

The Coming of the S'sessu

A new alien race for the STAR FRONTIERS[®] game

by David Cook

[Editor's note: David "Zeb" Cook was one of the original designers of the STAR FRONTIERS[®] game system. Though future releases from TSR, Inc., may make no reference to the S'sessu, gamers may adopt them into their games as player characters if the referee so allows and if care is used in setting them up in the campaign.]

First contact with the S'sessu occurred shortly after a brief skirmish between the S'sessu and the UPFS frigate *Hellscar*. The *Hellscar*, severely damaged in an encounter with two Sathar ships, made an emergency jump and re-entered normal space off Phri'sk, one of the two settled worlds belonging to the S'sessu. Orbital stations registered the arrival of the warship, and an interplanetary scout was sent to investigate.

The *Hellscar* established visual contact with the scout and refrained from offensive action, since the scout was of an unknown design. Hailing signals from the *Hellscar* were returned on an unused frequency in an untranslated language. When televisual ship-to-ship communication was established, the *Hellscar's* captain, believing he had stumbled onto a Sathar base, opened fire on the scout vessel.

Fortunately, the frigate's fire-control systems were damaged and the shots missed. The scout vessel returned fire and managed to cripple the frigate, though the smaller ship's weapons were technologically outmoded by UPFS standards. The frigate's captain broadcast a long-range distress call to the Federation, but he and his crew were unable to resist a boarding attempt by the S'sessu.

Several weeks later, an attack/rescue fleet arrived off Phri'sk. The UPFS fleet was large enough to suitably impress the S'sessu, a remarkable achievement considering their racial tendencies. Having determined by talking with the *Hellscar's* captain that the aliens were not Sathar, the fleet commander organized the first diplomatic missions and formal

contact between the S'sessu and the Federation proceeded unhindered. The S'sessu refused to give up the frigate, which they considered a prize ship; because of this and the frigate captain's familiarity with the S'sessu from his captivity, the *Hellscar's* captain was designated temporary ambassador to the S'sessu worlds.

Physical appearance

S'sessu are almost identical in appearance to Sathar, the most obvious difference between them being body coloration. A Sathar's skin is yellow or brown, but a S'sessu has a bright pink- or green-tinted skin. The S'sessu do not have the patterns of dots or stripes on their heads that the Sathar have. Otherwise, all other descriptive information on Sathar can be applied to S'sessu.

Senses

A S'sessu's sense of hearing is equal to a Human's. Its sense of taste is slightly better than a Human's, but its sense of smell is somewhat less well developed. A S'sessu's double pupils give it superior all-around vision, allowing it to see in several directions at once. A S'sessu always has a +2 Initiative Modifier because of its excellent vision.

Speech

S'sessu speak with a hissing lisp. They have quickly learned Pan-Galactic since their existence was discovered, and they can speak it normally. They can also speak the language of their own race.

Society and customs

In general, S'sessu are extremely competitive and self-centered. Each individual does what it wants, caring little for others except for those who can help the S'sessu achieve its goals. Power and possessions are only for those S'sessu who can take and keep them. This would seem to create a society where murder and violence are rampant, but this is not the case. Indeed, at times S'sessu can be highly organized and

cooperative, and violent crime is an uncommon occurrence among them.

If a S'sessu believes there is some sort of personal gain to be had in doing so, it will work cooperatively with other beings. A group of S'sessu might pool their money to build an interstellar spaceship, and another group might hire a police force to protect them from robbery or murder by others. However, S'sessu will have only one leader among them in most situations. Thus, a S'sessu company is controlled by one extremely powerful boss; the captain of a S'sessu spaceship is the absolute leader of all beings aboard that ship. S'sessu philosophies are based on getting and keeping power, not on what is right or wrong. To a S'sessu, the only actions that are "wrong" are those that keep it from reaching its goal in the best and safest manner possible.

The discovery of the S'sessu has presented a puzzle for xenobiologists. The S'sessu have no explanation for their similarity to Sathar and were in fact unaware of the existence of the Sathar until contact with the UPF. The current theory held among scientists is that the S'sessu are an offshoot of the Sathar race, and this seems well-supported. If this is true, the separation between the Sathar and S'sessu would have to have occurred more than 20,000 years ago, long before the Sathar or the S'sessu are known to have developed space travel. It has been speculated that an ancient unknown race of aliens (possibly the group known to xenoarchaeologists as the Tetrarchs) transplanted a small group of S'sessu to their present homeworld at that time.

S'sessu only hold claim to a small region of space, consisting of two stellar systems (each with one small inhabited planet) lying ten light years from the Gruna Garu system, on a line running from Dixon's Star to Gruna Garu and on to the S'sessu worlds. Due to their similarity to the Sathar, it was only through luck and careful diplomacy that they were not immediately attacked as hostile

aliens by the rescue force that found their homeworld. Little is known about the S'sessu's history, as friendly diplomatic relations have only recently been established.

The S'sessu are extremely aggressive business dealers. In their attempts to gain an equal footing with the other races in the Frontier Sector, they have hired adventurers to spy on, infiltrate, steal from, or suppress activities the S'sessu deem "unfriendly" in the Frontier systems closest to them. This has caused Star Law to take an active interest in certain foreign and business affairs of the S'sessu, though the race as a whole is not regarded as dangerous or hostile.

Attitudes

The S'sessu are essentially amoral (neither knowing nor caring about the difference between good and evil). It is a good bet that a S'sessu will always do exactly what is best for it, even to the extent of betraying others without a second thought to save itself. This "every-worm-for-itself" attitude makes the S'sessu disliked, especially by the Vrusk (who have suffered in certain business dealings from the S'sessu love for "dirty tricks").

Nonetheless, the other races have learned to work with the S'sessu, often with great success and mutual benefit for both sides. S'sessu adventurers often work well as team members, especially if they see their chances of finding personal gain and wealth are improved through cooperative effort. Of course, a better offer might always be made by someone else, leaving the door open for possible treachery.

Special abilities

Ability Insight. Because of the extremely competitive nature of S'sessu society, individuals have developed the ability to judge the strengths and weaknesses of opponents. All S'sessu start with a score of 5% in this ability. This is the percentage chance a S'sessu has of learning one ability score or skill level of a being he observes. The S'sessu must see his opponent actually doing something related to that ability score before he can make this judgment.

For example, Asphenomenas, a S'sessu, sees a smuggler outside a spaceport. The smuggler is trying to shoot a beam weapon at a guard robot. Asphenomenas secretly watches the smuggler, and the player tells the referee that Asphenomenas wants to use his *Ability Insight* to determine the smuggler's DEX

score (based upon the smuggler's shooting ability). The referee secretly rolls percentile dice. If the die roll is 05 or under, Asphenomenas will have learned

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the smuggler's DEX score. A roll over 05 would indicate uncertainty and no knowledge gained. *Ability Insight* may be increased by spending experience, just like any other ability score may be raised. This ability may only be used

once per game hour, simulating the intense concentration required to use it.

Creating a S'sessu character

S'sessu characters are created in the same way as other characters. The following Ability Modifiers are used when creating a S'sessu:

STR/STA: +0
DEX/RS: +0
INT/LOG: +10
PER/LDR: -10

S'sessu have the same movement rate as Sathar do. They walk at 10 meters per turn, run at 20 meters per turn, and move long distances at 3 kilometers per hour.

The following Racial Reaction Modifiers may also be used when dealing with S'sessu:

Humans have a -5 reaction penalty to S'sessu.
Vrusk have a -10 reaction penalty to S'sessu.
S'sessu have a +5 reaction bonus to Sathar.
S'sessu have a -5 reaction penalty to Vrusk.

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