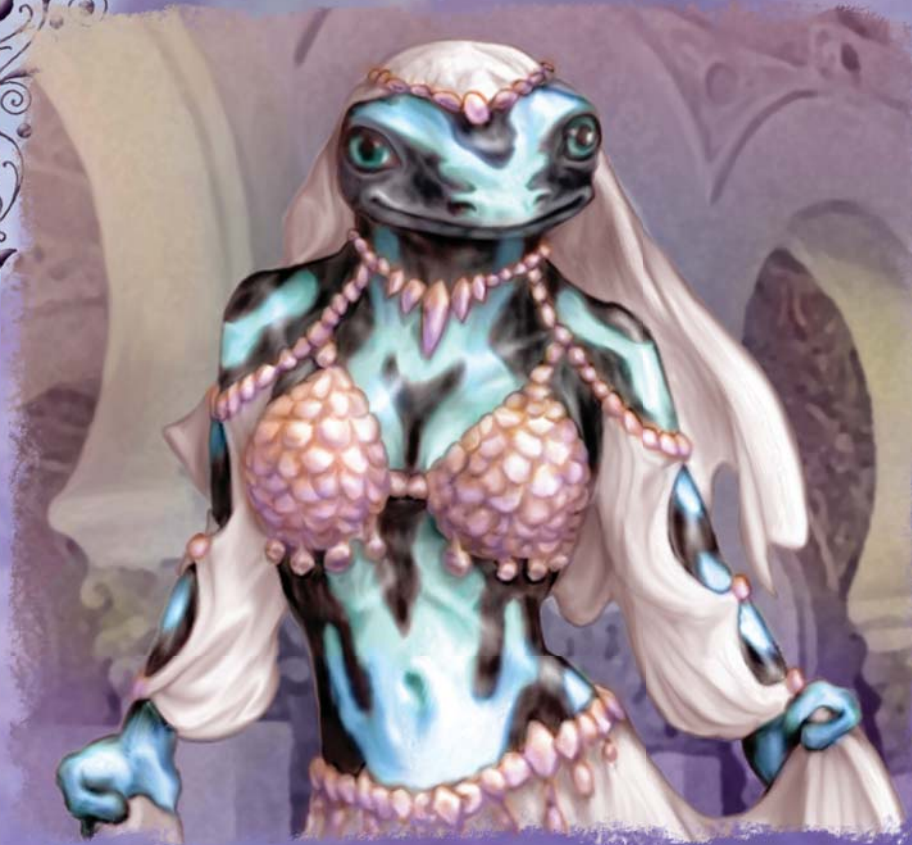


Combat is often a focus of most popular RPGs. Since martial arts play such an important role in the lives of Dárdüni folk, we decided to expand further upon the theme by illustrating how their martial arts are intertwined with cultural values such as piety and honor.

To the right: A panther priest strikes a stance as part of a martial style employed by his temple. The priest's fur, which glistens in the light of the two suns, is dyed blue to indicate divine presence.

Below: After failing to stop the demon that spirited away his lord's wife and unborn child, the honor guard Múshka weeps in the palace's courtyard.





In addition to the tales of myth, legend, and battle, Dárdüni folk enjoy performances of all kinds, and art is highly appreciated throughout the world. Dancers, poets, singers, musicians, puppeteers, and acrobats can all find an easy living in most cities.

To the left: A skilled Dárdüni dancer entertains an audience.

In sharp contrast to the pleasures enjoyed by the privileged, the poor and the Outcaste struggle to survive.

Below: A low caste beggar plies his trade.





Of course, an artistic exploration of the Dárdüni elite was also necessary. We attempted to show examples of the decadence of the higher castes as compared to the relative squalor of the less fortunate lower castes.

Above: An illustration in collaboration with artist Joe Fontenot depicts a snow leopard high caste noble woman.

To the left: An affluent platypus merchant admires a mystic artifact.





Some of the largest and most complex paintings were done for the covers of the primary books. Here is the cover of the *Basic Compendium*, created by Jim Daly in collaboration with Scott Jones, depicting the start of a Spiral Arena duel.



Here we see a single panel of the cover of the *SHARD RPG Gamemaster Screen*, which features a much larger panoramic view of the world. Aside from the world map, this piece of art is part of the largest of the paintings done for the game.



The cover that will eventually be used for the *Magic and Martial Arts* supplement.

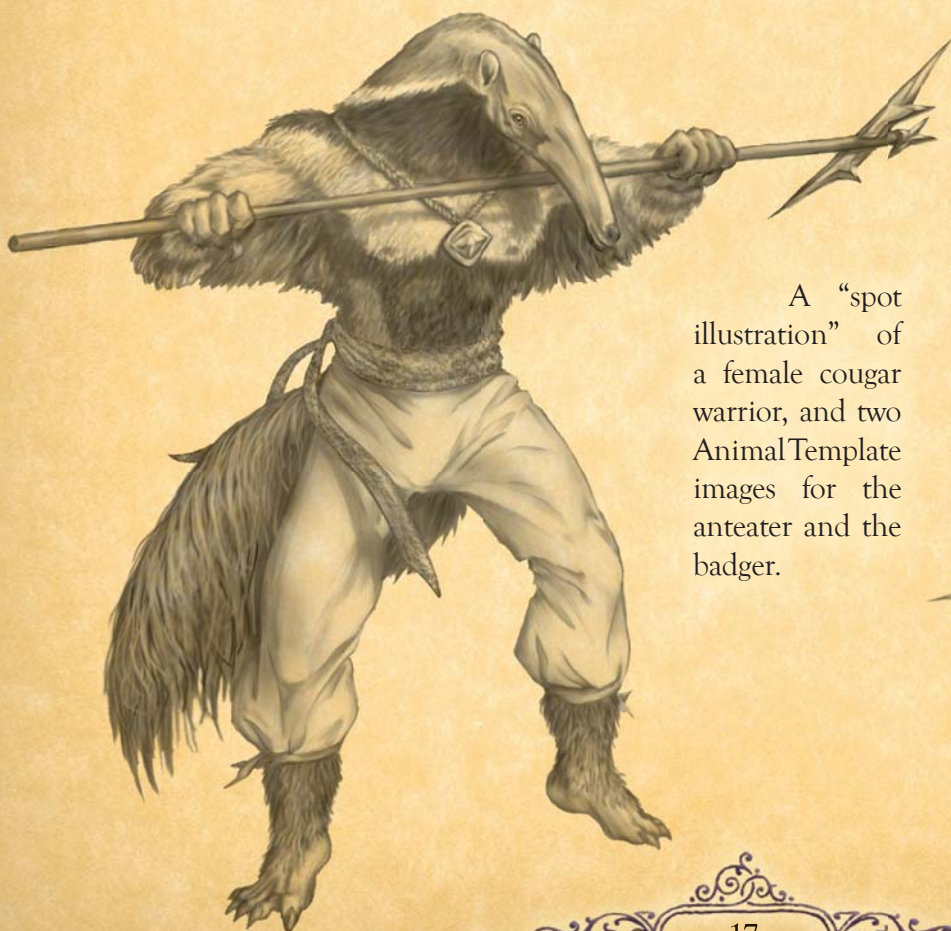


The cover that will eventually be used for the *World Guide* supplement. Here we see the shattered world of Dárdūnah surrounded by the celestial forms of the devah: Krilarah, Goddess of Magic, Kiráh, Ruler of the Sky, Nagamissa, Mother of Wisdom, and Kramah, Lord of Battle.

Sketches of the Zoics



Some of the very first images created for *SHARD* were simple pencil sketches of the Zoics, which later became the inspiration for many of the final illustrations. The following parchment-colored pages feature many of our favorite Zoic sketches, the collaborative efforts of a number of artists. Featured here is Taki-mahd, a feisty flying squirrel corsair with an obvious penchant for pistols. An early rendering by Eric Willman was used as the basis for this final image.



A “spot illustration” of a female cougar warrior, and two Animal Template images for the anteater and the badger.





“Spot illustrations” of a mystic mountain goat healer (top right), as well as a chameleon child with his spider pet (lower left), and Animal Template images for the basilisk, fox, and anaconda. On the opposite page, an elderly billy goat limps along.



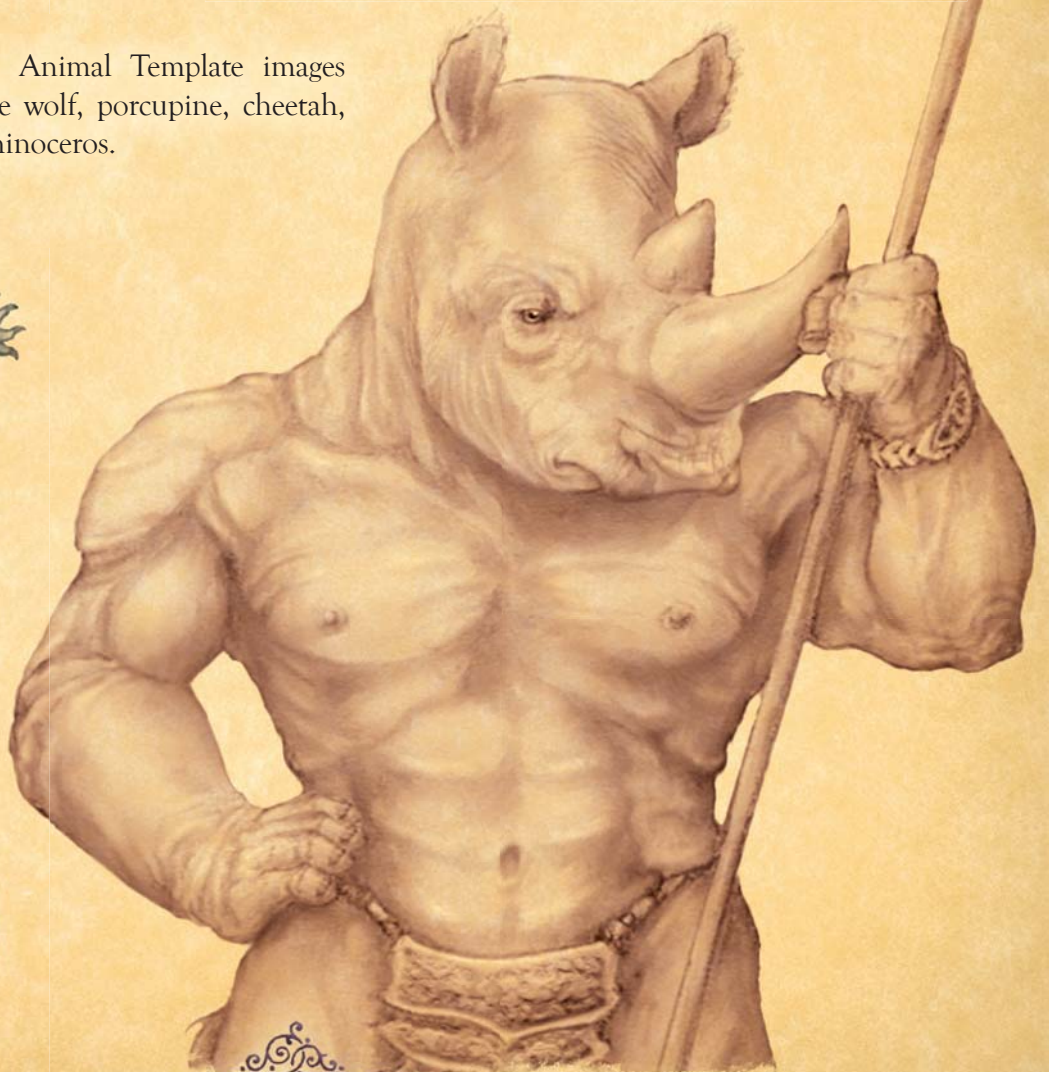




Above: A “spot illustration” for the *Magic and Martial Arts* supplement for a magical summoning discipline called Spiritual Sight. The original sketch that inspired this piece, created by Denis Loubet, depicts Kahramahn, son of the noble lord mentioned earlier, who was kidnapped while still in the womb along with his mother and spirited away to the north by demons. Eventually rescued, this individual would later become renowned for his amazing powers over the native insectoid fauna of Dárdünah, symbolized by the gargantuan creature looming in the background of this piece.



Animal Template images
for the wolf, porcupine, cheetah,
and rhinoceros.





The illustrations on this page, depictions of various deities, were collaborative pieces by Jay French and Scott Jones, whose combined work on most of the Zoics helped define the “look” of the characters of *SHARD*.

Above: The god Muhjibh, trickster and messenger of the devah, seen in a traditional dancing stance while riding a shining cloud to the Edge of Heaven.

Below: The Lord of Battle, Kramah, and Goddess of Magic, Krilarah, each with their symbolic objects: the axe and the glimmering orb.

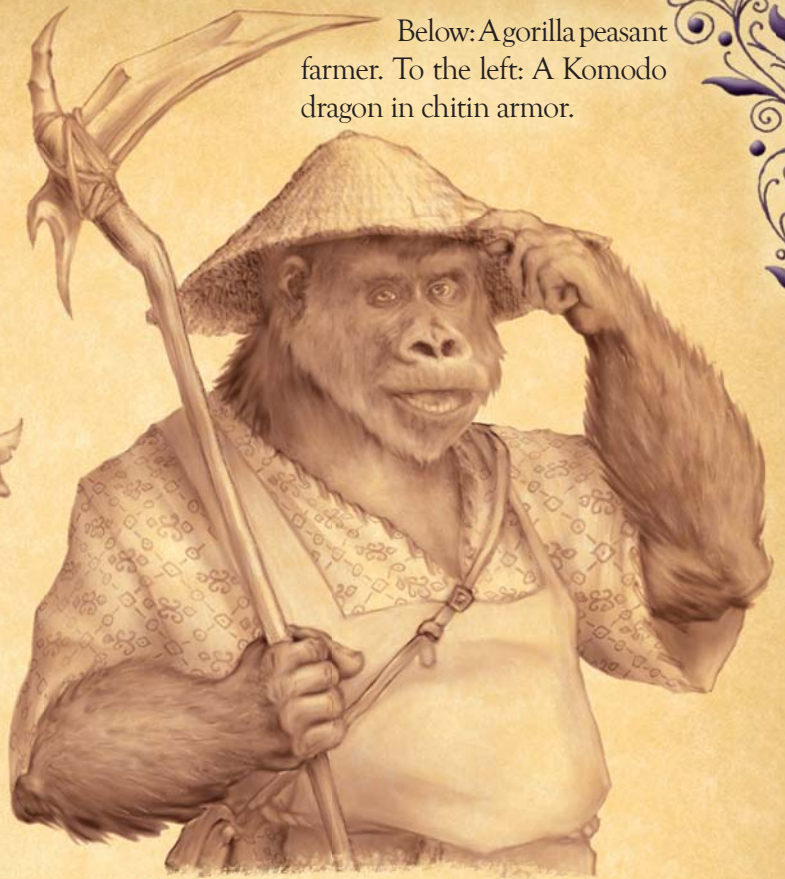




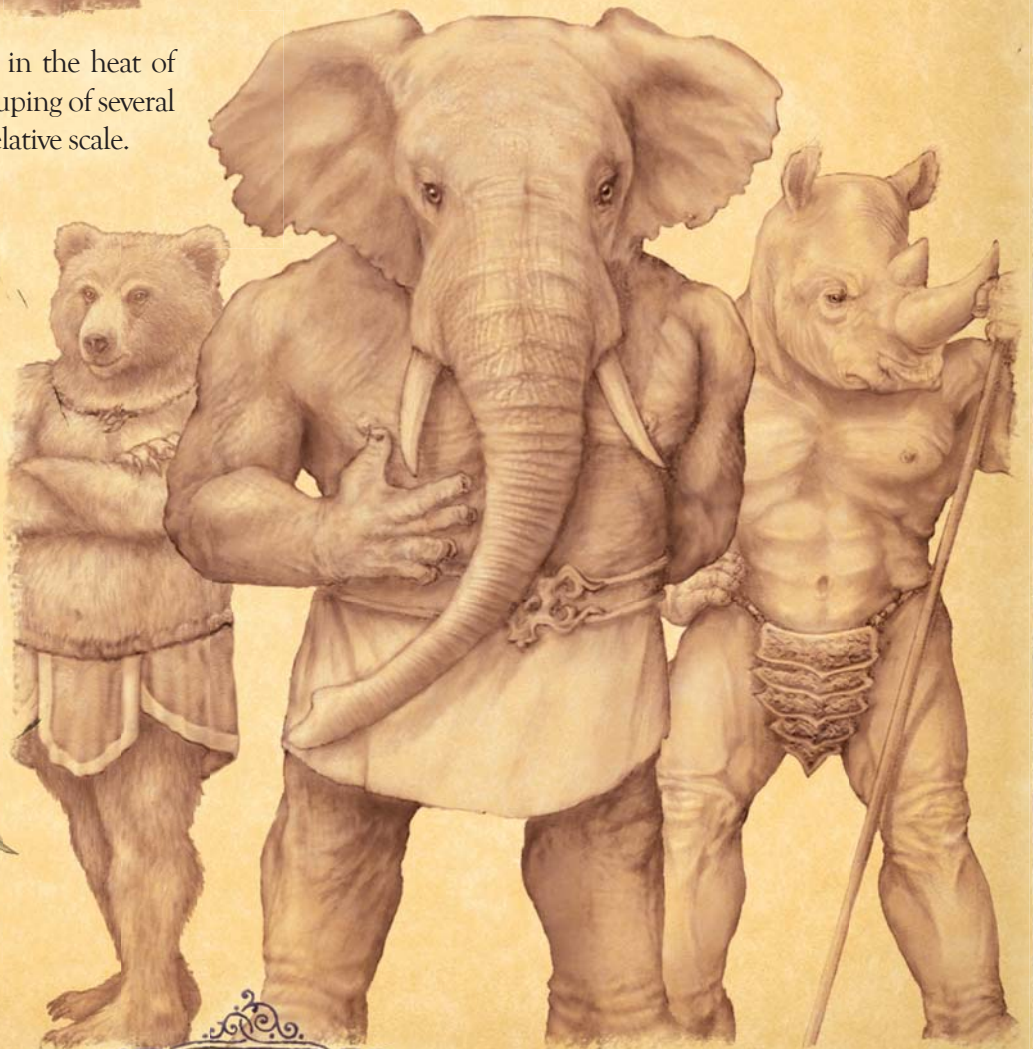
A boa constrictor, a Jackson's Chameleon, a sea turtle, and a bearded dragon.



Below: Agorilla peasant farmer. To the left: A Komodo dragon in chitin armor.



A ferret in the heat of battle, and a grouping of several Zoics showing relative scale.

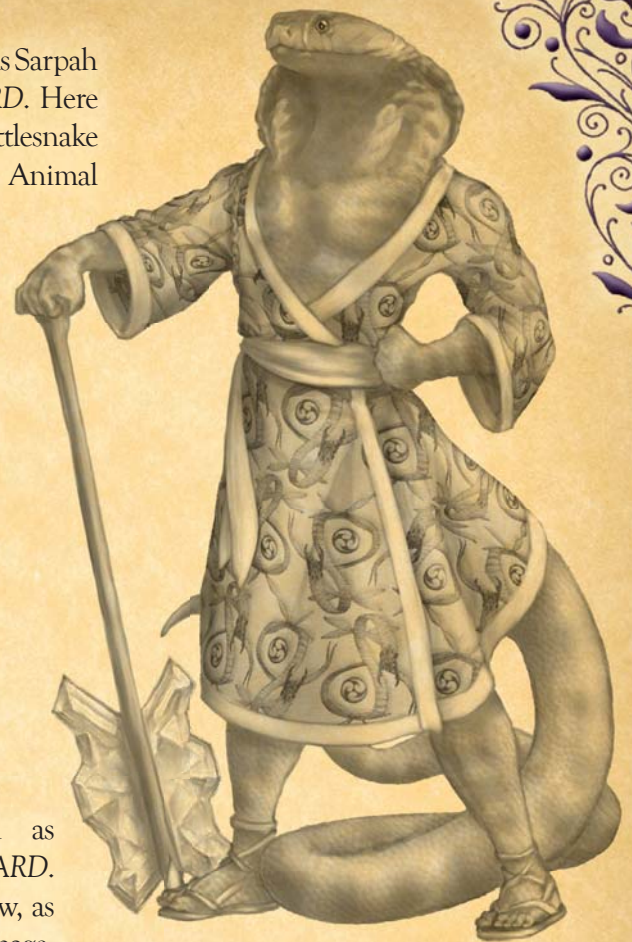




Animal template images for an aardvark, a fowl, and a frog. Bottom right: This depiction of the demise of a terrible villain, based on an early sketch by Denis Loubet, was used as a “spot illustration” for surprise attacks.



Reptiles are known as Sarpah by the inhabitants of *SHARD*. Here we have illustrations of a rattlesnake and a cobra, both used as Animal Template illustrations.



Mammals are known as Vajrah by the inhabitants of *SHARD*. The walrus and a wolverine below, as well as those on the following page, are works done in collaboration with artist Laura Jennings.





A red squirrel, a wallaby, an otter, a hare, and a skunk dancer.





A variety of Zoics: a fruit bat, a hyena, a Nile monitor, a frilled lizard, and a heron. Creating unique poses for each Zoic was a challenging task. Illustrating the frilled lizard below, for instance, required the combined efforts of three artists.



Since metals are almost non-existent on Dárdūnah, armed Zoics had to be shown with either wooden, chitin, or crystal weapons, such as the blades wielded by the hyena above.



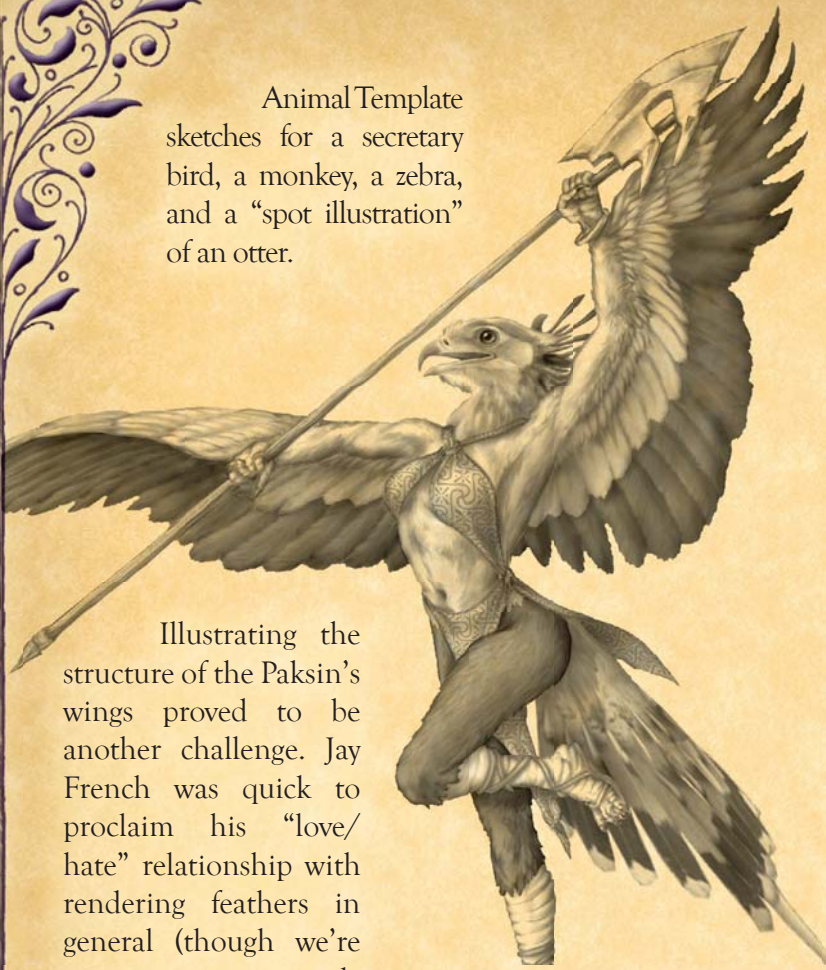
A panda, a shrew,
an emperor penguin, a
mamba, and a parrot.
We had many questions
to answer concerning
the small but important
details of the Zoics. How
long should our snakes'
necks be? How *does* one
depict a penguin's wings?



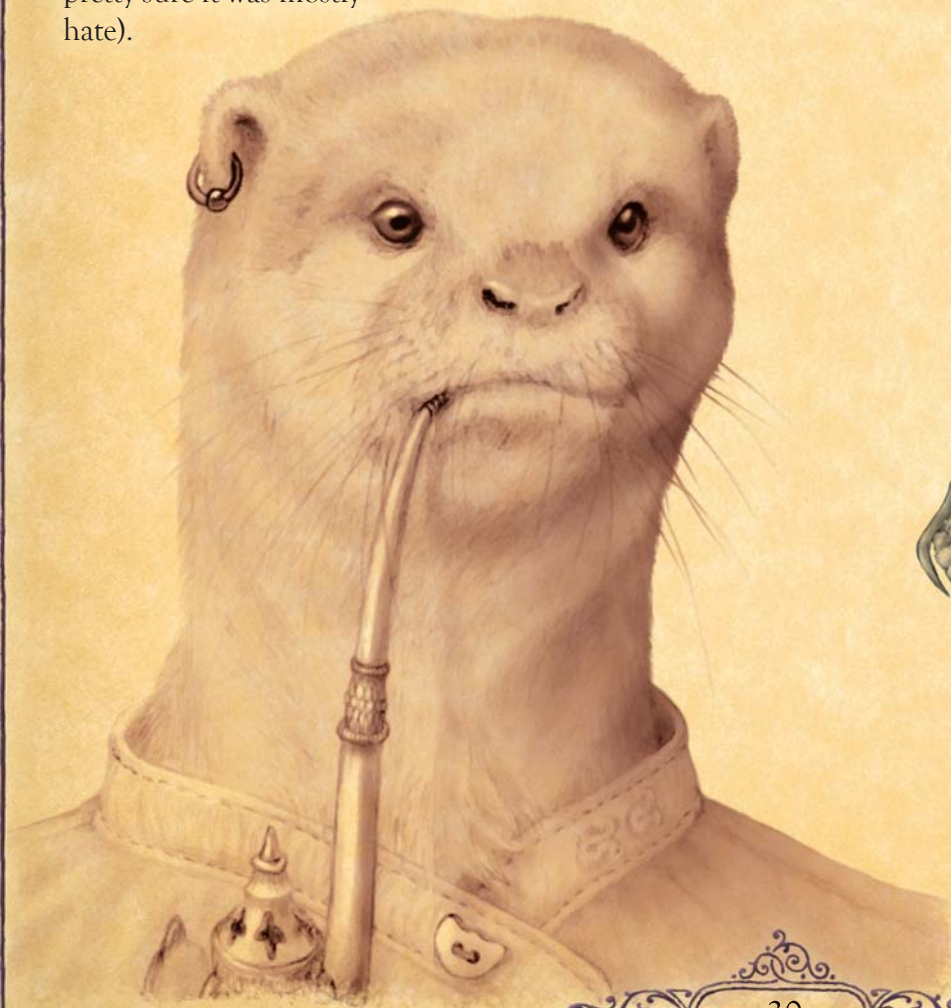
Birds are known as
Paksin by the inhabitants of
SHARD. As with the other
races, there is a great deal of
diversity among them.



Animal Template sketches for a secretary bird, a monkey, a zebra, and a “spot illustration” of an otter.



Illustrating the structure of the Paksin's wings proved to be another challenge. Jay French was quick to proclaim his “love/hate” relationship with rendering feathers in general (though we're pretty sure it was mostly hate).





The Environment and its Creatures



Here is a brief look at some of the environments of *SHARD*, along with the native alien fauna of the world. It was very important to establish a consistent visual theme that would tie all the different scenes together, and unify the more traditional and recognizable elements of Earth's cultures with the alien and exotic elements of the setting, such as mushroom forests, giant insects, crystal mountains, and flying ships. One of these themes was the design of the sky.





Dárdünah possesses two suns and three moons. This combined with a sky full of vibrant clouds makes for some colorful landscapes. It certainly explains the inhabitants' love of bright colors. With the look of the sky to help bring it all together, environmental scenes became much easier to create.

Above: The edge of the city of Muodrah, royal capital of the elephant Gajah dynasty. Below: The bright colors of a fungal grove almost glow in the mists of a northern rainforest.





All magic on Dárdūnah comes from a mystical realm called the Dream World. Top left: A sorcerer summons obsidian shards of defense in the swirling mists of the Dream. Top right: A powerful bat mage poles his lonely barge to the dark and sinister island of Klinráh.

Below: Crystal and Amber Hardazi cannons fire at a fleet of skyships from hidden pits on the grassy steppes of the Vale of Kthah. On the following page: (Top) A terrible sea battle culminates in fiery doom; (Below) A group of intrepid explorers sails away from a temple at the hour of False Dawn.







Here are a few examples of some of the native fauna of *SHARD*, which the inhabitants call *suthra*. Many of these images were created in collaboration with the artist Darrin LeBlanc, and are featured in the *Bestiary* of the *Basic Compendium*.



Top left: The terrible *karcha*, hunter of deep caverns. Top right: The beautiful, fluttering *dromi*, a favorite pet of the *Zoics*. Below left: The *kelléndu*, a *Dárdüni* mantis-dog. Below right: The *bandar*, a monkey-like jungle denizen. Center: The fearsome *vürtach*, a gargantuan sky predator.





Top left: A billása, often tamed by Zoics as pets as well. Top right: A jugánu worm, kept across the world as living sources of light. Bottom left: The large, ferocious predator known as a makri.



Bottom right: A common mount beast known as a chinti. Center: A dreaded sand vatha poised to strike with its venomous tail.



We leave you with the Jade Calendar of Magár, and hope you have enjoyed this glimpse into Dárdūnah, World of the False Dawn. We invite you to further explore the world and the adventures found in the SHARD RPG. May your crystal never shatter...

