KUKULKANI LORE
Millennia ago, long before even the dream of the United Worlds had been conceived by the rulers of Terra, human tribes dwelled in scattered settlements throughout the planet’s continents. Most of Terra’s peoples struggled to eke out a nasty, brutish existence, but some few were blessed—for gods walked among them. Ancient lore claims that these gods had descended from heaven to rule the tribes of this barbaric planet. The myths and legends surrounding these beings gave rise to the religions of many of Terra’s peoples, including the Maya.

Legions of Mayan warriors devoted themselves to a deity they came to know as Kukulkan. This living god manifested as a giant serpentine warlord with glittering wings and feathers fashioned from polychromatic metals. Kukulkan was but one of the reptilian god-beings, the Coatl, who came to ancient Terra from the vastness of space. Using technologies far beyond the bronze weapons and tools of the Mayans, the Coatl had traveled millions of light years from their home world to cow the young civilizations of Terra, indoctrinate the people to embrace Coatl ideals, and train the hardest among them as their willing warrior-zealots, the Cult of Kukulkan.

The Kukulkani offered their Coatl masters regular sacrifices of human lives to bolster the divine power of the gods. In ceremonial rituals and grandiose sacrifices, the Kukulkani surrendered the life energies of the weak and wounded to the Coatl. At times, the Kukulkani warred against neighboring peoples to bring captives by the hundreds to the holy ziggurats for sacrifice. Ritual blades cut thousands of still-beating hearts from the chests of these offerings, and the energies of thousands of lives pleased the gods.

Unbeknownst to the priests and zealots of the cult, these sacrifices constituted more than ritual displays of fealty and loyalty. Coatl science had long ago unlocked the secrets of entropic energy, enabling the alien beings to utilize life force to fuel their technologies. The tecpatl sacrificial knives gifted to the Kukulkani by the living gods harvested the bioenergies of those sacrificed, which in turn powered the weapons, technology, and starships-turned-temples of the Coatl. Kukulkan himself directed his worshippers to sacrifice human lives by the thousands to fill the Coatl’s insatiable demand for bioenergy.

In time, the Coatl chose to leave ancient Terra. Kukulkan appeared to his people in all his glory, his vast metallic wings casting ominous shadows across his worshippers, and demanded that they prepare for his exodus to the stars. In a frenzy, the Kukulkani fell upon friend and foe alike and brought tens of thousands of captives to the bloody altars. The devotion of his faithful pleased Kukulkan. He
chose one thousand and one of his most loyal servants to travel with him to the heavens. Thus, in the ninth century of Terran history, the Coatl and the chosen Kukulkani boarded ziggurat warships powered with the lifeblood of thousands and left Terra forever.

The Coatl flotilla cruised empty space for eons, stopping for brief decades on alien worlds to harvest the bioenergies of the indigenous peoples. In these efforts, the Coatl came to appreciate Kukulkani’s foresight. Rather than exposing themselves to harm, the Coatl could send the Kukulkani to reap the bloody harvest required to power the fleet. Over time, the Coatl rewarded their servants with new technologies and genetic augmentations to make them even more fierce and better able to do their masters’ bidding.

The arrival of the Coatl and Kukulkani to an unwelcoming and environmentally toxic world known as Attr would change the planet’s future irrevocably. The Coatl had been drawn to this mineral-rich planet far from the major space lanes by an advanced species called the Alteghran, the biological ancestors of the Dragyri. The Alteghran ruled throns of hulking warrior-servants brimming with ripe bioenergy irresistible to the Coatl. To feed their master’s hunger for the planet’s life forms, the Kukulkani armed themselves, boarded the landing skiffs, leapt to the void-road teleporters, and descended upon the Alteghran.

The Kukulkani had never met such resistance, and the battles with the Alteghran infantry were harsh, bloody affairs. Seeing many of his faithful warriors fall to the advanced technologies of the Alteghrans in battle after battle, Kukulkan, for the first time, gave the Supreme Commander of his war host the command to retreat. Many Kukulkani casualties were left behind. Flush with victory, the Alteghran soldiers felt invincible, and their pride would later inspire them to revolt against their masters.

Centuries later, long after the attack of the Coatl fleet had faded to little more than a folktale among the Dragyri slaves, the people of the United Worlds came to Attr. The megacorporations brought researchers and colonists, who turned the unforgiving planet into a test site for developing dangerous technologies. One megacorporation, Isuza Dynamics, explored the rocky foothills of Attr and the strange tunnels beneath them. There, a research scout found the nearly fossilized remains of what looked like a man...a huge man. While the ancient remains eluded conclusive medical analysis, Isuza scientists discovered curious equipment alongside the ancient corpse. Surprisingly intact after so many centuries, the devices were whisked away to the corporation’s labs and studied intently. In time, Isuza Dynamics unlocked some of the secrets of Coatl technology and gained a rudimentary understanding of their system of biological energy transference. Following the example of the Coatl, Isuza scientists learned how to turn life into fuel.

Isuza raced to develop technologies to leverage this new understanding and created the revolutionary entropic cell, a massive battery powered by decaying organic biomass. Although the entropic cell was primitive compared to the technologies of the Coatl, it was light years ahead of any of the fuel and fusion technologies of the other megacorporations. Further, the invention of the entropic cell enabled Isuza Dynamics to develop the CORE artificial intelligence.

The CORE, self-replicating robots with a mission to gather life energy, awakened long after the people of the United Worlds had abandoned Attr to its fate. Upon awakening, the CORE engaged the power cells powering the primary
entropic drive and sent a ripple of biological energy into the planet's ionosphere. There, the ancient probes of the Coatl detected this new source of powerful bioenergy.

Recognizing the coordinates these probes transmitted, the ageless Kukulkan decreed that he would return to Attr to taste the new life energies and to impose his will upon the world that had once dealt his followers their greatest defeat. Kukulkan took command of a single ziggurat warship, left the Coatl fleet behind, and conveyed his war host to Attr. Vengeance upon the thrice-damned Alteghrans was nigh.

The Kukulkani crusaders landed upon a planet very different from the one their ancestors had left behind. Where once were barren rock and deserts, a bountiful garden bloomed, teeming with life and enticing bioenergy. The devoted Crusade Captain Quetzol prepared his army for the attack, intending to sacrifice all the life on the planet to his living god and return victorious to the Coatl fleet.

However, instead of Alteghrans, the Kukulkani encountered humans, shadows of their past from millennia ago. Some of the humans closely resembled their Mayan ancestors. These people dwelled in Attr’s cities and seemed easy prey. Other humans living in outpost camps showed signs of genetic manipulation and cybernetic enhancement. While these people promised to be more stubborn foes, they teemed with bioenergy and thus also made tempting sacrifices. Other groups of once-human Terrans had evolved powers that rivaled those of the Coatl and had apparently reached the stars on their own. These tribes waged war against the other human settlements and feasted upon the flesh of the fallen.

As the Kukulkani host explored the planet further, they found pockets of unknown life forms evolving in bubbling mires of primordial ooze. These hive creatures were unlike anything the Kukulkani had seen, though Coatl scanners detected traces of Terran genes in these new organisms. While these creatures could by no means be considered human, they displayed ingenuity, tenacity, low cunning, and interestingly, enormous bioenergy signatures that could be harvested to power the Kukulkani crusade.

Captain Quetzol angrily discovered that the Alteghrans no longer inhabited Attr. Centuries ago, something had altered these once-fierce warriors, changing them into the barbaric Dragyri. While these debased creatures could momentarily slake the Kukulkan’s thirst for life energy, the crusaders’ quest for vengeance would remain unfulfilled. In disgust, Quetzol considered issuing the command to retreat and rejoining to the fleet.

However, Kukulkani scouts tasked with tracking the frequency signatures of the entropic drives to their sources discovered a great heresy—the unliving CORE perverting the biosciences of the Coatl to power base machines. Upon discovering this great affront to the living gods, the Kukulkani swore to crush every blasphemous machine to dust.

The Kukulkani have returned to Attr and shall not rest until all life has been harvested and every infidel machine has been destroyed.

Gods help them all.
**QUETZOL, CRUSADE CAPTAIN**

*By my hand, in your name, all worlds will suffer to sate your hunger. As it was, it ever shall be.*

—Quetzol

After decades of honorable service, Captain Quetzol was appointed to lead the Kukulkani invasion of Attr. Years ago, upon attaining the rank of Captain, he had been biologically enhanced with sequences transcribed from Coatl genetic samples. For the impending campaign, Quetzol endured further technomantic procedures to implant gravity field stabilizers and a bioelectric gauntlet better to meet the challenges of the unforgiving planet.

Quetzol was the first to step from the ziggurat ship into the planet’s acrid heat. His augmented eyes scanned the pallid sky and the alien landscape in search of Alteghrans. The scanners integrated into his war garb detected his foes in a nearby crevasse. Quetzol bellowed a battle cry commanding the Kukulkani to follow his charge. The war host, expecting an Alteghran stronghold, instead fell upon a humble Draygi mining camp. Bolts of raw energy from Quetzol’s gauntlet seared the air, immolating scores of the diminutive Dragyri. As the slaughter raged around him, a nagging doubt cooled Quetzol’s bloodlust. Where were the fearless devils that his forefathers had failed to vanquish?

After the massacre, Quetzol lifted a limp Draygi corpse. His tecpatl blade split its leathery skin, and with a twist, the creature’s entrails spilled onto the dusty rocks. Quetzol pulled the creature’s steaming heart from its chest. After a thousand blood sacrifices, Quetzol’s knowledge of cardiac anatomy was unsurpassed. He assessed the chambers and tissue and knew in an instant that the Alteghran were no more. His ancient enemies had devolved into the base animals whose bodies lay cooling around him. His hunger for vengeance would go unsatisfied. Nonetheless, the engines of the Coatl’s ziggurat required lives. Everything on the planet must die.

**WAR PRIEST**

*It weren’t how quick they set upon us. An’ it weren’t how they called fire from the sky. It were right after, when they brought out them knives. They stole them prisoners’ souls! Their very souls! I wouldn’t touch one o’ them knives if’n Saint Mary herself told me to.*

—Pete Begley, Survivor of the initial Kukulkani assault on Forsaken territory

Only the most dutiful of the Devoted Priests rise to the rank of War Priest. Aspirants to this hallowed rank must sacrifice offerings both numerous and worthy before their application is considered. The Great Cycle of genesis, growth, maturation, and decline informs the devotions of the War Priests, who acknowledge that even their own lives will one day come to an end and that their life energies will provide fuel for the technomantic engines.

While the Balam and Harvesters may make sacrifices of any type to the living gods, aspirant War Priests strive to select their offerings wisely. For instance, an ideal sacrifice might cause the death of an enemy commander at a crucial moment while simultaneously powering a technomantic ritual. Priests who ply their tecpatl blades in harmony with the divine rhythms of the living gods become likely candidates for the rank of War Priest. After one thousand and one such sacrifices, aspirants undertake the Rite of Tollan, a period of purification, study, and meditation, before their induction into the uppermost tier of Kukulkani society.

The War Priests’ tecpatl blades inspire terror in the enemy, particularly the Forsaken. When these blades harvest the life from a sacrifice, ghostly mists emerge, and keening shrieks fill the air. These screams often rout those few enemies who are still standing and will sate, at least momentarily Kukulkan’s divine hunger.
SUPREME WAR CAPTAIN

Of my opponent, I caught only glimpses during our withdrawal. His tactics bordered on the precognitive. He plied his strengths against our weaknesses. He answered each of our assaults with a perfect counter. He never relied on a single stratagem and never overextended himself. Were it not for my wits and our good fortune, I would not have survived to write this missive.

—Vikrus, Pale Father, in a report to Father Johann

Honed through experience, veterans of at least a thousand and one raids, and schooled in the wisdom of the codices of the Coatl, War Captains are the finest military minds of the Kukulkani. Promoted from the ranks of the Living Ancestors and Renowned Warriors, potential War Captains must endure dozens of trials testing their will and piety as well as the scrutiny of Kukulkan himself. Many do not survive.

Legend has it that Kukulkan reaches into the very spirit of the nominees to judge their very life essence. Should a candidate be found wanting, the living god consumes his life force, leaving only a desiccated husk. Those who survive the initial trials undergo rigorous training and techno-biological augmentation to improve their reflexes, cognitive function, and strength. Candidates learn the Coatl way of war described in the sacred battle codices and consecrate themselves through regular meditation and ritual.

Finally, the new Captain undergoes the Rite of Enigma, a mental trial in which he must fight a virtual battle, a complex tactical riddle posed by the War Council. Even in this mental simulation, death is possible. If the candidate survives and solves the enigma to the Council’s satisfaction, he is gifted with a badge of office, a macuahuitl, a war gauntlet, and a battle party to command.

NEW WARRIORS

I scoffed at the humans’ stories about these new devils, giant men with armor for skin and weapons of terrible power. Then I remember the stories from the warrens, tales of the ancient Alteghran and their enemies. Then did I know fear.

—Air Caste Guard Slave

Kukulkani Warriors understand the Great Cycle well and know that, for the moment, they exist in their prime. Warriors devote every moment of their lives to the worship of the Coatl and eagerly await new foes to sacrifice to their gods. By making holy offerings to the Coatl, Warriors become closer to that which they deem holy. This is a truth all Kukulkani know, and one they all hold sacred.

At harvest time, candidates for the Warrior Cycle compete in a festival known as the Hanal Pixan. At these times, candidates armed only with clubs engage in ritual combat with veteran Warriors armed with daggers. Those candidates who manage even a single touch are accepted into the Warrior Cycle. Those who lose the duel but survive return to the lives they new before the Hanal Pixan. The life forces of the mortally wounded are harvested to energize the transformation of the new class of Warriors.

New Warriors receive shields, war clubs, and blades and undergo the basic technomantic rituals and surgeries bestowed upon all Warriors, granting them longevity, strength, and great size. Warriors learn a style of combat that emphasizes speed and nonlethal techniques, for the Kukulkani seek to capture slaves for sacrifice to the Coatl. Warriors also learn two distinct battle calls. One, a somber call, pays respect to a fallen foe, acknowledging the skill of the enemy and bemoaning the loss of a sacrifice. The other, an exultant cry, beckons the War Priests to ply their tecpatl blades to collect the spirit energy that awaits them.
DEVOTED PRIESTS

It was like they changed their followers just by shoutin’ at ‘em. Made ‘em tougher or faster or stronger, all just by pointin’ with them daggers and callin’ out to the sky.

—Pete Begley, Survivor of the initial Kukulkani assault on Forsaken territory

Devoted Priests are not trained. They are forged. In the Great Cycle of life, many begin as simple Harvesters. Those who demonstrate great intellect, perhaps one in every thousand and one, may rise to the priesthood. Aspiring priests face dozens of hardships and trials, such as directing a ritual hunt while blinded and dueling another aspiring priest with technomantic rituals. Those who succeed in these ordeals may become fully vested Devoted Priests and enjoy rewards such as slaves, prestige, and the accolades of Kukulkan.

The cycle of a Devoted Priest involves constant learning. Through study, members of the priesthood add to their body of scientific knowledge, explore the intricacies of technomancy, and interpret the mysteries of the Great Cycle for the Kukulkani.

In battle, Devoted Priests serve in a support capacity through their link to the technomantic network. When Harvesters locate enemies, Devoted Priests direct their forces to respond. When superior numbers threaten the stalwart Warriors, Devoted Priests rush reinforcements to hold the Kukulkani line. The Devoted Priests’ greatest asset is their use of technomancy. With these rituals, the Devoted Priests can bolster their own troops, intimidate the naïve soldiers of barbaric worlds, and heal the injured with a moment of concentration and prayer. Though their powers are formidable, the priesthood uses its power sparingly, for each expenditure of energy must be replenished with additional sacrifice.

HARVESTERS

TARGET ACQUIRED. FIRING. SHOT EVADED. TARGET ACQUIRED. FIRING. SHOT EVADED. WARNING: PHYSICAL PROJECTILE INBOUND.

—Final transmission from CORE Scouting Force 811G7

Harvesters closely resemble their human progenitors, with minor genetic enhancements to bolster their strength, stamina, and tolerance to a range of climates—from frozen tundra to the withering heat of Attr. Harvesters receive training as both farmers and hunters, skills they employ while planetside, and collect the produce and animals to feed the Kukulkani people as well as the slaves and sacrifices to sustain the Coatl.

In battle, Harvesters serve as the eyes and ears of the war party. Built for speed rather than striking power, Harvesters can evade all but the fiercest fire and distract the enemy while the Warriors and Honored Dead move in to strike. When Harvesters do enter into melee with the enemy, their claws can rend both armor and flesh with modest proficiency. However, their true strength in battle lies in the deadly use of their atlatl.

The traditional atlatl is a primitive weapon, even by the standards of Attr, that hurls a long, flexible dart. When augmented by the gravitic manipulations of the Coatl, a Harvester’s atlatl dart can penetrate even thick armor plate. During the festival of Hanal Pixan, young Kukulkani compete in atlatl matches in which they attempt to disable, rather than kill, fleeing slaves. Those who excel at such competitions are considered prime for elevation to the Warrior Cycle. Many enemies of the Kukulkani have scoffed at the primitive atlatl, only to find themselves hamstrung and at the mercy of a Warrior Priest armed with tecpatl blades.
**BALAM**

I want me one of them guns! You see how it whittled down them Scuts? Quiet as a whisper an’ deadly as a hundred-foot chainsaw! Tomorrow, we’ll set us a trap, and I’ll get me my gun.

—War Chief Marshall “Half-Barrel” Barnes, the day before his warband vanished

Harvesters who distinguish themselves during the Hanal Pixan may be afforded the opportunity to join the Balam Cycle. The Coatl add further technological and genetic enhancements to these honored Harvesters to give them a predator’s olfactory sense and to improve their speed and strength with gravitic assistance nodes. An accurate and versatile hul’che firearm completes the arsenal of these skilled hunters.

The Balam serve as long-range scouts. With their gravitic implants, they can navigate terrain impassable to most Kukulkani forces. Their enhanced senses, once accustomed to a new world’s unique scents, can identify even the faintest traces of prey. Balam train themselves to detect the smells of synthetic materials, metals, and combustion engines as these things indicate the presence of intelligent targets, prime sacrifices for the Coatl.

Balam hunt in small packs and often prefer to wound their prey with a single flechette from their hul’che firearm. These rounds slice through flesh with ease and make small wounds that bleed profusely, enabling the Balam to track their prey as they retreat to their lairs. The Balam then transmit the location of these shelters to the War Priests and Captains, who can dispatch troops to begin the harvest. At other times, the Balam can switch to deadlier rounds that can stagger even the largest of foes or fire a stun-net to ensnare their prey for later sacrifice.

**HONORED DEAD**

We few survived only by luck and my own brilliance. Who knew that dead flesh, fit for my table, would prove so resilient? I am convinced that these walking meals are an affront to our sacraments.

—Vikrus, Pale Father, in a report to Father Johann

The Warriors of the Kukulkani know their place in the Great Cycle and that it is their place to live, fight, honor the gods, and die. However, if their skills be great and their hearts be true, a second birth may follow. After death, proven Warriors may receive the gift of the Unliving Cycle from the Coatl.

Devoted Priests perform the Rite of Reanimation with a crystal skull from a Cabrakan. The skull serves as a receptacle for the Warrior’s knowledge and prowess and is placed inside a body fashioned for it and bearing deadly talons. Thus, the Warrior joins the legions of Honored Dead, for whom service ends only in complete obliteration.

In some ways, the Honored Dead are living beings. Their flesh is animate beneath their armored mantles, and they communicate with Priests and Living Ancestors through the technomantic network. However, none of the original Warrior’s individuality survives the Rite of Reanimation, and only martial skill and devotion to the Coatl remain.

In battle, the Honored Dead function as heavy auxiliaries and unleash unfiltered technomantic blasts from their crystalline skulls. These energies often disintegrate the targets entirely, but such is the power of the Honored Dead that they capture the life energies of their opponents even as they destroy their corporeal forms. The crystalline skull itself houses the holy entropic energies the Coatl crave.
HONOR GUARD

Did ya see them huge, hulking fellers? My brutes’ll want some payback for Big Mike. Did ya see how he went down? One chop! Swoosh! No head! But don’t fret none. The ambush’ll do for them big’uns.

—War Chief Marshall “Half-Barrel” Barnes, the day before his warband vanished

The zeal of the Honor Guard stands out even among the fanatical hordes of the Kukulkani. Trusted by the gods themselves to protect the Priests, the Captains, and the Cabrakan, the members of the Honor Guard will stop at nothing, not even the sacrifice of their own life essence, to fulfill their duty.

None refuse the summons of the War Council when it seeks to expand the ranks of the Honor Guard. Each candidate is called upon to recount his deeds and sacrifices, which never number fewer than one thousand and one. If deemed worthy, the candidate enters the Tollan Chamber aboard the sacred ziggurat where he faces the judgment of Kukulkan. What transpires there is never spoken of, for the candidate faces his god alone. In time, the chamber opens. The candidate either emerges with Kukulkan’s blessing to undertake the Rite of Ordination or is found dead, drained of life energy to feed the hunger of the gods.

Newly ordained Honor Guard undergo more technomantic rituals than any other Kukulkani save the War Captains. As their physical bodies transform to prepare for the challenges they will face in their martial duties, their minds are opened to the prayers and the power of the faith of all Kukulkani, a source of tremendous spiritual strength and a constant reminder of the importance of those they protect.

In battle, Honor Guard wield gargantuan macuahuitl, technomantic marvels capable of cleaving armor, rending flesh, and shattering bone. Honor Guard intercept enemies who would harm the War Captains, Priests, or Cabrakan. However, when need arises, the Honor Guard will rush to the front line where, inevitably, they turn the tide of battle.

LIVING ANCESTOR

There are stories that tell of enemies who could steal one’s spirit with a gaze. I should have heeded such tales. The monstrous figure with the death mask did but gaze into my master’s eyes, and the next moment, he lay twitching on the earth as the priests approached with their knives.

—Air Caste Guard Slave

Kukulkani Living Ancestors have existed many years in service to the mighty Coatl. These enormous warriors don holy death masks and often lead regiments of Honored Dead. The skull visage on their death masks gives the Living Ancestors a fearsome appearance. These artifacts also connect their minds to the technomantic network enabling the Living Ancestors to direct the Honored Dead telepathically.

Living Ancestors enjoy a unique position in Kukulkani culture. Those seeking the favor of the upper echelons often honor Living Ancestors with gifts and sacrifices, and War Captains and Priests seek counsel from them on issues ranging from history to warfare to the mysteries of the Great Cycle.

When Warriors become Living Ancestors, the Coatl further manipulate their genetic sequences to increase the sizes of their already impressive frames to make them true terrors on the battlefield. Their war claws backed by their tremendous strength can shred flesh and armor alike, and the gaze of their death masks can paralyze any enemy. In single combat, Living Ancestors are more than a match for any enemy. When commanding Warriors, the Living Ancestors bring lifetimes of experience to the field, employing subtle tactics and strengthening the resolve of all who follow them.
AH’CHU’KUK

Them gates woulda’ held were it not fer them huge fellers. Three times the size of a man they was! One pointed at the gate and boom! Shredded it to scrap. Ten years that gate stood against everything the wastes could throw at it, and it was gone in the blink of an eye.

—Pete Begley, Survivor of the initial Kukulkani assault on Forsaken territory

Millennia ago, the Coatl descended from the heavens to Terra, and the Cult of Kukulkan was born. However, some cities were slow to accept the new gods. The king of Mayapan, for one, refused to surrender his belief that he was the god-emperor of his city-state and forbade his people from worshipping the Coatl.

Legend tells that Ah Chu Kuk, a simple man who had heeded Kukulkan’s call, heard tell of Mayapan’s heresy. Enraged, Ah Chu Kuk took up arms and, declaring that the crimes of Mayapan could not go unanswered, marched on the city alone. His fellows applauded his bravery but mocked his foolishness. What could one man do against an army?

At dawn, Kukulkan awoke, saw what Ah Chu Kuk had done, and ordered his warriors to follow him. When the Kukulkani arrived at the gates of Mayapan, they found only carnage and destruction. The fortifications had been torn asunder, and the inhabitants had been slain. Though Ah Chu Kuk had fallen in the battle, he had defeated the warriors of Mayapan and routed the remaining citizens.

Kukulkan honored Ah Chu Kuk, who became the first of a new cycle of peerless warriors who would forever bear his name. These giants stand nearly twenty feet tall and wield the most advanced weapons of the Kukulkani legions, including bio-arc cannons and stone gauntlets that harvest the entropic energies of the enemy.

COATLAI

It swept down as though from my nightmares, screeching thunder and belching lightning. Slaves fled, and warriors retreated. The raiders chanted, “Co-wat-lie. Co-wat-lie.” I threw myself down before the great beast and prayed to any deity listening.

—Air Caste Guard Slave

The winged serpents known as the Coatlai are the avatars of the living gods. The Kukulkani believe that these beasts act as the eyes and ears of the Coatl, Kukulkan in particular. As such, the people adore and worship the Coatlai as demi-gods and have decorated the creatures’ lairs in the catacombs beneath the Tollan Chamber with the treasures of a thousand worlds.

The Cycle of the Coatlai remains a mystery to even the priests of the Kukulkani. No creature stands outside the Great Cycle. Thus, the Coatlai must be born, grow, mature, decline, and perish. However, the Kukulkani only encounter the Coatlai in their prime. Though many Coatlai inhabit the ziggurat starship, their exact numbers remain unknown. Only a single Coatlai ever heeds the call of battle, even in times of great peril.

Although these creatures are revered as sacred, second only to the gods themselves, the Priests and War Captains understand that the Coatlai behave like simple beasts and must be commanded accordingly in battle. Coatlai employ gravitic assistance modules to enhance the performance of their great wings. They serpents strike to sow panic in the enemy ranks, the feathers of their wings serving as blades to cut the enemy down. The creatures can exhale bolts of pure bioenergy, and their bite can render stone to dust. At times, the Coatlai will extend its wings and tear the life essence from the enemy in a spectacular rainbow display of entropic energy. Those few enemies who do not fall victim to this harvest either flee in terror or stand mesmerized only to suffer the horror of the creature’s next attack.
CABRAKAN

Finally, my lord, I must report on a most curious member of the enemy force, a giant humanoid, a kind of walking altar that resembles the unliving warriors in the skull masks. The raiders seem to revere this automaton with a zeal I have seldom witnessed.

—Vikrus, Pale Father, in a report to Father Johann

The Kukulkani often organize extended campaigns around a gigantic Cabran, which serves as a mobile temple, a vessel for harvested entropic energy, a logistics node, and a battle platform all in one. The Cabran’s massive twin macuahuitl can destroy entire enemy ranks in single strokes, and the fiery gaze of the crystal skulls implanted throughout its frame can devastate enemy fortifications in an instant. The Cabran’s granite-hard skin can turn away blows that would kill most warriors, and it can heal its own wounds with instinctive technomantic rituals.

After a battle, the Priests ply their wicked tecpatl blades to reap the entropic energies of captured enemies, storing the vital power in the body of the Cabran. Those fallen Kukulkani worthy of elevation as Honored Dead receive crystal skulls and animating energy from the Cabran. Damaged crystal skulls return to the Cabran, which collects the memories of the Honored Dead. An extended raid often sees the number of skulls upon the Cabran slowly depleted as the force suffers losses and the ranks of the Honored Dead swell.

When a war host returns victorious, the Cabran takes its place in the hallowed Tollan Chamber and settles into its niche. There, along with its five brothers, it discharges the bioenergy it has collected into the ship’s batteries and uploads the knowledge of the Honored Dead to the archive.

TUUCHA’NAK

“The dead continue their journey.”

The Kukulkani have waged their invasion wars relatively unchanged for centuries. Quetzol’s crusade of Samaria has proved a surprisingly difficult endeavor, forcing the supreme commander to look at thousands of years of tactics and reevaluate. Inspired by the enormous primate beasts that live in the growing terraform around the ship, the Sun Crusader ordered the creation of a new kind of war machine. Giving a new and deadly body to veteran warriors too wounded to return to battle, Quetzol designed the powerful tuucha’nak destroyer engine.

The tuucha’nak takes all of the boiling rage of a wounded warrior and helps it fuel a weapon of tremendous power. Made from the same stone-alloy as other Kukulkani constructs, the destroyer engine is difficult to damage and is saturated with technomantic advances. The tuucha’nak has two ram-ended forelimbs that it uses to smash through enemy defenses, both personal and structural, applying a tremendous strength and capacity for demolition. If its physical puissance is not enough, the warrior within each tuucha’nak can focus their hate and frustration through the golden eyes with which it looks upon the world, unleashing a crackling heat blast.

Waiting to crush foes to pulp or sear them to ash, a few dozen of Quetzol’s tuucha’nak engines have been fully constructed but only a handful of qualified Kukulkani have been interred within to activate some. As the conflict escalates there will be more wounded veterans to activate more destroyer engines. Until those opportunities arise, the crusade will surely make do with the few hulking death machines it has for now.
Ixchel, The Nocturnal Mother

“The Crusader has had his day, now is the time for the Great Mother to have her night.”

—Ixchel, Priestess of the Moon

High Priestess Ixchel, and her Cult of the Moon Goddess, have always stood as political opponents to Quetzol and the Sun Crusade. Various sect leaders would argue the methods and merits of each invasion, as the Kukulkani warship targeted planet after planet. When the bio-energy signatures of Samaria drew their attention it was no different. The debate between the cults actually ended with Ixchel’s holy order taking priority for this important return to Samaria.

After the Kukulkani ship landed onto the planet, fate stepped in. Mysterious saboteurs struck with surprising efficiency and explosions rocked the ship as it settled into place. Sections of the ship became inaccessible due to twisted wreckage and collapsed superstructure, leaving Ixchel and her loyal followers trapped behind hundreds of tons of stone-alloy. After making sure her people were safe in stasis, she began the long process of cutting away the blockage – seething with hatred as Quetzol’s forces no doubt took her place outside. Finally, when the last chunk of stony bulkhead was removed from in front of her chapel, the Nocturnal Mother swung her doors wide open and awakened her cult.

Ixchel is the rightful leader of the Samaria invasion. Her escape from the wreckage has caused a ripple of dissent amongst the Kukulkani, which only helps her ultimate goal – to push aside the usurper Quetzol’s command and take up her rightful position as leader of this planetary conquest.

The Nocturnal Mother is more than capable of leading the Kukulkani on Samaria. She commands her followers with a welcomed charm, treating them as friends as much as subordinates. This approach is so contrary to the military rigidity of Quetzol’s crusade that she attracts new cult members readily, even from the ranks of his supporters. Ixchel commonly asks new followers to prove their loyalty through body modification, branding and other readily visible initiations. The Great Mother smiles upon those willing to show their devotion, after all.

In order to strengthen the opinion of her leadership and the Cult, Ixchel joins her followers in raiding the wastes of Samaria. As a member of the Kukulkani inner circle, she has made heavy use of her access to technomantic augmentations as well as a direct conduit to the bio-energy batteries throughout the territory. Her ability to manipulate life energy is legendary, whether it be her own, that of her followers, or what she absorbs through her blades. With a gesture she can reach out and grab the invisible tethers of energy, reeling foes in like fish on a line to meet their end on her sacrificial knives. Ixchel can see the ebb and flow of bio-energy all around her and when she focuses her technomantic connection to it all at once it pulses brightly in a blinding white eruption. When the spots in everyone’s vision fade, the Kukulkani have surely taken full advantage of the Moon’s blessing.

Ixchel has a lot to prove to the Kukulkani still loyal to Quetzol out in the wastes, especially given his impressive successes in recent months. Her cult gains new members with every victory and she learns more about the world with every captive brought back by her warriors to be interrogated. Ixchel will not rest until she discovers that which will cement her ascension to her rightful place above the usurper – the locations of the CORE’s primary entropic storage cells and all the bio-energy within them.
KAACHIKA

"Your cycle continues in death..."

The Kaachika are warriors who have set aside their war clubs to join the Moon Goddess openly. Now that Ixchel and the Cult of the Moon are on the rise, a number of Kukulkan's warriors have grown in confidence, and have stepped away from Quetzol's crusade to join the Great Mother. The rivalry between the two leaders pits brother against sister, and questions about loyalty echo throughout Kukulkani society. The bravest of Moon worshipers outwardly prove their devotion to Ixchel – through amputation.

Warriors surgically replace each Kaachik's weapon hand with a bio-pulsar, an ancient energy projector. The angular prosthetic absorbs the light of the sun and stars and changes them into powerful blasts that can sear flesh and cause lasting muscle spasms. Having traded their former warrior melee weapon for the internal wiring and augmentations surrounding the bio-pulsar, the Kaachikas essentially becomes a living solar battery. Whether by design or happenstance, a Kaachik is a symbol of the Moon's followers taking energy and power away from the sun to be wielded by those loyal to Ixchel.

DOOM SEER

"All life must end..."

The first stone-alloy deployment skiffs to fly away from the Kukulkani's ship shocked the locals, but they were just the beginning. Even on Samaria, stones rarely fly or drop off deadly warriors intent on attacking your settlements. The skiffs were short-ranged, and the locals that saw them rarely saw them twice. Distant enemies never had to deal with Kukulkani gravitic technologies... until the coming of the Doom Seer.

Sworn to look upon their new world of conquest from within the great predictions of Kukulkan's stone-etched scriptures, Doom Seers view their surroundings in shades of prophecy and portents. They spend decades chiseling out holy text-covered slabs from the hull of the ship, building them around powerful gravitic engines to create their own personal doom scythe. The doom scythe is a marriage between a one-man grav-skiff, a calendar of prophesized events, and a deadly weapon upon which the Doom Seer rides across Samaria in search of those who must fall before him. When the Doom Seers take flight, a new age is looming.

A Doom Seer uses advanced gravitics to stand defiantly upon the scythe's surface, skimming across the battlefield by subtly shifting his weight to bring it careening into the enemy. The edge of the scythe is made up of a heavy, spinning stone wheel covered in blade-like wedges. The scythe's "teeth" rotate at bone-crushing, flesh-tearing speeds. Anything too close is torn to shreds by their weight and momentum, blasted to pieces like wood before a whirring saw. The Doom Seer deciphers his targets from the glyphs beneath his feet and marks them for destruction - the doom scythe will then see such prophecies fulfilled.
From the early days after arriving on Samaria, when Kukulkan’s crusaders began to spill out into the conflict-ridden wastes, Samarians have been forced to watch the skies for the horrifying silhouette of the voracious coatlai. The bio-mechanical, flying serpents are a true terror from above, but their existence has always begged the question – where do the coatlai actually come from? When Ixchel’s repairs on the ship unearthed a lower nesting chamber filled with stony coatlai eggs, that question was answered.

The Chosen are an order of oath-sworn servitors that sacrifice their own lives to usher the hatchling coatlai from eggs into adulthood. Each Chosen has two of the wriggling beasts grafted to their arm, connecting their lives to the life energy coursing through the Kukulkani at all times. The Chosen hosts funnel as much bio-energy as they can into the increasingly hungry creatures, hoping this seemingly endless need for energy can be sated on the battlefield.

Using the coatlai hatchlings as living-weapon extensions of themselves, the Chosen allow them to feed on the enemy bite after bite. The young creatures are still learning how to be adult predators, sometimes even spitting a mist of energy-sapping venom on instinct alone. The needs of the small semi-symbiotic monsters force the Chosen into a position of ultimate martyrdom to reach the next stage in their life cycle, whether that energy comes from the enemy or from the slowly dying host body.

Once the coatlai hatchlings have consumed their incubation hosts, they molt up into a new and even more predatory form – the coatlanak. Young, voracious monsters that still have more room to grow before receiving their technomantic implants and augmentations, each coatlanak has a biological imperative to hunt, kill, feed and grow.

While they will one day fly the skies on grav-tech wings, for now they slither, coil and leap amidst their Kukulkani masters toward what they have been taught to be food.

Coatlanaks are subjected to intense behavioral training by the war priests to follow instruction, even in the heated chaos of battle. The large alien serpents follow the cues given to them by other Kukulkani, turning their aggression on shared enemies as if by instinct. Each coatlanak puts their foes into two categories: those they can tear into bits to swallow and those that must be rendered down to meaty sludge to absorb their life energy. Jaws strong enough to crush bone, filled with fangs capable of tearing plate steel, make easy work of the former. When confronted by targets that fall into the latter category, however, the evolving venom glands ringing the throat of the beasts do the job. Their latticework of bio-energy receptors moves and concentrates collected energy to where it is needed, turning a coatlanak’s deadly venom into a virulent and sticky acid it can spit surprising distances. Deadly and still developing from their bloody pasts toward their infamous futures, these beasts are brutal killers from the moment they hatch, and they practice much of their predation in their coatlanak stage.