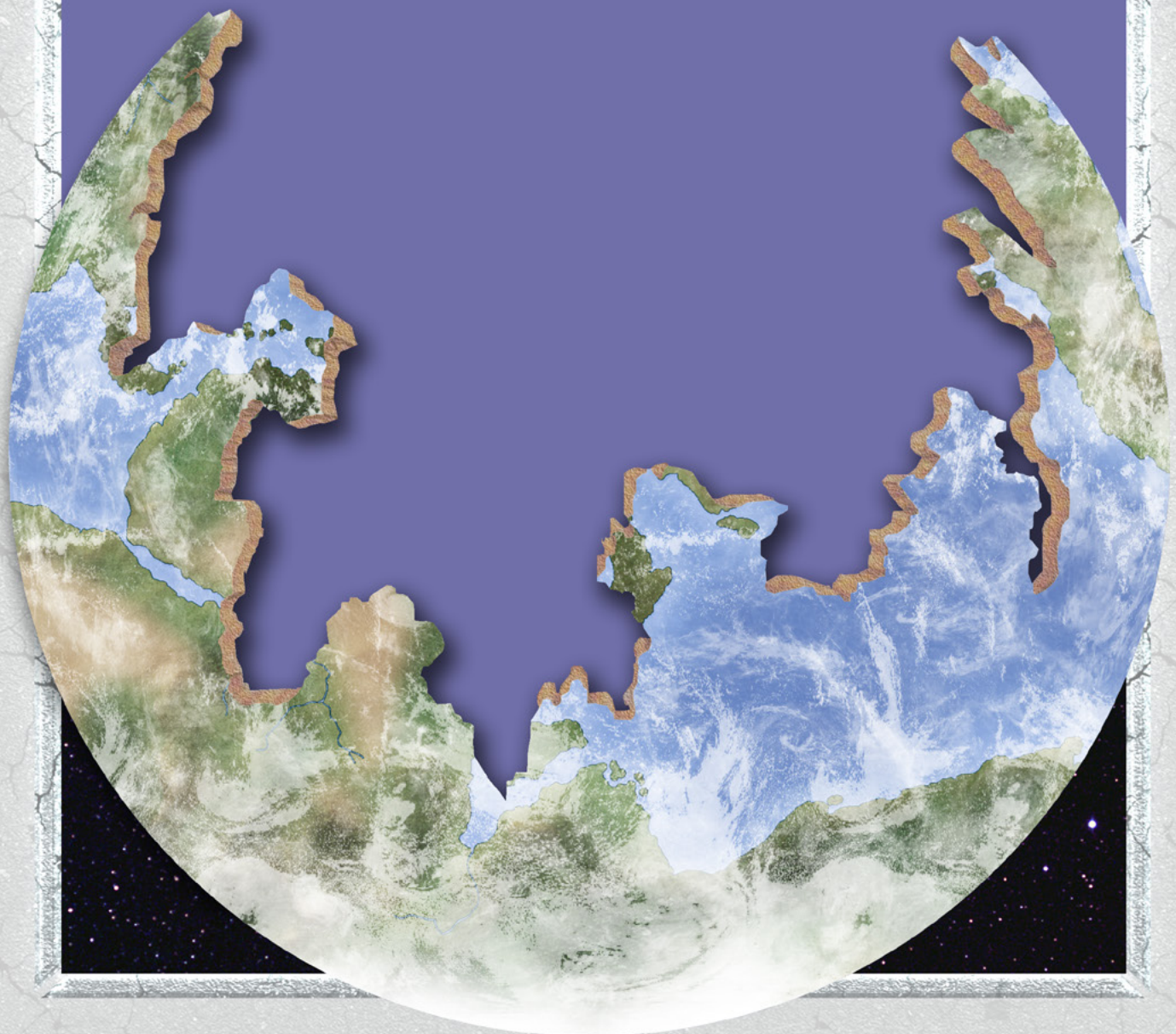


Dungeons & Dragons

HOLLOW WORLD

Malpheggi Lizardmen
by Mischa E Gelman



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Speical Thanks to John Howell, Diego Galeifel, and Garafaele Galeifel for serving as editors, contributors, and critics.

Society

The Malpheggi have only a few major roles among their people that people fulfil. The role considered the most important is that of Queen. The Queen makes decisions for the Malpheggi as a whole, especially considering matters dealing with the Azcans and Schattenalfen. Her word is law, and not questioned by more than a tiny fraction of the people. The position is not hereditary despite the usage of the title Queen, but rather when a Queen dies or can no longer fulfil her duties of leadership, the shamans convene and perform a complicated ritual which few Malpheggi and no outsider knows the specifics of. At the end of this ritual, each attending shaman is informed by Ka as to the identify of the next Queen, who is then notified of her role. No special event marks this transition, though the word is spread quickly by the shamans as they return to their homelands. The Queen, while the leader of society, is still responsible for her community (she never moves from her home community, and if she marries, the spouse moves into her home place) as any other Malpheggi is, and will instruct youth or forage or do whatever the community would have asked her to do before. Should these duties overlap, the duty to the nation comes first.

The Queen rarely requires advisers or a bodyguard, as Ka selects a lizard woman capable of defending herself and making solid decisions on her own. The lone mark of office is a golden amulet that the Kelinths say was granted by Ka to the first Queen. This amulet is rather simple compared to human jewellery, but is also magical, granting the Queen a -5 to AC and defending her from spells levels 1-3.

Below the status of the Queen is that of the community leader, who is decided upon by the members of the community. Oftentimes the Kelinths of the community will decide on the community leader though, the rest of the locals agreeing readily with their choice, as the Kelinths are assumed to know best which community member is comparable to the leaders of the past who have done a good job. The community leader is not shown the same reverence of the Queen and is rarely known outside the immediate area of those they rule, but bears the same responsibilities, albeit on a lesser scale.

The Kelinths are the next highest lizard people on the status scale. The Kelinths are responsible for passing on the history and lore of the community and of the Malpheggi in general to the next generation. They

often do this through music (they are the only musicians among the Malpheggi) and the greatest tales of the Malpheggi have become hour-long works of song that every Kelinth knows by heart. Outsiders rarely notice the import of these Malpheggi, but the lizard women and men themselves show great deference to those who have attained more knowledge than any other in the community. Kelinths are also responsible for the rare deviant in society, and are almost always successful in correcting the behaviour of such troublemakers. There is no real way to sum up their contributions to society, as they are social worker and historian, singer and academician, teacher and drummer. A Malpheggi must study many years before (s)he is recognised as a Kelinth and this occasion is considered a great time for joy among the family of the new Kelinth. The formal recognition ceremony is conducted by the foremost local shaman with the entire community present. Upon becoming a Kelinth, a Malpheggi stops his or her former role, something that does not happen even if they had become Queen or the community chief, yet another sign of the Kelinth's importance to the swamp dwellers.

As evidenced by the previous descriptions, the shaman plays an integral role in the Malpheggi world.

They are often very humble, realising they can never hope to know and fulfil every wish of Ka, and their flaws are thus acceptable to the community as a whole. They are seen as the guides to the next life though, and a such have great respect and any error is seen as worse than if another Malpheggi had committed the wrong. There are a wide variety of rituals and ceremonies that a Malpheggi shaman must know in order to be recognised as properly fulfilling his or her duties. Shamans do not correct wrongs as often as the Kelinths do, but it is still often their responsibility as well.

Oddly, foragers rank a high role in society despite their large numbers. As they are more integral to the day to day functioning of the community than any other, perhaps this can be a sign of the Malpheggi practicality (the farmers of other Hollow World civilisations rarely being considered vital). Foragers are expected to be knowledgeable of the wide variety of flora and fauna that exist in the swamp, and are often wiser about the effects of herbs and plants than the healers of other societies.

The Wokani are next on the status line, often relied upon in times of emergency, but rarely aiding in the daily life of the community. Wokani are very specialised, with those living

in the middle of the swamp focusing on magic affecting plants of the swamp, those living on the borders focusing on magic of combat, offensive and defensive. This is a very generalised statement, though, as Wokani can be found that specialise in magic affecting nearly every aspect of life. While their magic is of low level, they have created a vast number of spells unknown by other mages, either of the Hollow World or Outer World. They are often seen as separate from the community and have little role in community life nor much say in the life of the community, a large difference from the shaman.

The next group in the social status chain are the warrior/scout/guides who deal with foreigners. This work with foreigners is what gives their group the low status it maintains, though it is seen as awfully necessary, bringing in gold in mercenary pay and defending the civilised lizard people from their barbaric human and elven neighbours. The typical Malpheggi warrior/scout/guide is knowledgeable of every aspect of swamp life, but only moderately trained in weaponry, making them rather different than the uneducated but soldier-trained warriors of nearby civilisations. The average Malpheggi warrior relies on brute strength and

wits to compensate for this lack of combat training.

The craftsmen who provide the weapons, clothing and tools of the Malpheggi are not shown much honour, as these items are not considered necessary, but rather luxuries that the Malpheggi can afford to have now that they have a large and secure population. The Malpheggi, while taking pride in their work, are rather poor craftsmen and men, their tools considered crude and primitive by nearly any other culture. Equal respect is given to tailors, smiths, fletchers and weavers as all these skills are considered to be equal in terms of need and value.

The next to last group in Malpheggi society, still shown great respect by the rest of the community (there are no 'untouchables' or other outcasts), are those who cannot work. The elderly and young (both in smaller proportions than in other civilisations as mentioned earlier) and the disabled (physically or mentally) fill out much of this category. They are still responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the community but they are not relied upon as are the other groups in society.

The lowest group in the Malpheggi social status scale are the adventurers. The reckless, impractical Mal-

pheggi who wishes to see more of the outside world or who goes alone or in a small group to deal with menaces of the swamp is valued only if they make an impact of great import (say, finding an ancient relic of the Malpheggi or killing a rampaging T-Rex that the individual communities cannot handle). Adventurers are supported by each community they arrive at, in hopes that they will either settle down or eventually commit a remarkable achievement, but the locals rarely socialise with these nomads. Still, the situation is better for those who stay inside the swamp than for those who head out and must deal with the prejudices of each nation. Those who exit the swamp often do so because of the negative Malpheggi attitude to adventurers. A shaman or a wokan who adventures is treated the same as any other adventurer, as the decision to seek fame causes a great loss of face.

This, then, is the social status system among the Malpheggi. Respect is often linked to increased responsibility and increased aid to the local community, as well as focusing on the practically useful and knowledge-oriented groups in society. It is not egalitarian, nor is it merit-based, but it is often considered a useful, functional system by the Lighthouse scholars who have

compared it to the other Hollow World societies.

One last note: the course of life a Malpheggi pursues is of their choice. The lone exception is when it comes to being a Queen, a decision made by Ka. Granted, a Malpheggi may not have the skills to lead, the memory needed to be a Kelinth or the natural magical talent needed to be a Shaman or a Wokan. Any Malpheggi may study the rituals or the magic or the lore though, and it is only when they realise themselves that they are not fit that they seek another way of life. The Wokani and those groups below them have a negative stigma attached to them, making them less attractive and less represented though. Malpheggi seem to judge themselves well, and do not shy from the lesser occupations, creating a fairly stable society.

Foreign Relations

The Malpheggi, while selling their services as mercenaries and scouts to their neighbours, have a decidedly negative view of the nearby civilisations. Generally, they view Azcan, Schattentafen and Neathar societies as uncivilised, barbaric and violent. The constant battles, the different treatment of people based solely on gender, the inability to survive in the swamp on their own and other traits all mark the humans and elves as inferior, a

moral often taught to the young by the older generations. All hiring of mercenaries or scouts is conducted through the community leaders at the border of the swamp, as the Queen cannot be expected to second such decisions which occur often and at two opposite ends of the swamp. Should a community leader be found to make a poor decision, though, in such matters, (s)he will likely be replaced, as dealings with foreigners be conducted as perfectly as possible.

The Malpheggi occasionally must acquire materials not found in the swamp. They do this by asking for goods oftentimes instead of money for their services as mercenaries and guides. Otherwise, they simply use the gold they have been paid to pay for these items that they are in need of.

As cited, the only relations they have with the two main groups nearby are as mercenaries and scouts hired by both sides, with allegiance to neither. The only major changes in the future would if a representative of either side did something drastic, like an attack on the Malpheggi, or seizure of currently unoccupied swamplands. In such a case, the lizard men and women would likely sever all ties with the opposing nation and destroy any troops they sent

near the swamp. The key players in these interactions are the leaders of the Azcan and Schattentalen fronts and the Malpheggi communities near the front.

Domestic Relations

In the matter of intercommunity disputes, the problem is settling by a council consisting of several leaders. Three Kelnths from the area where the problem exists are chosen, preferably one from each of the communities involved in the dispute and one from a community not involved. Two former community leaders from nearby localities and the two most esteemed shamans of the area round out the council. Often the number of members or the occupations of the councillors is changed based on circumstances, but the 7 individuals mentioned are considered the proper balance. Intercommunal disputes often involve the rare fertile regions in the rather desolate swamps, where food is of high value. Should the matter be of great importance, both sides (or all sides involved, if more than 2) bring the dispute before the Queen, who makes the decision.

Entertainment

The Malpheggi are not a very joy-seeking people. They get their pleasure from the simple enjoyments

of every day life and do not have extravagant affairs to thrill themselves, a far cry from the Azcan tlachtli tournaments and the approaches of their other neighbours. They do not seek joy out, but rather find it in what their neighbours consider tedious work only done because it maintains society.

Critters

Though they were plagued by a variety of swamp dwellers when they first arrived from the Known World, the lizard people have since made the swamp theirs. Many insects and reptiles still thrive, but the Malpheggi communities are as free from these pests as possible. Larger pests, like black dragons, are known to the Malpheggi as well, but they have learned to keep their distance from these beasts whenever possible, making their homes far from the lairs of these beasts. Also, the Malpheggi are quite resistant to the illnesses that the insects of the swamp often carry, and in other cases have developed antidotes and cures to these diseases. A foreigner, though, will likely be plagued by all these hazards, especially if (s) he does not have a Malpheggi guide. When the Malpheggi are troubled by an animal threat, they react quickly, banding together several nearby communities and attacking the problem head-on. With the worst problems,

like an entire dinosaur herd or a black dragon, they often hold back instead, gathering forces from miles around, before acting. Never will they relinquish ground in the swamp they consider theirs to anyone.

Housing

A large part of why the Malpheggi are viewed as simple and barbaric by humans is that their dwellings are very simple. Due to the land in which they live, where a house would be rather impossible, they build houses on wooden stilts with ladders leading up and down as well as mud huts. Each community generally has one type of housing or the other and the Kelinths often argue among each other over which one is superior, almost always supporting the type used by their community. Often though the choice is simply based on territory, the huts being on the firmer areas of the swamp and the stilt-supported houses on the less firm regions.

People

Ethnicity

While Malpheggi vary greatly in colour, and while many communities have arisen in different locales around the swamp, they see themselves as one people. Such a belief descends from the days when they first came to the

Hollow World, few in number, and had to cope with the reality of being a small group reliant on one another. Also, as racism is not common on Mystara, it makes little sense for them to see skin colour as at all important. There are no tribal conflicts within the Malpheggi, though they possessed such on the Outer World. Such ideas were lost in the transition to the Hollow World and most Malpheggi would scoff at the notion at such divisive ideas. The communities they have formed see one another as brethren and not as another group with which they are in competition.

Gender

The two genders are basically equal in Malpheggi society, with more or less equal numbers of scouts, foragers, kelinths (see Social Status section) and shamans being female and male. The Malpheggi are ruled by a queen, as is each community. The Malpheggi do not focus much on gender issues, and their speech is decidedly gender-neutral, more so than any other Hollow World culture. The tendency of nearby cultures to treat their women as lower beings is frowned down upon by the Malpheggi, who see it as a sign of barbarism.

(It should be pointed out that many of these same cultures see the equal-

ity of the Malpheggi as barbaric in nature.)

Marriage

Malpheggi generally marry for love, but occasionally the child of a communal leader will be placed in an arranged marriage. Malpheggi are rather forward, and when they do care for another often make their emotions known to the other party at first opportunity, avoid long courtship rituals. Marriages are presided over by a shaman of Ka. In the situation that two Malpheggi of different communities marry, the couple often moves into the land of the female, though it is not uncommon for the two to join the male's community or a different one altogether (often in such a case one between the former homes of the two). Malpheggi marriage vows are recited again after 1,3 and 5 years and every 5 years after that. If either lizard person does not want to renew the vows, then the couple becomes separated and if one is from another community, they often return to it. This is a rather rare circumstance though, and most Malpheggi are married for life once they have found the right mate.

Family Structure

All Malpheggi take responsibility for the young of the community

and try to raise them and discipline them as if they were their own. The parents do take final responsibility for their own brood, though, and will always place their life ahead of the life of their child. The lizard men and women do not have a typical familial arrangement though, adapting more of a communal approach. Often members of a family will be separated for hours, days or weeks on end if called upon by the community to undertake an action necessary for the sustainment of the group at large. This is accepted as a necessary part of life and when it occurs the community takes an even larger role in caring for a spouse or a child left behind. While they are very interdependent, the Malpheggi are also raised to be very independent, capable of surviving on their own for long durations. As such, when a Malpheggi is found away from the family she or he loves, their focus is often found to be on the task ahead and not on those they left behind.

Age

As mentioned, all Malpheggi take an active role in educating and training the community's youth. Malpheggi though mature faster than humans and do not reach the same losses of mind and body with age, meaning most Malpheggi are in good shape, of sound mind and capable for fending

for themselves. Respect is not given to older Malpheggi simply due to their age, rather respect and admiration are gained by impressive deeds of any sort or achievement of a high social status. Past the age of maturity, few Malpheggi track their ages, finding it a silly notion of humans.

Malpheggi Community

The village of Klippat is on the eastern side of the Malpheggi swamp and is fairly standard as Malpheggi communities go. The community is headed by Shiantha, who has been leading her people for the past 17 cycles. A leader who does her job by letting the community do day-to-day affairs as is and only steps in when required to do so, she is acknowledged by the lizard people of the area as a capable headswoman. She works as a forager in addition to these responsibilities and is rather knowledgeable as to herbal medicines and the uses of the various plants in the locality.

The village's lone Kelinth, Ilpashan, is new to the full responsibilities of the role, having been giving additional burdens when his teacher and mentor Drallect died of old age. He is very wise, or so the opinion of the locals goes, and has been accepted easily into the role of the only Kelinth in the community. He still has great doubts

about his ability and thinks Kelinths should be all-knowing, as he felt Drallect was, and he is very frightened that he will let his community down by not filling the role properly.

Ilpashan's wife of 12 cycles, Hulnibivi, is one of the community's 5 shamans. Her assurances of his skill in his new role are probably the main reason he has not despaired yet. Showing worship of superiors is common in the family, she too shows great respect to her superior, the village's head shaman, Drofkil.

Drofkil, Son of Kilbitan

History: Drofkil was born 69 cycles ago. From when he was a mere tyke of age 5, he knew he wished to serve Ka with all his life. All his life has since been occupied with this intention. He became a shaman at the young age of 16 and has been the chief shaman of the village for 22 cycles now. Despite his great adherence to Ka's teachings, he has not forgotten that his priorities also include serving the community, which he does a magnificent job of.

Personality: Drofkil is generally outgoing, kind and compassionate. When someone does not properly fulfil their role in a ceremony or when someone performs a selfish act that damages the community,

he becomes extremely enraged and often violent. This violent side is not quieted by anyone in the community, but rather accepted as simply an overabundance of zeal on Drofkil's part. He feels it is his job to instil in the other shamans and citizens of the community the same respect for Ka he has.

Appearance: A not very imposing lizard man, Drofkil stands 6'2" and is a bit withered from old age. His light grey skin is many-wrinkled and he looks older than he is. His sole possession is an amulet that has been in the community for hundreds of years, with a picture of Ka engraved on its ivory surface.

Combat Notes: AC 5; hp 27; At 2 claws; D 1-4+1, 1-4+1; save C8; ML 12; AL N; S 13, I 10, W 16, D 5, Co 11, Ch 17. Languages: Dragon, Lizard Man, Neathar. General Skills: Survival (Swamp) (I), Leadership (Ch), Honour Ka (W+2) Spells per day: 2/2/1.

Just as passionate about their work as Drofkil is Shilfath, a scout who ensures that the creatures of the

swamp do not interfere with the lives of the peaceful community.

Shilfath, Daughter of Gippara

History: Shilfath was born 20 cycles ago to a couple that provided the community most of the scouting it needed. She grew up idolising the work her parents did, and has followed in their footsteps now that her father has died when he stumbled upon the area where some alligators resided. Her mother no longer goes out on scouting missions since that time, but Shilfath's enthusiasm for the work knows no limits.

Personality: A very emotional lizard woman when it comes to her joy of her work and her love of her parents, Shilfath can also be very cold and calm. When out scouting, she shuts out all emotions, as she knows fear, sadness or enthusiasm can all lead to a quick death. She fears it was her father's anxiety to prove his worth to the community that caused his death, as he ventured too far from the general patrol range.

Appearance: A rather beautiful girl by lizard person standards, her love of scouting and of her parents comes way before any would-be husband. She is an opal black in coloration, with yellow speckles on her arms, and stands 6'4". She is a bit on the thin side, as

any excess weight would slow down escape from any hazard she finds.

Combat Notes: AC 5; hp 18; At 1 battle axe-skilled or javelin; D d8+3 or d6; save C3; ML 12;AL N; S 14;I 12;W 10;D 16;Co 14; Ch 14. Languages: Dragon, Lizard Man, Neathar. General Skills: Survival (Swamp) (I+1),Stealth (Swamp) (D), Nature Lore (Swamp) (I)

Also venturing out from the community are the foragers who bring in the food that sustains the small group. Diligent to take just what is needed, they go out each day and bring in the herbs and plants needed, letting others handle the gathering of meaty foods. One of the many foragers who go out for this daily work is Ziltib, a middle-aged male.

Ziltib, Son of Brakkil

History: Ziltib was born 38 cycles ago, the son of the former head shaman of the community. He was not shown any preference of course due to this circumstance and is today your standard member of the community. He chose the simple life of the forager over his father's way of work because he does not think himself capable of such brainy work.

Personality: Ziltib is a calm and gentle soul who only wishes the best

for his community and his wife and children. He is content with his work and with his lot and doesn't understand why a human in such position would wish for more.

Appearance: Standing 6'7", Ziltib is a sapphire-green in coloration. He is of moderate build and looks ... well, average. The kind of guy who would get lost in the crowd easily by personality's sake, his looks simply make that possibility all the more likely.

Combat Notes: AC 5; hp 3; At 2 claws; D d4+1, d4+1; save C1; ML 8; AL N; S 14; I 9; W 11; D 12; Co 10; Ch 9. Languages: Dragon, Lizard Man, Neathar. General Skills: Survival (Swamp)(I), Nature Lore (Swamp)(I+1), Mysticism (Ka)(W)

Whereas Ziltib is your typical lizard man, Mardili, a wokan, is quite "out there". The shaman's other wokan, Ghaliwan, specialises in making illusions of Nithians (though hardly good ones seeing as how he's never met one), Mardili is interested in something very odd..

Mardili, Daughter of Mardela

History: Mardili was born to the life of the wokan which she has followed all 43 cycles of her life. Her mother, Mardela, always told her how strange

and useless wokani were, but this never dissuaded Mardili, who has certainly become strange and useless. Mardili is generally an outcast in the community and with rather good reason.

Personality: Mardili is obsessive with her goal in life: talking to flies. She believes she has worked out hundreds of spells concerning flies and other bugs, but few have any real effect as her active imagination lets her believe they do actually have an effect. She figures the only way to develop a spell concerning talking to flies, though, is by capturing a black hag and learning from those knowledgeable and filthy beings. She is far too smart to consider such an act herself though, so convinced her nephew, Wilkin, an adventurer and fellow outcast, to go. He has been gone a year and none has heard back from him, leaving his family and community to be glad the little adventure-some leach of resources is gone and leaving Mardili hopeless that she will find another to volunteer. There's always outsiders to the community though...

Appearance: Mardili stands 6'6" and is of average looks, as lizard women go. She is yellowish-green in colour and is of very light build, seeing as how she does no work. She

also tends to eat quite a bit, thinking it stimulates the mind, and as such is quite overweight.

Combat Notes: AC 7;hp 19;Att 1 short sword; D d6+1;Sv C5;ML 9;Al C; S 13;I 16;W 6;D 5;Co 9; Ch 8.
General Skills: Survival (Swamp)(I), Drinking (Co+2),Persuasion (Ch)

Mardili is one of the rare Malpheggi who does not fit into the community/mutual aid view, though, and the community functions well despite these rare exceptions. Unless any predator moves into the area or the political situation of the area shifts dramatically, the community will continue as is for a long time, growing slowly and progressing positively.

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