

# Vharata

*"The Zoth-em have no honor. They are not true Vharata. They gave up that status when they began to reconquer Dijat. A true Vharata would have declared war, and never attacked the innocent. Borud of the Zoth-em doesn't even show his face to them but, like a coward, lies to them and controls their leaders through bribes. A true Warrior always faces his enemy. The day will come when we will crush these blasphemers, and the Empire will once again be an unstoppable force, our name will once again mean power."*

## - Emperor Grun of Veh'gor Clan

Next to the Dread Thahazi no race is feared as much as the Vharata. From birth, the Vharata are trained as warriors, and only the strong make it through the training. Although aggressive and warlike, the Vharata are not mindless killers, and have a highly disciplined Code of the Warrior that all Vharata must follow. Most Vharata would accept death before dishonoring the Code.

The Code was established over a thousand years ago by the warlord Grun, at a time when the Vharata were nothing more than animal like predators. All across the planet Vhar, warlords and feudal clans fought among each other for land and power. As clans became more powerful, so did their weapons. The Vharata were destroying each other at an alarming rate. Many of the warlords knowing that their entire race was headed for extinction, called for a meeting of all the clans. Attempts at peace treaties were called but failed. It seemed they could not escape their aggressive nature. The Vharata were predators and lived for battle.

Grun declared that it was "life without honor" that was truly killing the Vharata, not battle. Grun and his clan became prophets, spreading their "Code" across Vhar, destroying all who would not submit. Eventually most of the clans did submit and Grun became the first Emperor of Vhar.

Over the next few hundred years the Empire grew, eventually reaching beyond their solar system. At its height the Empire ruled over 40 worlds, including the Andavi and the Dijat. Terror struck the hearts of all who heard the word "Vharata." Even the powerful Alliance feared the might of the Vharata.

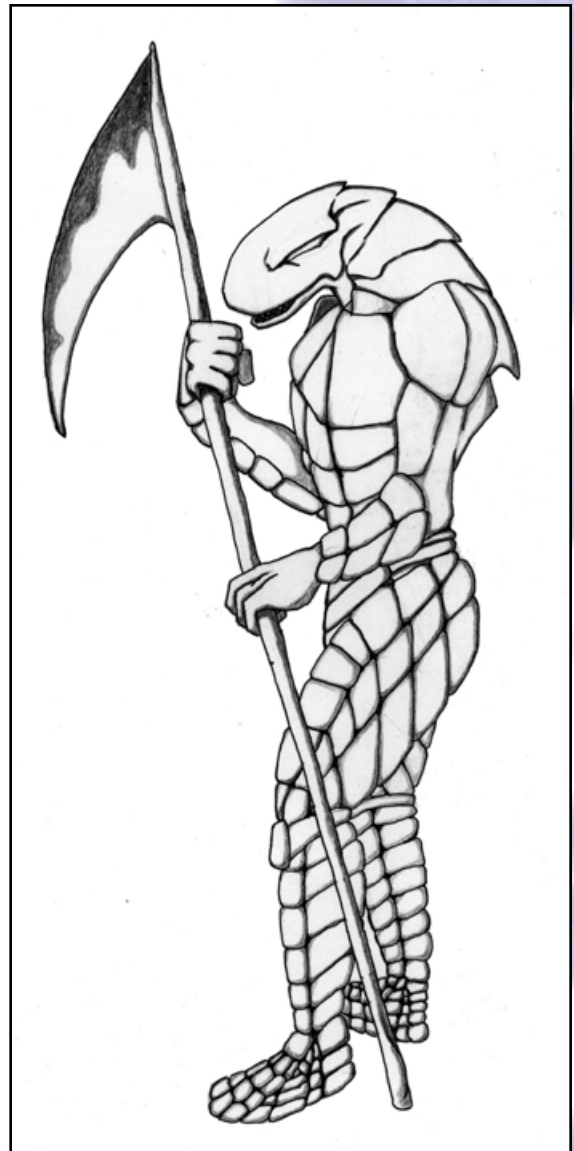
Unfortunately not even the power of the Empire could withstand the Thahazi. The Empire disintegrated back into feudal clans fighting among each other for land and power. Some, like the Zoth-em, openly oppose the Empire. The Zoth-em even oppose the Code of Grun, and are no longer considered true Vharata by the Empire and most other clans. A total of fourteen worlds are ruled by the Vharata, nine by the Empire and the others by independent clans. Even with their diminished power, their reputation as fearless warriors precedes them. The mere mention of a Vharata strikes fear into the hearts of all races.

**Physical Description:** The Vharata evolved from insectoid predators on Vhar. Hulking beasts, reaching up to 10 to 12 feet in height, the Vharata are a truly terrifying sight. They have no internal skeleton but have a heavily armored exoskeleton covering their entire body with glossy black chitinous plates. Even their eyes are protected by transparent chitin. Their mouth and jaws, consisting of four extendible mandibles, is also protected by armor, opening only when feeding. They have no nose, but instead have two organs on the front of the neck used for breathing and vocalizing. These organs are the only unprotected part of Vharata. Vharata are actu-

ally quadrupedal creatures. They typically move on all fours, but are equally comfortable standing upright. They are often said to have a "robotic" appearance.

Vharata typically live from 100 to 200 years. They are hermaphroditic (possessing both male and female organs) and lay eggs. One Vharata typically gives birth to one to three children.

**Relations:** The Vharata are criticized by the Alliance and Humans as being barbaric war-mongers. The Vharata however say that the Alliance are the true barbarians. The Siduri are hypocrites, ruling from the shadows, imposing their way of life on others. The only difference between the Empire and the Alliance is that the Empire is honest, say the Vharata. Both the Empire and Alliance conquer worlds, the Alliance simply does it in the guise of "equality", when in reality it is the Siduri who truly benefit. When the Vharata conquer a world they do so with no false pretense of equality. They place themselves as the rulers and unlike the Siduri they ask only for a small tithe to the Empire, placing no judgments on their subject's religion or culture.



Although seen as war-mongers they are looked upon with a sense of awe by Humans, Andavi, and Dijat. They are respected for their loyalty, honor, and sheer power. Of all the races in the galaxy, the Vharata respect only the Andavi and the Pank "honorable warriors." The Ka'Ubla while respected for their discipline and courage are criticized for "protecting the weak," and their "any means necessary" view of warfare. They fight with courage and selflessness, but still fight in the shadows like animals, which denies them of honor.

**World-view:** The Vharata believe that only the strong deserve to live. Conflict and war are a natural part of the Universe, and the weak should not be protected. This is not to say that the Vharata are cruel. They believe that although only the strong have the right to rule, with this strength comes responsibility. Strength is not only physical but mental and spiritual. Without honor, loyalty, and honesty, strength is meaningless.

It is perhaps because of this that despite their high level of technology in other areas, their level of medical knowledge is surprisingly low. Healers and doctors make up the lowest level of the cast system.

**Religion:** Vharata practice ancestor worship, and believe in reincarnation. Vharata ancestors form a Celestial Empire which mimics Vharata society. The Celestial Empire is ruled by the First Vharata: Vhar (representing Strength) and Vharat (representing War). The next most important ancestor is Grun who represents Honor. Other ancestors include Gui (representing Anger) and Khgem (representing the Sword). The Celestial Empire eternally battles with Demon like creatures of light known as the Semiach. The Semiach are ruled by Kiahmech, the Lord of Lies. They are believed to reside within the Center Space.

Vharata pray to their ancestors at least twice day, once when they wake that they may face their enemies and fight honorably, and again when before they sleep that they may live through the night to fight again the next day.

Battle is central to their religion and highly ritualized. Before battle Vharata must pray to their ancestors, not for victory, but to fight with honor and serve the Empire. The use of poisons, hidden explosives, or any form of combat that does not directly face the enemy is considered dishonorable. Combat is usually entered with a blood curdling scream, announcing their presence to the enemy. Ambush are permissible as long as the Vharata does not attack from behind.

Training to become a Warrior begins as soon as the child is able to crawl, around 3 years of age. The training is harsh and some do not survive. The training is completed with a Pain Ceremony, in which the student's teachers attach nerve inducers to the students body. Incompletion of the training does not necessarily mean death; however, some may be eligible to become one the

Guijor (explained below) or even a Maker (explained below).

According to the Code of Grun, a Warrior must never kill for personal reasons, although killing to avenge a dishonored (i.e. killed by back stabbing or poisoned) comrade is permissible. A Warrior lives only for his Lord and the Empire. Any Warrior that behaves against the Code is expected to commit suicide by stabbing themselves through the mouth with a ritual dagger, called a Vharesh. Only in this way does the dishonored Vharata redeem himself and may rest eternally with their ancestors. Those that don't are doomed to the abyss, becoming one of the Semiach.

The most unique Vharata ritual is perhaps their funeral practices. The exoskeleton of the deceased is dried and preserved and displayed in the homes of the closest relatives. Particularly honored Warriors are put on display in the Imperial Palace on Vhar for all to see.

**Family Structure and Organization:** Vharata family structure is based on the clan and caste systems. Their clan is their "family" and are raised according to their caste. There are three castes, the most powerful being the Makers: engineers, artisans, and holy men.

Next are the Warriors, made of twenty-one clans who rule the Vharata. Most of these clans hold fiefs under the Empire, six are independent, and the last are the Guijor, the Emperor's elite. The Guijor give up their very bodies to the Emperor, becoming cyborgs in order to become a more effective warrior. Ironically they are often chosen from the physically weak, but mentally strong youth who fail the initial warrior training.

The lowest caste are the Laborers: consisting of farmers, healers, and musicians.

Usually a Vharata cannot move from their birth caste to another profession, but there are exceptions. All Vharata clans in the Empire, including the independent clans follow this system, the one exception being the Zoth-em. Zoth-em have done away with the caste system in favor of a merchant, capitalist system much like the MDC. Among the Zoth-em, those with money have the power.

Some Vharata have chosen to give up this system altogether and join the Alliance, or even become traders or bodyguards.

Very little is known about their reproductive practices, a secret they keep from outsiders.

**Names:** Vharata names are harsh and guttural. Their language uses stereo harmonics, creating a slightly metallic sound, from their dual vocal chords, something very difficult (but not impossible) for other races to pronounce. All Vharata have three names and a nickname. At birth they are usually given a nickname, often translating to "Rock," "Bug," "Brave," or "Big." Upon reaching adulthood, they are given a Warrior's name (or Maker's name, or

## Vharata

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Base Defense Bonus	Fortitude Save	Reflex Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+1	+2	+0	+0	Natural Armor +1, +1 Constitution
2	+2	+2	+3	+0	+0	+1 Strength, +1 Constitution
3	+3	+2	+3	+1	+1	Natural Amor +2, +1 Strength, Large Size



Laborer's name whatever the case may be). Some common Warrior names are: Grun, Grumesh, Heg, Agreh, and Zogah. Their last name consists of their clan name followed by their caste name. The current ruling clan is the Beh'gor-Warrior and the most powerful Maker clan is the Kheem-Maker.

**Role Playing:** Vharata PCs can be either Imperial Warriors sent on a mission for their Lord, or Zoth-em gangsters. Makers are rarely adventurers. Imperial Warriors are proud and constantly concerned with honor, quick to accuse another of dishonoring them or their clan. A dishonored Vharata fights to the death, but will usually accept the surrender of their opponent. Most Zoth-em are opportunists and thieves, with no respect for the Empire. They are hated by their fellow Vharata who, "won't even honor them with combat." Some Zoth-em adventurers however are outcasts, wishing to redeem their clan in the eyes of the Emperor. These Vharata, filled with the shame of their dishonorable clan are usually "Super-Vharata" even more concerned with honor than other Vharata.

Vharata often have the Short Temper Weakness. Almost all Vharata Warriors are Stalkers. Zoth-em are sometimes Unseen or Politicians.

## Vharata Racial Traits

- Vharata receive a +2 to Strength but a -2 to Intelligence. The Vharata are not necessarily unintelligent but tend not to cultivate that side of themselves. Most Vharata would rather fight than educate themselves.

- **Medium Size:** As Medium creatures, Vharata have no special bonuses or penalties. However, a full grown 3rd Level Vharata is Large size and receives the appropriate bonuses and penalties.

- Vharata base speed is 30 feet

- **Run on all fours:** Vharata can move on all fours at a rate of 40 feet. It cannot have a weapon in hand when moving in this way.

- **Thin Atmosphere environment:** The Vharata's home planet has a very thin atmosphere. Their bodies have adapted to this giving them the Strong Lungs Feat for free. They also take no penalties for high altitudes up to 10,000 feet.

- +2 to Intimidation. Their fierce reputation precedes them. Most run at the mere site of a Vharata.

- **Non-Humanoid form:** The Vharata do not traditionally wear clothes or armor and no one makes any to fit a Vharata. A Vharata can have armor made specially for them at five times the cost. Note that the benefits from its natural armor does not stack with donned armor.

- **Color Blind:** The Vharata home world is dark and almost devoid of color. Few of its life forms, including the Vharata, have developed the ability to see color.

- **Dark Vision:** Vharata can see up to 60 feet in complete darkness.

- **Alien Nervous System:** Vharata neurology is wholly different than most other sentient races in the galaxy. They have no sense of fear and are immune its effects. Also, they gain the Anti-Psychic Mind feat free, depriving them of the ability to use Psychic Powers (but

can learn to use psychic tech).

- **Radiation Resistance:** Vharata are immune to level one radiation but take the normal penalties from more intense radiation.

- **Scent:** What the Vharata lacks in sight, they make up for with their sense of smell. By making a Wisdom check (DC 10), Vharata can track by scent. Treat as the Track feat, but surface conditions and poor visibility are a factor. The DC increases by a factor of every hour that the trail grows colder.

- **Automatic Languages:** Siduri Trade and Vharata.

- **Racial Levels:** Vharata can take a few levels in "Vharata" to develop their natural abilities further.

## Vharata Levels

**Wounds:** 1d10

**Spirit:** The Vharata gains a number of Spirit points equal to 4 + one-half his class level, rounded down; in addition to his or her Strength bonus, (if any) every time he attains a new level in this class.

**Skill Points at 1st Character Level:** (2+ Int modifier) x 4

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 2+ Int modifier

**Class Skills:** Awareness (Wis), Climb (Str), Handle Animal (Chr), Intimidate (Chr), Jump (Str), Sense Motive (Wis), and Survival (Wis).

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Vharata are proficient in simple and heavy melee, and simple, automatic, and heavy firearms, and no armor.

## Age

As a character ages he or she changes. He or she grows wiser with experience but his or her body becomes frail. Most races mature slowly, reaching physical maturity at about 2/3rds of whatever middle age is for that race. Humans (and Andavi), however, mature incredibly fast. This is reflected by Racial Levels. By the time the average Humans is mature he or she has already gained valuable life experience. This is reflected by Class Levels, i.e.

### Ages

Races	Middle Age	Old	Venerable	Maximum Age
Andavi	35 years	55 years	70 years	+2d20 years
Aznor	N/A			
Dijat	150 years	225 years	300 years	+10d20 years
Human	40 years	70 years	100 years	+3d20 years
Ixion	N/A			
Narod	75 years	100 years	150 years	+10d20 years
Pank	50 years	80 years	120 years	+4d20 years
Siduri	125 years	200 years	260 years	+5d20 years
Uhr'Pishim	175 years	260 years	350 years	+20d20 years
Vharata	100 years	140 years	180 years	+5d20 years