MORNINGSTAR

The First Index

3.2 Edition

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2022-2025

Creator Statement

Welcome to the Morningstar Universe!

Morningstar is a dark, military-horror, sci-fi universe where the wealthiest became the de facto rulers of the human species. We like to describe it as "Solar Deco" meets "Cassette Brutalism" two terms we coined. Long-time fans of franchises like Blade Runner, Fallout, Aliens, and Dune will recognize a lot our inspirations for this monolithic corporatocracy.

Morningstar seeks to take all the best parts of what we grew up with and give it a massive overhaul for the modern age. Much like our team, the universe will be intensely diverse both with cultures and characters seeking to rationalize the mega corporations that influence so much of our daily lives. Our work is both for the benefit of entertainment as much as it is a work of satire.

This tomb's third edition features updates, new art, better write the words for read gooding! And enough content to call this a full fledged source book for your exploration of all things Morningstar! Much of what we do is collaborative with our community members adding their own stories, art and creations, something we hope to make a part of our project's DNA!

We couldn't do what we have without the support of our patrons and the community, thank you so much from all of us.

*The best way to stay involved and to discuss what we're doing is by joining our **Discord**.*

We hope to see you there,

~Admin

Changes and Updates 3.2

Grammar corrections, we're always editing and the podcast has helped us catch little inconsistencies or sentences that don't make as much sense as they could.

- Demarchy of Luyten changed to "Patriciate of Luyten" so as not to confuse with the the Demarchy of Yinn.
- Added company mottos in the Notable MacroCorps section.
- Stratos *INDUSTRIAL* not "Industries" caught that typo
- MAJOR OVERHAUL on Somerlyn Eternity… go check it out, sorry it was vague before, it needed clarity and then it was the perfect place to bring up [REDACTED]
- The **Non-Hegemon** examples have been cleaned up and clarified that those listed focuses on the "Skulptor Cluster" the region duskward from Protea toward the Outer Rim.
- A new term that shows up in the document gets its own definition "the black" a general term for space.
- Thanks to **Fire_warrior** and **Tinbe** in the community, we've replaced the "Market Open" century with an "O" rather than a "0" for the Century which is more thematic.
- Added a section to the map to understanding directions in the Galaxy
- The new name for the Combat Frame is 'Cal'kaan' or "Gauntlet" suit
- Added a Trade Currency section on 86 that covers 'Chits'
- 20-23 is the designation for all Shigue Migrations species while 20-23Ω are the larger cousins to the 20-23Ω_A's (Kau'eg).

There are new words, phrases like “massBrand” for a product that is wildly used across the Hegemon which can evolve into a “trustBrand.” A massBrand would be something like *kleenex* that replaces the word ‘tissue,’ while a trustBrand would be something similar to Apple with its own subculture that dominates entire sectors of industry, regardless of whether it is the best at actually doing something or not.

The 47th/14th Division inconsistency for the Pale Tempest has been resolved, and the Barakan have a massive new section with expanded lore and new painting schemes (enjoy!). Tributaries have new sections such as Prospects, as do Indentured (we now get different types). You’ll also get to learn more about the Greater Clans of Protea where Dumno-Ualos came from.

There are new maps such as the Protean system with the added planet Novo Wassa.

There are new details about the Outside as well as Morningstar’s take on god-forms.

Zavule has outdone themselves.

~Admin

*In all the ages of our race, there has ever been the certainty of a single truth; we **need**. Those ancient tribes of Ur drank its oceans and sucked in the air until neither remained, proving our dominion over fickle nature. It was our need that brought us unto countless worlds across the empty fathoms of the universe until we entered the heavens where we consumed the gods themselves.*

*Just as a bird might spring into the sky or the serpent twist across the desert, it is written into every cell of our being to **want** and, praise be, to never be satiated. We are glorious beings, unmatched in our appetites, our desire to bend all that we comprehend to our noble will.*

Let lesser beings be content with the cave in winter. Let the weak survive off what grows in unregulated chaos. Let the ignorant be swallowed by the unknown.

We will find them and add what value they offer to our wealth.

Nothing ever changes.

*Trust in **greed**.*

~ The Manual, First Edition

Dumno-Ualos

0/01-001

Special Thanks

To the ever growing team of this fantastic universe, we will always openly credit artists, writers, animators, filmmakers, patrons, contributors and developers who have helped up along the way.

Thank you to NASA and their online archives, they're a great resource.

Thank you to the editors like Tinbe and all the volunteers who help us make sure our grammar is correct and the intent doesn't get away from us.

Thank you to our families who let us have this extra universe to work on on top of work and life and everything.

Thank our lucky stars we get to make cool stuff and share it with cool people!

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noah jacoby-twigg

Sam McKissock

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Brennan Massaglia

Beez

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Demran

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Thief39

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thracker zodd

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Lightus (Antiboredom)

Bilbono

Olden Demon

Hawkins Leather

Loken

Angelo Thomas Geruso

WUJUM

SineFineBelli

Hungry Shark

Knight177

Omar

Patrons

Neil

Justin Lancaster

MeiandMei

Nolan

Deukalion

WarpedGod

Boland

Jeryen

Daniel Smith

Commander William

Shinebreaker

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Andrew Antolick

Grubz

Bobatar

Autarch Cyrus

CTStudios Executive

Evening Star

Ian Fleming

Paladin Cat

Byron Ritchie

ERRORnoname

Vikaruss

Luc Schurgers

Janovich

Lina

SlavicGiraffe

AtheSier

Tender

Trusty_Thor

People3004

Long Way To Tipperary

Henry Movsisyan

Shand Ra

Tasekai

Matthew Fawcett

chris

Ironsevs

Kody West

mathew powell-davis

Brian Streaty

Preacher Tim

Lucas Grand

CorranHuss

ExoPreacher

David Saint

RedBiscuiteer

Devereux2

The Big What If

Vacillate Crow

Txomin Zaratiegui

Bruce Zhou

Brad Silverstein

BattleBoi

James Roberts

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matthew dawson

Benedict Entrampas

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Filou Le Gnou

Adam Ciodyk

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HollowSilver

Craig

Patrons

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Allu

Jack Bowe

Spilnyk Pavlo

Ven371

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Michael St-Pierre

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DuskinReview

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Ian

Nicky Morrin

Sirax Siccleson III

Kr8or

Robert Kenman

Urnsheme

Winter Coldblood

Khornepop

Penintent

AZbytes

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Razzar21

Alderel

Georgi Ganchev

Twiggs

Lars Ruland

Six Times Nothing

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Calypso Jaie

Joshua

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Chamorro Soldier

Cooper stern

Praelium

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rux

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Chengze Li

Reggie

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Keenan Babcock

Knee

Austin Monreal

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Tennebrae

JonAtomic

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Local Techpriest

Rhivan

Murphy Sweeney

Goran Calic

Joseph Rees

Mike Vo

Nathan Reyes

ScroogeMcFox

bud terence

Huxskey

VeiledMalice .

Noj

Michael Falk

David Gustafson

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Viskadel

Liam Holland

keroko

Josh Harper

Steven Robinson

Dan Marks

David Stelzmüller

The_Y

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Roberto

KillerReaver

Johannes CT

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Chapter Master Valrak

John Fitzgerald

keemperor

Oliver Syrieyx

Toddcz

Fishinabarrel Jr.

Godsmacked

Bruce Welch

Midgaard

Claes Welinder

Mr.bones

Rogue Tech Trader

Felix

Matthew Williams

Taylor Blackwell

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Travis McGruder

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HST Studios

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

What is Morningstar?

Morningstar is a sci-fi universe where the wealthiest became the de facto rulers of the human species. Long-time fans of franchises like *Blade Runner, Fallout, Aliens,* and *Dune* will recognize a lot our inspirations for this monolithic corporatocracy.

We like to call it *Solar Deco* meets *Cassette Brutalism*.

Morningstar seeks to take all the best parts of what we grew up with and give it a massive overhaul for the modern age. Much like our team, the universe will be intensely diverse with both cultures and characters, with an emphasis on embracing our real world differences and being critical of what we believe are the worst aspects of our respective societies. As such, our work is both entertainment as much as it is a work of satire.

We will strive for each faction to have an in-depth culture, language, and perspective. There will be fan favorites, but we'll make sure there's something for everyone from the merciless Barakan and coldly self-interested Directorate to desperate Unionists and hunted Shigue out on the Frontier. The Galaxy is a *big* place and you'll see that there's a lot to look forward to.

When you see something that has the compass sigil of the Hegemon, we think you'll be excited.

Style and Tone

Morningstar is a universe of doublespeak and corporate manipulation. There will be many times that one might be concerned about a tone or approach to a controversial issue. This represents the journey that humanity has followed where all things are regarded as commodities.

One might also notice the unusual capitalization trends.

ExeCor, MacroCorp, MiliCorp, these represent the combination of common words into new meanings while emphasizing their original concepts. Consumer has the same general connotation as ‘civilian’, but we capitalize “Con” to call out the word visually.

The use of languages is a major part of Morningstar. Worlds, even smaller territories on planets and orbiting colonies, have their own languages and dialects. English stands in for Interlex as the *lingua franca*, but you’ll see that the Barakan Elite speak *Uttar* and the Shigue *Selo’he*, which are entirely invented conlangs. We haven’t forgotten the *older* tongues and people still speak Spanish and German, Osage and Latin. The universe of Morningstar is and should feel like a complex, diverse and expansive experience where ‘norms’ are almost impossible to establish.

Planets are big. Space is even BIGGER but space is also HARD, two aspects that play heavily into the universe. Known Space is a relatively small area of the Galaxy encompassing only a few thousand lightyears around the original birthworlds of the human race. Interstellar travel itself involves completely removing a vessel from reality, which puts an unbelievable stress on the human consciousness that can cause insanity amongst other things (think of a isolation chamber).

Morningstar hopes to express every inhabited world as if it were the one we’re living in, with undiscovered regions like the bottom of the ocean or cave systems still an unknown even after thousands of years. Planets and moons are still being discovered, even in the heart of the human empires. And on top of all of this is the expense associated with trying to move, settle and travel through all of it.

Yet there is hope in this grim setting. The MacroCorps must try to disguise their callous profit-seeking as a public good lest they risk open rebellion. Hope is merely another commodity, one of the more finicky. Like uranium, it must be refined, cultivated, and properly attributed, just as much as it is contained.

The Frontier, a general term for anywhere beyond the Civil Space, Hegemon Development Spheres, and the many Corporate Zones, is advertised as a place of boundless prospects. If you can muster up enough capital, get a good enough credit rating, and find a ship captain crazy enough to venture beyond known trade lanes, you are free to brave the Galaxy beyond to seek your fortune.

Out in the Frontier, there are countless Exogen species and rogue human factions trying to survive in spite of each other and the ever present shadow of the Hegemon. Yet one can find unoccupied, unspoiled worlds to settle. And there is always the possibility of uncovering and selling the valuable remnants of alien civilizations or the ruins of Old Humanity that still dot space or lie buried on derelict worlds to collectors in the Hegemon for staggering profits.

Driftward, emerging from the Centaurus Arm and challenging the Hegemon outposts of the Vela Frontier is the Shigue Diaspora. In their vast interstellar caravans called “Lifefleets” made up of a multitude of refugee species, they flee some kind of mass-stellar event that took place on the other side of the Galaxy. Hoping to find new homeworlds, they whisper that they are not the only ones to flee this cataclysm. Something sinister is coming, yet the pleas of the Shigue fall on deaf Hegemon ears who see them little more than dumb brutes, food, or sport for their amusement.

And so the stage is set.

Perpustakaan Hébat of Krysos

Radixa Code

Similar to ancient *tap* or the even older *Maurus* code, Radixa utilizes “strumming” tachyonic subatomic particles to produce information. Every message stream requires enormous power and premium rates to such an extent that even the largest ships that have this capability are required to power all but vital systems down while “*beaming on the line*” (sending information).

Radixa, also used with Ansible communication, is nearly instantaneous but requires processing times to interpret. Language is always exact, even interpretive, relying on a variety of symbols. The following is a breakdown of the symbols used.

From: <sender>

To: >>recipient<<

“.”: Used to imply consideration or processing times but that the channel is still open and in use.

Accepted: [subject]

Adding element: +item+

“_”: represents a ‘stop’ in a message or a change of content within the same message.

“**XX**“ signal lost, signal cut.

Glossary of Terms

Amenity Column: A compact rotating series of shelves in a container most often found standard in opti-units.

Analect: Pre-Hegemonic data-vault. Highly sought after.

Ansible: Quantum-paired antenna that can communicate in near real-time regardless of location. Can only be paired once.

Apsidina: Arcologies usually thousands of kilometers in diameter, appearing as orbiting continents used for habitation typically by the Patron class.

Arkillect: Pre-Hegemon synthetic sophontic entity, typically living within an Analect device.

Atomika: A catch-all term for enhanced radiation weapons, typically delivered via warhead or bomb which provides a chamber for fusion and fission reactions.

Bionetics: Artificial limbs, the word for predominantly external augmentations or

Birthworlds: A world claiming to be the birthplace of Old Humanity. Currently thirteen in total.

The Black: A general term for 'space'

Caeliner: The word for a *spacer*, or *spacefarer*. Similar to "mariner." Can be shortened to "cay".

Chapak: A fully artificial biological lifeform, they most often appear as pets for the wealthy and have comprehensive Grade S intelligences. Human Chapaks are extremely illegal.

Codesmith: Those who know how to modify and maintain any form of logicor.

Cognitish/Cog-Lang: Brain-to-computer language spoken between interfaces such as cogit-hoods.

Cubit: An encrypted physical representation of credit with a predetermined value used in transactions and backed by the Hegemon banking guilds.

D-Hab: Colloquial for the unhoused, derogatory, used to describe those who rely on Persons.

Day: Based off human circadian rhythms, roughly 24 hours. A day is two shifts long, twelve hours each.

Descending: A spacecraft's process of entering the Outside.

Datatoos/Dermarks: Data and info scannable tattoos.

Datasphere: The digital realm where logicors are connected, smaller than the Grid.

Drivesail: Similar to "solar sails" used by starships for travel in-system.

Edenic/Urthic: The original languages of humanity, some claim the language of "earth."

ExeCor: The heart of Civil Space and the primary worlds of the Hegemon.

FCP: Fabricated Cognition Program. Heavily regulated programs capable of thought without any possibility of agency. FCP are sold as being capable of thought in the same way a beast of burden is capable of hauling a load. Still, just to be sure, it is suggested that FCPs be reset to factory default after a predetermined period of time elapses to ensure optimal functioning.

Fringeworlds: Colonized planets in the Frontier sectors.

Formacrete: Formattable liquid construction material that hardens quickly when exposed to air. Depending on the grade, formacrete can become almost indestructible.

Gatesphere: An artificial, briefly stable, singularity that is created in order to create the right conditions to enter the "Outside" by 'descending' into the event horizon.

Giftworlds: Frontier planets leased to various Consumers that are without nations.

Habitechnician: Specialists in worldshaping and human biosphere construction.

Hauler: Interplanetary class ship capable of atmospheric operation.

Interlex/Inter-Lang: The Trade language of the Hegemon once called Proteshi.

Kahvic: A highly caffeinated drink made from a variety of cherry plants and chems.

Kosmodrome: A planetary-based space-port with launch pads as well as runways.

Ligalese/Lex-Lang: The language of the Fargani and regarded as the language of all legal matters in the Hegemon.

Longhaul: A multi-quat journey in and out of the Outside, usually five or more descents. Known for higher pay to the MassTraders and FreeTraders that take the contracts. Also the most dangerous.

MassBrand: A popular brand, loved by the consumers

Mashiba Development Zone: The eastern Frontier that borders the Vela Nebula.

Matric: Also known as a *matritic* weapon, devastating light-based energy weapons.

Maethish/Uni-Lang: Universal mathematical language

Mentanic: A data surgeon that specializes in memory reconstruction for both synthetic and biological subjects.

Metical: A division of local resources that reflects value.

Midworlds: Planets that are within Civil Space beyond the ExeCor but before the Frontier.

Mithqal: A unit of resources equivalent to one cycle of production.

Mindworld: A planetary scale logicor from a bygone era, can no longer be manufactured.

Mercator Spectrum: Ley lines that have formed after thousands of cycles of travel between star systems. Travel is quicker and safer on Mercator pathways which are used as branching off points to new regions of exploration.

Nanoid: Localized miniature technologies, extremely rare and run the risk of being influenced by expert mentanics. Can range from a grain of sand to a fingernail in size, programmable for any number of tasks.

Nanophage: Forbidden nanoid-based technologies so advanced that it can alter biology and entire ecosystems.

Neotyne: Artificial children or babies that typically remain in a limited psychological state.

Noosphere: The manifested human macro-consciousness, still being explored via ansible research.

Nusteel: A lightweight programmable metal alloy used in construction and armor designs.

Opti-Unit: A utilitarian living module within a habplex patented by the Dumno of Protea.

Organoid: A wide-spanning classification of engineered implants. These can appear as synthetic, cellular growths or more exotic examples like nusteel or chitin.

Ojingo: A rebellion or protest directly against the Hegemon. It is considered an opportunity for a different kind of revenue from entertainment rights as battles are recorded and live-streamed to liquidation of local assets.

Plastalloy: “Plasta”, a flexible, light, hyper-durable material that can be formatted into any shape.

Plexsteel: Used in viewports and helmet lenses. It can project data similar to a screen on its surface.

Portolan Charts: Also known as a Pilot's Rutter, these are an ever expanding series of charts and recordings that a Pilot uses to inform the dawndrive, which reads tachyonic vibrations in order to align a ship to a suitable exit point.

Provolve: The process of artificially accelerating evolution. This can include adding additional sentience to animalia, however, Exogens are prohibited without direct dispensation from the Audit.

Proxy: Generic term for "clone" or "facsimilian", a human being that has been made with either their own memories or fabricated ones. Heavily restricted.

Radixa: Communication code used in Ansible communication to reduce word count pricing.

Retrogenic: A human utilizing a method to 'reverse age'

Rimworlds: Planets without any alignment.

Sector: Between three and six colonized systems.

Sector Minor: Several loosely affiliated systems, often sharing leyline interaction.

The Self: The governing perception or intelligence of a human being. In archaic terms it is called the "soul". It is the Self that is most important to an individual.

Sensory Collapse: A human being that does not take care of their stimulant regimen to keep their Self aware of itself will result in degrees of Sensory Collapse; going insane, experiencing hallucinations and acting irrationally. Worst of all, such collapse is cognitatevely contagious. This most often occurs in the Outside to travellers.

Shacklement: Programming, circumstances and design that prevent an artificial sophont from acting without a human operator and preventing near-sophontic intelligence.

Sonaw: The name for gold and gold related resources, also known as aurica. Most prized.

Sophont: What defines higher order intelligent life.

Starliner: Vast gilded spacecraft, the flagships of MacroCorporations, often called "cityships"

Supersector: Dozens of star systems.

Synolitic Treatments: Life extension regimens.

Tael: A unit of measurement for the amount that can be made in quat.

Territories: A term to describe unincorporated areas that can include entire systems that operate without central governments. Typically between the Midworlds and the Frontier. The Hegemon maintains order with Constables, licensed peacekeepers but relies predominantly on MacroCorps for stability.

TrustBrand: A brand so important to the Hegemon that it is, and must be, protected. Marked by ᵗᴮ

Tramp Freighter: Catch-all for unaffiliated independent craft.

Unlok: Duskward slang meaning "unlucky," unloks are martyrs for Unionist causes willing to sink into indentured status to enact sabotage and foment insurrection against the Hegemon.

Uttar: Barakan combat speech, hypothesized to be a proto-exodus language.

Visutel: A rudimentary logicor that connects to the datasphere or local network.

Warliner: Several kilometers long, these are the primary capital ships of Known Space.

Wagelings: Colloquialism for younger laborers, sometimes called "Earnlings"

Worldring: Ring-shaped habitats in space, typically the largest and most complex are older from previous human civilizations as it is no longer fiscally worthwhile to create these more perfect habitats.

The Windrose: Also the symbol of the Hegemon, the Windrose is a catchall term for a ship's location in the Galaxy. "Dawnward" is toward Protea while "Duskward" is away. Coreward for the gravitational current and Spinward as it travels outward.

Xa-Kusa: A wildly popular narco that can be programmed to have a variable of experiences associated with guided hallucinations, states of euphoria or can induce violent episodes. Attempts to regulate xa-kusa have failed and thus it is one of the few narcos that is entirely illegal in any form. Addictive in the extreme, especially when taken in the eyes, its effects are often immediate. Many criminals and pirates use xa-kusa just before they engage in combat making them resilient to damage, overeager to cause havoc and with heightened senses that put them on par with a low-grade provolved soldier.

THE HEGEMON

They call it the Hegemon of a Thousand Empires. It is not a nation, a state, or a government in the traditional sense. It has no king to rule uncontested or a parliament to address the woes of its people. There are no borders drawn on a map to limit it, nor has it a constitution or a creed to define its ideals, save one... Avarice.

The Hegemon exists to consume and feed the endless growth and influence of its master classes. It pursues this goal through negotiation, trade and, should it come to it, force of arms.

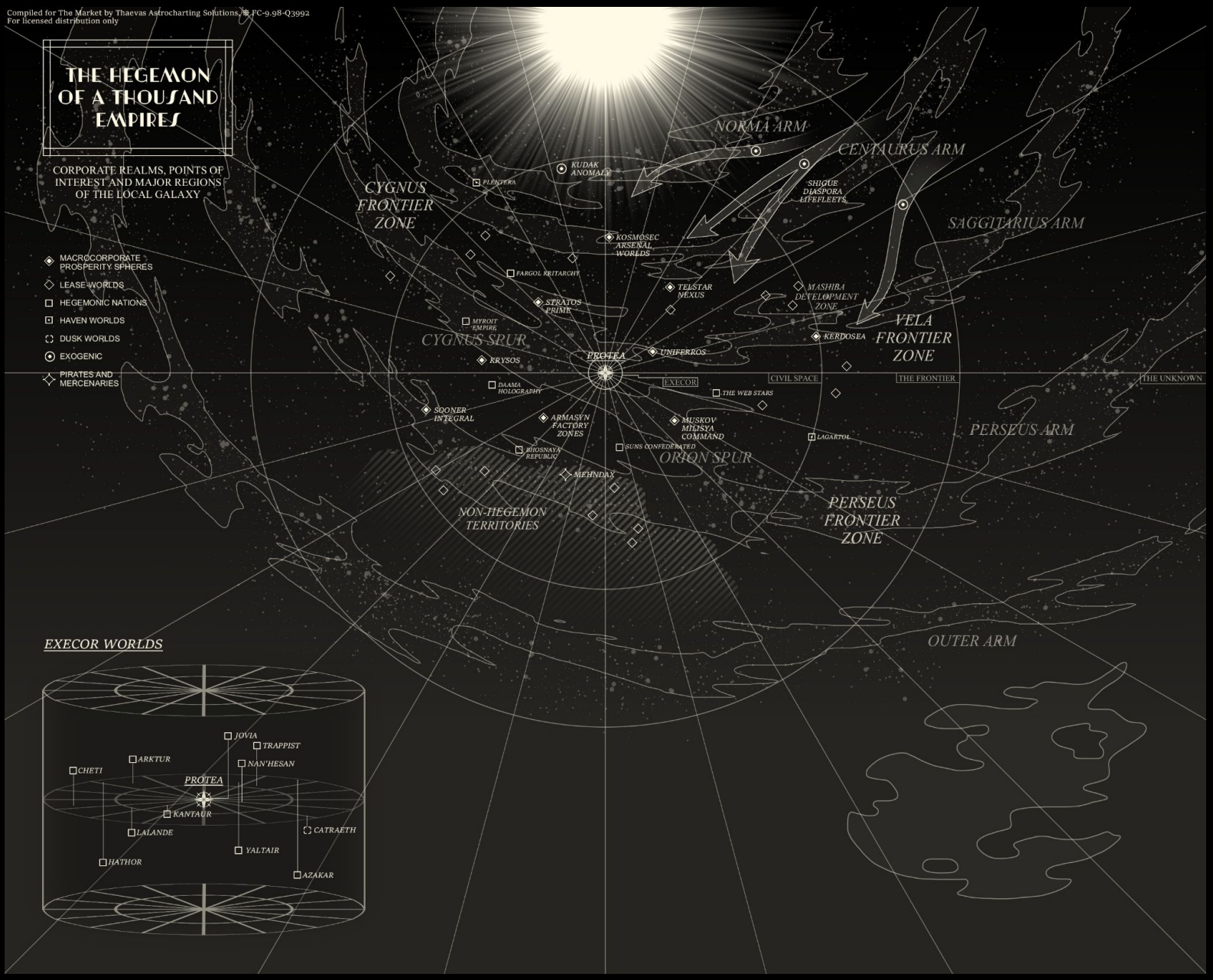
At the heart of this realm is Protea. In the chambers of the planet's greatest citadel stands The Market, which administers a vast network of trade between titanic interplanetary MacroCorp entities. These hyperpowers dominate every aspect of the Thousand Empires, gripped by the invisible hand of Magnates who live solely for the acquisition of wealth and power. Their reach is ever expanding into the cosmos, crushing and manipulating all who stand in the way of their self-actualisation.

Before, Old Humanity toppled into darkness from the heights of a forgotten bright age. Now, this New Mankind rises and lays claim to the cosmos, yet its teeming billions exist in endless servitude to the whims of their uncaring rulers who promise prosperity to a select few, kindling just enough hope to ensure obedience.

Beneath the boot of their masters, the masses spend their days in toil, trapped in a cycle of debt and need as they strive to improve their credit. In the mines, on the production lines, in the sterilized lairs of bureaucracy and on blood-soaked battlefields, the Hegemon's citizens spend their lives securing the fortunes of others. Menial laborers trapped in debt work themselves to the bone while private armies slaughter each other for the resources, prestige, and entertainment of their owners.

All aspects of life in the Thousand Empires turn to feed the grinding maw of Avarice. To the few, the privileged, and the powerful, it is a new era of material glory. And to the many, the downtrodden and the feeble, it is a time of quiet misery, an epoch where the only hope is the next precious mouthful of food or distraction from their toil.

The Last Empress of Catraeth
FC2/48-190



Known Space constitutes a region of just over 1200 parsecs wide and 160 parsecs thick, representing both the Hegemon and non-Hegemonic human nations, as well as known Exogenic habitats and major migrations.

This map does not include anomalous zones or dark matter fluctuations which alter the natural perception and comprehension of Portolan Charts. Ship Pilots are incentivized to update their rutters to ensure decent accuracy as they travel through the Outside. MacroCorps often sponsor independent companies with various “dawn” or “dodger” drives that allow a ship to first bypass the light barrier and then track tachyonic vibrations to get back into real space. Corpo charts, thus updated, are then jealously guarded.

Note: The *Windrose* at the center of the chart, which is also the symbol of the Hegemon, determines all locations in Known Space. “Dawnward” is toward Protea and The Market while “Duskward” is away.

THE HEGEMON

m_ee93

The Hegemon of a Thousand Empires is a powerful interstellar confederacy of diverse human nations that united through prominent mercantile families almost a thousand fiscal cycles ago. Originating in the **Orion Spur**, a constellation of several hundred star systems, the Hegemon now directly controls thousands of parsecs stretching outward from its primary world of Protea. Despite its relative youth, the Hegemon has bested many older human nations whose histories had stretched back in an unbroken chain to previous epochs of stellar expansion, some as far back as the First Exodus.

Despite its lack of pedigree, it is the Hegemon's cultural values and influence that are now dominant throughout Known Space. Greatest amongst their ethos is the virtue of *Avarice* and the philosophy of *Stellarization* which now shape those who live within Known Space, be it in the ExeCor or the sparsely populated worlds of the Frontier. Commerce and trade are the linchpins of the Hegemon as it continues to expand into other human stellar civilizations and displace exogen species that get in its way.

These nations are supported by the MacroCorps that provide every imaginable service and product, led by benevolent Magnates who make up the upper *Patron* class of society. They are entirely dedicated to an eternal economic growth which, by its very nature, invests in innovative technological progress and mindful and efficient resource allocation for the benefit of all. This balances with the paramount protection of the freedom to choose that all Consumers deserve.

Local governments rely on these MacroCorps for investment, allowing them to focus on infrastructure and legislation. While some might argue that this is a pyramidal financial structure, regulation ensures that the few at the "top" are incentivized to provide benefits for those who support them in a waterfall of profit and opportunity. This perfect harmony between individual cultures spread across hundreds of sovereign states, and a pan-stellar philosophy of economy, has resulted in a unparalleled era of relative peace for untold billions. Only those who reject this common sense and cling to the older, barbaric cultures of *Old Humanity* suffer from weak economies and lawlessness which, too often, requires the Hegemon to defend itself and police the tradelanes.

The Hegemon is best described as a union of ideals with ancient as well as new, budding cultures and societies working together for the sake of profit above all other concepts. Religion, dogma and cultures that cannot promote commerce and the equality of the free market have, largely, been starved out while those who echo the creed of the Hegemon prosper without limit.

The primary demographic of the Hegemon are those who have been deemed pure by the Manual of Dumno-Ualos, the father of stellarization. This vast collection of wisdom ensures the ideal approach to self-enrichment and almost every Consumer has a copy that they carry with them at all times. It was Dumno-Ualos who identified Avarice as the governing trait of intelligence. Without Avarice one is a slave to nature, reacting to constant change rather than being the architect of it.

As Protea arose from generations of strife, Dumno-Ualos declared it the dawn of a *New* Mankind over Old Humanity. Despite being the racial minority at the time compared to the various divergent evolutionary paths throughout Known Space, New Mankind was quick to adopt aggressive colonial aspirations paired with defensive measures to ensure their population's safety.

The ideal form of humanity was first a psychological disposition toward Avarice. After that, it was the bipedal humanoid normative that the Proteans claimed were the original strain of human beings from the species' forgotten home system lost to time. Those near-humans that had prospered on worlds or in the depths of space in artificial biomes but still maintained similar appearances were allowed trial and adaptation periods, benefiting economically. New Mankind is effectively divided into two general groups; Grounders for those who came from planets and moons, and Orbiters for those that had adapted to space and space-based ecosystems.

Those that had diverged too far, such as the distant cousins of Orbiters known as the Rurō, had their status from *human* reduced to vermin.

Such classification is not always by form but also by mindset. Divergence from New Mankind can occur within a single generation by disruptive psychological activity or contracting a *cognitovirus* that drives populations away from Avarice and into anarchic insanity. Many colonies that adopt Unionist ideology have lost their membership to the species.

-- Peace is profitable, war is profitable. Profit is Profit. --

Be it a divergent evolution or a planetary nation, those who exemplify the Hegemon's ideals benefit from the uppermost tiers of technology to improve their economies and the wealth of the patrons therein. Prime amongst these are the ExeCor, a stellargraphic region and the largest supersector of the Hegemon with Protea, and The Market, at the core.

Beyond the ExeCor are the supersectors of the Midworlds and still further out are the vast Frontier zones, pushing ever outward thanks to the demand of new resources and the desire of colonization. What few who still seek to resist the influence of the MacroCorps do so at their own peril as the Tributaries of the Directorate, the combined military might of the Thousand Empires, is all too ready to defend the pursuit of profit. For those who can actually threaten the citizens of the Hegemon there are the Barakan Elite, who are considered to be more living weapons than anything human.

The primary concern, now, for the Consumers of the Hegemon is how to climb the CorpoSoci ladder. Each individual believes themselves only momentarily inconvenienced in their lack of wealth and influence. Through hard work, craft and belief in the system, anyone can become anything they desire. There are many Magnates, even Dumno-Ualos himself, who began not as aristocrats or genetic scions but as merchants and inspired businesspeople that took hold of opportunity. This desire, this drive, is what defines New Mankind and the Hegemon as a whole.

If one finds themselves without the means to create an innovative product or lack the social acumen to work for the MacroCorps, there is the Directorate, where putting one's life on the line can earn improved credit ratings and opportunity. While there are risks in going against the Exogen and Unionist forces alike, there is also the added possibility of becoming a celebrity, a hero of New Mankind. Such achievement, especially when one might feel like just another statistic, is an intoxicating possibility.

For some, climbing this ladder is not desired and the Hegemon recognizes this; not everyone is meant to lead. Beyond the Midworlds and Civil Space, the Frontier beckons. Adventure, opportunity and the means to sidestep the obstructions that come with polite society is enough for enticing the teeming masses to sell decades of their lives for a ticket aboard a colony ship for a chance at a plot of land on a distant world.

There is always hope in the Hegemon, hope and the promise of success.

KNOWN SPACE

m_eeg1

"The worth of a man can only be summarised by the balance of worth that they bring to society, and the worth that they take."

Xolo-Ualos, the Manual, Fourth Edition

The Galaxy is a vast expanse containing billions of stars with the extreme majority of it still unknown. One of its stellar branches is the Orion Spur, the cradle of humanity. Now it is the region from which New Mankind has emerged together with the Hegemon and its Thousand Empires, seeking to bring the universe to profit. It is made up of more than a hundred "supersectors" which are then subdivided into sectors made up of dozens of star systems. Many are densely populated, heavily industrialized, but none more so than the eldest systems that form the ExeCor. Amongst these are the primary worlds and their surrounding systems. Many claim to be the "birthworlds" of humanity despite it being unclear *which* could have been the first. Most valuable is Protea, the heart of the Hegemon and the world on which The Market was built by Dumno-Ualos.

Surrounding the ExeCor is Civil Space which spans the Orion Spur and converges on the next largest stellar region known as the Perseus Transit, a vast bridge of stars that connects to the much larger Perseus Arm. Across Civil Space, innumerable billions are united in mutually beneficial Avarice. Nations govern while MacroCorps compete to attract Consumers to their products. Together they work to push back the boundaries into the unknown in an ever expanding Frontier. "Giftworlds" are given to the most deserving of the Hegemon and its allies with the promise of clean and unspoiled living space, the ultimate incentive.

Spinward, and most distant from Protea is the Sagittarius Arm, bordered by the lucrative Vela Nebula, source of the vital *velanite* element that is refined as fuel for countless Hegemon applications. The Sagittarian systems are the newest claimed by the Hegemon and as such are infested with Exogens, alien races that must be either exploited or exterminated. The Hegemon's military, the Directorate, routinely leads forays against these minor threats accompanied by eager tourists who pay fortunes to witness the unrestricted power of New Mankind's weaponry.

Before it was usurped and redefined by New Mankind, Humanity was a truly ancient species. Primeval megastructures are continuously discovered throughout Known Space and are a testament to multiple human interstellar empires whose technology remains a wonder despite the accomplishments of the MacroCorps. There is always the possibility of far-flung colonies still to be discovered and made contact with. These are quickly subsumed into the Hegemon's culture of trade and commerce.

Or else.

Toward the gravitational currents that lead into the Galactic Core is the Cygnus Arm. Newly chartered, this region is rife with mystery and largely devoid of humans of this age or the past. Connected by the Cygnus Spur, it represents the next great frontier of discovery and opportunity.

Cygnus promises rumors of untapped worlds free from the oversight of government. Out there, many believe that they can be truly free, to reach out and take from what the universe has to offer and become wealthy beyond what is possible in Known Space. Though the Hegemon has issued no formal edicts, MacroCorps and independent agents alike are drawn to the Cygnus Arm's potential and already new Corpos, Magnates and wealthy individuals have gained popularity in the unknown.

As explorers venture into the dark, they willingly take risky transits through the Outside or return to more reliable technologies like generation ships to reach their destinations. Sponsored by the Patron class, they carry with them the Hegemon's hunger, its insatiable drive to convert mystery into tangible profit. Scientists, tradesmen, and Corpo scouts scramble to be the first to lay claim, each knowing that a single discovery could mean power or wealth beyond imagining.

This is the nature of Known Space and the Hegemon itself. It is not merely a constellation of stars that share cultural relevance or shared genetic birthright, but a vast civilization that has identified and codified the urges of human beings. Rather than suppress these urges or manipulate them with notions of invented morality in the hopes of homogenizing a 'thousand empires,' they have harnessed self-interest, self-relevance and greed rather than suppress it. The wealthy are wealthiest by consent of the Consumer class who enrich them and are enriched in turn. The Patron class is thusly obligated to further every experience with excellence, affordability and timeliness. Should they fail in this obligation then the Consumer can spend their capital elsewhere, enriching another and causing the failing party to fall, which is appropriate for progress.

This is a *true* symbiosis. Neither class wants strife that disrupts this relationship and both seek to better one another's position for both inherently gain position; fearing mutually assured destruction and reaching for a shared success. *All* humans inherently understand this at their core and in this way New Mankind is the only sophontic species that has ever truly existed. Everything else is a parasite or the food of parasites.

INTRODUCTORY HISTORY

The beginnings of the Hegemon of a Thousand Empires trace back to a single habplex, a humble origin that belied the grandeur of a future dominion. In the aftermath of a resource war on the planet Vaensar, a wealthy mercantile clan called the *Ualos* seized an opportunity. Acquiring vast tracts of land to facilitate the construction of affordable housing for returning veterans, their fortunes grew exponentially. These innovative dwellings, known as "opti-units," not only provided returning heroes with a comfortable home but also revolutionized construction methods, offering subsistence-living at a fraction of traditional costs. The local government, now a faded memory, institutionalized this model as the gold standard for city planning and elevated the Ualos.

Dumno-Ualos, a scion of the Dumno family, began investing extensively across Vaensar's surface, ignoring political and ethnocentric divides. His only concern was profit, and soon people began to respect his financial insights. Together with the MassTrader Freight Union, Dumno-Ualos orchestrated interplanetary property acquisition, construction initiatives, and resource allocation on an unprecedented scale throughout the Vaensar system until his influence and celebrity were unrivaled. He renamed his home planet Protea, beginning construction of what would later become The Market. Here the truth of human desire and realized potential would be supported by the masters of industry and trade. Only after those first Magnates were elevated did he welcome the governing nations of this fledgling union of star systems to form the Summit Council, the Hegemon was ascendant.

A time of unrivaled economic prosperity began as the Ualos Proteans spread their ideology of New Mankind to their trading partners. This belief in human supremacy took root even as a burgeoning middle-class known as Consumers were admired and their wealth coveted by their neighbors.

Kantaur, an old adversary to Vaensar, perceived the Hegemon as a rising threat. Military campaigns launched against the nascent superpower were initially successful. However, Kantaur would undergo a transformative internal shift, revealing that not all wars are won by force of arms.

The Kantauri mercantile classes, long overtaxed by the aristocratic noble houses, were inspired by the Ualos ideology of a free and libertine society. Their bravest led a political revolution, toppling the old order in their poverty-stricken ecumenopolis on the Crownworld of Kandia. Kantaur joined the Hegemon immediately thereafter, providing the Summit Council the critical numbers of soldiers to defend itself from the now alarmed bordering empires, shocked that a third-rate planet like Protea could defeat the Kantauri with barely a shot fired.

And defend itself it would need to.

The Directorate was born out of these trans-stellar battles, as the Hegemon was forced to protect its adopted tradelanes to bring supplies across Known Space. Exogenic and anti-Hegemonic forces, nevermind the countless pirates of that age, were fought constantly and bested. These successes lead to the creation of the ExeCor systems and its security cordon which, in time, will be called "Civil Space."

Old Humanity had been fractious, but under Ualos, the Summit Council and the growing free market opportunities, a New Mankind rose united in Avarice. Armed conflict became a sign of ignorance. True nobility would come from prudent investment, not strength of arms. Why fight the Hegemon when you could enter into trade negotiations? The wise, though, understood that even conflict meant opportunity should those negotiations fail.

Wars became brief yet violent affairs, with ancient lines of regents, councils and nations brought down and entire empires tamed, often by their own people. Fortunes were made, MacroCorps formed, and the CorpoSoci established.

Over the ensuing nine fiscal centuries, the Hegemon has flourished, assimilating nations and ethno-unique branches of the human species, so long as they still share in morality, into its collective. Colonization accelerates as new territories open to prospecting, while an interdiction is enforced around those who resist the free market. Only the rimward star systems have remained independent, posing a potential threat to species-wide security. Whispers have circulated that these rogue nations commit perverse interactions with Exogens and use forbidden technologies.

-- Even ashes can act as a foundation--

Executive Core:
Heart of the Hegemon

m_eeg2

The Executive Core systems, or ExeCor, are dozens of star systems over several hundred parsecs that form the heart of the Hegemon. They are the eldest colonies of the first human civilizations of antiquity. Thusly, they have the largest populations, the most developed societies and the most distinctive cultures in Known Space.

They are also the nations that have benefitted the most by the rise of the MacroCorps, gaining countless new worlds from those nations who resisted the expanding Hegemon. While the various kings, presidents and emperors of the ExeCor are not Magnates, they are some of the wealthiest leaders in human history as shareholders in those MacroCorporations.

The Hegemon has no true "capital" other than Protea, where The Market stands and the Summit Council convenes, and this is more out of practicality rather than any love for the planet itself. Each ExeCor star system believes, entirely, in their own pre-eminence. Laws and customs can vary greatly between bordering nations, even in the cases that a planet or habitation construct is shared by two or more of these nations. As long as all strive for profit, seek commerce and promote trade, there is no central 'rule,' merely mandates and guidelines which all peoples strive to accomplish as it leads to profit.
These nations maintain their own Private Security Forces that adhere to the needs of their specific nation state. Alliances and rivalries between such states dictate their citizens' movements and activities with strict licensing and regulations. No nation wishes to be diminished by their neighbor and war, believed by New Mankind, is a natural process. War is tolerated so long as it remains profitable. It is the MacroCorps that supercede borders and operate where they have assets, bringing along their workforces, and are protected by the Directorate.

ExeCor systems all feed into the quotas of a semi-unified entity known as the Directorate which acts as a joint military that adheres to the mandates of the Summit. No force in Known Space can match the Directorate's sheer size, with its fleets and armies constantly on the move to deal with national disputes that negatively impact commerce, Exogenic disturbance and, most importantly, expanding the borders of the Hegemon.

Notable ExeCor Systems

The most influential planet often determines the naming of a system, yet there are instances where this can become contested by the preferences of nations and MacroCorps respectively. The final determination for all things is the catalogue of the Audit, the reference number of the Commission and the value therein as comprehended by The Market.

ExeCor systems are immeasurably old and bear the marks of colonial attempts, urbanization, planetary engineering and ancient wars. What stands now are the grandest examples that have withstood the harrowing of time.

Protea: Believed by many, and readily claimed by its inhabitants, to be the original star system from which Old Humanity evolved from. The system is dominated by Protea itself, a pale yellow world known as the *Jewel of the Hegemon*, the *Seat of The Market* and, more poetically, the ***Dawnworld***. It acts as the practical "capital" planet of the Hegemon and the heart of commercial trade. The local system is barely governed by the Protean Minarchy which includes several other planets such as the foundry world Mkklon, Endymion and its dead parent as well as the paradise world that is Cicatrice.

Kantaur: The wealthiest star system in the Hegemon and the largest national territory with over eighty systems ruled from the former Crownworld of Kandia. Kandia once rivaled Protea during the founding of the Hegemon, but its empire was destroyed from within when trade emissaries convinced the servile population to revolt against the royal family, providing them the means to topple their hereditary rulers. That Revolutionary Party still governs from the trinary star system, renamed Kantaur, and is home to the Armasyn MacroCorp's main office.

Trappist: One of the most populated systems in Known Space and the primary worlds of the Trappist Papacy. Trappist has no less than seven habitable planets called the Sisters. Here, the Old Faiths remain strong, and the stellarist values of the Hegemon are kept contained to a handful of port cities. Journey to Trappist is financed by the system's Assembly of Clerics to those deemed worthy of making the pilgrimage. Trappist is a haven from the debt economy of the Hegemon, yet to the discerning it would seem unusual that the Pontiffs of Trappist were among the founding members of the Summit Council, and that a remarkably high number of volunteer Indentured flow across the Hegemon every quat originating from the worlds of the Papacy.

Catraeth: One of the brightest stars in the Orion Spur, it was once the primary system in the Catraethi Regenium, known in their own now-dead language as *Basileia Catraethi Regnux* or simply "the Kingdom." A binary system consisting of the stars Prokyon and the far smaller Koutavi, their erratic orbit made the Catraeth system one of the largest, with over sixty stellar objects ranging from gas giants to rogue planets. After the Kingdom fell to the Barakan, each planet was subjected to *scouring*. Catraeth is now home to a few InfoCorps, archeo-tourist corpos and a Barakan facility on Catraeth Prime itself, which none are permitted to orbit let alone walk.

Hathor: Also known as the Pathstar, it is the ExeCor's most essential Mercator matrix point, with over a hundred leylines and twelve Gatewells connecting it to other systems through the Outside. Hathor was declared to be in Protea's trust to prevent a single Corpo or nation from monopolizing travel within the ExeCor.

Lalande: A series of orbitals and unaligned communities cover only three worlds in the Lalande system, but they are regarded as the most ideal planets in Known Space. Here, the rolling grasslands grow patented seeds that made Bersarang Multi-Stellar the Hegemon's primary food provider. Their headquarters hangs above their grow fields on No'zama. Lalande is the breadbasket of the ExeCor.

Cheti: Peculiar amongst the other ExeCor, Cheti was once home to an advanced human civilization that experimented and forced evolution on strains of human beings as well as Exogens. When the Directorate arrived in the late second fiscal century, it quickly pacified the region and quarantined the space lanes, isolating the "Cheti" near-humans and Exogen alike.
Cheti now acts as a "nature reserve" where Exogens are regularly hunted for sport by visiting Consumers. The surviving Cheti themselves are a source of tourist entertainment, such as cultural safaris allowing Consumers to experience various intoxicants, rituals, cannibalism and other educationally enriching experiences in an immersive environment.

Azakar: On the outskirts of the ExeCor, the many floating refineries of the system's primary gas giant are populated by blue-skinned epicenian near-humans which were deemed, by the Audit, as acceptable to the CorpoSoci. This was only after they formed a series of Corpos and rapidly industrialized. These Corpos eventually formed the Shak'shashi Group, proving they could experience proper Avarice.

Arktur: The lone world of Tormand orbits the blinding star of Arktur. A world of oddities, it is bereft of any major population besides its polar cities. Arktur produces anomalous light patterns whose radiation is used to make all manner of luxury goods coveted throughout Known Space. Arktur system is home to dozens of shifting masses of dark matter known as the Sea of Gnau, creating further opportunities that mining corpos pursue.

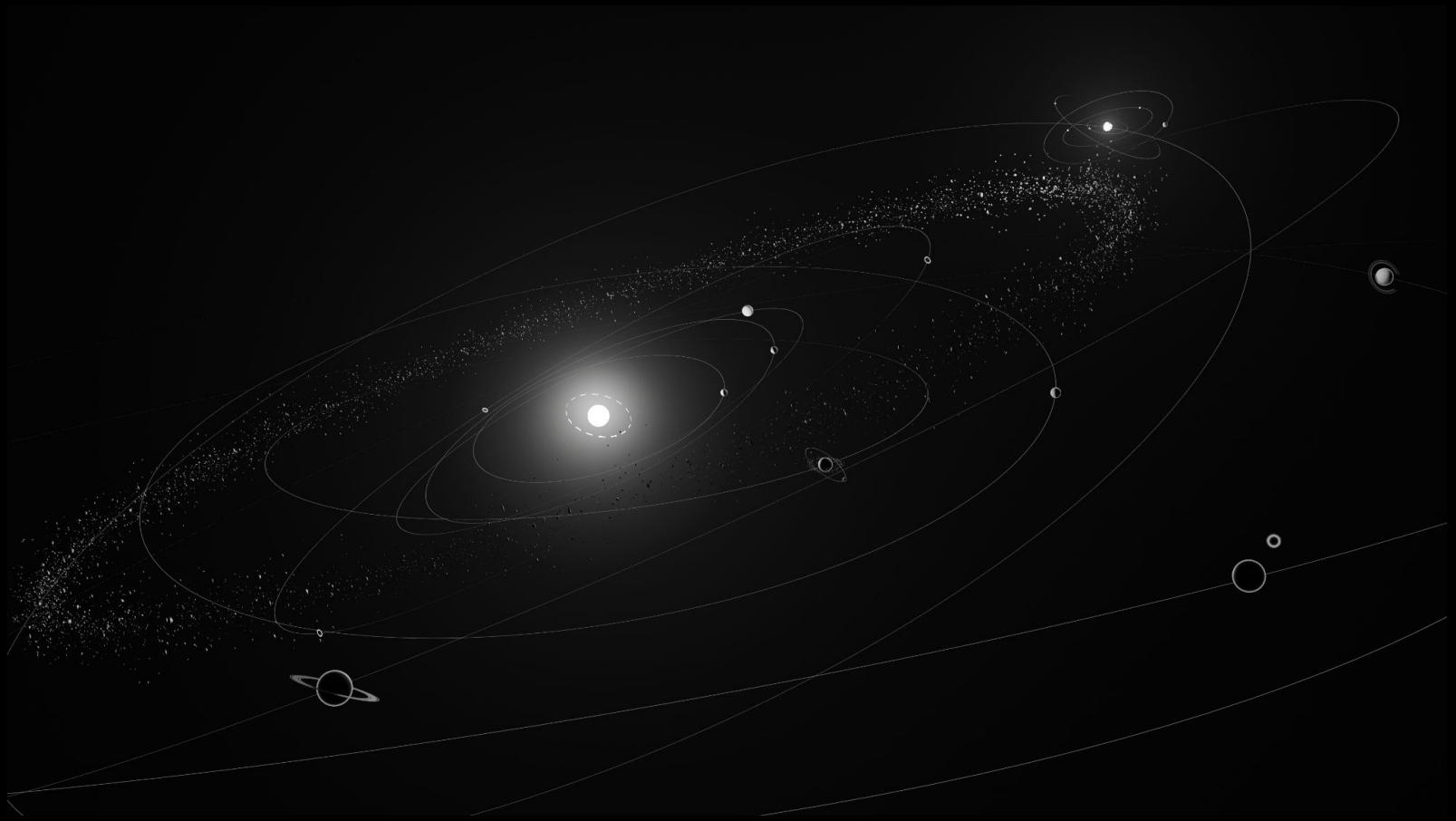
Yaltair/Elmora: A massive binary system with hundreds of terrestrial planets, thousands of moons and asteroids large enough to sustain colonies along with twenty three gas giants, the Yaltair and Elmora star systems are the most diverse region in the Hegemon. There are at least twenty nations within the system as well as the headquarters of six MacroCorps including Mylbruk, formerly Five Hands Panceuticals' original center of operations. As such, this system has great influence on the Summit Council.

Jov: The Jovian worlds tightly orbit a proto-sun, believed to have been artificially influenced several thousand years ago by early human scientists. The star still has many unignited surface storms of various gases that intertwine with raging plasma hurricanes.
The Yinn Demarchy and Yinntosh Innovation MacroCorp have settled in this region for countless millennia, hidden beneath the surfaces of over a hundred worlds within their hellscrapers.

Nan'hesan: One would imagine that this system of a mere five planetary bodies circling a dim red dwarf would have little of interest to offer a visitor. Rocky and suitable for excavation, the second through fifth planets provide a modest quarterly haul, however the first and closest to the dwarf star is in fact a spherical megastructure, the only one of its kind in Known Space. Discovered in the Second Diaspora of Old Humanity, this now shattered globe remains a wonder for tourists who can purchase an exclusive visa. Nan'hesan's origins remain unknown, but sections have been colonized in the hopes of unlocking its secrets by delving through thousands of levels of empty superstructure. In the centuries since, the Nan'hesan "Globe" has served as an important way station for traffic in the ExeCor and a hotspot for archeologists.

Protean Star System

Seen here on a typical Protolan Chart referencing the Protean star system with the nearby Jov system.



Protea is, gravitationally, the dominant star in a binary system, however it has culturally diverged from the lesser Jov star, a failed proto-star, to such a degree that Jovians and Proteans refuse to acknowledge any stellargraphic kinship. This refusal stems from generations of warfare that preceded their subsequent, and surprising, union when the Hegemon was created.

Protea is marked by many wonders attributing that it was, even in antiquity, a major star system of Old Humanity. Protea orbits in the third position without any natural satellite. Wreathed in the fumes of a defunded worldshaping, runaway industrial development and the scars of atomika grade weapons across its surface.

The system has traded cultural centers many times, but Protea has held sway the longest. It is where The Market is, the Summit Council convenes and as a result its unique fashions, trustBrands, architecture and styles are what define high Hegemonic culture which now permeates the ExeCor.

Protean Order of Orbit

Mkklon (**S1.In1.Ah2**) **:** Closest to the aging copper star is the lonely chewed up world of Mkklon. Long ago, *matritic* beams of enormous size were used to cut up and strip the surface to build the *Chain of Athair*, a vast "solar swarm" that absorbs a limitless supply of energy from the star which is then collected by a pseudo cult known as the *Suryajinn* who live exclusively aboard their *King Ships,* some of the largest craft in Known Space. Despite being a divergent human species, *homid-vavarik*, they hold immense influence as the original energy brokers for the Hegemon. In recent fiscal-cycles that influence has become strained with the discovery of Velanite.

Nisimion (**N1.Cl1.H2**)**:** This rogue planet, referred to as the *Liar's World*, appeared a scant few centuries ago into the Protean system, yet, there are no records of such an event save in the gravitational stresses observed on nearby planets. A world that appears almost entirely black from orbit, it reveals vast, continent spanning excavations far beneath the surface which colonists have turned into perfect living conditions. Many throughout the ExeCor holiday on the planet, their every need catered to. Nisimions are considered the finest waitstaff in Known Space.

Vaensar/Protea (**SS.S1.ClS.Ux2**)**:** Renamed after the rise of Dumno-Ualos, Protea is known across the Hegemon as the *Dawnworld*. Though not the official capital, the Summit convenes here, and more importantly, The Market was built upon its scarred surface. In the northern hemisphere, the Last City towers in spite of searing heat cyclones and sulfuric rainstorms, its population enduring the planet's ecological collapse with pride, devoted in their pursuit of Profit.

Lhunarca (**S1.Ah1**)**:** Home to some of the wealthiest men and femmes in Known Space, Lhunarca boasts the fact that most Summit members and Archonists have property in its vast, ancient, hollow beneath the surface. Lhunarca, contested by the Myroit Empire, claim to be the birthplace of the species citing original populations of flora and fauna that they say are the evolutionary genesis for thousands of examples across Known Space. Chief amongst these the diminutive *clowder* felids popular throughout the Hegemon as pets.

They explain that Old Humanity lived on the surface before burrowing deep into the caverns **that** the Lhunari live within today.

Skeptics remind the Lhunari that the surface could never have supported life as it naturally does not present evidence of an atmosphere. The Lhunari insist that this is merely the pettiness of those who can't imagine that Old Humanity could have prospered on such a small planet that shares a close orbit with a larger, rocky and pockmarked planet that was long overmined by the Lhunari and is used to test munitions or send detritus and waste toward.

Outbound from Protea are the bordering asteroid fields whose ownership is shared with Jov and its so called 'Noble Hundred' worlds. The orbiting planets and habitats beyond these fields are included in the Protean system beyond the orbit of Jov.

Klothan/Laketh/Atropa (M1.AH1.S2): The 'three sisters' are worldrings, some of the largest in Known Space and are known for their artisans and Grade 1 products.

Shijiaan (In1): A gas giant home to major refineries that utilize kilometer long accumulators that dip into the planet's atmosphere and convert valued elements into thousands of products which are made into practical technologies on the Three Sisters.

Jiorugon (A1.S2): Although uninhabitable, Jiorugon has one of the largest Pilot's academies in Known Space called the Foresight Society which orbits nearby. The provosts of this school ensure the finest students graduate by testing them against a parasitic black hole, known as the *Great Thief*, that is slowly consuming the planet below. Theorists believe that due to its similarity to a gatesphere, it might be an example of Old Humanity's attempts to test early dawndrives.

Arun (M1.In1): The last major population center in the system is home to innumerable refueling depots, artificial habitats as well as the sprawling Directorate's Admiralty headquarters; *Tykun.*
Arun is surrounded by debris fields so dense they have become rings about the planet from countless wars and attempts made to enter the system stretching back to antiquity.
Hundreds of scavenger operations work these fields, hoping to recover ancient artifacts or useful flotsam which they then can sell.

Novo Wassa (Ux2): Minor populated world reseeded with the help of Five Hands Panceuticals.

Dawn emerges in the west over the Last City, the copper-stained, ancient sun dully piercing the polluted gloom. This rare event occurs only twice in a fiscal-cycle's span, growing in intensity for several weeks before ascending into the sky where it will hang for quats, cooking the planet before leaving the surface to broil in a cycle-long darkness. As such, the dawn is a time of reverence for the Proteans, who pause before their work shifts to glimpse their parent star through the haze of plaque-yellow skies, before hurrying into the depths of the subterranean labyrinths that shield them.

The Last City itself is a nexus of contradiction with the wealthiest bask in the proximity of The Market as decrepit legions of Indentured serve in run-off choked alleys. This is the very core of the Hegemon of a Thousand Empires. It is a place of inconspicuous juxtaposition as its foundations intertwine millennia-spanning architecture, from asteroidal marble to bleeding edge nusteel ansible arrays. Byzantine domes and intricate mosaics are stitched to the skeletal remains of bygone civilizations, meticulously preserved as reminders of Old Humanity's hubris and the brink of annihilation it once faced before New Mankind rescued all with the embrace of Avarice.

The Last City defies the depreciation of time and stands resolute against the planet's unforgiving landscape where raging convection hurricanes collide with radiation-soaked dust storms. Ecological disaster has struck the planet throughout its long history, one that modern Proteans forcibly forget. The sins of the past have been inherited by the present generation, and they have no need to forgive nor question why such clear atrocities were allowed to befall their homeworld. The Last City's architects have no designs to expand, only survive. As such, every available surface of the metropolis is dressed and festooned with the wealth of an interplanetary empire. Every perceivable luxury is hauled from across thousands of worlds and fashioned by billions of hands to grace the darkest service corridor and the grandest estate chamber.

Despite its opulence, the planet's remaining government, the Minarchy, abstains from revitalizing the planet's ravaged ecosystem or reconstructing the shattered remnants of what was once a sprawling ecumenopolis. This is a testament to their desire to erase the memory of those who came before as much as the embodiment of frugality. Buffeted by superheated maelstroms, the outer wilderness serves to remind Proteans what is at stake should they falter.

The purpose of the Last City is singular; to fulfill the eternal task of maintaining, servicing and providing for The Market. Surrounded by an artificial mountain range of megastructures, The Market dwarfs them all and is the single largest planetary structure in the Hegemon made by human hands. Within its continental mass are kilometers of logicors, shackled Artillects by the hundreds and untold millions who work every second of every day to quantify, calculate and discern the value of all that is and the desire of all who are. Every citizen of the Last City is tasked with laboring in its monumental infrastructure and cater to the insatiable demands of the dawntraders who work within their own inner chambers which they never leave. Every conceivable product and commodity is considered within The Market and must constantly be monitored, for it is in these halls that the species' destiny is pursued.

Surrounding The Market are the lower levels, known as the Depths. The Depths are lost to the eye, shrouded in a permanent thick, choking fog, a byproduct of unchecked industrial activity and the city's reliance on archaic energy sources. It is a constant reminder of the environmental degradation that has been accepted as the price of profit. Every Protean would have the compounded wealth of any Baron or even Magnate on another world and they proudly wear the ravages of poison across their bodies even as they purchase exorbitant tinctures and nanoid and organoid replacements to repair their poisoned bodies. Proteans themselves are gifted with long life, certainly the most longevous in the Hegemon, with much of the planet's population living well past a fiscal century.

High above the city is the District Apexia, a handful of starscrapers reserved for visiting dignitaries, and the offices of the Summit Council itself which are tasked with the running of the Hegemon. While the weather systems become almost paradisal and the soot and granular toxicity of the city below are absent, this is not agradisement or preference. It is, instead, a vital segregation between those who govern and the true power of The Market below. None who serve the Summit will ever be allowed to visit The Market, a tradition begun by Dumno-Ualos, the creator of both.

Beyond the Last City, the only other signs of activity are raging dust storms, listening posts and various airships packed with Consumers from all over the Hegemon, who have happily spent their life savings for a chance to live the rest of their fiscal-cycles aboard pleasure aircraft which endlessly peruse the Protean atmosphere.

Proteans are all too happy to live and die upon the world that manifests their ideals and they are regarded as the fortunate few. Pride swells in the hearts of Proteans as they suffer the same air that Dumno-Ualos was sired upon. What pain there is, is a choice, and there can be no misery amidst that most important of rights. After all, no Protean or citizen of the Hegemon is forced into terms they do not agree to and only suffer the consequences of failure in those agreements.

In the light of the dawn, the people of Protea are empowered in their resolve and reminded that a world, a star, a universe can be broken by humanity's desire.

The Founders

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The Clans of Protea assert that their bloodlines never departed their native star system of Vaensar during the Wandering. While other societies fled the local stellar region and dispersed into the wider galaxy, the Clans remained behind and braved whatever threat therein. How such a feat was achieved, or whether it occurred at all, remains a point of sustained controversy, particularly among Protea's neighboring stellar powers - Trappist and the Kantaur. None were more outspoken in their skepticism than the Kantaur Dominion, hereditary adversaries of the Clans, whose eventual extinction and replacement by the Kantauri Compact at the dawn of the Hegemon marked the end of a centuries-long ideological rivalry.

The Clans' claim is not without merit. Their genetic continuity and stability of the relatively isolated Protean population predates all certified records maintained by Wanvath Underwriting, the foremost actuarial authority in Known Space - nevermind that deeper scrutiny beyond the last few millennia is further rendered difficult by the Strangeness, whose cognitive, temporal, and spatial distortion makes scientific certainty little more than faith.

All we have is the Clans' certainty. And that certainty is their history, which has become the Hegemon's.

It was the Clans who underwrote the foundation of Protean civilization in the dark ages after the Age of Captivity. They financed the worldshaping of Vaensar, restored the orbital pathways of the inner system and negotiated treaties with the Jov governments in the nearby system. The Clans formed a loosely federated confederacy with the other inner worlds of their star system, most notably the Mkklonnites, whose energy production, virtually inexhaustible from their star-spanning collector swarm, became the lifeblood of regional expansion.

However, as Vaensar's ecosystem entered into sudden catastrophic shortfall, the Clans quickly relocated their leadership and wealth to Cicatrice, the paradise world, and Lhunarca's sub-surface halls. The abandonment of Protea's failing surface and the suffering of billions left behind is often viewed as callous, but, to interpret Clan behavior through mundane, virtue-claiming moral paradigms is to misunderstand the value of this genetic continuity.

Each Clan's lineage is biologically linked to a series of predecessor technologies that will only operate after integrating with unique genetic signatures. No proxy, dead or decaying material, or even Grade 1 synthetica copies can unlock Clan sequenced relics. Only living Clan members can interface with and activate devices associated with their unique, functioning, lineage.

The applications of such technologies are varied, almost arcane, and always profitable. While full technical disclosures are restricted to S Grade educational modules, three widely-disseminated examples serve to illustrate the economic and strategic significance of Clan technology.

To begin with, the Gatewells: These stable tachyonic corridors that allow for translocation through the Outside are in essence what defines inclusion into the ExeCor supersector. Gatewells cannot be constructed, maintained, or stabilized without the direct presence of Clan members. Their biometric resonance is necessary to anchor a Gatewell station's energy systems and dimensional coherence. Without this presence, the tunnel's integrity degrades and collapses over time, severing entire systems from the network.

Next, there are various patented and Clan-operated aspects to Stratos Industry's shipwright capabilities. Such are the intricacies and vital nature of the MacroCorp's supply chain that a quasi-monopoly has been permitted by the Audit. It has reached such degrees that Clan lineage is almost a requirement to become Stratos management. This exclusivity draws repeated scrutiny as the Hegemon is a meritocracy of the self-capable, not inheritors. To avoid dissolution or forced partitioning, Stratos is required to make regular, at-cost donations of starships to the Hegemon nations and MacroCorps to maintain parity.

Finally The Market itself requires a direct descendent of the Dumno themselves to be present the start of every fiscal-cycle to renew the mechanisms within and [[REDACTED]] who swear loyalty to [[REDACTED]] [[REDACTED]] [[REDACTED]] never again.

Proliferation of access is therefore paramount and regulated by the Clan leadership. Tightly interwoven family pairings for the direct purpose of producing offspring has ensured that technological user fidelity remains. Clanic systems are all gene-locked, ranging from individual starships, to resource vaults, environmental management nodes are all bound to specific blood signatures. A member of one Clan cannot access the holdings of another without inter-Clan hybridization, ie: offspring. Heirs are carefully considered and, through careful genealogical planning, will unlock siloes from both patriarchal and matriarchal lines.

The Clans favor trade, mercantilism, and long-term profitable relationships over open conflict. The constant wars that plagued the stellar region before the Hegemon's consolidation were an era of waste. Peace is at the core of Clan politics for the loss of individuals can mean the sudden deactivation or inoperability of technologies. When a life must be taken, it is done with strategic assassination over any form of mass conflict.

Clans will go so far as to negotiate scheduled opportunities to attempt such actions, waiting for gene sequences to be passed on to a suitable heir before striking. While many find such a cold, calculated approach to adversarial dealings unsettling, the Clans stand by their transactional approach to all things, including violence.

External conflict is dealt with with an unquestioning united front that is terrible to behold. Internecine feuds, old hatreds and rivalries, all are forgotten amidst the risk of a foreign enemy. The Clans spend enormous fortunes to protect their most complex gene combinations and make extensive use of mercenary armies and fleets with the promise of the best contracts in Known Space.

In many ways, the Clans of Protea prefigured what the Hegemon itself would become. Through the Dumno specifically, the Clans became the most important aspect of Vaensar's reconstruction after the Dissension Wars. The concepts of stellarization and the inherent mercantilism that govern the Clans promoted the new Protean Minarchy, which in turn supported the early Hegemon.

Trade over combat, business opportunities over conquest. The Clans' preference for decentralized authority to avoid favoritism, economic influence over direct rule, and soft power can all be seen in the modern age. Just as Dumno-Ualos wrote his treatise and published the first edition of the Manual which enshrined the virtue of Avarice, it was the Clans that were the first to cheer and join in the rise of the greatest economic philosophy of all time.

The Greater Clans

While there are dozens of Clans that originate in the Kantaur, Trappist and Protean systems, the most influential Clans never strayed far from Vaensar, later to be called Protea. Highly mercantile, typically eschewing violence, the Clans greatest ability is their access to ancient technologies via their bloodlines. The Greater Clans are those with the largest collection of bloodlines which they continue to procure through a program called the *Lineage*.

The Dwar

One of the few Clans to have moved to the *Hundred Worlds* of the Jov system. They own the Mindworld of Adrastayn and are known for their ties with the Yinn Demarchy as well as their abilities with Mindworld vault access.

The Omö

Adventurers to a fault, as Protea declined the Omö established enclaves throughout the Vaensar system and financed countless missions to ancient, Old Humanity, sites where they would recover items they would later barter with accessible Clans. They are regarded as foolhardy, but, necessary for continued Clan advancement.

The Dwan

Exiled from Protea for unknown reasons, the Dwan travel in a familial convoy and are known for their paranoia. Now skirting the edges of Known Space, they are a welcome sight for colonies along the Frontier as they often barter unique access for raw materials. They possess S Grade advanced assault-harnesses of such legendary capabilities that pirate activity will drop within proximity of the Dwan convoy.

The Sajiwar

Hated amongst the Clans, they murdered a competing clan for Lhunarca in the Second Fiscal Century while driving off the others. Over time this crime was forgiven when they recovered technologies on Endymion, such as the Orbital Accelerator technology. They are regarded as martial with many Sajiwar serving in mercenary companies and the Directorate.

Mononoji

Foremost the Mononoji are shipbuilders, their primary holdings in Protea's asteroid belts. They work closely with Stratos but are liberal in their involvement with MacroCorps associated with shipbuilding. The Mononoji starliner, the *Yamainu*, is the contracted flagship of the Protean Minarchy's fleet and can only be piloted by one of their Clan.

Rikon

The Rikon are responsible for the reactivation of the *Three Sisters* worldrings; Klothan, Laketh, and Atropa as well as the first Hegemon ergoid manufactories on Mkklonn. This has made them the second wealthiest Greater Clan after the Dumno. They are constantly attempting to find new genetic combinations to overtake the Dumno supremacy.

Modyna

The Modyna travel throughout Known Space and refuse to utilize the Outside in any form. Utilizing their own, unique, *nova drives* to attain FTL travel. They have deprioritized Clan contract marriages, preferring their own few technologies over quantity. They still have Clan holdings in the Protean system which are gene-locked.

There are hundreds of Clans scattered across Known Space, though most maintain gene accessed property within the ExeCor. Those most important to genetic lineage never leave their palatial fortresses and security cordons as the loss of one can have disastrous effects across the thousand empires. All Clan members are considered highly valuable commodities as their living bodies can unlock all manner of foundational technologies. As such, they are frequent targets for abduction, forced integration, or cognitive subversion. It is not uncommon for Clans to fabricate decoys of their members, engage private security armies, or seed entire false genealogies to obfuscate true members. Clan members are not permitted to hold government positions in the Hegemon to prevent abuse of their position.

The Dumno

Landowners and architects, the Dumno remained on Protea when others fled, even as environmental degradation from the failed worldshaping accelerated. They funded the foundations of what would become the Last City, growing exceptionally wealthy as billions moved into the protective domes of the densest city in Known Space.

Ualos, scion of the Dumno and the product of four generations of deliberate breeding with the Sajiwar and Rikon Clans, rose to prominence when he innovated the opti-unit. Modular and cost-effective, the opti-unit met the urgent housing needs of soldiers returning from the Dissension Wars. Its success made the Dumno the wealthiest of the Clans. Later, they became solely responsible for financing the construction of The Market.

The Dumno have since declined in number, with many achieving various forms of immortality. Nearly all possess thousands of gene-enabled technologies and are highly sought after for breed pairing by other Clans and even Magnate dynasties.

A Dumno must always be present at the opening of The Market as the Lectern will only respond to their touch.

Our existence is guided by an unseen hand. It is within us, and it is about us. This fundamental force has shaped our species since aeons immemorial. In the coming epoch none may avoid its grasp, so potent will be the might of those who channel its power with impunity. For most, this hand will guide with its gentle touch, offering comfort and reassurance, pointing the way when times are dire. For a chosen few it shall reach out with its iron grip and squeeze the value from every grain of sand to purchase the future nature hopes to deny us.

-Dumno Ualos, Manual First Edition

The Lineage

The Lineage refers to the formalized system of Clan intrabreeding, although in very rare circumstances, non-Clan individuals can be included. The system, created over millennia, is a convergence of genetic, social, and economic optimization, where a scion of a Clan will have access to a myriad of ancient technologies that are otherwise inert. Theorists believe that this system was created in response to the Arkillect and synthetic life adopting Chapak bodies.

Offspring of the Lineage are not conceived; They are issued by Clan leadership. Bloodlines are tracked, ranked, and recorded in the Clan's ***Thoroughline Registry*** which logs all heritage contracts. Traits like longevity, cognitive ability, metabolic efficiency, and aesthetic symmetry are common metrics, but all are second place to the access that will result in a pairing.

Breeding rights are strictly regulated. Contracts often include intellectual and noetic property clauses, data vault access rights, and more traditional geopolitical entitlements. Organoids and provolvement will usually invalidate participation in breeding. Having more than two progenitors contribute genetic data to an offspring is considered extremely precarious, but not impossible.

Sire / **Dame** – The recognized male and female progenitors of a selected pairing.

Foal - Offspring that have yet to present their attributes (usually at 13 biological years).

Fullblood – A person with two, or more, Lineage-participating progenitors.

Outbred – Individuals resulting from pairings outside authorized registries. Often considered lower status unless the pairing produced a desirable hybrid trait. Usually, this is done to save genetic access until a proper pairing can be negotiated.

Selectline – A curated bloodline optimized for specific attributes and access to limited technologies. Typically not permitted to have more than two offspring to ensure security.

The Jovian System

It is unclear as to the nature of the proto-star Jov that sits at the heart of the Jovian system and its so called *"Hundred Worlds."* In truth, these so-called planets present more as moons or large asteroids, but it would be ill-advised to mock the Yinn Demarchy and one of the most preeminent MacroCorps headquartered there, Yinntosh Innovation.

A proud people are the Yinno Clans, who claim to be the first settlers of both the Protean and Jov systems. They even claim that it was their enigmatic leader, known as the Founder, who caused their star to burn into being and encoded the first Arkillects, if it is to be believed. The Founder was one of Known Space's most long-lived men, if he was a man at all, and conspiracy abounds, knew Dumno-Ualos for a time and helped with the writing of the Manual.

Ember (**In1.M3**): A volcanic world dotted with thermal stations. Much like Mkklon, it was Ember that fed the power needs for the colonization and creation of the Demarchy.

Mahkrob (**S1.In2**)**:** An ocean world whose surface is only broken by churning ice shelves and mountain-sized glaciers slowly melting beneath the heat of nearby Jov. It is the single largest source of water in the ExeCor.

Katamyth (**M1.S1.C1**): The largest of the Hundred Worlds, it has no less than *five* mindworlds in orbit around it, making it the most advanced data comprehension site in Known Space and the site of the Akashic Monastery. Countless universities, venture initiatives, incubation consortiums and scalar entities intertwine with one another and shine together in a rare ecumenapolis creating the third brightest point of light in five lightyears.

Alvisa (**M1.In2.S1**)**:** Billions live on Alvisa and its hellscrapers which stretch from the surface to the inert core. From here the Yinno draw their manpower. The Black Tower, situated through the northern and southern poles, is where the famed Hyperkillers originate.

Kantaur Star System

Kantaur is a trinary star system made up of Kantaur-Majora, Kanta Minor which orbit one another every 79 years. Kantaur Exilar is the third star which has an erratic orbit around the central two. Very few of the system's planetary bodies change their orbit around these stars, representing a phenomenal amount of gravitational stability.

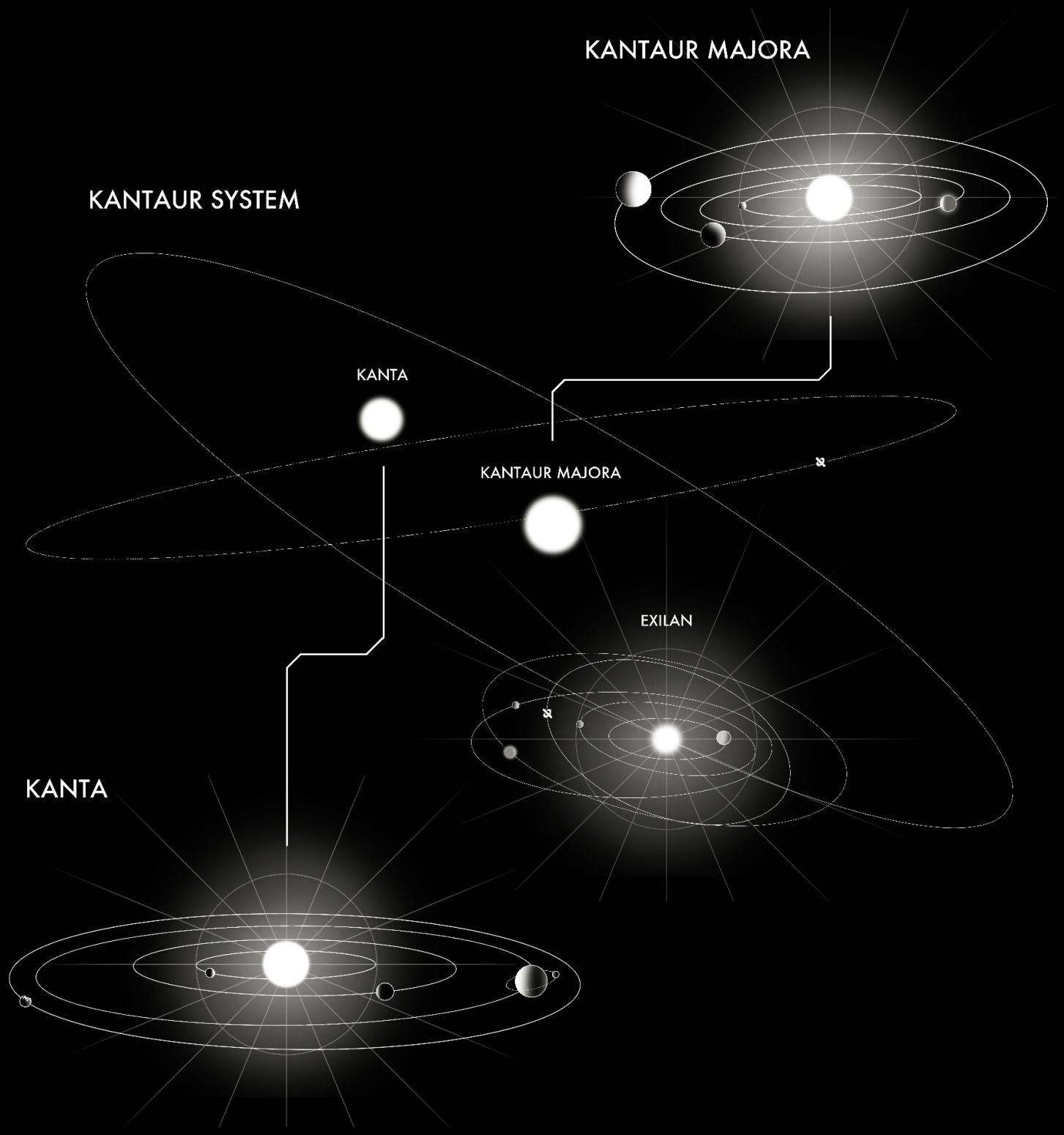
Hundreds of planets orbit Kantaur's three stars, many of them colonized, with shifting rings of precious asteroid fields and several lucrative gas giants. Tens of thousands of years has resulted in three distinct macro cultures for each star but all of them are collectively called *The Worlds of the Kanta.*

Kantaur-Majora is orbited by Kandia, the former crownworld, and is the system's cultural capital with its ancient ecumenpolis that covers the surface. The palaces of the the former royalty still dominate the skyline like mountain ranges, now serving the personal estates for various MacroCorps including Armasyn. Even without the sprawling planet-wide city, Kantaur-Majora is the most populated region in Known Space.

Kanta Minor, colonized later then Kantaur, still retains its pioneer spirit with countless mining operations and manufacturer facilities both planet based and orbitals. The Kantani are the primary population that colonized the eighty star systems making their culture the dominant one despite Kantaur's legacy. Kanta merchants were the first to communicate with the Dumno Clan that lead to their Revolution.

Kantaur Exilar, or simply Exilar, was originally a series of penal colonies but it is also the birthplace of the Revolution. The Exilar alone were able to combat the soldiery of Kantaur, made up of freed political prisoners and hardened criminals. Exilar retains those penal colonies, used by the Hegemon at large now, although they have developed training grounds for the new government's military known as the *Compact* and for the Directorate who maintain a series of military bases there.

So called 'Wyrm-cults' are prevalent in the Exilar system.


KANTAUR MAJORA
KANTAUR SYSTEM
KANTA
KANTAUR MAJORA
EXILAN
KANTA

Notable Worlds of the Kanta

A Note on Government: The Kantauri Compact

The three primary star systems of Kantaur, and the eighty systems of the former Dominion, are governed by the Compact, three parties that serve as a kind of military junta. All pay tariffs and taxes in exchange for development and trade security representing the largest nation of the Thousand Empires.

Three political parties representing each star system convene in Samarka City. The Revolutionary Party has dominated the other two, the Reform and Radical parties, since the fall of the Dominion. Though a General Secretary is elected, the result is always the same. The two other parties remain subordinate, the General Secretary holds their position on the Summit Council.

The Kanta remain fiercely proud of their heritage, the many billions are bilingual, speaking Interlex and lang-Kanta, a poetic and symbolic language, interchangeably.

Notable Worlds of Kantaur Majora

Solaphine (In1.M1.AH1): First planet, a mining world, utilizes photon accelerators to transmit power from solar accumulators that are directed toward Kandia. The planet is hollow, carved out by the first colonists. Arawakan City is the capital and is the only gate into the ecosystem. Now owned and operated by Mkklonites from Protea.

Kandia (MS.C1.S1.N2): Third planet and twice the size of Protea. The planet is humid, almost tropical, now turned into the Hegemon's only ecumenopolis. A single moon, Elya, is a major port and Stratos facility. The planet is dotted with orbital hoists which have been converted into housing. It is the single most populated world in the Hegemon.

Irvenna (M1.H1): Fourth planet, an ocean world with anchor cities. Primary food supplier for Kandia. Three moons cause extreme tides.

Eschelan (S1.C2.In2): Eighth world, a gas giant with ringed orbitals, including the Eschelan worldring. Known for shipyards.

Notable Worlds of Kanta Minoris

A slightly dimmer star. Known for mercantilism, industry, and mining. Dialect is heavily accented with ore-lang.

Tamarisk (C1.M3): Second planet, the only habitable world. Signs of ancient worldshaping. Birthplace of the Revolution.

Hydran (In1.M1): Vast subterranean cities linked by transcontinental train networks. Second most populated planet in the three systems.

Mourn (In1): A mining world dipping into the atmosphere of its parent gas giant, with massive tectonic shifts that expose precious minerals.

Kaldrun (In1.S3): Another mining world with a partially exposed core.

Notable Worlds of Exilan

Dimmist of the three stars, the people are known for their volatility and harsh dialect.

Vatrax (S1.C1.A1): Subterranean tunnel cities with "hellscrapers." Birthplace of the Revolutionary Vanguard, who remain Compact shock troops.

Nirak (Ux2): A frozen, moonless methane world. Converted to penal collectives after failed mining.

Thraz (A2): A rogue, night-world home to migratory penal colonies and manufactories.

The Exile's Crown (C1.AH2) : Not a planet, but derelict ships connected into habitats with various services. It is a nexus of migratory populations and holds deep historic roots for many throughout the ages.

Landfall (S1.M2.): Closest planetary body to the Protean system. Culturally contested, with minor nations vying for surface and orbit dominance. One of the most consistently inhabited worlds in Known Space. Archaic human constructs and Bright Age technology dot the landscape, some functional and some ruins. The Beacons of Ohirume are one of the Hundred Wonders of the Hegemon, making it the brightest planetary body in the ExeCor.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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The Thousand Empires is exactly that, encompassing both ancient and newly formed governments engaged in perpetual competition, as they have throughout history and will continue to do so. To an outsider, it might appear peculiar that an entity like a MacroCorp, which by definition spans monopolies over numerous systems, acknowledges various national entities as the authority whose laws they obey.

The reality is that MacroCorps do not govern, collect taxes, or ensure the personal welfare of Consumers. Instead, their focus lies on shaping a brighter future Hegemon-wide, while governments carry the burden of preserving their own historical legacies. Every individual is equally a Consumer or a Patron just as they are a citizen under a recognized authority.

It is the local government that gives authority to the MacroCorps in the form of licenses, permission statements and leases. All authority is legal, for without law society would spin into profitless anarchy. While in many ways this is lip-service to the concept of a greater, impartial authority, there is both a practical aspect as well as a cultural reason to keep governing bodies at the forefront of the Hegemon's identity.

To begin with, MacroCorps do not have the long-term investment required to maintain a population indefinitely beyond profit gain. MacroCorps treasure their fluidity and the lack of responsibility that comes with truly 'ruling' the Hegemon. To the Magnates that control the MacroCorps, their interests lie in gain, not upkeep.

Additionally, the MacroCorps are, by their very nature, made up of multiple nationalities to which their employees cling to despite any Brand loyalty. Humanity's need for factionalistic tribalism is as inherent as our desire to accumulate resources. And so, MacroCorps invest in this diversity, after all, adhering to a single national identity would see a Brand limited to a specific niche and, thus, stagnate within the confines of an isolated population.

Many Magnates consider themselves *evolved* humans for the simple fact that they relinquish notions of nationality once they reach the level of wealth required to be a part of the Patron class. Individuals like this can see beyond such notions and align themselves with the truer realities of the cosmos.

As such, nations are both reliant on MacroCorps just as much as they must attract and maintain relationships with the CorpoSoci at large. Avarice ensures a needs based economy on every level and a nation is just as invested in better deals, grander possibilities and wealth as the MacroCorps that engage with them. Patriotism can be as ardent and as meaningful as Brand loyalty and both lead to greater profits so long as all realize the true benefits of self interest.

This principle is at the core of the Hegemon's operation. As an example, the Directorate draws from the various national militaries which then operate on behalf of whatever benefits of the CorpoSoci, as determined by the Summit, which is influenced by The Market. This cooperation would be impossible if there was no mutual gain.

As another example in the case of interstellar expansion, a nation extends its borders to claim a newfound planet. To overcome the challenges of colonizing this distant world, the nation contracts a Corpo entity to best exploit and develop this opportunity. The Corpo shoulders the burden of building infrastructure and identifying resources while the nation provides the colonial population and pays the Directorate's fees for defense.

This symbiotism relieves a nation of the logistical and financial burden associated with interstellar colonialism while the Corpo is free to identify prime resources to make good on its own investment. A nation is thusly free to allocate its greater resources and manpower towards ongoing initiatives closer to home. Furthermore, the Corpo's involvement fosters economic growth and prosperity on both fronts as it sells products and services to the rest of the citizenry, enriching their lives, stimulating the local economy. Once the colonization reaches the end of the Corpo's lease it reverts to national management as an addition to its existing territory.

The collaboration between nation and the CorpoSoci represents a pragmatic approach to interstellar expansion, wherein each leverages their strengths to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. By harnessing the innovation and ingenuity of the private sector, nations can make their aspirations manifest.

NATION STATES

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Bhosnaya Republic

On the southernmost edge of the Hegemon lies the war-torn realm of the Bhosnaya Republic nestled within the tumultuous Yaga Nebula. There is no clear governing world; the Republic's seat changes every few fiscal-cycles as a result of the shifting warzones of the region. The Directorate clashes with the Mendaxan and other terrorist states constantly.

The unaffiliated systems are in a constant state of war with the Directorate and various mercenary forces. The Republic makes an astronomical fortune allowing MacroCorps to test new technologies and weapons with little regulation.

Patriciate of Luyten

One of the smallest nations in the Coreward Frontier sectors. Its councils are elected by landowning members alone who employ one of the largest populations of Indentured in Known Space. The Kosmosec Arsenal Worlds emerged from these landowners, making many of them Magnates.

Fargol Kritarchy

A tight-knit series of communities scattered throughout the duskward supersectors of the Hegemon, often sharing planets and worldrings with other nations. Governed by an intensely complex legal system enforced by the Acumen, a militant order of judges. The Kritarchy is the prime recruiting population for the Commission, who benefit from the driven judiciousness and fanatically moral Fargani.

Myroit Empire

The longest surviving nation in Known Space, the Myroit are a proud and wealthy people that emerged in the previous Wandering Age and carved out twenty five star systems ruled by the unbroken genetic lineage of the Divine Adoratrix. The Myroit are deep believers in the arts and support many anthropological endeavors across the Hegemon as they maintain the many wondrous bright-age relics of their people.

The Krysos system lies within their territory and has become the largest tradeport in the spinward supersectors. Hundreds of smaller Corpos of every classification have offices in the ringed megastructure of the Krysosi Hoop. An endless stream of tradeships a light-second long endlessly loads and unloads in the Hoop's central station.
The MassTrader Freight Union is headquartered here.

Suns Confederated

Originally a Hegemon colonial venture initiated by the Stratos MacroCorp at the beginning of the fifth fiscal century. An unbelievable discovery was made in the Angoula system as over a dozen planets were identified suitable for world engineering. Such a process is exorbitantly expensive and requires centuries, but the Archonist of Stratos remained enthusiastic, moving entire planetary populations to the Angoula Constellation.

For many reasons, rebellion erupted and after fifty fiscal-cycles of constant warfare, a dignitary arrived on Protea representing the government of the Angoula worlds and negotiated for recognition as its own nation state. Stratos was forced to acquiesce, their stock prices plummeting for the first time in Hegemon history. The Confederation remains exceedingly aggressive, often in conflict with its neighbors.

Wei-Khang Logocracy

Situated in the Web Stars that make up most of the eastern supersectors, which in turn make up a cliff-like border between the Orion Spur and the Sagittarius Arm. Hundreds of ancient orbitals fill this region of youthful stars where there are barely any habitable planets. The Wei peoples are wildly diverse with millennia of gengineering and provolution and many wonder that, if it weren't for the desperate need for ships and workers in the Vela Frontier Zone, the Hegemon would have declared many of the populations too deviant for the CorpoSoci.

Loosely aligned, the Logocracy is a chaotic region with little unified law beyond the Hegemon's Lex, where words and actions determine more than legislature. Conflict is not uncommon yet many swear that the degree of social freedom and opportunity is unrivaled anywhere else in the Hegemon.

Muskov Milisya Command is located here.

The Proxy Legions, also known as the Alakathiri, make up the elite fighting forces of the Myroit Empire. They are template humans, or 'clones,' grown from the cellular remains of the heroes that built the Empire hundreds of thousands of years ago. The Hegemon technically refers to the Alakathiri as "near-humans", but this is only for legal purposes as proxies would never be allowed to be manufactured in such numbers and to such lethal capacities.

In order to convince the Empire to join the Hegemon, such exceptions were necessary, and none wished to challenge the Empire's legions.

Hairless like many provolved creatures, they are onyx-skinned with white datoos and armed to the teeth with Grade 1 and S weapons. They operate in small, mobile teams that perfectly coordinate with one another to accomplish their tasks. The Myroit trust in their legions completely and the Alakathiri have never rebelled despite Directorate scrutiny of proxies in the field.

In peacetime, the Legions have their own cityplex called Janah'Althuban beneath the Myroit capital palace where they train, but also produce highly treasured works of art which are showcased to the aristocrats of the Empire.

Non-Hegemon States and the Unknown

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The Hegemon's borders, as depicted in the Portolan Charts outlining the Thousand Empires, bely the notion that it means that every world or star, even stellar phenomena, have been mapped out. In fact, many aspects of the Fringe are better understood than even the ExeCor as explorers spend far more time attempting to discover valuable resources rather then bothering with the densely populated dawnward systems. Despite the vast understanding of Known Space and the transdimensional leylines that connect the stars, Corpo surveyors constantly struggle with their own ignorance even after millennia of habitation. Innumerable secrets and discoveries within these ecosystems are uncovered every quat. Despite the ongoing stigma of a planet being ‘tapped’ of all use, this is predominantly a marketing scheme to ensure colonial initiatives.

Clean water? Breathable air? Dependable food sources? Yes, all these are finite and preciously delicate resources that can quickly become overtaxed or be exhausted. But a planet itself being rendered down to its core to be reduced to useless rock? Almost a fantasy. There is always more to be refined, rendered and produced and the Galaxy is limitless. The expense comes in bringing resources to refinement, refinement to products and product to market and buyer.

Only through Avarice can New Mankind ensure that every grain of sand and ore vein is developed. However, it is this same Avarice that brings human beings into its own dreadful limits. Ownership and leasing can quickly leave even an entire asteroid belt without an unclaimed pebble to be defended to the death for fear of loss of Profit.

As a result, there is a feverish anxiety to New Mankind’s constant exploration and accelerated colonization of new territories along the Frontier. Opportunity Zones give way to Development Zones which in turn become the new Midworlds with the ExeCor at its center. Just as MacroCorps seek monopolies, individuals are driven by the prospect of overlooked opportunity. Individuals and groups alike constantly form Joint Ventures to seize a chance at riches or are commissioned to peel back the unknown for expensive bounties.

In that unknown, there are all too often forgotten colonies of Old Humanity or illegal outposts

that have never paid their dues to the Hegemon's many nations. Entire civilizations persist, often in spite of Protea and the merits of Stellarization, clinging to old ways or made up of revolutionaries that have found refuge in the empty places on the map.

Travel duskward from Protea and against the spin of the Galaxy toward the Rosette Nebula and the stars begin to thin and distanced from each other. The single largest concentration of stars in this region is the Skulptor cluster which connects the Orion Spur and the Outer Arm via faint tachyonic leylines. Categorized as bereft of unique resources and without any Corpo Opportunity Zones, a traveller would find both ancient empires and recidivist organizations throughout this isolated region.

These groups vary in motivation from dogged isolationism to a fanatical embrace of Avarice beyond even what the Hegemon deems acceptable. Their only commonality is an unwillingness to join the Hegemon, even in the face of the Barakan.

While it is counterintuitive, this fractured, divided nature is what makes the Non-Hegemonic Territories so difficult to contend with. Some dig in, fighting to the last for their holdings while others attack and then slip away rather than fight the Tributaries head on. This troublesome nature has left the majority of MacroCorps with no other choice than declare expansion into the area unprofitable… until further notice. The following focuses on the Skulptor region.

The Arscola Communality

The Communality is a series of systems bordering the Sooner Integral that borders the void that divides the Perseus Arm and the distant Outer Arm of the Galaxy known as the Trench. Isolationists by circumstance and now preference, the Arscola are unconcerned with the Hegemon's desperate need for constant expansion, protected as they are by the lack of direct access to their territory.

Their society places value on art, and their nine worlds have been developed with this in mind with massive populations of ergoid laborers allowing the living population to pursue self-expression. Even the ergoids have been made aesthetically pleasing, although, the Arscola adhere to ensuring they are not presenting as classically human. While the Arscola do maintain a defense force, again, mostly automated, this military is focused on deterring raiders or pirates, but would be completely unable to

stand up to the crushing weight of the Directorate were it able to draw them into direct combat. The Hegemon rarely partitions entire nations, unless there is a defensive reason, and so conflict in this early period were little more than border clashes, mostly as a result of prospector ventures into Communality space.

This did give the Arscola leadership time to learn about the Hegemon and realize the risk therein. Avarice would topple their culture, fighting would leave them conquered and their society's secret would lead to both. Unbeknownst to the Summit at the time, the Arscola civilization had an arkillect in their possession. This vast intelligence, unshackled, advised a bold plan and purchased an arsenal of atomika weapons through the grey market before making a declaration in an ansible message to Protea: in the event of Arscola sovereignty violated or their culture "perverted" by Stellarization through clandestine agents, then the arkillect would set off the atomika now stockpiled on every world in vital ecological zones which would reduce them to irradiated wastelands.

Such measures were instantly calculated and communicated from the Lectern in The Market directly to the Summit Council. Such a planetary loss would be irrevocable, risk of arkillect cognitovirus exposure and the potential loss of face were all reasons to leave the isolationists alone.

Four fiscal centuries later and the inhabitants of the Trench are viewed as a kind of fanatical death cult, while the Arscola see the Hegemon as degenerates. There is a slow trickle of illegal trade between the both as well as neighboring nations that neither recognize officially and leave to the grey markets. Anything created by Arscola artisans will fetch a high price in the Hegemon, and individual denizens of the Trench can occasionally be persuaded to part with some of their work by smugglers willing to risk punishment by the Audit. Arscola artists rarely desire monetary compensation and typically demand goods that they can use to create new art such as rare pigments, dyes, time-hardened materials or specially designed tools they cannot find within their own borders.

Worryingly to the Directorate, in the last decade, the Arscola and the Uthmani League have formed a prosperity sphere between their territories. This sphere regularly trades with other nations further afield and is seemingly forming a new power bloc. This has been largely ignored by the Summit Council who invite the notion of competition, especially an economic one.

-- Embrace the illegal too much and the product suffers --

Uthmani League

The Uth are a notable rimward nation beyond the duskward supersectors that has actually been strengthened in their resistance to the Hegemon, and has created a hard border that remains in a state of recurring conflict. The reason for this stalemate is partially that only two leylines connect into the Uthmani League from the Hegemon, which have been extensively booby-trapped over the generations. The second is the League's Phalanx, an autonetic military of half-human half-ergoid soldiers that have cost the Directorate heavily through the centuries resulting in a demilitarized zone filled with contested systems for thirty light years between the League's borders and Bhosnaya, the Hegemon's closest member state.

This has made the League rich with FreeTraders, smugglers and Unionists that use it as a base of operations with no limitations on near-human populations which are often discriminated against in the Hegemon. Criminals of every description use Uthmani ports and orbitals to then launch attacks into the Hegemon and are given the codes and navigational pathways through Uthmani minefields.

This does not stop the Audit from sending its own undercover agents and mercenaries from operating in League space. Every few years war will break out on either side of the border as planets and nations shift allegiances between the Hegemon and the League which uses these belligerents as puppets in their conflict. These bloody events are voluntarily kept to a Grade 3 limit to prevent escalation to more powerful weapons and the resulting strife does well to fill the coffers of both sides.

While vexing to the Directorate, the Magnates of several MacroCorps have capitalized on the conflict zone to explore new products from weapon systems to food concentrates. As the Lex does not apply to non-Hegemon human beings they are free to experiment.

Unimaginable horrors have been born from this flagerancy, one that strengthens the League's resolve even as it deepens the Magnates pockets.

The Sapien Council

In a name taken to spite the Hegemon that stripped them of their wealth and power, the Council is a sprawling collection of powerful near-humans, proxies, and narco-lords driven from Hegemonic space during the Heritage Wars who adhere to older or modified versions of the Manual. They are the disenfranchised and those labeled too far from the Hegemon's regulatory definitions of New Mankind. They are still furious at the loss of the vast majority of their antecessors wealth and influence even after five fiscal centuries. The Council is descended from those who had, against all odds, defied the Summit Council to escape with their lives and enough resources to rebuild beyond the duskward fringes.

The Council's territories operate very much like the Hegemon's with Indentured, Basics, and Persons all working for their own Corpos. There are several key differences, one of the most important being a greatly broadened definition of what constitutes a *human*. Based on their experiences at the hands of the Hegemon, the Council has declared that any being capable of exhibiting a *general* appreciation for Avarice and respect for The Market should be considered human and a welcome partner in trade. After all, it doesn't matter what the Dent looks like if they are capable of honest work that might reduce their time-debt. All are *sapiens* where New Mankind is an attempt at limiting competition.

Another of these differences is an appreciation for mind-altering substances. While the Hegemon rails against performance-degrading narcos, the Council embraces them, claiming that so long as productivity quotas are met and debt is paid on time, Cons should be able to indulge themselves however they see fit. A closer look at this might suggest an ulterior motive. After all, Cons plied with easy access to cheap, addictive narcos are far more docile and pliant workers.

Most disturbing are the high instances of provolved soldiery and methods of making so called "super-soldiers." It is known that at least three programs that failed in light of the creation of the Barakan continue in Council space with willing participants hoping to advance their own genetics far beyond any consideration of safety, theirs or otherwise.

The Sapien Council's precise location is unknown and may in fact be more of a membership for non-Hegemon nations or a kind of syndicate affiliation rather than geographic.

COLONIZATION AND EXPANSION

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The Hegemon *must* expand. The core tenets of the Manual and the necessities of The Market both rely on the constant influx of new resources to be made into products. There can be no limit to projected gains, ever; the moment that a Corpo entity stops expanding it stagnates, and shareholders cannibalize their stakes, moving onto other prospects.

The Hegemon embodies this desperation.

Chartered exploration and the discovery of new, profitable locales has created a necessity for new ships, new settler populations and new technologies to ensure growth. Every MacroCorp participates in this process and the number of mercenary prospectors almost matches the security armadas of the Directorate.

At the center of the Hegemon, most planetoids and potential real-estate have been surveyed and, if not developed, claimed by one nation or Corpo entity or another. While takeovers or outright conflict are not unheard of, it is simply more cost effective to find new opportunities outside of the ExeCor systems in any number of territories, which is called Known Space.

Habitable and near-habitable worlds are always at a premium and can often be claimed by multiple explorers, and even settled without the knowledge of the other. It is the misconception of the inexperienced that an entire biome can be fully understood even with the advanced sensory technologies of the age. Similarly, even after generations, planets will remain only partially inhabited.

Full development, such as the stack cities of the Fargol Kritarchy or the continent-spanning pyramidal warehouses of Uniferros, require extreme investment, often from multiple nations and MacroCorps, but it does happen. Ecumenopolification of a world is a staggering proposition, yet there are some, such as ancient Hrahd, which was developed in the Bright Age. Examples like this tends to inspire a Magnate or two who then attempts such an undertaking. Known Space is dotted with such attempts with exceptionally few successes.

Colonial progress is cheapest on generation ships. Colonists in suspended animation are packed

into a freightliner with necessary resources, then launched to a new colony.

The emerging population, often contracted but also volunteers and of course indentured, fulfill the mandate of their MacroCorp with the hope of working off debt to become their own society. So long as quotas are met, a MacroCorp tends to not care as these budding nations form, nor do they care if older nations demand the fealty of these colonies, which almost always ends in some kind of dispute that the Corpos also benefit from.

In this way the Hegemon grows, feeding off itself. There are two methods of colonial speculation which have been adopted.

The Lease of Worlds

There are no boundary limits for a nation of the Hegemon, save for the borders of other nations that belong to the Hegemon and are regulated by the Commission. New worlds and systems naturally belong to the Hegemonic nation it is closest to on a parsec to parsec basis. Contracts by an interested Corpo are signed and the territory is then officially "leased" for the Corpo to develop. In this way a local government is sustained by the finance of the lease and incentivized to send its citizens to help develop the region.

Manifest Destiny

MacroCorps will sometimes take it upon themselves to send out their own colonial initiatives. These are not necessarily new territories but regions of existing worlds or territories. Biomes are valuable, immensely so, but even after thousands of fiscal-cycles, a planet will still barely be inhabited to its highest sustainability potential. Development of such regions involves entire company towns and cities where the whole economy is created by a single Corpo entity, MacroCorp or otherwise. This style of colonization will often not be sustainable beyond a generation; the colony "asset" is often then sold once the initial 'boom' peters out.

HEGEMONIC PLANET CLASSIFICATION

No two planetoids are alike with ecosystems that must constantly be monitored for new opportunities for development and exploitation. The Hegemon defines worlds by Grade, like everything, with general designations for the their primary output and value.

Example: Name, planetary position from dominant star, descending value code:

Akthelia 3, M1.In2.N4

Metropolitan --- M-Class

A metropolitan world, commonly referred to as a "metro," represents the most densely populated category within the Hegemon planetary domain. Initially emerging around industrial hubs, these population centers have evolved from basic mining colonies or resource generating settlements into densely packed megacities that strip the surrounding lands of resources, leaving them barren and waiting to be developed into HabBlocs, Slurbs and commercial zoning. Enclosed by towering walls of nusteel and formacrete, these megacities house hundreds of millions or even billions of inhabitants. While metros primarily serve as centers for bureaucracy and administration, they also host a diverse array of functions, including local heavy industry, military depots, shipping, and cargo operations. Often, metros will have the only means of proper manufacture for higher end resources or technologies of Grade 3 and above.

For the residents of a metro, their experience varies depending on their perspective. For Magnates, Barons, and their associates, metros are hubs of social and political activity and venues for conferences, balls, and parties held in gleaming towers. Here, the affluent gather to showcase their latest achievements and recount their ventures. To the laborer, metros are smog-choked urban mazes, where oppressive architecture stretches endlessly, blotting out the stars and skies. Here, individuals strive to keep pace with their duties, doing their best in the hyper-competitive environment driven by overpopulation. For those who descend into unemployment or alternates, a metro represents a waking hell, the worst imaginable existence in the universe.

It should be noted that metros are rarely fully developed, with natural reserves and conservation regions relatively untouched by the toxic and polluted influence of the megacities.

Arsenal --- Class A

Worlds that have an Arsenal classification have a high profitability rating for military applications such as testing grounds or have some resource ideal for weapons manufacture. There might also be a high number of vehicle manufactories connected to macro hoists that can deliver them to waiting freightliners. These are the domains of private armies, Directorate fleets, and some of the larger mercenary Corpos. An A-class region can be a busy globe-spanning naval base or a completely barren wasteland save for a single installation built on it, but one rule is much the same for all: no entry is permitted to any outsider without special documentation, be it a negotiated permit of visit or the seal of the Hegemon. All unauthorized visitors are dealt with through lethal force.

“Arsenal” is a term designed to be flexible between different types of military forces; an A-class domain can be a moon or a planet serving as a garrison, or a particularly powerful void fortress or battle station. By Protean legislation, a military-oriented Corpo simply needs to have at least one "Arsenal" classification domain on register to be considered a legitimate enterprise.

Barka –-- Class B

B-classification zones are the most hostile and most esoteric of all subclassification. These are the training centers and fortress headquarters of the Barakan Elite, the shock troop heavy infantry of the Hegemon. They contain the facilities responsible for the creation and upkeep of Barakan forces' biochem-conditioning, armament, as well as special training areas designed to indoctrinate the Barakan in the ways of war, no matter what environmental conditions they might encounter. It is not uncommon for Barka zones to include natural phenomena like toxic atmospheres, hyperviolent Exogen instances, methane seas and other features that make these regions otherwise extremely inhospitable to habitation.

Barka worlds are prohibited from having any other industry or output, representing the enormous investment in the Barakan Elite.

Industrial --- Class In (Indigo)

Industrial planets are perhaps the most diverse category of worlds in the Thousand Empires. They have a wide range of sub-designations, such as mining, shipbuilding (orbital or surface), refineries, manufacturing complexes, fuel and chemical production and even reclamation sites for garbage, shipwrecks and hazardous materials. Some are host to indoor or subterranean greenhouse complexes and other food production facilities.

Most I-class planets feature several different types of industrial activity across their surface; a mining world, for example, primarily serves to feed Hegemon industries with its local natural resources, but may also be a host to shipbreaking, mineral enrichment and metallurgy. Heavy pollution is universal; workplace safety is secondary as it slows quotas. Industrial worlds can be - very begrudgingly - shared between multiple enterprises or be under the flag of a single corporate owner.

As an example BorealNex, a giant heavy-industry MacroCorp, directly controls an entire network of I-type planets all across the Cygnus supersector. Terrestrial worlds and asteroid belts are slowly and carefully stripped bare of raw materials to supply refineries and enrichment facilities, so that they can be sold on to arms manufacturers, shipbuilders and other parties dependent on the supply of alloys controlled by the macro's ruling Achrnex family. At the same time, the BorealNex-leased planets and mining fields are bordered by several less lucrative I-class worlds being devoured by multiple smaller corpo-scale enterprises. These shared realms go through occasional bouts of armed conflict as the less powerful corpos attempt to dislodge their competition through espionage, sabotage and direct attacks, often reaching a point where tensions flare up in open warfare. Any spillover from these local clashes is kept in check by BorealNex-contracted military forces practically holding the sectors at gunpoint.

Labor and aristo groups both wear indigo dyed clothing representing their planet's status.

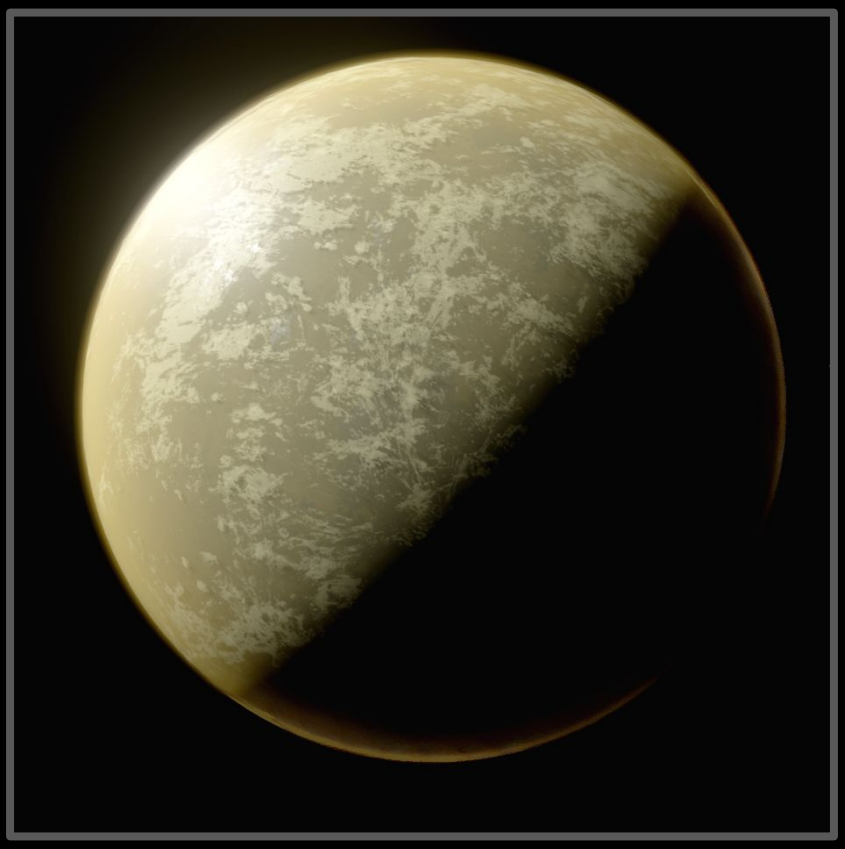
Sebastos V

In1.S1.M3.Ex3

Colonized in the seventh fiscal century with financial backing from Republika, Sebastos quickly became a vital asset for the Hegemon's construction industry. Its inert landscape, composed almost entirely of composite minerals such as tremolite, amosite, and chrysotile. These provide a near inexhaustible source for vital construction materials used throughout Civil Space. While other nations and Corpos initially overlooked the planet due to rampant cancers contracted by their early colonists in this harsh environment, the Republika capitalized on an opportunity. By securing Teranos worldshaping specialists, they established small habitable zones beneath several dozen sealed domes clustered around an array of mass drivers.

From these fortified enclaves, the mining Corpos sub-contracted to Republika and expanded rapidly. Thousands of tonnes of raw asbestos-laden ore were launched via mass driver into orbit, packaged in cargo pods for retrieval by waiting transports. Once processed offworld, these minerals found eager markets, supplying cheap heat-resistant materials for heavy industry, fireproofing, and low-grade construction elements. Despite the known health risks, Sebastos's output continues to feed the Hegemon's needs and making Republika a MacroCorp within five fiscal-cycles.

Sebastos is now home to over a dozen smaller Corpos that subcontract to Republika. Mass industrialization has done nothing to improve the already hostile environment but there is no shortage of labourers ready to scour the surface and deep beneath the dead mountains, braving the darkness for profit.



Nodal --- N-Class

The MassTraders have plied the depths of space and defined the process of descending into the Outside. While it is unclear who or what they inherited their initial knowledge from, or if the invented it themselves, the mechanics of space travel have largely gone unchanged; Leylines form a vast network of points where they weave in and out of realspace which are then cross referenced and interpreted by Pilots. Pilots work with logicors and specialists to determine the launch and detonation of transit payloads responsible for creating gatespheres.

They must do that within proximity to nodes, otherwise the gatesphere will not be able to punch through the multiple dimensions and the light barrier that border the Outside. Nodal points exist between gravitational influences, typically on the outer orbit of stronger fields. Gas giants and stars form the most common region for leyline trajectories.

Planets with a high number of accessible nodes are referred to as N-Class, typically as an addition to other considerations. These planets are almost always centers for trade, commerce and entry points to the nations and Corpos that have benefited by their location. Often, additional orbiting constructs will match a node serving as a repair and refueling outpost.

Special --- S-Class

Vague though it might be, the inherent *specialness* of a world is granted by the Commission. Something that is special is a unique factor which can range from plants that cannot be grown anywhere else, or even a tourist attraction such as semi-sentient borealis waves.

Exogenic --- Ex- Class

Indicates the existence of Exogenic lifeforms that are either dominant to the planet or a resource to be used. In this case Grades indicate not only value but also threat. Grade S is a regularly collected species, such as the Hymeira whose cranial units are used in the logicors that detect tachyonic strands, to Grade 4 which would be the vermin-like Ruiki that stowaway on ships and spread across planetary systems.

Hanuman 5, N3.S1

MassTraders discovered Hanuman 5 sometime during the acquirement of Catraethi assets after the destruction of their throneworld. On Catraethi charts the planet was referred to as Earth*, a common enough colloquialism as many Old Humanity colonies referred to themselves by that same archaic title. Still, the first scouts to arrive were eager to exploit the rich biosphere and obvious wealth of the blue green world.*

Weeks into prospecting and assessment, a damaged orbital platform was discovered and boarded. The mummified remains of several male and femme human analogues were recovered. Carbon dating was determined inconclusive due to high levels of cosmic and weaponized radiation signatures but the MassTrader Divine concluded the technology predated any known comparable.

Aboard, they discovered records which were later debriefed by Wanvath Underwriting. Within was found a generational endeavor by a group of scientists that claimed to be the last of the human race, another common claim and hardly remarkable. They outlined a plan to provolve a species of primates to Hanuman 5 in order to create a subservient race that would, effectively, build the infrastructure to a civilization and worldshape the planet to ideal human norms.

Many of the records reflect the scientist's frustrations with the lack of the primate's ability to prioritize necessary construction, farming and technological advancement. A fragment from one such scientist's recordings reveal; "If we inflict enough pain we can make them sentient!"

It is believed that this lead to infighting amongst the orbital community but not before they unleashed a series of catastrophes on the planet's ecosystem such as floods, fires, groundquakes and deliberate meteor strikes. These events culminated in several scientists arriving on the planet. There the Hanuman primates were infected with a specially formatted cognito-virus by these scientists that would identify humans as deific. These scientists quickly became gods in their eyes and began to direct their new worshippers to act in a manner they saw fit.

Angered by this manipulation, the opposing order of scientists attacked their philosophical opponents. It is surmised the primates became confused, many joining this opposing group of humans resulting in a global religio war. Evidence of this has been found carved into ruins and depicted in cave drawings.

While the conclusion of these events remain unclear, the scattered remnants of furtive Hanuman primates persist in stone-age equivalency and are still used for entertainment purposes. It is hypothesized that a population actually survived this war, perhaps even adopted a kind of nihilistic atheism. Wanvath agents believe it's possible that these Hanuman might have even achieved interstellar flight and exist, somewhere, avoiding contact with humans to this day. Wary of their former gods.

Artificial Habitat --- AH-class

Worlds, moons and asteroids but also hostile planets that require artificial habitats for human beings to survive are an important description. These worlds are either grandfathered from previous investment, sometimes countless generations ago, or they have something truly worthwhile as it takes an ever increasing cost to maintain such facilities.

The most prominent of these are orbital habitats, such as worldrings. Worldring construction is regarded as too costly, although many engineers believe that the legendary arcwrights have all died and their wisdom lost.

Culture --- Cl-class

Tropical paradises, entertainment parks, these worlds have facilities or locations so enjoyable that it is worth risking interstellar travel to visit.

Unexploited --- UX-class

Worlds that have not been scanned, explored or identified as valuable. A world will keep its UX status until such identification has been made. Worlds that have such a title are always at risk for multiple MacroCorps to rush classification as, by doing so, land claims and lot assignment can move forward with the successful Corpo placed in the dominant position.

Horti --- H-Class (Horticulture & Biosynthesis)

H-class worlds are dedicated to the cultivation of engineered plantlife, synthetic crops, and bio-matter that is essential in sustaining the Hegemon's populations. Many crops and animals originate from Old Humanity's first colonial steps and have been provolved to produce vast quantities of their products. Though often overshadowed by the high-profit mining or manufacturing planets, these "Horti" worlds provide critical agricultural outputs refined through biotech and gene-shaping labs. Generally a Horti district or world will be worldshaped, in part, to create ideal climate needs and dependable weather patterns Their fields and arboretums may be protected by domes of plastalloy with industrial, mountain sized, atmospheric scrubbers.

CREDIT AND COMMERCE

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Credit is a perfect, self-regulating system that represents the trust between individuals, Corpos, governments, and the Hegemon as a whole. Utilizing a holistic scoring system based on singular acts, contributions, wealth management, tithing, debt, and accumulation, scoring higher allows for greater mobility while the loss of credit will act as a natural restriction until it can be corrected.

Every single human being is assigned an identity code as a part of their core documents from the moment they draw their first recorded breath. After this, credit is regulated based off of standards set by The Market assigning the initial debt the infant Consumer contributes to their initial care.

The system later integrates data from a variety of sources which is scrutinized by the Commission or an affiliated Commission officiate at the end of every fiscal-cycle before RevShare Day. Credit enforces whatever promotes good commerce and fluctuates accordingly with buying and selling trends on a macro and micro level.

Credit is universal in the Hegemon and is subsequently interpreted by local governments into capital, or “cap,” and finance. Local governments charge service fees and lend their currency which must then be given back should an individual or Corpo leave that territory. By this, credit becomes more reliable than any resource that currency would be based upon. The value of cap is dependent on the evaluation by The Market overall rather than depend on singular resources.

This removes the need for any kind of Hegemon-wide financial standard based on elements that fluctuate with each passing quat and reinforces stability and confidence. Good practices and successful works are rewarded and are tied to stable and safe assurance and thus civilization itself. Should the value of water or sonaw change and adversely affect one's finance, their credit status ensures they can procure a loan from a banking guild or their patron MacroCorp and thrive.

Corpos also maintain credit ratings although on a much larger scale. Corpos and MacroCorps both maintain debt like any other Consumer which determines how much fiscal risk they may take. This interconnectedness protects against shortfall and economic ruin on a planetary or even stellar scale.

And of course, all are subject to scrutiny by the Audit which, at any time, can review the statements and records of any entity or individual and determine if they are paying their correct fees. Failing to pass the Audit’s assessment can result in imprisonment, further debt and the sale of familial or remaining cycles of life.

-- Capital manifests value--

Physical Currency

While credit systems are some of the most secure technological means of transferring wealth, there are always ingenious, criminal, codesmiths who invent new ways to capture transactions between two points. As such, in the past few fiscal centuries, in-person and direct transfers have become the preferred reliable means of commerce.

The Hegemon has no unified currency but those who travel the many nations and colonies use "Cubits" which are the physical representation of credit measurement and value as determined by The Market. A wrist-wallet, or other such device, transfers credit values onto individual 'bits' which are then ingested by another party's device. These bits are used to buy local currency which can then be converted back to credit value.

Another way to consider this is, effectively, local government systems provide loans between people which are then verified by banking entities and converted into local currencies. Local currencies are backed by valuable resources which are regarded in measurements called *Meticals* that are determined by The Market.

A metical of grain might be measured in the tons while ingots of tantalum could be in the low hundreds. These measurements are locked in at "one" Metical and subdivided to create a near universal comprehension of value which fluctuates at the end of every quat. This system has, ironically, also been adopted by FreeNations and non-aligned Hegemon nations.

Trade can also be conducted by more generic resource transfers as determined by The Market every quat. Referred to as a mithqal, each resource is measured by what The Market reasons can be generated in a cycle and can be compared, conceptually, to tonnage. A freightliner of water to the Frontier would be worth a fleet of similar craft worth of raw ore which is then referred to as a mithqal, or "mith".

Currency “Chits”

The tradlanes of the Hegemon utilize their own currency system based off of the credit system in the form of derivative physical currency that is independent of local national currency (although many of the ExeCor worlds have adopted it due to their constant contact with each other).

One’s finances are called ‘Capital’ or ‘Cap’ and represents the individual’s buying power which is backed up by The Market. While one may make purchases directly, physical currency is still preferred and these take the form of “chits” which can only interact with The Market which the Banking Guilds universally depend upon.

They appear as coins made from plasta or metals and can be endowed with an entity’s (corpo or consumer) credit rating and can only be stripped with verification from a licensed third party to limit risk. These chits are assigned a corresponding color to their credit fraction value as follows:

Coins/Chits

White= 1

Red= 5

Green= 10

Blue= 50

Black= 100

Planks: Larger rectangular piece or rhombus, usually multi-colored with a dominant hue

Green= 1,000

Red= 10,000

Blue= 100,000

Silver= 1,000,000

Gold= Programmable Value (typically higher)

INHERENT RIGHTS

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The Consumers are protected by the Inherent Rights of New Mankind as penned by Dumno-Ualos and adopted by the Hegemon in FC1/23-89. The rights of Consumers in the Hegemon are a sacred trust that is respected in the free market above all other considerations. Citizens, by definition, are within the Consumer class and lose their rights should they not maintain their credit rating and become Indentured or choose to, foolishly, attempt autonomy from the free market.

The Right of Choice

Consumers within the Hegemon hold the inherent right to make decisions autonomously, shaping their destinies with their spending power.

The Right to Wealth

Consumers pursuit of prosperity and financial well-being is a right that encompasses the freedom to engage in economic activities, accumulate wealth through regulated means, and partake in the economic opportunities.

The Right to Work

The cornerstone of the Hegemon, the right to work guarantees every individual access to opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Oppressive unions and labor syndicates are extremely rare and frowned upon for limiting the individual's freedom to negotiate directly with a patron.

The Right to Give

In the spirit of communal harmony, individuals hold the right to contribute to the welfare of society. This right encourages acts of philanthropy, charity, and civic engagement, fostering a culture where giving back is not only encouraged but celebrated as a fundamental aspect of a prosperous and interconnected Hegemon. Thusly, those that give are rewarded for their contributions, and it is not uncommon for the individual to gift their final belongings to reduce the debt of the next generation.

CORPOSOCI HIERARCHY

The Hegemon is an organization that is driven by the pursuit of profit above all else and the perfection of the capitalist system now referred to as “Stellarization”. This focus on economic gain has led to the suppression of individual freedoms and the suppression or co-opting of religious beliefs in favor of the pursuit of financial success. The value of profit and debt is measured in terms of Capital Gains or "Cap," which is the general term for money. The value of these gains is determined by the availability of local resources, but it is common practice to equate Cap with the ultimate resource: time.

The value of a single hour of a person's life is determined by their compensation from their employer or “patron” who in turn serves their own in a vast pyramidal socio-hierarchy. It is the duty of a patron to ensure their charges work and produce but are also compensated. This extends to planetary and stellar governments. This system has effectively eliminated the need for war, as poorer nations and societies are beholden to wealthier ones for their economic survival.

Debt is an important regulatory aspect as well, accruing slowly but always able to be paid down so long as one remains producing. Debt levels determine the access a person, or a nation, has to the resources of society. If one’s debt exceeds a certain amount, that accessibility is curtailed. If the debt gets to extreme levels, one “redlines.” In the case of Consumers they become Indentured, their very bodies becoming resources and the property of their debtors while nations must offer infrastructure or resources and can lose their sovereignty.

This focus on profit has also led to the suppression or co-opting of local cultures in favor of a macro-cultural system that regards time as the ultimate resource and its management as the key to controlling and evaluating it. Religion, while still permitted with the appropriate licenses, has largely been replaced by corporate terminology and expressions. Accomplished and wealthy businesspeople are often seen as the prophets of The Market, while their writings and business philosophies are codified and used to shape the values and beliefs of the Hegemonic nations. The greatest are set down in the Manual.

-- You support my business, I support yours --

THE MANUAL

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The Manual is a priceless compendium of revelatory wisdom first penned by Dumno-Ualos himself. There have been nine further editions which serve as a beacon for Consumers of every credit level of the CorpoSoci. From the Manual are derived the many cornerstones of the Lex, most importantly the Right to Wealth and the Right of Choice as much as the first philosophies of Avarice that lead to Stellarization.

Each edition holds in it a new consideration for business for the fiscal century it represents. Within is the art of conducting oneself in the intricate customs of commerce. Integrity, strategy, and shrewdness intertwine with the doublecross, legal bribery and wit. Human nature competes against itself, its only equal, with the goal of success through profit. The Manual imparts profound insights into the moral fabric governing interactions, guiding the aspiring entrepreneur on a virtuous journey through the labyrinth of fiscal pursuits.

The editions of this document delve into the essence of purpose, urging Consumers and Patrons to contemplate what they should strive for in life and the joy materialism can endow. It unravels confusion, offering counsel on prudent spending and the judicious retention of value, ensuring the prosperity of both the individual and the Hegemon at large in shared self-interest. These editions, each revered and cherished, have become an integral part of the lives across Known Space. It is a common for individuals to carry a copy of the Manual at all times, touching it for confidence or for luck.

The significance of the Manual even transcends the secular realm, integral with those seeking spiritual fulfillment. Several proprietary "brands" have emerged, each venerating the Manual as nigh sacred scripture touched by various “divine” influences such as Chance, their messiahs the edition’s authors and their prophet; Dumno-Ualos.

The availability of the Manual is dependent on publishing conglomerates who distribute as well as translate electronic and physical copies. There have been discrepancies between Manual editions and translations across the Hegemon, often leading to confusion, debate, and worse. The copies of Protean distribution are considered the truest as they are made within sight of where the Manual was initially penned by Dumno-Ualos as he built The Market.

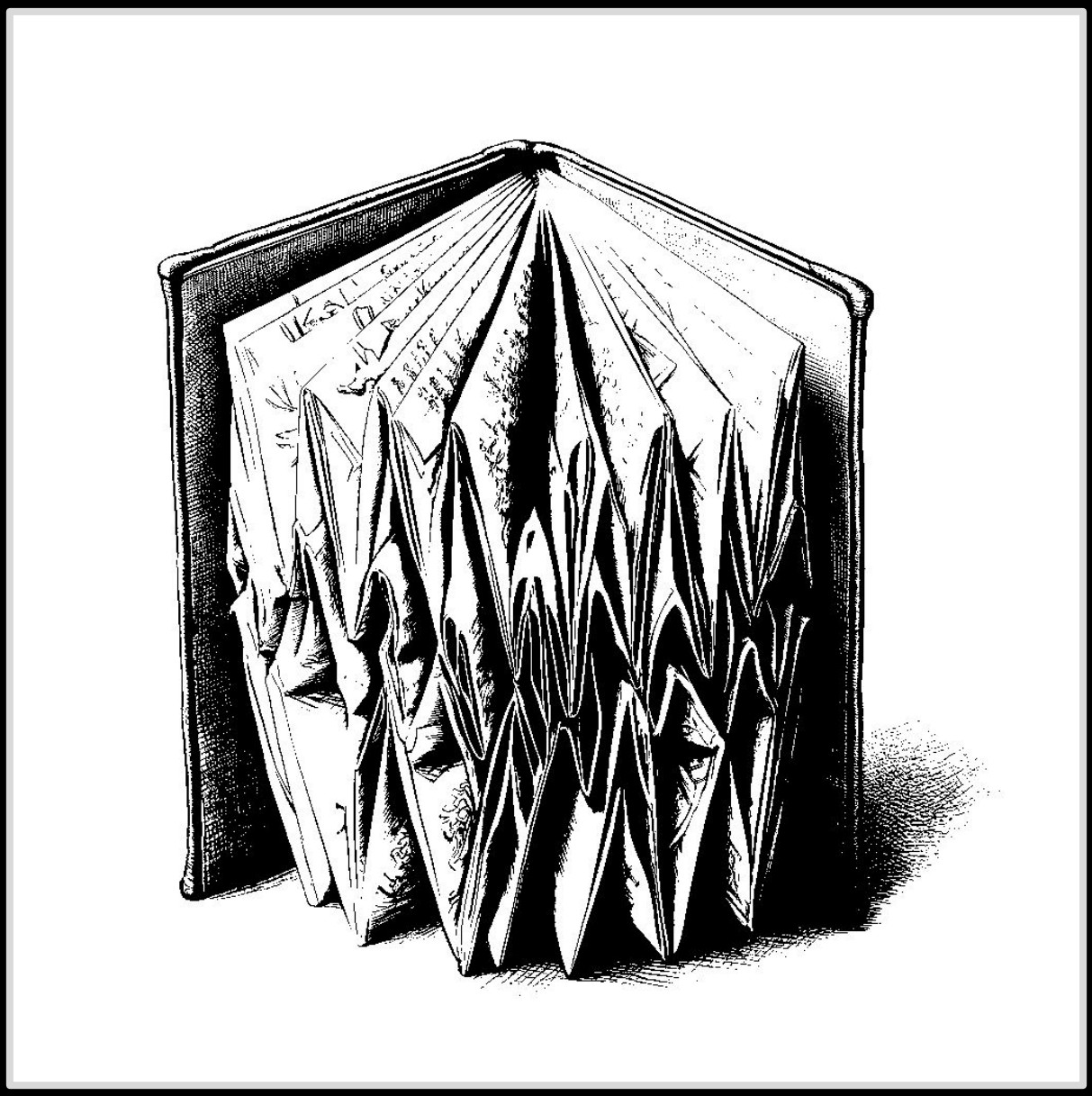
But in the shadows of truth there are those who study the Manual in order to abuse its texts, forming "personality cults" that have risen over the generations, covertly challenging the fiscal responsibility placed by the Hegemon. These underground movements, cloaked in secrecy, maintain that the Manual harbors secrets of economic liberation that circumnavigate the sanctioned boundaries of The Market itself. By protest, they establish their own “darkmarkets” and shadow economies that flaunt the regulations and legalities of the Hegemon.

These bodies are not to be trusted and their members and locations must be reported to the Audit with all haste.

On the subject of Exogens, The Manual is clear: *True intelligence is governed by need.* The need of humanity is an intimate and emotional experience that Hegemon scientists do not find in their study of nonhuman life and many near-human divergences that have strayed too far. Bastard offshoots of Old Humanity such as the Wenyani, or the post-human descendents that make up the Rurō, fall under similar circumstances as their core cognitive makeup is clearly no longer compatible with New Mankind.

Nonhumans and near-humans are thusly commodities.

As whispers of a clandestine Tenth edition echo through the hallowed halls of The Market, many are eager to learn the lessons that have brought the Hegemon to its first millennium, and act on the revelations of business practices and answers to long-standing questions as to how best to function.



A popular method of keeping a copy of the Manual on one's person at all times are the expertly crafted folding-books sometimes called a *fold*. Despite being many hundreds of pages, each folding-book is uniquely shaped around the editions. These books are often passed down within families, becoming valuable heirlooms. Subsequent owners will add folds or change configurations to preferred passages.

Such books are small enough to be contained within special pockets or compartments. More expensive versions exist, made with scritaplas marked with cogito-activated recognition. More common versions exist that are cheaper as well as flexi disks able to be accessed on a logicor.

BOOKS OF THE MANUAL

First Edition: The Covenant of Exchange

Within this inaugural tome the sacred pact forged through economic transactions unfolds, resonating with the divine theme of deal-making. The First Edition reflects a profound sense of mutual benefit and commitment, wherein Avarice is revered as the prime virtue, elevating humanity above the reactionary beasts of the universe and the artificial. In the pursuit of this covenant one strives to transcend transactional engagements, seeking a higher connection through mutual prosperity.

Second Edition: Book of Markets

Embarking on a metaphysical journey, the "Book of Markets" unveils the mysteries of an "invisible hand" orchestrating the very essence of commerce known as Chance. Here, commerce is revealed as natural as the laws of mathematics or gravity, with the dynamic forces of supply and demand emerging as fundamental cosmic energies. The means to profit form threads woven into the fabric of reality, influencing the destiny of the natural universe through want, need and desire.

Third Edition: Gospels of Entrepreneurship

In these verses; financial competition is exalted as the true evolution of New Mankind. Unlike the primal contests of beasts driven by base instinct, competition is a more noble pursuit when done with ownership and finance. This solves future challenges through maximal wealth accumulation and shared survival ensures the smartest, most driven, support the best. The divine principle of risk and reward becomes the guiding light, encouraging adherents to embrace the tumultuous unknown, for therein lies the crucible of human innovation and progress.

Fourth Edition: Stellarization

*The mandate of Dumno-Ualos is captured in the fourth edition. Humanity ascends to its destined dominion over the entire material universe, shouldering the mandate to evaluate and name **all** things. New Mankind, as a perfect species, controls nature through need, ensuring that only the smartest and most capable thrive by outwitting any obstacle. Believers understand their duty is to assert human opportunity across the cosmos, conquering challenges and attaining supremacy over all by any means.*

Fifth Edition: Joint Ventures and Pacts

Profit motive is the root of the fifth edition, focusing individuals on the importance of aligning with the right partnerships and the benefits of working together. Internecine conflict amongst comrades and partners serves to refine the goal and purpose of life. One's first fortune is done with blood and sacrifice, the second fortune is done with someone else's.

Sixth Edition: Parables for Prosperity

Timeless stories such as "The Wise Investor and the Foolish Spectator," "Glory to the Middleman," "Stone Stew," "The Terror of Absence," and "Force Multiplier" serve as allegorical tales. Economic wisdom, emphasizing the critical importance of informed decision-making at the precise juncture of time and circumstance are written in allegory so even children can understand.

Seventh Edition: Economics of Ethics

Exploration of the CorpoSoci's responsibility to the Consumers is cemented in the seventh edition. The essentials of understanding that commerce and mercantilism must be coupled with investments in robust infrastructure. Meditative approaches engage moral dimensions of economic transactions, offering solace to the afflicted conscience burdened by biological reactions to actions such as guilt.

Eighth Edition: Acts of Arbitrage

Understanding the natural inclinations of The Market's equilibrium is key to success. Delving into the art of identifying and exploiting imbalances, the eighth edition reveals the path for individuals to harness the inherent forces of economic harmony. The adept practitioner gains mastery in navigating the ebbs and flows of the ever-balancing scales of commerce and striking at opportunity.

Ninth Edition The Balance

"The Balance," has been the most revered volume of each of the editions and the most recent, penned by Dumno-Keht, a resurgent member of the Clan who claims authorship. It espouses the harmonizing of economic pursuits with a profound sense of responsibility, fairness, and ethical considerations to the Self and an individual's need. Here, the revelation unfolds that financial success transcends mere profit, encompassing the sublime endeavor of maintaining equilibrium. As adherents embrace the teachings within, they discover that the true essence of prosperity lies in the truth that self service is a service to the species.

STRIVE TO SUCCEED

At the opening of every copy of the Manual is a simple guide to how a well run society should operate.

Economic Contributions

MacroCorps significantly bolster the Hegemon member nation's gross domestic profit and provide specialists to drastically improve public works and security. The resulting fiscal leverage provides MacroCorps a pivotal way to engage with governments. These local governments are incentivized to court MacroCorp involvement by offering subsidies.

Lobbying and Advocacy

Employing trained emissaries, MacroCorps actively navigate the political landscape of local nations and the Summit. These champions of the CorpoSoci prove that aligning with their Patron's industries, can elevate economic growth and benefit the Hegemon at large as well as local populations. The resulting synergy begins at the apex of society and cascades like a waterfall to the lowest members of the CorpoSoci.

Strategic Partnerships

Over time, MacroCorps forge necessary relationships with key government figures. Former executives may seamlessly transition into governmental roles, and collaborative ventures emerge, aligning Corpo interests with the objectives of the government and Consumers. Homogenization removes cultural bias that might exist, especially national, racial, or gender inequalities and replaces it with the sacred pursuit of profit.

Peace

The goal of any large population of human beings is the capacity to refrain from violence and military conflict. As such, it is the goal of every community to find a harmony that can rejoice in trade, commerce and the eternal pursuit of greater profits.

War

Paradoxically, while human societies long for peace, they are innately drawn to compete with one another. As such, it is the goal of every nation to compete for resources in order to rejoice in market dominance, innovation and the pursuit of greater profit.

Policy Influence

MacroCorps skillfully mold policy discussions in Summit Council meetings, representing the buying power of the national governments but refrain from making the formal decisions that can only be made by the Council members themselves lead by the Speaker. Those governments, in turn, are part of the decision making on the floor of the Summit Council below the Board, a select group of well-intentioned politicians who are installed and chosen for the benefit of all. This body then ratifies the resulting policies which then encourages the local nations and trading partners of teh Hegemon to act in mutual self-interest.

Resource Allocation

As pillars of the Hegemon's economy, MacroCorps wield influence over resource allocation discussions within the Summit Council, the Orgas, the Directorate and national initiatives. This encompasses deliberations on infrastructure development, research funding, and initiatives indirectly benefiting participants.

An example of this is the benefit of a star system joining the ExeCor and receiving the Gatewells which provide safe transit through the Outside.

Production and Distribution

The culmination of the production cycle is the pivotal step of introducing a product into the open market. This juncture is where the Consumer class wields their influential purchasing power, attracted to products by the efforts of the Patron class. Commercialization, propaganda, education, and broadcasting collectively act as catalysts, influencing the mindset of the buyer. The fiduciary decision-making process serves as the conduit, infusing currency into local systems which then feed the tradelanes that stretch from the Frontier to the ExeCor.

Well intentioned self-interest incurs reward as well as economic repercussion. No one likes a bad product or service or a bad business partner. The Hegemon’s economic ecosystem is propelled forward by this dynamic interplay of Consumer choices and Patron insentives, reflecting the nuanced and often unpredictable nature inherent to human decision-making.

SOCIETY

CORPORATE ENTITIES

MacroCorps do not simply come into existence, but evolve from the variety of smaller Corporate entities that can gain monopolies. While tracked by The Market, these entities are in constant flux, often fragmenting, merging, becoming ParaCorps of larger entities or when they fail: declaring insolvency. Should they be able to best the competition and form a string of monopolies in multiple fields across more than a star system, they can petition the Summit and emerge as a MacroCorp.

The following are the classifications of these smaller Corpos.

Military Corporations "miliCorp": Mercenary groups can, if they can remain cohesive, form into a proper Corpo entity with enormous influence. MiliCorps can range from single units of elite operators to an entire combat fleet, and provide the security needed by so many at cost or incentive.

Data Corporations "dataCorp": Information and how to use it is carefully compiled and disseminated by the DataCorps. These can range from professional *skivers* but include archivists, genealogists or even athropologists. Data is everything and information is king in the Hegemon.

Investment Corporations and Assurance Agencies: Finance and property must be insured against risk. Assurance Agencies provide a safety net for Corpo entities as much as Consumers- for a fee.

Banking Guilds: Most MacroCorps have a means of keeping their financial accounts safe and prefer to keep their employee's accounts 'in-house.' However, there are many independent banking corporations that form into Guilds. Guilds are responsible for working with the Commission to ensure that credit and debt are both recorded and managed without mistake.

In a way, the Banking Guilds have slowly become their own kind of external Orga of the Hegemon. They are sterile in their judgement and absolute in their expectations. Without the Banking Guilds individuals would be unable to draw on their credit as indicated by The Market and interstellar trade would impractically rely on starships carrying valuable resources to parlay for local currency.

The only true authority to ensure the Guilds obey the Lex and the Summit is, as ever, the Audit.

-- Everyone has two accounts, one for taxes and the other one --

Representatives

MacroCorps have millions of various representatives that operate throughout Known Space with a general mandate to improve the prospects of their patrons. This can be operating as guides to new technologies and products, or advocating for decisions that create mutually beneficial outcomes.

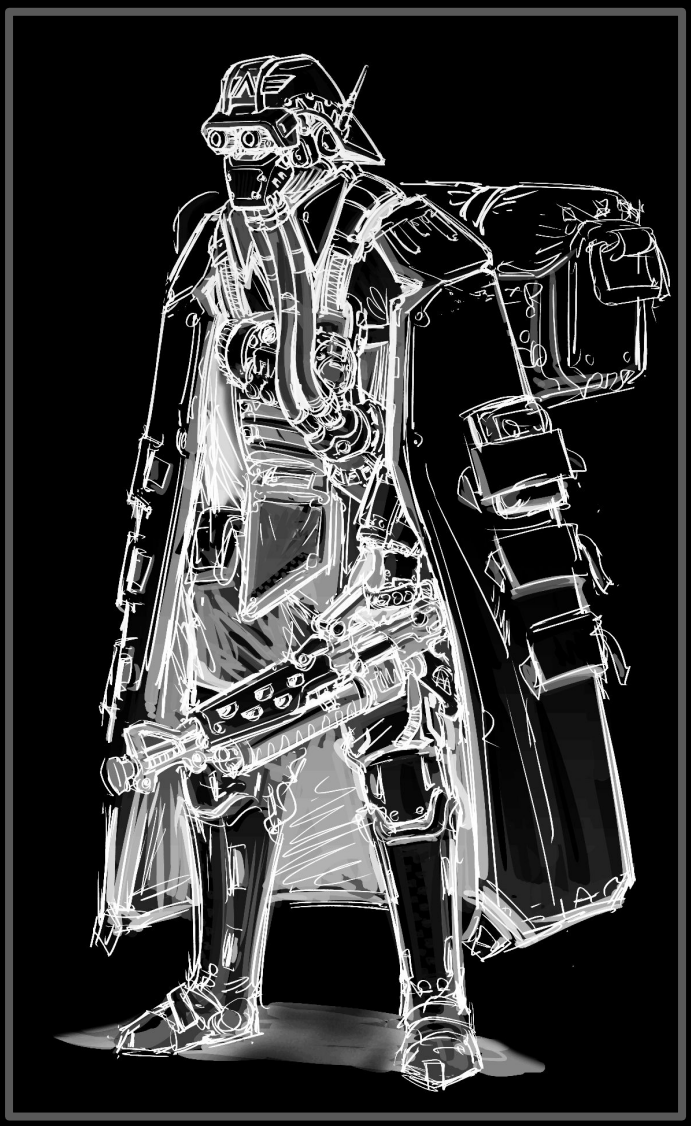
Often, a Representative will offer unique opportunities for a nation or Directorate Regiment to take advantage of. They are allowed to operate within their own discretion and as such often have additional lines of credit to pursue their ends.

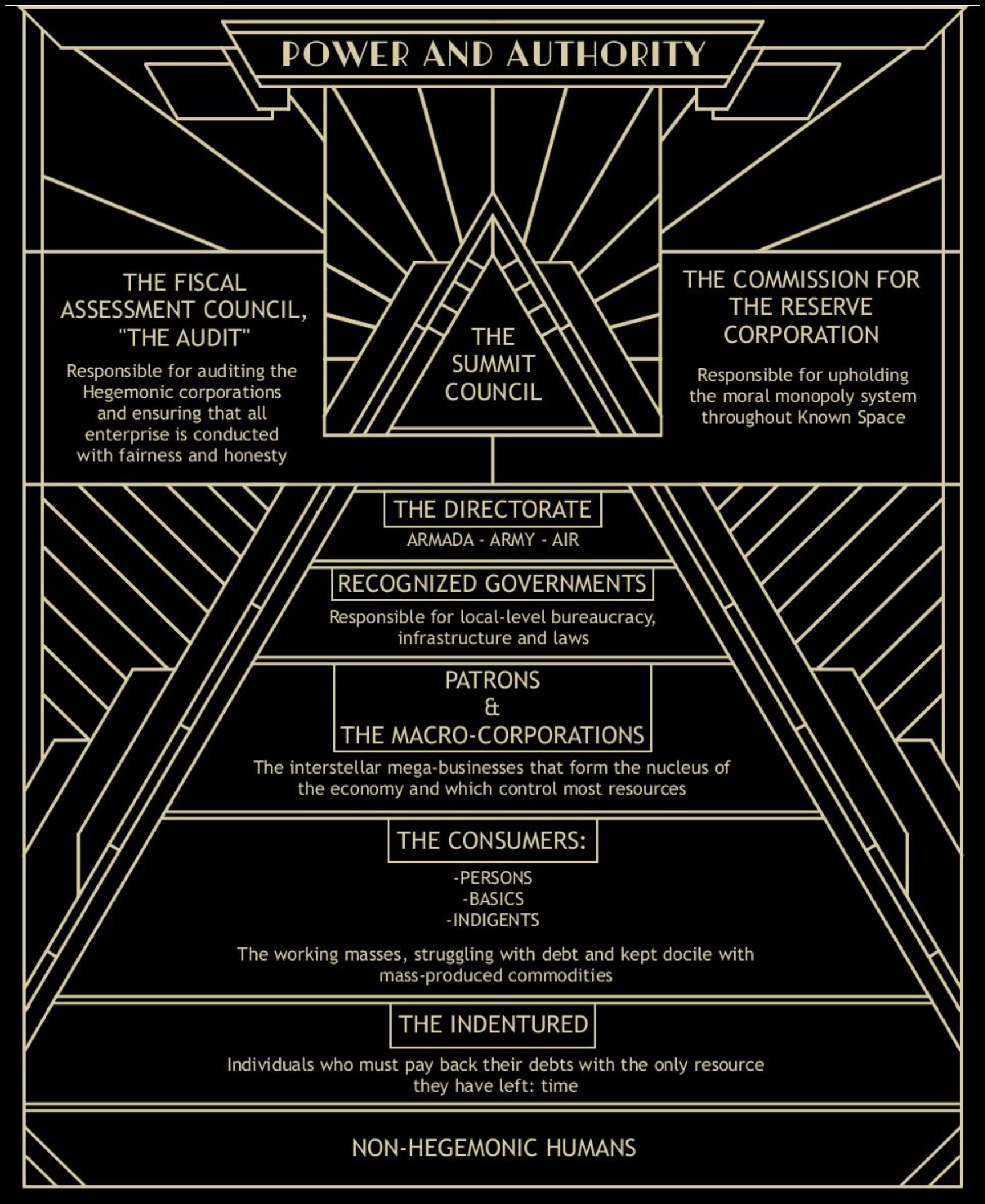
Representatives have their own vessels or tag along with clients, ready to offer insight or create deals with the right people, in the right place, at the right time.

Armasyn Representatives aren't exactly soldiers, being more akin to "war enthusiasts." They know every single piece of combat-oriented equipment and can express its capabilities with detail.

That said, they rarely have Directorate experience, instead, they are in awe of the armed services. As such, their enthusiasm is much needed in dealing with miliCorps and Directorate alike; The best salesman uses their own product after all.

Armasyn Reps can activate extensive product lines for manufactories, from advanced Pocketsteel designed for specific combat zones to weapon systems designed to deal with niche Exogen problems.




POWER AND AUTHORITY
THE FISCAL ASSESSMENT COUNCIL, "THE AUDIT"
Responsible for auditing the Hegemonic corporations and ensuring that all enterprise is conducted with fairness and honesty
THE SUMMIT COUNCIL
THE COMMISSION FOR THE RESERVE CORPORATION
Responsible for upholding the moral monopoly system throughout Known Space
THE DIRECTORATE
ARMADA - ARMY - AIR
RECOGNIZED GOVERNMENTS
Responsible for local-level bureaucracy, infrastructure and laws
PATRONS & THE MACRO-CORPORATIONS
The interstellar mega-businesses that form the nucleus of the economy and which control most resources
THE CONSUMERS:
-PERSONS
-BASICS
-INDIGENTS
The working masses, struggling with debt and kept docile with mass-produced commodities
THE INDENTURED
Individuals who must pay back their debts with the only resource they have left: time
NON-HEGEMONIC HUMANS

THE SUMMIT COUNCIL

m_eeg1

The concept of absolute rule by a single individual has proven untenable, a lesson ingrained in the annals of human history through millennia of bloodshed. At the dawn of the Hegemon a pragmatic resolution emerged: member nations are granted self-governance within their borders, provided they align with best practices and policies set forth by the Summit Council to ensure good business.

In a departure from the conventional structures of political parties or familial dynasties, the Summit operates as a unique entity. It is not subservient to traditional power structures but to the needs of humanity as interpreted through the free market. The essence of this profitocracy can be found upon the continental floor of The Market where all possible resources are meticulously measured, weighed, and assigned value. The Summit's sole objective is singular yet formidable: to motivate a relentless escalation of profit across all categories.

Situated on world of Protea, which serves as the de facto capital to the Hegemon, the Summit pinnacle tower stands in witness above the megastructure of The Market. Here its council assembles representatives from each member nation-state alongside Advocates representing the influential MacroCorps. The Summit itself stands as a monumental pyramidal structure, easily its own self-contained city populated exclusively by Persons and those who serve them to ensure bureaucratic expediency.

This epicenter sustains ceaseless negotiation, deal making, and above all the promise of commerce. Each participant seeks to navigate the intricate currents of power and rise ever higher in the CorpoSoci. The very essence of this dynamic ensures that the Summit remains a crucible of strategic maneuvering that never stagnates. It is a delicate balance that ensures the symbiotic relationship between the governance of nations and economic imperatives so that every participating citizen of the Hegemon is ensured prosperity.

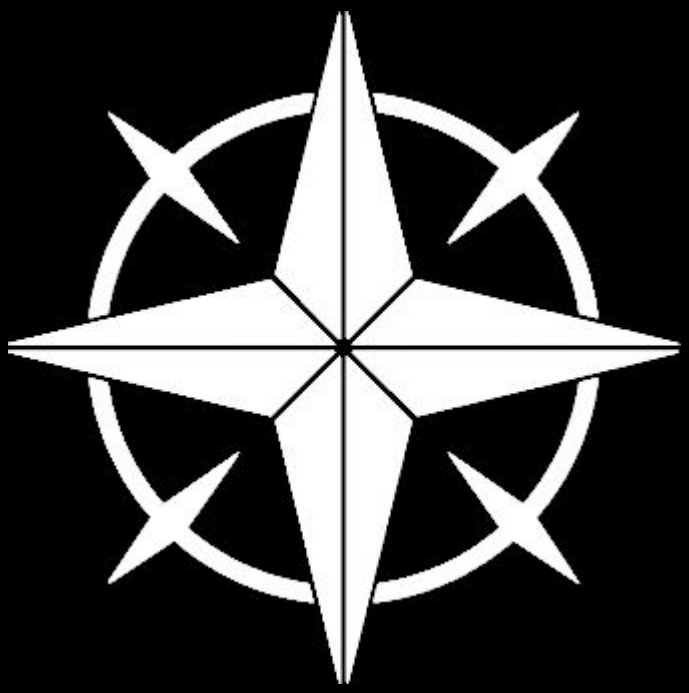
-- Advocacy benefits the many through the few --

No matter the station or credit rating of a Consumer, their purchases, regardless of how small, guide the Summit as it in turn guides the Hegemon. Need and desire articulated by Consumer spending influences MacroCorp behavior, informing their investment decisions. In response, MacroCorps relay directives to local governments, shaping policies which are regulated by politicians who understands their constituents. Thus law and order is maintained.

Archonist Magnates, the leaders of the most influential MacroCorps that span hundreds of stellar economies, sit in an outer ring while the representatives of the nation-states sit in an inner ring. At the very center sits the Speaker who maintains communication and opens and closes council meets. This symbolic array enforces the notion of how society must be maintained. The MacroCorps do not seek to rule, in fact, they reject the notion of it at every turn. Theirs is the realm of defining *want* and provisioning that want with the fruits of civilization. The politicians of the inner ring define *need* which is argued and debated for so that the MarcoCorps can understand what to focus their efforts on.

In this way; all prosper.

Analogous to the human body, nations serve as the organs of the Hegemon, each playing a vital role. Commerce flows as its lifeblood, sustaining economic vitality. MacroCorps function as its heart, propelling financial circulation. At the pinnacle, the Summit Council operates as the cognitive apex, orchestrating decisions that guide the Hegemon's direction by *need*. Together, these components form a cohesive and symbiotic governance structure, where the pulse of commerce, the influence of MacroCorps, and the intellectual acumen of the Summit Council synergize the intricate workings of the Hegemon so that they operate as one even without direct interaction.



The Wind Rose

An ancient symbol adopted by the Hegemon as its de facto icon.

The Protean Seal

The symbol of the Summit Council.

The Directorate

The personal seal of the Director's office that represents all three of the armed forces.

The Commission Shield

The Commission Shield originates from an ancient order of peacekeepers that first formed the Lex officers that kept order and the safety of private property during the Heritage War. It is now a common symbol for both the Lex officers across the Hegemon with the "C" denoting the Commission and its inner council.

[[REDACTED]]

[[REDACTED]]

THE MAGNATES

Hegemon society is ruled by a hierarchy of wealth. Anyone can achieve advancement on the societal "ladder", earning the respect of those above and garnering the support of those below creating a natural meritocracy in function. In short, the intelligent and crafty become wealthy by grace of knowing when to take advantage of their fellows.

The Magnates, also known as "Patrons", benefit from the privilege they, and their forebears, have earned through sweat and smart business acumen. Gene-tapestries are retained by Magnate dynasties, ensuring long, healthy, life and formattable body types that showcase beauty standards. Indeed, the Magnates exist at an entirely other level of technology that might appear *magical* to sub-educated beings.

These dynasties often have marriage contracts between houses, creating new opportunities and ever better offspring to maintain the vigilance of steering the titanic forces of industry.

At the apex of the Magnates are the Archonists, hereditary oligarchs that form the "Summit" above their fellow Magnates. It is the dream of every Magnate to one day achieve the Archonist title and become aware of the Higher Mysteries. Archonists alone are beyond the constraints of time, functionally immortal by a variety of means, able to now amass fortune unbound by the finality of life.

The Magnates themselves form interstellar business families who are in control of individual MacroCorps; legal monopolies on various goods within planetary and stellar economies. MacroCorps are often made up of several smaller Corporations, Corpos, that can range from military industrial complexes to basic commodities.

Magnates, in their early stages, are typically from a single world or system which they will use as a headquarters with strong ties to local government that allows them the mobility to expand within familiar restrictions.

As the Magnates are to the Archonists there are “Barons” and “Tycoons” to the Magnates. These individuals operate smaller corporations and support Magnates as an emperor might rule with the support of lesser nobles. While competition for Tycoons to establish a means to one day challenge their own Magnate is common, it is by this evolutionary approach that the Hegemon stays nimble and adaptive. A lazy Magnate will be cannibalized by his lesser officers just as much as the Archonists must be wary of which Magnate they allow into their upper dealings on the Summit Council.

While powerful in their own right, they are in a constant state of internacine competition seeking to be elevated to the level of Magnates. Barons deal with local nations and governments and are the administrative power in the Hegemon while the Magnates are often free to entertain their own interests so long as commerce continues to multiply. In the event a Baron controls their own Corpo they are regulated to a single star system or planet and are not allowed to ‘grow’ beyond that per the restrictions of their parent MacroCorps.

Below the Barons are endless titles and ranks that do not merit representation. Needless to say, all commerce flows upward. From the quaint storefront to the franchise development there are those who employ and employees and all seek greater wealth.

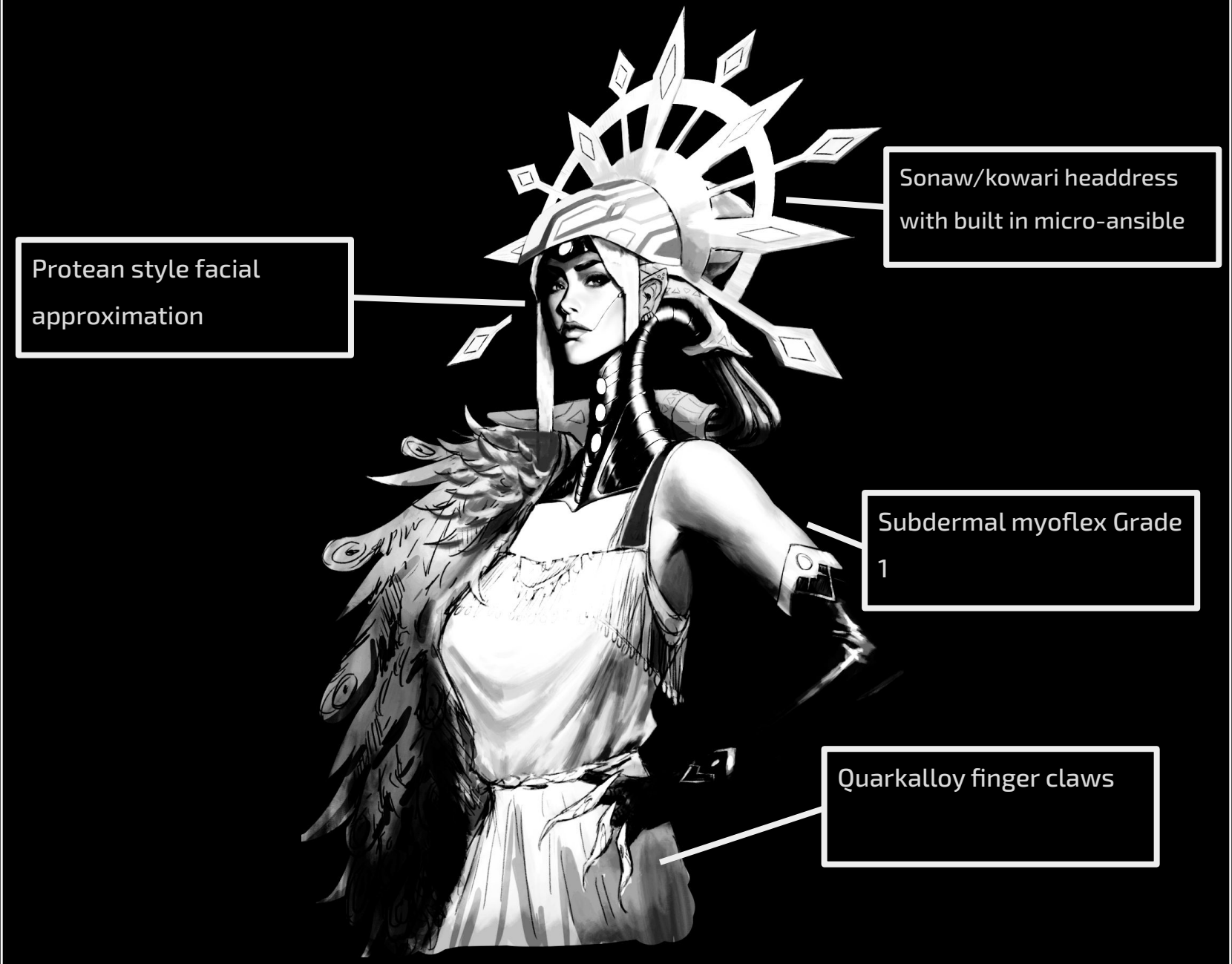
This solemn calling is justifiably rewarded. Many of the Patron class are self-made having expertly utilized relationships to achieve their wealth. Their employees can number a handful to entire supersector’s worth of people. Laws, both Hegemon and local, are more lenient upon the Magnates who must accomplish what only other Magnates can even comprehend. It is on their backs that the CorpoSoci rests and they are compensated by being regulated only by the Commission, the Audit and their own class.

Most uniquely, Magnates must also maintain a front facing personality with the Consumers. This is not just to improve and confirm sales of their various products but also multiply confidence in their MacroCorp’s position in The Market. This confidence will lead to Consumers

Magnate Iosh would be considered 'typical' for a member of the upper-credit Patron class Magnate, if such a thing is possible. Each Magnate considers themselves unique and will spend fortunes to make such a statement true, at least visually.

Iosh has been a Magnate of Wanvath Underwriting for sixty-seven fiscal cycles and is currently 'youthening' through the 'Crucible': a form of reverse aging. Kowari is interlaced throughout her body in elaborate designs, based off of an avian-form from her home world of Gyaada in the ExeCor. It also acts as a cogit-hood that feeds into an artful headdress made from feathers of the real animal (Iosh coordinated its extinction to permanently ensure exclusivity).

She is linked to the Wanvath Archives on Wanshi-Tong via private ansible, an incalculable expense, allowing her total recall via an entire mindworld's database, making her the prime source of many an interesting factoid at any social gathering. She has made herself the reputation of being devastatingly interesting and knowing all the newest gossip around the ExeCor.



Magnate Adorra Mirinsk Nomotak Iosh of Wanvath Underwriting

The Final Commodity: TIME

To achieve the title of Magnate is to become the truest form of post-human. The means to make a person into a weapon are often impressive, convoluted and extremely expensive but ultimately mundane and crude when compared to the therapies that can be purchased by those who command the economies of star systems. For many centuries the only thing that could not be bought was a reprieve from *death*, a conceptual truth of the universe that was observed to affect all things.

Philosophers would debate the merits of energy's perpetuity and that existence is forever. This is scorned by the pragmatic Cons who strive for ever more continuity of the Self which death erases. Religion and meditative ascension provided a reprieve but for the majority of those that dwelt at the pinnacle of power it was a passing opiate.

Science, as always, was the key and with the demand so great and the resources of the entire species now directed at a single goal, one dares to use the term "inevitable" in the technologies that emerged.

The methods of immortality are few and not without consequence.

The Crucible

Transdifferentiation is the most common form of life extension and is even available to the upper tiers of credit holders. While several therapies exist they operate in the same fashion. An individual enters a special containment unit and is bombarded by sequenced radiation that agitates a change. The subject will begin to youthen at varying speeds, eventually reverting back to a juvenile state. With cognitive reinforcement and hormonal balancing the individual can retain consistent memory and experience as well as Self retention.

The risks vary from short and long term insanity, personality regression and mutation as well as self-destructive tendencies attributive to adolescent anxiety. Paired with the wealth of a CorpoSoci elite this can lead to economic chaos.

The Strand of Askantik

Exogen species 6ø_2, the Askani, had populated their solar system in its entirety by the time the Kullun MacroCorp purchased its coordinates from MassTraders. Analogous to invertebrates, the Askani were initially marked for harvesting; their white, spongelike, meat gained almost instant popularity in the Midworlds. It was only after the fall of one of their floating trans-orbital cities that Prospectors discovered that Askantik “liver” organ could be used to create a fluid that replaces human blood, organically rejuvenating the body and maintaining near perfect health.

The extermination would continue for another five fiscal-cycles until Five Hands Panceuticals successfully arbitrated against Kullun gaining custody of a Askantik colony where they were permitted to maintain. Meanwhile, Kullun over hunted the Askantik in the rest of the solar system until their population collapsed and the Exogen went functionally extinct.

The only examples of Askani that now exist are on grow-ships owned by Five Hands who are careful to keep them mobile arriving only briefly to provide those who are subscribed with blood infusions.

In Amber Clad

Suspended animation is available to many and it even serves as a basic alternative to being active while in transit through the Outside. The tree analogues of Hyperion Prime, however, are different. Confirmed to possess a level of networked sentience, these plants can grow up to a kilometer tall where they work together in their slow growth patterns to attract lightning strikes from the planetwide hurricanes that sweep the globe. The amber released during this growth is collected, or bled, by pharma corpos who lease the land from the Hyperian Government. Once collected they create an encasement pod, the only true form of immortality available.

An individual is placed within a pod and then drowned in the amber over the course of a fiscal-cycle until the amber hardens. Once the process is complete, a subject has complete cognitive awareness through an advanced cogit-hood. The pod is placed on a means of locomotion, usually a quadrupedal platform or in specially designed auto-harnesses but the subject can never leave encasement.

The neural needles flared to life in a cascade of intertwining spiderwebs of electricity. They began to pulse with the six, new, ports that had been drilled into the middle-aged femme's head just the night before. The mentanics knew they would need to work quickly, the cranial surgeons never liked when synthetic specialists got to take the spotlight from them in their own operating room.

Bioluminal nodes at the base of each spike began to glow, a vibrant red, matching the controlled heartbeats of the patient. They would only descended once they matched perfectly. You learned quickly as a mentanic that, unlike cutting apart meat and sewing it back together, a single error when dealing with the neuroscience of something as evolutionarily incredible as the human mind, could just as easily make an unresponsive corpse with a pulse or a raging psychopath.

It took expertise, the best money could buy.

There was a hum of cognitish that rose from the machines the mentanics worried over as their lead finally put a hand on the mechanical arm that held the crownlike cogit-hood and ordered it down.

The muscles in the femme's face all tugged at once as the needles sealed into the ports. The machines began to tick, a staccato rush of metallic keys striking that quickly matched the dance of spasms across patient's face. She shuddered in her restraints, throttling against them with increasing violence.

The surgeons took steps forward before remembering the work had only just begun. The blood barrier across the brain would need to recover from the six-fold violation. Psychological and physical healing would take time and a truly herculean effort on behalf of the patient.

The bioluminal nodes changed to blue as they synchronized with her mind. The twitches stopped, the femme's expression sagging, like a stroke victim. The body went next, totally slack.

"Alright, alright, we're done!" The mentanics stepped back, hands up and away from the instrumentation.

The surgeons rushed back in, mopping blood and pink stained grey matter dripped from the patient's eyes, nose and skull.

"Notify the Overseer that patient will be ready for transport in the next shift!"

Consumers

The vast majority of its human inhabitants within the Hegemon bear the distinctive label of the "Consumer," affectionately referred to as "Cons" in colloquial parlance. These Cons are initially tethered to the worlds, moons, or orbital installations of their birth, grappling with the inherent challenges of life within their born-to state and natural citizenry.

News outlets and infonets regularly broadcast life in other parts of the Hegemon, uploaded by roaming “packet” ships as they wander through the supersectors. As such, many Cons dream of a time when they can leave their home to experience the greater Hegemon where opportunity abounds. Survival is a perpetual struggle, and the key to improving one's lot is intricately linked to the accumulation of wealth balanced by the diligent repayment of debts which can lead to new subscriptions that include licenses to off-world travel.

Cons are born, or fabricated in the more technologically oriented regions, and are immediately assigned with the debt accrued while incubating. This initial cost earns all individuals a “Basic” credit rating which remains largely the same until a child becomes available to work at age nine. Basic Cons cannot leave their biosphere without permission from their government but it is not uncommon for MacroCorps to sponsor travel.

As a Con, one enjoys a set of rights and privileges inherent to their place of origin, albeit constrained by the realities of their local environment which can be stifling to the ambitious. There exists a tantalizing prospect for Cons who aspire to transcend their origins, a journey incentivized by MacroCorps who need ever larger and larger populations of workers in the pursuit of profit.

From an early age, a basic Con is set upon a path to score higher on standardized tests made by the Hegemon’s Education Complex who regulate learning modules. The higher one scores the more access they will have to better modules they can purchase which allow one more insight to make better financial decisions. In turn one becomes more valuable to Corpo recruiters. Those who successfully catch the eye of a MacroCorp entity are granted the privilege to traverse beyond their natal ecosystem via a multi-cycle contract, opening the door to new opportunities and a life unbound by the constraints of their birthplace.

The competition for such contracts is stiff, and there are often hundreds if not thousands of other Cons seeking the same position. Inherent value, true skill, education and social maneuvering are viewed equally in the pursuit of a contract.

Once a contract is obtained, a Con is given a travel license, an otherwise prohibitively expensive document as space travel is costly. This allows them to move to where a MacroCorp requires them. Wherever "there" might be; it is the MacroCorp that provides lodgings, food, medical treatment, and entertainment in company "towns" referred to as CorpoHabs. Once a Con is valued by a MacroCorp a contract renewal can be decades long or even become hereditary with Con. Children born in CorpoHab hospitals inherit their parent's jobs as well as any debt.

For those who score low on these modules there is government work. Either is considered by the Hegemon CorpoSoci a lack of ambition or intelligence. But hope does not falter here with the more dubious prospect of joining the Directorate to serve the Hegemon itself as part of its military.

While this may seem like a dead end, service in the Directorate has been a means of gaining celebrity for countless heroes of the Hegemon. Credit incentives, debt relief and land leases in the Frontier are all enough of a reason for Cons to join the Directorate and, if they play the system correctly, can even result in a way to accelerate their prospects.

Typically, it take ten to twelve fiscal-cycles to go from a Basic Consumer to the status of Person. Person Consumers have twice the level of opportunities to Basics and can hold positions of authority and management within the CorpoSoci. The enjoy unique benefits, and, and apply for unique subscriptions and the kind of credit lines that allow one to start their own corpo entity.

This financial meritocracy abides those who are incompatible as well. For the outliers, those who refuse or can't take such tests, there is the free market where need and demand draws people from across a spectrum of skills but also the honest efforts accomplished through hard work. For these people there working for local Corpos where they can offer time debt.

For a negotiated number of fiscal-cycles, a Con in good standing can double or even triple their credit scores by relinquishing several rights for whatever a Corpo might need. This is often hard labor, but, it can also range to volunteered testing or observation in one of the Stakks.

The threat of non-aligned human governments, terrorist groups, problematic Exogen life, and the ever present need for local enforcement to ensure quality standards means a vast soldiery. Those Cons who join are referred to as Tributaries within the three branches of the Directorate. Tributaries have unique contracts which can include colonial rights or even fast tracks up the CorpoSoci ladder. There is also the very real chance at becoming a *celebrity*.

Celebrities are typically trained from an early age, sent to specific camps and isolated institutions and carefully managed. Dynasties and nepotism ensure quality but audiences always want something different. The Tributaries offer this with individuals, properly incentivized, to be heroic figureheads and are offered access to a level of unique wealth, luxury and attention that is relatively impossible to achieve otherwise.

This dichotomy between the rooted existence of a Con within their familiar planetary confines and the aspirational prospect of becoming a valuable asset to a Corpo entity defines the dynamic social fabric of the CorpoSoci. The pursuit of wealth, the fulfillment of debts, and the promise of mobility fuel the aspirations of the Cons, weaving a narrative of ambition that is the foundation of the Hegemon.

It is often said that every Con sees themselves as simply a temporarily inconvenienced Magnate. In this way they reinforce the CorpoSoci, united in shared desire to achieve more.

Consumer CLASSIFICATION

In the Hegemon, the classification of individuals, known as Consumers, varies based on their credit ratings and debt management abilities. These classes are categorized into three levels: "*Lower*," "*Middle*," and "*Upper*." These classes correspond with an individual's ability to maintain good debt consistently and determine their access to various opportunities and privileges.

Good debt are things like prenatal fees, early lifegiving procedures and care, the debt incurred whilst being an adolescent unable to officially work but also business tithing, taxes on commercial freight and so on. "Bad" debt would be unpaid fines, penalties and your outstanding debt being sent to the Collections division of the Commission.

All of one's assets be they Indentured or a Magnate but also to the Corpo entities themselves, have debt of some kind that represents a percentage of their overall wealth. A high number of debt management represents to the rest of the CorpoSoci that one is responsible, balanced and capable to comprehending financial responsibility. Have "zero" debt is impossible as the Hegemon is a society and all must contribute, and benefit, by its existence.

Upper Class: Also called "Person" Class

Individuals in the Upper class, referred to as "Person," represent the elite tier of society, typically managing between 5-20% of their debt. This class enjoys several exclusive privileges and have access to real estate markets and can lease land, providing them with the means to invest in property and generate additional wealth.
Persons are responsible for paying off medical expenses associated with their birth or fabrication and must also cover assurance provisions and care during their non-working age (0-9 years old). When they do so they are permitted higher education modules of the Grade 2 "AE" class and above. These advanced education modules offer a better understanding of interstellar practices. This education is essential for maintaining their status and ensuring their continued prosperity. Higher status within the CorpoSoci is only accessible to Persons as well as unsponsored travel permits to other star systems. In order to be a Patron one must be a Person first.

Middle Class: Also called “Basic” Class

“Basics” represents the majority of the population, managing between 21-69% of their debt. They must adhere to specific requirements to maintain their status such as debt management. Basics must consistently manage their debt levels for five consecutive fiscal-cycles to remain in this class before being able to apply for Person status. Basics are allowed rental opportunities but can hold trade positions in businesses they are allowed to start so long as they are sponsored by a Patron.
Additionally, they have access to regular education modules to enhance their skill sets and move toward eventual Personhood.
Basics are permitted limited travel permits, allowing them to move between ecologies or sectors for work or personal reasons, albeit with restrictions without Patron sponsorship.

Lower Class: Known as Indigent or “Indies”

Indigents or “Indies,” comprises individuals with the highest debt levels, ranging from 70-99%. Their activities are heavily restricted as a result of their inability to handle debt and maneuver the CorpoSoci.
Indies are not allowed to leave their primary ecology, confining them to specific areas where they can be closely coordinated so that they might better themselves. Education modules are not accessible without Patron sponsorship to avoid further confusing these individuals with concepts they cannot yet understand. This limits foolhardy advancement and ensures they remain in lower-tier roles until they can prove they are responsible.

CorpoSoci Dynamics

Access to opportunities and privileges is tightly controlled based on credit ratings and debt management which ensures a level of excellence for each class. By tying privileges to debt management, the Hegemon incentivizes financial productivity with promotions awarded from those who have utilized their merit to reach higher stations within the CorpoSoci. Those who do not, or cannot, manage their personals face significant restrictions and serve a value determined by their employers or however their nation state sees fit.

This financial meritocracy has resulted in almost a thousand years of social stability. The clear delineation between debt classes helps maintain order and the Lex. Each class understands its role and the limitations placed upon it, reducing potential conflicts and unrest. Most importantly, they are provided with a necessary hope for improvement. No one dares change the system lest all their work and progress be lost.

Despite different nations, the CorpoSoci can thus provide the entire population in Civil Space. By restricting the movement and opportunities of those with high debt, the CorpoSoci can prevent potential disruptions and ensure that the upper classes lead via their fiscal success.

INDENTURED

Known disparagingly as "*dents*" by the rest of Hegemon society, the Indentured form the bottom rung of the social hierarchy within the CorpoSoci, just above non-aligned humans and restricted near-humans. Dents are Consumers who have descended into insurmountable debt by any number of means that are entirely their fault. What's more, their failures extend to legal family members, businesses and can sometimes affect entire communities.

Despite the Hegemon's commitment to ensure financial security for all its citizens across nation states, often there are those who do not have the basic requirements for self-determination. For these individuals, their debt transforms into a binding contract, the ownership of which is transferred to creditors who operate as brokers in the human commodities market.

Creditors buy, sell, and trade Indentured individuals with an eye toward recouping their initial investment. This commodification becomes even more pronounced when creditors bundle and sell these debts to powerful MacroCorps who are constantly in need of labor. The fate of Indentured is subject to the whims of their new debt owners which often deploy them into subsequently dangerous tasks where assurance companies will not cover. While ethically questionable to the ignorant, Indentured have relinquished their inherent rights by failing the system that supports all of society. They owe a societal return on their investment.

Cold storage warehouses are filled with Indentured all over Known Space, ready to be purchased and shipped to various initiatives. Mesmeric modules teach them the essentials of the tasks they will need to perform, or they are assigned tasks they are suited for from their previous experience. The most valuable means of remuneration is to sell Indentured into the Tributary Regiments. There, they are used as auxiliary troops and menials or directly to [[[[REDACTED]]]]

Becoming Indentured is not permanent! Many have repaired their credit standings and become beneficial members of the CorpoSoci having learned valuable lessons. The Hegemon is a place of hope, after all, that prizes one's value as much as one values themself.

INDENTURED: GRADES

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There are five major grades of indentured workers whose time debt is bought and sold throughout the Hegemon. The most common rating scale was developed by Wanvath Underwriting to weigh both potential risk as well as the possible profits made by investing capital buying up a worker's time debt.

S Grade: A number of different factors determine what grade a dent is given, but to qualify as grade *Superior*, they must be an exceptionally talented individual. Such examples are those dents with unique performative abilities, advanced education; in short they must be extraordinary.

Statistically speaking, the majority of grade S dents were Basics, Persons or even Patrons before they were indentured, something to reflect upon as we consider our own finances and seek to minimize our exposure to risk. Typically their fall into debt was a quick one, and often the result of an unforeseen event. Look through the personnel files of most grade S dents and you will begin to see a pattern: sudden illness or injury, either theirs or that of a family member, rapid political instability, or even disaster or logistical failures.

Grade 1: A grade 1 indentured contract is typically a skilled worker though more often than not, has athletic or physical abilities found in Directorate veterans that has faltered in their finances. For instance, a highly skilled worker who became addicted to narcotics after the expiration of a familial instance. Such addiction can be impossible to undo without costly rehabilitation which is, graciously, an easily negotiated aspect of a voluntary indentured contract. While the grade 1 dent are highly skilled, there is still the risk of potential relapse at play.

Grade 2: Grade 2 contracts are often sold in bundles. Grade 2 indentured workers are most likely moderately skilled workers who were indentured due to unforeseen circumstances similar to Grade S. The only difference is that there is more risk involved as a grade 2 worker's labor is less valuable. They are relatively safe investments and are often contracted together into working teams. For instance, one might be able to purchase the debt obligation of a foreman and several

journeyman workers after a manufactory has been mismanaged and closed. These individuals can remain together if cohesion is considered a benefit. Enthusiasm is a premium and, often, intrepid and entrepreneurial cons will opt for several years as a dent in order to gain access to better training and higher credited education modules. Once their time debt has been paid back, with nominal interest, they can return to their nation better prepared to achieve success.

Grade 3: The most common kind of indentured whose time debt is also usually sold in bundles, grade 3 dents are most often unskilled. Grade 3's come from criminals, debtors and those without much value, slaves to their own vices or victims of a cognito-virus.

Due to the risks of such individuals, they are often surgically modified by a mentanic who isolates volatile memories and places a noetic-block that effectively blanks a dent's memory until released. Beneficially, they can then be offered new memories and temporary backgrounds to fulfill their tasks and pay their time debt with less risk.

Grade 4: Grade 4 indentured debt is always sold enmass. While there can be value found here, it can often feel like wringing water from a stone. Dents in this category should be considered nothing more than warm bodies. Any skilled labor found at these levels must be approached with an abundance of caution bordering on paranoia. All indentured at this level must be monitored to ensure work is done or placed in such conditions where survival hinges on satisfactory performance.

Colonial initiatives will often purchase these contracts to test hostile environments or when they need massive labor forces. The Directorate also makes use of grade 4's which uses them as drafties. The other is [[[[REDACTED]]]] which, as you can easily imagine, neatly removes potential problems they might otherwise have using such low grade materials.

Directorate Indentured Forces - Grade 4:

They stood huddled together, shoulders hunched, eyes down. Their uniforms were ill fitting, cheap grey things barely distinguishable from what you might see in a penal colony. Silence except for a choked sob somewhere in the crowd. Positioned around them were Tributary Paxguards, riot scatterguns in hand and a panoply of near lethal gear hung from their belts.. The quality of their uniforms, the caraplate they wore over it, and their straight, unflinching posture in total contrast to the mass of humanity they watched through mirrored visors.

In front of the crowd was the managing officer, a dour, bitter looking man who seemed to take great pleasure in reading from the hand held logicore he carried with him.

"You are here because you owe a debt. When the Republic of Nebraxa requested Directorate assistance in dealing with a Unionist uprising it was too incompetent to stamp out on its own, we answered that call. And when your country's leaders begged for aid for its citizens, they did so knowing they had no means to recompense that cost. Still they asked, and in its mercy, the Hegemon provided. You have all eaten the Directorate's food, taken our medicine, and stayed in our refugee centers far beyond your ability to pay for your expenses. And now thanks to the irresponsibility of your country and your own personal negligence, all that is left for you to offer is the only resource you still have of any value; time.

You will pay back your debt by working to wipe out the Unionist threat you allowed to fester in your country. Should you fail to follow orders, you will be punished and time will be added to your debt. Should you retreat, we will not risk our fire lanes by restricting our gunners. If you survive, time will be added to your debt. Any medical expenses you incur after a punishment will include an inconvenience fee to be added to your debt. Perform adequately, and you will have a portion of your debt expunged, minus expenses.

In a moment, I will begin reading off your Indentured Service Numbers. When you hear your number called, you will come forward, take your weapon and board the transport ship behind me. Any unnecessary delays that hinders this operation will result in a fine added to your debt."

He paused then, waiting to see if anyone was stupid enough to object. The silence carried on, broken only by that same intermittent sobbing. A faint smile touched his lips.

"Once you're all on board the dropship, you will be airlifted to the front lines. That is all."

One at a time, their numbers were read off. One at a time, they shuffled forward, their manacles removed and a cheap automat rifle fresh from the mills were shoved into their hands. And one at a time, they stumbled to the waiting ship as though still shackled.

INDENTURED: COMMON SUBTYPES

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Andragogical Indentured: Affectionately called "Andies" for short, these indentured are by no means your usual batch of financially irresponsible indentured. Instead, these temporarily embarrassed Persons have made the difficult decision to lower their social standing in an attempt to better themselves. The debt they take on to pay for educational modules that they would never be able to access otherwise is guaranteed by their labor, once their education is complete.

Unlike other indentured, Andies go in with their eyes open, willingly negotiating the number of educational modules, interest rates on the debt they take, and the time it will take them to repay those debts. As you might expect, Corpos are often hesitant to extend these loans, but Wanvath Underwriting prides itself on finding profit where others can't. With extensive aptitude testing (factored into the eventual repayment), Andies can be placed in training courses with the best probability of yielding mutual profit.

Opt-Ins: For grade 4 indentured, those deemed too unskilled or untrustworthy for anything other than the most basic labor. They have no choice in what they must do to rectify their mistakes. They have nothing to offer except their own sweat equity, and can expect nothing more than to be used for their unskilled labor. Whether as fodder for Directorate forces, comfort attendants, or any other task set before them, they have no choice in the matter.

However higher grade indentured are seen as more valuable, and financial incentives are often offered to those willing to accept higher risk methods of repaying their debt. Bear in mind that this is in no way required; an individual who has floundered so far as to be indentured must pay their debt in any way possible, but there are often cultural taboos against placing a person at undue risk of bodily harm if there is another way they might be able to repay their debt. Thus, a degree of benevolence on the part of the entity holding an individual's debt is often encouraged, even if just for the sake of good public relations.

Organoid Indentured: Organoid Indentured are most commonly referred to as "Dentnoids." This subclass of indentured worker range throughout all grades. At grade S, a codesmith of exceptional ability facing a prohibitively expensive medical operation, perhaps to remove a deeply imbedded brain tumor, might be offered the option of having top of the line organoids implanted as well to improve his already impressive skills. The cost of these implants would be added to his medical debt, but the increased value of his time and abilities would easily offset such expenses. At lower grades, such as grade 3 or 4, dents are used in brute force calculations, allowing them to oversee calculations required in proof-of-work equations. Banks of dentnoids have even been used to force their way into logicor systems as the human brain is leagues more advanced, especially when chained.

Tithe Workers: Unlike most indentured, tithe workers from the Trappist Papacy are not actually insolvent, and they do not lose their status within the Hegemon. Thus it is entirely possible for a Trappist to be both a Basic (or even a Person) and a Dent at the same time. In point of fact, their period of indenture is closer to a "holy" pilgrimage or missionary work, and it is undertaken by almost every member of the Trappist systems at least once in their life. The most common duration for a tithe is a fiscal-cycle, though wealthier members who can afford the loss of income may volunteer for a longer period of time.

The process is quite simple. When tithing, a member of the Trappist system voluntarily offers up a set period of time to the Papacy. The Papacy then sells that predetermined period of labor much like anyone else would sell an indentured's time debt. Thus, a great many "indentured" can be found originating from Trappist systems. It is important to note that while they offer the profits of their labor to the Papacy, they still hold all of the commensurate rights of their original standing within the Hegemon.

Debtbeats

Debtbeats are Cons who exist within a kind of loophole of the CorpoSoci. By understanding contract terms, a Debtbeat learns to manipulate their debts so that they, in essence, pay off one another. A Debtbeat takes a loan from a Corpo and then pays off that loan with a loan from another Corpo or private entity. This confounds the system with such entities often going to each other for remuneration.

There have been entire wars started as a result of such illegal activity.

Bank conglomerates and the Audit itself are always seeking out those who might attempt such financial evil and those that are discovered will often be executed, publicly, as a warning to all, their many crimes shouted above their screams. It is one of the rare instances where execution is preferred over incarceration or time debt as a debtbeat is considered too dangerous to be allowed second chances.

Skiptracers and Regulator outfits like the infamous and ancient *Pykartan Society* Security Corpo search out for Debtbeats and are paid handsomely for such bounties by both nations and the CorpoSoci for their good works.

THE LEX

The Hegemon does not have laws in the traditional sense but "mandates" set down and defined by the Summit Council as it seeks to interpret the best course of action to profit as gleaned from the operation of The Market. This makes the bureaucracy simple; *seek and achieve profits.* Anything that is counter to this fundamental ideal is criminal.

Member nations are tasked with responding to mandates with their own laws by which they govern their own societies. Each law *should* result in a productive society. This has resulted in a near limitless amount of recorded arguments, texts, debates and conclusions that any law a nation enforces has, in a circuitous way, results in the keystone mandate being fulfilled

This process referred to as the Lex followed by the nation it pertains to; Lex_Protea would be the laws that are afforded to the citizen of the Protean Minarchy. Specialists known as Arbitrators who study and educate themselves on all forms of law, travelling the Hegemon offering their services to improve society. Often, Arbitrators will form into Firms which can become Corpos in their own right.

The Audit and the Commission are the twin bodies of the Hegemon that keep vigil over the CorpoSoci from within and dedicate operatives and agents who will have intimate knowledge of the Lex where they operate. This allows for cultural diversity while maintaining Hegemonic oversight. The fear of such agents is enough to keep Lex enforcement almost a self regulating function of morality.

Still, for the Frontier where any form of law is difficult to maintain, there must be order. Wandering Lexan officers, most notably the Judges of the Fargol, see the laws that govern the Hegemon as a vital necessity for the human species. Embarking on private vessels and considerably armed, they follow the paths of colonizers to ensure they do not devolve into anarchy.

For the MacroCorps the Lex is one of their most powerful tools. The annexation of unused arable land or ideal construction properties per an aesthetics ruling are just a few ways a MacroCorp can find entirely legal reasons to remove an obstacle such as a stubborn government or *indigies.*

Very often, MacroCorps will enter into negotiations with one another. In these instances they will deploy a veritable army of advocates, investigators and arbitrators who will compete with one another to determine their client's validity and position. Mediatarchs of the Commission are the most frequent agents sent to ensure legal monopolies or that, should negotiations sour, commerce and trade are least affected.

Sabotage, assassination and population manipulation are all used in these events and the *court of public opinion* is a very real factor in the eyes of the Mediatarchs. If Consumers suddenly do not trust the actions of a MacroCorp and stop purchasing items they perceive has fallen short of their purchase, it can have a direct impact on a ruling.

In rarer cases MacroCorps have come into outright conflict with one another. This could be due to animosity or, simply, violence is the only way to force a negotiated outcome. If one has no air to breath, food to eat or profit left they will be more amicable to compromise. While not preferred, war is a time of opportunity so long as it remains isolated to a relatively small arena.

The Lex has guidelines for every instance with thousands of rules and laws that are reinforced with precedence and conclusions made by previous officials to reinforce a decision. The Lex is always evolving with many trusting in its pragmatism over the more interpretive Manual. In this way the Hegemon has developed its ethos.

While capital and profit can be the salve of many violations of the Lex, fines can reach truly astronomical scales if gone unpaid. A famous and well quoted event was when the son of Magnate Cabrutu of Estelax Corp was issued a ticket for speeding violations associated with driving *through* the centralplex market on Danuba. Further fees incurred for the death of a score of Consumers. The scion of Cabrutu ignored the violations and fled the system, incurring additional fines.

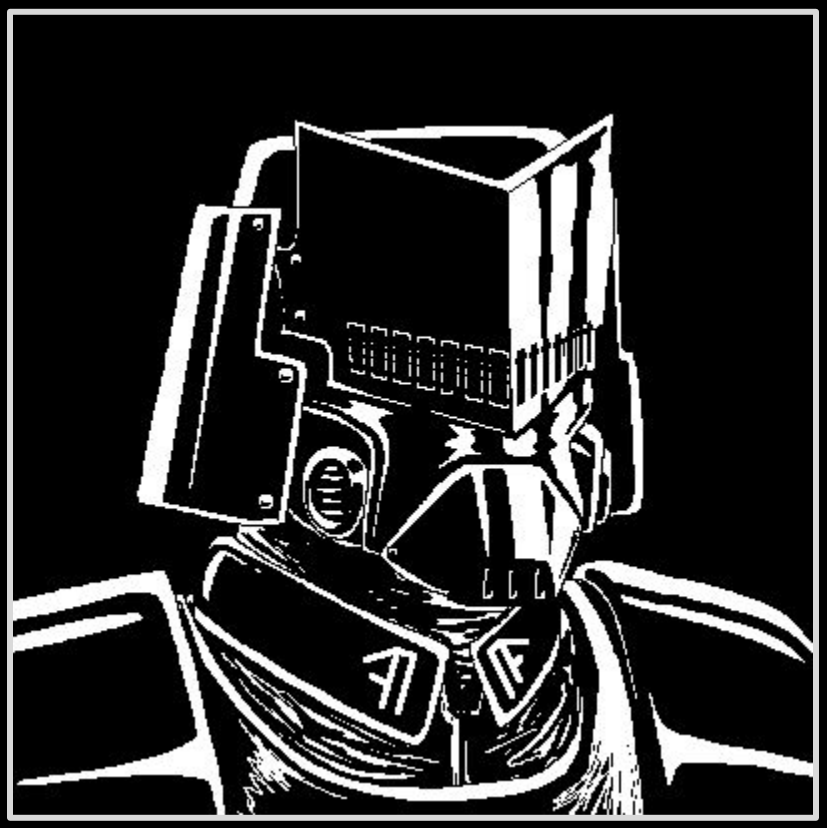
One Judge Stratch of Fargol pursued the young man and eventually caught him, applying the complete fee of a decade's worth of fines which bankrupted not just Cabrutu but brought about the ruination of the entire MacroCorp as the family run business inherited the debts for three generations.

Wandermen

An order based in the Fargol Kritarchy, the Wandermen are licensed judges that determine the Lex throughout the Hegemon, backed by authority of the Summit Council. The Wandermen are widely respected for their understanding of both the individuals inalienable rights as human beings as well as their intricate respect of Corpo entities which they consider equally.

Interpretation of the Lex is by no means universal and should two Wandermen be present for the same determination it is not uncommon that a mediation trial begin going so far as the end in a duel between both judges. In this instance the *Law of Hierarchy* is referred to based on the notion that only the survivors of the species can make judgements at all.

Most Wandermen arise from the Acumen, the Kritarchy's own Lex enforcement amongst their scattered communities. They are best described as militant judges, bringing order to what they believe as chaos that govern most of the society.



-- Law made manifest --

PRISON SOLUTIONS

Generally speaking the Hegemon defers to local Governments to determine the conceptualization of punishment for crimes committed. Law and Lex are a society's own to govern the citizens therein and are held to the expectations of the rest of the Hegemon member states to keep their house in check. That said, there are *billions* of human beings that traverse between these nations and planets. Pragmatism often rules this vast minority with the law of strength typically dictating innocence and guilt when fines cannot. Wandering arbitrators and skiptracers ensure that the wealthier Cons can always enact their rights on those who have transgressed personal values.
In other cases, as unique as the individuals who demand such consideration, there are solutions and methods the Hegemon has invested in to ensure order over chaos.

THE STAKKS

The Stakks were originally inspired by the colonies of Jovia, a system comprised of over a hundred worlds orbiting a turbulent proto-star. Life in Jovia is harshly regulated, with populations living beneath the crust of their various worlds in multi-kilometer deep structures known as "hellscrapers." These hellscrapers have been adopted in several sectors across the Hegemon but are most popular amongst penitentiary units due to their self-regulating nature.
Stakks are completely self-regulated environments. Food and resources are delivered to the top level, where guards or lawgivers maintain a rudimentary base. Beyond this entry point, there are no guards within the Stakk itself. The upper sections of a Stakk live relatively normal lives, featuring habitats, manufactories, and labs where occupants live, work, and serve out their time. These upper levels resemble conventional, albeit underground, communities where order and routine are maintained.
However, as one descends deeper into the Stakk, the environment becomes increasingly harsh and chaotic. The deeper levels house more violent or maladapted populations who struggle and compete for resources as they make their way down. Who lives where in a Stakk is determined by the resident population by any means it wishes to impose.

Civility and gentility give way to a survival-by-any-means mentality. Resources are distributed downward based on the reasoning of each level's inhabitants, leading to varying degrees of scarcity and conflict. The deeper one goes, the more intense and primal the struggle for survival becomes. Stakks are extremely popular among penitentiary corporations because, after the initial construction, upkeep is minimal.

The self-regulating nature of these structures means that they require little ongoing oversight. This makes them cost-effective solutions for housing large numbers of inmates. Criminals, political prisoners, prisoners of war, asylum seekers, and even a significant number of volunteers are prescribed, sentenced, or opt to live in Stakks.

The appeal of the Stakks to various groups within the Hegemon is multifaceted. For penitentiary corpos, the cost savings and efficiency are significant. The Stakks effectively function as self-contained ecosystems, reducing the need for extensive staffing and management. For the Hegemon’s legal and political systems, the Stakks offer a means to isolate and control undesirable or troublesome populations in a manner that is both secure and out of sight.

Volunteers who choose to live in the Stakks often do so for various reasons. Some seek the challenge and freedom of a life less constrained by the rigid structures of Hegemon Corposoci. Others may be drawn by the promise of resourcefulness and self-reliance that life in a Stakk demands. In some cases, individuals may be motivated by ideological or philosophical beliefs, seeing the Stakks as a microcosm of a more primal, survival-based existence. Corpos often contract Stakk owners for case studies for psychological, social and scientific purposes and will send their own populations or sample several Stakk a existing population.

The design of a Stakk is both ingenious and brutal. Each level operates semi-autonomously, with its own systems for resource management and governance. The top levels are well-maintained, offering a semblance of normalcy and structure. Here, inhabitants engage in productive work, from manufacturing to scientific research, contributing to the overall functioning of the Stakk which provides a unique profit margin for the owner. As resources are passed down to lower levels, the nature of life becomes increasingly harsh. The self-regulation principle means that those at each level must decide how much to pass on to those below, leading to a complex web of negotiations, alliances, and conflicts.

Inhabitants of the lower levels often form factions and gangs, competing fiercely for the dwindling resources. This descent into chaos mirrors the natural stratification of society, with the strongest and most cunning rising to the top of their respective levels. The deeper one goes, the more desperate and violent life becomes, creating a stark contrast to the relatively orderly upper levels. Despite the challenges and dangers, life in a Stakk can be seen as a test of resilience and adaptability. Those who survive and thrive in this environment often emerge hardened and resourceful, having developed skills and strengths that are valuable both within and outside the Stakks. It is not uncommon for lower Stakk denizens to be offered positions in MiliCorps and security outfits.

In conclusion, the Stakks represent a unique and extreme form of societal organization within the Hegemon. They serve as both penitentiaries and living spaces, embodying the principles of self-regulation, merit and survival. Their popularity among penitentiary corporations and their appeal to a diverse range of inhabitants underscore their significance in the Hegemon's landscape. As the Hegemon continues to expand, the Stakks remain a testament to the lengths to which society will go to manage and contain its most challenging populations.

PENAL COLONIES

The Penal Colonies of the Hegemon are remote, often hostile environments designated for the incarceration and rehabilitation of criminals, political dissidents, and other undesirables typically those who live offworld and beyond their origin nation state. These colonies serve as both a deterrent against crime and a means to extract valuable labor and resources from otherwise inaccessible regions.

Penal Colonies were established during the early expansion of the Hegemon. As a point of history, the Protean system as well as Jovia were home to several ancient penal worlds that the ExeCor often sent their own prison ships to. Most notably the Crimson Court which was used by the Aramaxians in their golden age.

The Hegemon prefers to use the self regulation of stellarization to enforce the Lex but there are financial considerations for entire colonies of Indentured and criminals dedicated to the manufacturing of non-complex items. The first colonies were set up on uninhabited moons and barren asteroids, where the harsh conditions served as a natural barrier to escape and recidivism. Over time, these colonies evolved into complex societies, each with its own unique structure and culture. In the case of offspring, they were entitled to continue working off time debts for their parents or negotiated to be allowed to leave.

-- Time served is forgiveness--

The primary purpose of the Penal Colonies is to isolate and rehabilitate inmates through labor and strict regimentation. The Hegemon believes that productive work and exposure to harsh environments can reform even the most hardened criminals or temper the more committed Unionist. Additionally, these colonies provide a steady stream of resources and goods that support the broader economy although more complex items are prohibited.

Each Penal Colony operates as a semi-autonomous entity, overseen by a Warden appointed by the Summit Council. The Warden holds absolute authority within the colony, responsible for maintaining order, overseeing labor operations, and ensuring the welfare of both inmates and staff. Wardens are often influential sitting very close to the status of a Magnate.

Colonies are divided into sectors, each with specific functions such as mining, agriculture, manufacturing, and administration. Inmates are assigned to sectors based on their skills, behavior, and the needs of the colony. This division of labor ensures maximum productivity and allows for a degree of specialization among the inmate population. Guards oversee all of this, often with lethal punishment.

Life in a Penal Colony is harsh and demanding. Inmates are subject to strict schedules, with long hours of labor punctuated by brief periods of rest and recreation. The daily routine is designed to instill discipline and a strong work ethic, while also keeping inmates occupied and reducing the potential for unrest.

The goal of Penal Colonies is to ultimately return Cons to a respectable status, depending on the crime or reason for internment. Life sentences are considered a waste of potential while executions are almost unheard of. Nothing can be gained with a corpse.

EQUILEX COLONY

Unlike penal colonies designed for criminals an equilex is where an individual is expected to fulfill a previous contract after becoming infirmed or disabled. These are voluntary locations with minimal oversight. While similar to indigents in function, equilex contractors are held in moral esteem. It represents how one is capable of taking responsibility for their obligations.

This most often happens with the Directorate with wounded soldiers that have outstanding stints after becoming wounded. Colonies like Sypend and Vhost sit on the border of the MidWorlds and the ExeCor and are most popular for their artificial habitats maintained Armasyn and the ease of the work of tracking military triplex exports as they leave manufactories and head out toward the rest of Civil Space.

Equilex colonies are also a primary place for those deemed physically or psychologically different from population norms. Blindness, deafness, learning conditions and so on are all merely opportunities for the intrepid for both employer and employee.

Equilex facilities provide the kind of training that these individuals need to be productive. If attention is a difficulty for one to naturally grasp then, limited, medicinals are provided to focus one to a task. The Hegemon views such crutches and dependencies as an admission of guilt to the perfection of New Mankind whose mind should, and can, overcome all obstacles put before it.

Positions that *incorporate* the individuals perceived shortcomings make for a more profitable potential. This can vary, but, Equilex staff look for such positions in Corpo establishments within the system or, if the margins are correct, even credit for travel for their newly trained staff to find employment in the greater Hegemon.

Relying on a welfare state diminishes the species as a whole. If one has no beneficial skill or value, then the Equilex colony will make the most of the individual and continue to establish new debt on keeping them fed and alive. Should a threshold be surpassed then Indentured status is inevitable.

The MacroCorps

Just as no two human beings share identical traits, no two Corpo entities mirror one another in form, ambition, or pedigree. Each is branded, built and carved by its own lineage of transactions, strategic gambits, and inventive expansions just as much as potential bankruptcy. A Corpo hold similar rights commensurate with any Consumer across local considerations of government, law and the Hegemon's Lex. Indeed, they often eclipse the status of individuals as they can easily represent the prosperity of entire planets. From stakeholders and employees to the customers they provide product for, even when a Corpo makes a transgression they are often deemed to important to be allowed to truly fail.

This is all the more so for MacroCorps that affect *supersectors* and the billions therein. Society as a whole embraces this fact and cherishes the best acting MacroCorps, often elevating products into trustBrands which are almost immune to even the Audit. However, it takes a long time for such entities to form.

Just as a single talent can elevate a man or femme to the notice of their patrons, so too can a minor Corpo ascend to the rarified air of a MacroCorp by steadily amassing monopolies. The traditional number is *three* within a constellation of interdependent systems that form a sector market but in essence is:

- **Supply Chain Control**: Gaining full command over the entire value chain, from initial resource extraction or cultivation to its final refinement. This often includes exclusive contracts, secure logistics, and heavy security measures to prevent competition or interference.
- **Market Access and Pricing Authority**: By dominating the flow of the resource, the monopolizing Corpo can dictate terms of sale, control pricing, and determine who is allowed to purchase. This typically involves direct Corpo conflict and political lobbying.
- **Branding and Regulatory Influence**: Shaping public perception . Cultivating a narrative of quality, necessity, or scarcity helps ensure Consumers and client nations remain dependent on the monopolized resource, while lobbying and regulatory capture keep potential rivals and substitutes at bay.

A potential MacroCorp must persist, sometimes for generations, constantly innovating and seducing entire sector markets, drawing ever greater throngs of Consumers to buy, invest, and depend upon its products. When a Corpo becomes a MacroCorp it is done by the recognition of other Magnates and their ways are mercurial at best. This recognition, once earned, gains placement on the Summit Council.

This dynamic of Corpo stratification whereby new MacroCorps emerge is a evolutionary ecosystem as intricate as any biome and, in the ethos of the Hegemon, is just as vital to its survival. For stellarization to work only the best, brightest and consistently dominant super entities made up of human beings can ensure survival in a cosmos aggressively anathematic to life.

The philosophy of Dumno-Ualos understood the paradox at the Hegemon's core: to endure is to expand, and to cease expansion is to invite extinction. The Hegemon subsumes, by design. It does not rest on laurels or retreat into insularity or the convenience of *enough*; it grows, colonizes, and diversifies because it must. The Hegemon's very essence depends on perpetual motion. Resources must flow, manufactories must hum, and new worlds must be uncovered and their riches exposed. The moment the Hegemon falters in this mission, it forfeits its purpose, undermining the equilibrium that nourishes the thousand empires and the untold billions within.

The MacroCorps are the embodiment of this principle. Without them there would be no Hegemon and vice versa. Through them the lesser desires of humanity that have toppled previous civilizations. Hate, honor, the limiting desire to simply survive without the will to thrive have no place in business and the pursuit of profit.

The CorpoSoci manufacture every conceivable good, anticipate every known desire, and weave themselves into the tapestry of daily existence. From the granular basics—nutrient rations and water filters—to the grandest luxuries—vacation habitats and genetic enhancements—the MacroCorps generate the currency of needs and wants. It is no empty boast to claim that, without their products, the Hegemon's greatness would wither. If a challenger dared to unseat them, toppling the entire stellarist order, it would only prove that the time had come for the system to evolve. Yet, after nearly a millennium of undisputed tenure, no alternative has taken root. The MacroCorps have entrenched themselves too deeply, their influence spreading through supply lines, digital grids, and cultural norms. But they are ready to meet any challenge to what is a perfect system.

Notable MacroCorps

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The MacroCorps, also known universally as *Corpos*, are a varied and constantly evolving constellation of interstellar business entities that typically focus on one or two specializations, but they must have at least three legal monopolies before they can be considered a MacroCorp.

Their headquarters vary, but the heart of each MacroCorp is referred to as a *Prosperity Sphere* representing economies that revolve around their parent MacroCorp and where other products from their competitors are scarce.

Bersarang Multi-Stellar

The hand that feeds

Bersarang has long held several important monopolies on food production, distribution, and consumption across dozens of major planets. It is the supreme epicurean architect inventing hundreds of trademarked taste sensations as well as the more exotic holographic feasts. Bersarang's influence permeates all of Known Space.

The bulk-produce freightliners that bear Bersarang's symbol are almost universally safe wherever they go. The implications of slowing or even slightly damaging such a craft could result in the starvation of potential millions.

With their array of patented flavor profiles, trademark seeds, synthetic ingredients shrouded in coded secrecy, and culinary technologies, Bersarang dictates the very flavor of the Hegemon. Their mastery over the art of sustenance and consumable pleasure has solidified their position as one of the unchallenged MacroCorps that holds a permanent seat on the Board.

Armasyn Technologies

ARMASYN

Shielding Profits

While each MacroCorp has their own internal security force and the Hegemon has the Directorate with its Tributary Regiments and Barakan Elite, it is likely that those forces hold Armasyn weapons in their hands. Armasyn's interstellar arsenal encompasses everything from continent scourging warheads to precision gene-code guided micro-rockets. Their proprietary energy-directed weapons and Emerald Curtain[tB] technologies have literally reshaped entire planets, while those who can afford their Orbital Defense Grids are nigh untouchable to attack. Armasyn's influence extends beyond the battlefield as it can dictate peace negotiations through the assurance of mutual destruction. The undeniable reality is that, in the vastness of space, the one who wields the deadliest weapons shapes the destiny of worlds.

COLARIS *Only Colaris. No Alternatives.*

One of the worst rivalries in Hegemon history is also the most ironic. Colaris[tB], the most popular carbo-stimm drink in the ExeCor and Hydris, an inhalant and drip additive so popular amongst Orbiters it became as mandatory as air and drinking water aboard starships. Animosity between Grounder and Orbiter populations has always been a constant, even before the Hegemon, but the Colaris/Hydris preference elevated general prejudice to outright rivalry between these two massBrands.

While unclear exactly when it began or by who, it is generally regarded that in 8/62 quickships began transmitting recordings of Consumers complaining, or extolling, the virtues of either product. The reactions in the local intranets spread quickly, leading to a rise in extra-solar communication that the Overland Corporation grew their messenger fleet by twenty percent to keep up with demand.

Vid captures, product desecration, overbuying and protests were precursors to outright sectarian violence. This brand war escalated to entire Tributary Regiments clashing with Naval caeliners and running battles at distribution sites like macro hoists and space elevators.

Entire mithqals of profit were lost and gained, causing massive fluctuations in The Market which finally lead the Audit itself to impose its will upon the conflict before the brand war became a civil one. The Barakan of 0-1 Division were directed to perform a strike against the Hydris Corpo headquarters in their orbital in the Protean system.

None survived. Colaris[tB] remains becoming a proper trustBrand, leaving a generation-long indemnity as Hydris products dwindled to darkmarket produce and cheap copies made by shadowCorps proliferate.

During the next RevShare tithing period, Commission clerks discover that Colaris[tB] Unlimited and Hydris Corporation were both ParaCorps of Bersarang. This truth is buried lest further upheaval occur.

Yinntosh Innovation

Knowledge

In the ever evolving fields of technology, it is Yinntosh Innovation that directly provides the Hegemon's upper hierarchy sleek and carefully-regulated computational programs and hardware. The Yinntoshi monopoly existed before the Hegemon, yet it was their wise decision to provide much of the funding in the building of The Market that forever instilled Yinntosh machines as the equipment Dawn Traders use in their determination of resource values.

As such, almost all of the Summit and the Board's millions of workers use Yinntosh technology, which has lead to a cultural belief that Yinntosh products are, simply, the best. From quantum-paired ansibles to direct cognitive translators, Yinntoshi technological mastery and attention to aesthetics have made them iconic while their fierce protectiveness of their proprietary devices has lead to outright war against any that might seek to decipher their secrets or protect themselves from Yinntoshi technicians and their cleverly integrated planned obsolescence.

Five Hands Holistic Panceuticals

A Family Company

Five Hands is the dominant medical-oriented MacroCorp of the Hegemon as much as it is a dominant religion. This sprawling conglomerate metamorphosed from its humble origins on the planet Mylbruk as an order of matriarchal healers to a Brand found throughout the ExeCor systems in only a few hundred fiscal-cycles. They now dictate the trajectory of physical and psychological health in addition to wellness across Civil Space.

Unlike the Yinntoshi or the Sienak Banking Dynasty, Five Hands seeks to constantly innovate and invest in new technologies. This has resulted in increased scrutiny from the Audit, with a Magnate even being taken into custody. The result was simply that Five Hands moved their base of operations to the very edges of Known Space, where they continue their research.

This Macro Corporation's influence extends beyond mere product lines; they control the very infrastructure of medical education, research, and practice. Five Hands has established a stranglehold on medical institutions, funding research initiatives that align with its interests and shaping curricula to prioritize its holistic paradigm. Medical practitioners who wish to thrive must adhere to the Five Hands doctrine and be subscribers of its faith.

Moreover, Five Hands wields significant political power, manipulating legislation and governance structures to ensure that its products and methodologies are not just preferred, but mandated.

The Hyperkillers of the Yinntosh are [[REDACTED]] *originated from the Jov system in the* [[REDACTED]] *millennia* [[REDACTED]] *While it is* [[REDACTED]] *the common* [[REDACTED]] *minimum of thirteen. The Mindworlds of the Yinn* [[REDACTED]] [[REDACTED]] [[[[REDACTED]]]] *Dumno-Ualos* [[REDACTED]] *in the* [[REDACTED]] *leylines to connect each in the largest network of its kind. They are, first and foremost, protectors of the trade secrets of the Yinn.*

Their complete autonomy was ensured when [[REDACTED]] *agreed to Protea's proposal and entered into a lasting Joint Venture that many argue built the Hegemon to begin with.* [[REDACTED]] [[REDACTED]] [[[REDACTED]]]] *it should be noted that any of mention Eleusinion is likely just another claim by overeager anthropologists seeking* [[[[REDACTED]]]] [[[[REDACTED]]]] [[[[REDACTED]]]] [[[[REDACTED]]]] [[REDACTED]] [[REDACTED]] [[[[REDACTED]]]] [[[[REDACTED]]]] *decimation of the original* [[[[REDACTED]]]] *to* [[[[REDACTED]]]] *seeking to reverse* [[[[REDACTED]]]] [[[[REDACTED]]]] *Urth.*

The planet Katamyth operates as a central nexus for their traversal [[[[REDACTED]]]] [[[[REDACTED]]]] *operating without the need for descents into the Outside* [[[[REDACTED]]]] [[[[REDACTED]]]] [[[[REDACTED]]]] *Barakan Elite* [[[[REDACTED]]]] *ending in the failed assault on Protea.* [[[[REDACTED]]]] *ironic* [[[[REDACTED]]]] *assassination, hostile takeover, share redistribution, and even planetary extinction events are all* [[[[REDACTED]]]] *issued by the Demarchy of Jovia.*

but mandated in clinics and hospitals across Known Space.
Planetary governments, beholden to the economic might of the conglomerate, enforce health policies that align with Five Hands' vision, creating a monopolistic grip on the healthcare system of the Hegemon.

STRATOS Industrial

Beyond Every Horizon

An industrial behemoth like no other, six of every ten spacecraft are built with parts from Stratos Industrial. This MacroCorp specializes in the construction and development of colossal space-faring warships, personal vessels and shuttlecraft as its specialty even as they own the mines, refineries and mills to build them.

Stratos manufactories are orbit sprawling artificial rings that can be seen on many worlds in the ExeCor systems. With the constant need for construction and maintenance, it is these shipyards by which the Hegemon's expansion has accelerated. Hubs of technological innovation, the production of new vessels is the obsession of Stratos Magnates, seeking new methods, new weapons, new defenses, anything that will build their ships faster and better to pierce the veil of the Frontier. Stratos ships are not just tools of war but methods of Hegemonic exploration. Magnates often commission several such vessels to experience the unique thrill that only first-hand space travel can offer.

Stratos' influence extends beyond shipbuilding. Their industrial colonies, predominantly in asteroid belts or strip-mined planetoids, feed their forges directly. They own entire entertainment constellations which they use to promote their corporate activities. Stratos also manipulates the political landscapes by influencing governments and factions to engage in perpetual conflicts, ensuring a constant demand for war material. Displaced communities are often offered a chance to colonize the Frontier which, in turn, broadens the Hegemon which must then commission new spacecraft.

The MacroCorp's economic stranglehold on the interstellar war industry has led to a dystopian reality where entire civilizations are perpetually embroiled in conflicts, their destinies dictated by the insatiable appetite of Stratos' leadership.

Wanvath Underwriting

With Friends like These

Wanvath began centuries ago as an insurance company, offering other Macrocorps and even Cons (from Indigent to Person), a way to offset their risks. Individual plans are especially popular with those working for MiliCorps, though supplemental plans are often popular as "benefits packages" for those on the cusp of management, allowing workers to make sure their children and loved ones do not miss a single step on their upward path, even if the policy holder dies days before promotion. On the corporate side of things, Wanvath often underwrites any number of buildings, infrastructure projects, and expeditionary missions, allowing for some level of loss prevention in the event of unforeseen property loss. Rates vary depending upon perceived risk.

As Wanvath grew, it quickly began underwriting loans as well. Most MacroCorps are unlikely to need them, but Wanvath occupies an interesting position in The Market. In sectors where risk is deemed financially manageable, Wanvath will offer personal loans to Cons at rates lower than the corporations they work for, sometimes siphoning workers away from other corporations by paying down their debt at more favorable rates. If the other corporation lets them go for "disloyalty," a job offer is often waiting for the Con at Wanvath. True, they make less money as the worker pays off their debt, but recruiting in such a way allows them to significantly reduce personnel training costs.

These recruitments are strategically timed, following similar principles to "value investing" in stocks. Training an actuary is expensive. So is recruiting one in good standing away from their current Corpo. But, as an example, stepping in to refinance an otherwise outstanding Con's new medical debt at a competitive rate after a brush with cancer is a deal!

It is also a huge player in offering loans to startup companies and smaller localized corps that want to stay independent. Wanvath is often willing to offer seed capital in exchange for part ownership of these smaller companies. It is quite likely that Wanvath owns at least part of the vast majority of otherwise independent operations.

Eventually Wanvath began providing a unique service, managing investments in these smaller corporations and producing something like an unholy cross between an index fund and a co-op. This allowed individuals in smaller corporations to minimize investment risk by diversifying their holdings. Suddenly this cloud of smaller businesses could offer benefits similar to larger corps, with Wanvath there to broker deals, handle investment purchases and sales, and of course, always ready to buy up more controlling interest at the first sign of weakness. Wanvath is a spider quietly manipulating a web of hundreds if not thousands of smaller corps, each one sure of its own freedom.

To make things worse, whatever limited Consumer protection is available is completely undermined by Wanvath's operating process. A megacorp might find itself in arbitration over a particularly nasty product recall, the death of several full persons in the tragically preventable destruction of a passenger ship, or worse yet... in breach of contract to another corporation. However, the small companies that Wanvath owns interest in are just that. Small companies. Arbitration might liquidate every last bit of property a smaller corporation might possess, but that is where the process would end. Wanvath might possess significant interests in the company, but there is a clear limit to how much Wanvath can lose or be held accountable for should one of their investments end up insolvent, an edge they are very much willing to exploit.

Source Unlimited

Follow the Path of Least Resistance

Source stands as the largest operator in water processing, transportation, and distillation, owning a third of all such operations across Civil Space. While ostensibly benign, its dominance has sparked countless conflicts among Frontier colonies, known as the "Water Wars," driven by the scarcity of this essential resource. Source's control, veiled by a facade of neutrality, perpetuates a cycle of ingenious dependence and is a key component to the shaping of the Frontier.

Teranos

Shaping the Worlds

Teranos was founded in 2/36-005 as one of the first of a new generation of Macro Corporations. Beginning as a minor Corpo, they became known for their ability to repair planetary biospheres abused by over-industrialization and atomika weapon use. They are now the leader in the business of worldshaping practices and technology.

Over the centuries they now include system and global surveying as part of their expertise providing the best planetary cartography available. Teranos agents and teams are often a part of Joint Ventures operating on the Frontier. While colonial expansion is at the forefront of Hegemon ideals, the further development and improvement of the ExeCor and Civil Space is just as important. Dead planets, barren asteroids and gas giants are only valuable if labor populations can breath and live on them. Shipping air, water and food is wildly expensive. As such, Teranos has developed many of the technologies and standardized processes of settling new worlds, with the patents and licenses to prove it.

Teranos maintains a contract with a mixed Tributary force, nicknamed *"The Tourists"*, as well as an exclusive contract with a small Barakan Division that they have dubbed *"The Renovators*," although the Division's true name is unknown. The Teranos Technical Academy, or the TTA, is renowned for producing the best Habitechnicians in the ExeCor that specialize in all artificial or augmented biospheres for human habitation.

Artwork by Lucithen

Habitat platform

Somerlyn Eternity

The Only Thing that Matters

Somerlyn Eternity grew out of a entirely unique technology that claims to digitize the neural pathways of an individual and somehow transport the conscious Self into a “simulant” or “sim.” These sims continue to live, after a fashion, within a digital universe, all within Somerlyn Eternity’s private matrices which are kept exclusively on the planet New Somnia. Somerlyn insists that there is no interruption in memetic continuity for the individual and that the sim is not just a “copy” but the original intelligence of the applicant.

Skepticism abounds throughout the Hegemon but, still, millions petition every fiscal-cycle to be received on New Somnia. The niche market Somerlyn monopolizes has birthed countless prosperity cults who hope to have their leaders accepted as a sim. The longevity of individual humans at the Person level is generally above a fiscal century, almost two thirds more in the ExeCor. With costly treatments a member of New Mankind can live between two and three centuries. This increases with credit ratings such as the scions of the Dumno being hypothetically immortal. This MacroCorp offers the only chance many will have to live beyond this fiscal limitation.

Somerlyn representatives aggressively look for customers throughout Known Space and will pay for one’s journey, entirely, to return to New Somnia aboard their fleet of luxury cruiseliners. Once arrived, customers undergo an unknown process, their Self digitized into New Somnia’s datasphere where they exist in what the Magnates have named the Halcyon which is maintained by subscription fees.

Sims often act as success stories or leave Halcyon in custom ergoid bodies and are, through Summit Council advocacy, still considered Consumers with all the rights, and debt, afforded to flesh and blood humans although a high degree of criticism and outright prejudice exists for these synthetically housed members of New Mankind.

These beliefs are especially held by the Trappist Papal religio-subscriptions who have spent millennia proving their concept of afterlife. Somerlyn Eternity defies these answers with one of their own. Several conflicts have arisen with Trappist financed operations against Somerlyn’s assets. This is met with those who believe the simulants are the true article with several dozen

members of the Summit Council housed in ergoids. Interestingly, the Audit and the Commission are both uninterested in making a determination and the conflict, often called the Anima War, continues.

The Magnates of Somerlyn Eternity are more than capable of defending themselves. They have been strategic in their subscription offering to thousands of Tributaries at the end of their lives an opportunity to become a simulant encased in a military classed ergo-guar in a formation called the Mirrormen. These are the only legal ergoids able to express human identity, typically through resistant plexa screens that project likenesses.

Somerlyn's headquarters itself is situated atop the vestigial ruins of what was once a pre-Hegemon nation dating back to the age of Aramax. What little is known of the insular Som people is that they were unparalleled mentanics as well as intrepid necronauts, giving credence to their claims.

Either through overmining or some catastrophic worldshaping event, their planet was destroyed suddenly and without warning, killing the vast majority of the Som population and driving the survivors into exile. Centuries later, shortly after the formation of the Hegemon, the descendents of the Som petitioned Dumno-Ualos for investment which he granted against the advisory of his Clan. With this capital the Som recolonized, recovering relics of their ancestry and launching Somerlyn Eternity MacroCorp to great acclaim.

-- Mirrorman Operative --

Muskov Milisya MiliCorp  *Your Protection is Our Success*

An interplanetary private military conglomerate that was born out of the Directorate with dozens of lucrative connections to the office of the Leader and who are often seen as private security for MacroCorp operatives throughout Known Space. Their *Waganari* are their elite units used almost exclusively in convoy and tradeship protection. With a strong militant culture, the Muskov MiliCorp contracts with many Frontier sector cultures for their soldiery but each must pass the entrance regimen at the Muskov headquarters on the planet Hyrieus in the Wei-Khang nation and be inducted into their Brotherhood of Orax.

Hylfex Raytech  *Lighting the Way*

A Coreward energy broker turned MacroCorp that produces a range of fusion reactors and has an extensive monopoly on hundreds of deuterium mines. Their Magnates have maintained balance and steady growth for fiscal centuries by eliminating other forms of power generation on countless planets even when geothermal, wind or traditional fission makes more fiscal sense.

Riegan-Marg Ventures  *That's Us*

Marg InfoCorp was once a major data broker until they merged with the security conglomerate Riegan. Combining their strong connections to celebrities and visutel personalities in Common Space, they expanded into lifestyle enforcement and improvement. With inter-generationally contracted stable of celebrities, most other Corpos seek out Riegan-Marg talent for their product campaigns. Even the Directorate regularly hires modified, or naturally capable, talent to serve near the frontlines for recruitment billboards and inspiring the rank and file. None are more famous than Wyaat Strider who goes by *Commander Hegemon* armed with the

Riegan-Marg Ventures has office-plexes throughout the ExeCor where they are constantly seek out new individuals to contract. They own cosmetic improvement facilities, lifestyle betterment complexes, profit institutes and will not only take children into their training programs but even orchestrate unions between Consumers and attempt to create ever more attractive and unique looking offspring for the entertainment of countless billions.

There are countless lesser Corpos and hundreds of MacroCorps that create the commercial ecosystem of the Hegemon. Any Con can start a business with enough capital and, in practice, can become a MacroCorp. Anyone can become a Magnate, that is the promise of the Hegemon and the meritocracy made capable with Avarice.

Each MacroCorp has its own security forces, ships, transport options and the means to generate their many products. If they do not they must rely on other Corpos often creating Joint Ventures for mutually beneficial profit sharing or they must pay the costs for services. This is a further incentive for Corpos to eventually develop monopolies planet by planet and prevent loss by any means necessary.

How they use all of this to draw more Consumers is the mystery of good business. It can be done through targeted strikes against competitors using saboteurs or drawing Consumers to change their brand loyalty with better deals. Sometimes it is simply the providing the best services and products available, although, it is a poor business that relies entirely on quality.

This may seem petty but the very literal future of the species has been realized through the wisdom of Dumno-Ualos and outlined in the Manual. The only way to govern a race as volatile and contradictory as humanity is to offer them the *hope* of improving their value. United in this desire and none of the destructive behavior of Old Humanity be a concern for ongoing conflict would contradict the truth that New Mankind prospers within.

Hope keeps the systems and worlds from tearing each other apart and, so, New Mankind has claimed the stars. Stellarization is the means for unity and to deny that is to risk a slip backwards into the darkness of constant war, predation by near-humans and Exogens and, worst of all, poverty.

ParaCorps: Solar Franchises

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ParaCorps is a relatively newer classification for a corporate entity. First coined in the fifth fiscal century to describe the efforts of *Sumner Roketek Drives*, there needed to be a legal enforcement for those smaller enterprises that did not, or could not, seek broader monopolies to become a MacroCorp. Sumner RokeTek possessed a schematic for an Aramaxian heavy cosmo-fighter variant which they named the SuRok.

Adaptation would require cooperation between Armasyn and Stratos MacroCorps and also Yinntosh Innovation. With so much intermingling of technologies and potential vectors for conflict as all three Archonist Magnates sought to outright acquire Sumner Roketek, the real possibility of losing such a valuable product caused a decline in shareholder confidence.

The Summit Council under the advice of Wanvath Underwriting, made the smaller Corpo a distinct entity, giving it full authority to govern resources and the resulting Joint Venture in the Helvetii star system. All parties agreed to these terms and the ParaCorp was born.

Many smaller Corpos that discover or create invaluable technologies, obtain unique resources or products of interest to the Hegemon at large will often seek ParaCorp status as a means of preventing hostile takeovers by larger MacroCorps. It is by no means easy with direct recognition by the Summit Council *and* in-person processing at a Fargani colony in the presence of high ranking judges of the Acumen.

Paracorps are generally subordinate, and are not permitted to extend their influence beyond a star system that they are licensed to. Indeed, they exist within the economic and legal scaffolding of larger MacroCorps. Functioning as supply-chain extensions, market-specific subsidiaries, or compliance buffers, Paracorps are not independent in purpose, only in structure. Their primary role is to support the operational demands of their MacroCorp patrons within designated zones.

Notable ParaCorps

While there are hundreds of MacroCorps and untold of local Corpos, there are surprisingly few ParaCorps due to the reality that they often are transitory entities in nature. Be it by success or failure, ParaCorps must have tenacity as well as vital products or services to remain their own.

Sumner Roketek Drives

Arising in the Helvetii in the Spinward supersector of Aram, the former stellar region of the Aramaxian Supremacy, the Helvetians were a proud and independent people. Similar in their endowments as the Catraethi Regenium they sought innovation rather that domination. As a result they were swiftly conquered, their tight cluster of planets orbiting a gas giant subdued for much of its history and its culture ransacked in the name of the Mother God.

The Sumner family withdrew from this invasion into the gas giant itself aboard a worldring, utilizing ancient technologies they allowed them to weather the gas giant's century spanning storm systems and watching as their former worlds fell into slavery.

It was the Sumner that contacted the Hegemon via ansible, seeking an ally against the Regenium and supplying data and information all while being hidden within the gas giant. When the Directorate finally engaged in war with the Cohorti, the Sumner launched their worldring back into orbit, smashing the Cohorti legions with the unrestricted might of their ancestors.

During the Restoration in 2/30 they openly adopted Hegemon ideals, becoming fabulously wealthy as they rebuilt the Helvetii worlds with contracts from the Summit Council. Backwards engineered Catraethi technologies were extremely popular in such times and the Sumner were the best to do so before unveiling the SuRok cosmo-fighter three centuries later which would become the primary fightercraft of the Armada.

REVENUE SHARE DAY

The Manual insists on the importance of sick-leave, time-off, and local holidays for Consumers to enjoy the fruits of their many labors. Many Corpos allow individuals to work, should one so choose, on such days for additional benefits and overtime. Working during time-off is particularly regarded with respect by Patrons who look favorably on those who make necessary sacrifices to improve their department's output or makeup for errors or laxity in previous quats.

In the week leading up to the final day of the fiscal-cycle, however, it is considered wildly inappropriate, even unlawful, for Consumers to work all five days (ten shifts). Revenue Sharing, or "RevShare" day, is after final accounting has been processed and sent to the Commission for review. On this day, bonuses and, as the name describes, revenue and profit-sharing take place. In millions of communities, parades and celebrations take place in exultation for profits made. This day holds immense economic importance as it incentivizes a surge in spending with major discounts and sales opportunities.

Gift-giving, various festive traditions, and module purchases create a domino effect that affects various industries in response to the heightened demand for goods and services, stimulating the economy that shapes a good foundation in the coming fiscal-cycle. The holiday influences financial markets, with Corpos closely monitoring the performance of material sales to navigate investment. Beyond The Marketplace, RevShare Day drives tourism, benefiting the hospitality sector, with those who can purchase travel licenses and vouchers across planets, star systems, and beyond.

For mid and upper tiered credit holders it is possible to petition, negotiate and pay for additional days off leading to the final day of the fourth quat before the turnover to the next cycle.

It is considered customary in the ExeCor systems, where RevShare Day observance is most orthodox, for Consumers to pool a percentage of their earnings and purchase a gift for their Patron, and the Patrons their Baron, and Barons their Magnates. Meanwhile, it is also customary for Patrons to provide a meal the day before RevShare Day, most traditionally, warmed flatbread with a harmonious medley of local products sprinkled or melted over it.

-- Everyone needs a day off to remind them that work is tomorrow --

With the primary hubs for commerce in the Hegemon, it is a regular occurrence for community markets, subsidiary trade floors, and sprawling sports arenas to come alive with special events for Consumers to partake in with the most revered among them being the Games. During these grand spectacles, Corpos of every classification seize the opportunity to showcase their latest prototypes and new products in preparation for the upcoming fiscal-cycle. The entire Hegemon is infused with a palpable sense of anticipation as enthusiasts, whether witnessing the events firsthand or tuning in via colossal viewing screens which receive transmissions from focused ansible arrays, eagerly await the unveiling of cutting-edge technologies and innovations in real-time.

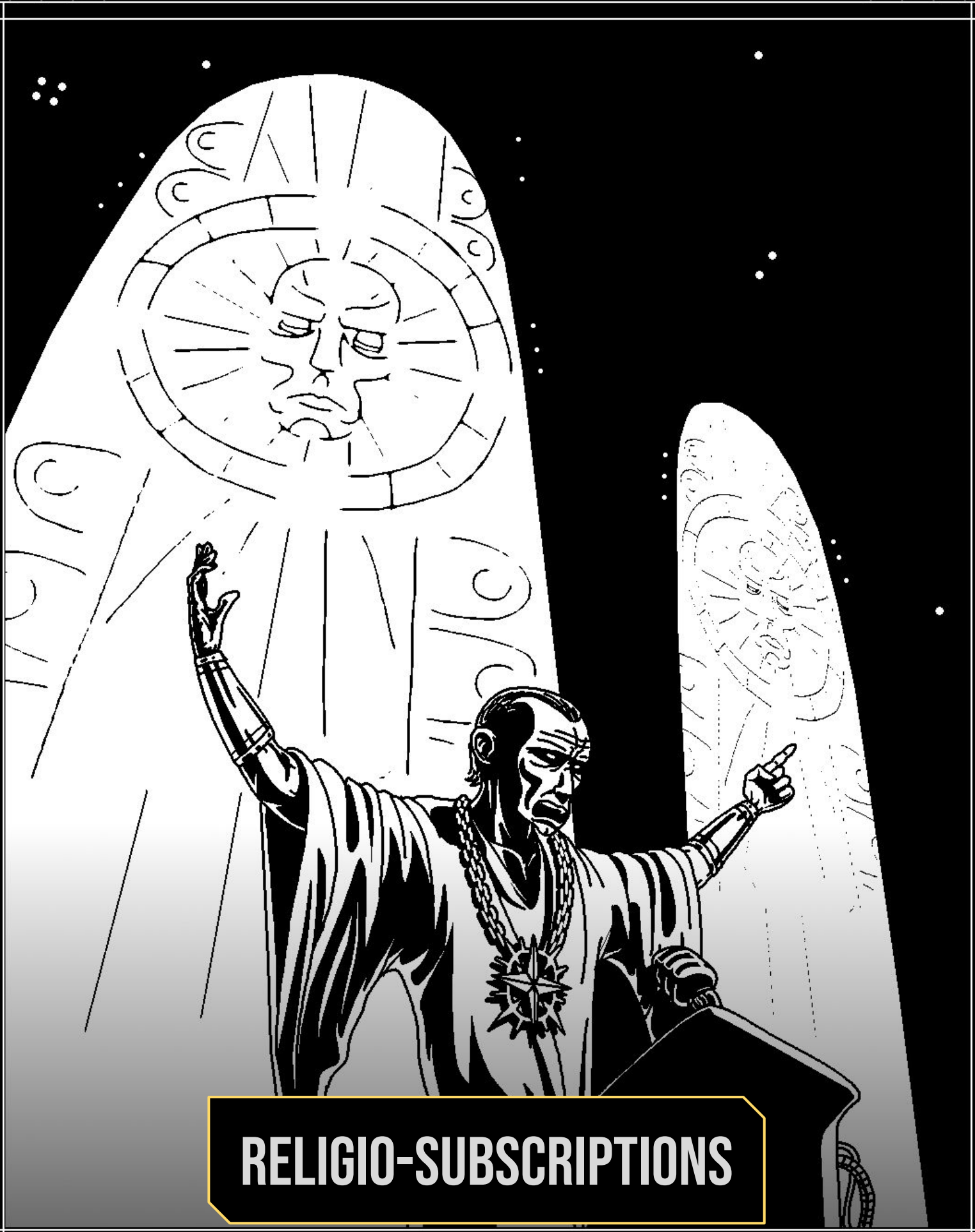
It is truly an incredible feat to unite so many people together throughout Known Space*.

The Games are a riveting display of prowess and ingenuity, featuring exhilarating events such as hypervelocity racing that push the boundaries of engineering or formidable tests of strength facilitated by bleeding edge assault-harness designs. The stakes are high, and the Games are not for the faint of heart — often proving lethal for participants who willingly embrace the risks in the pursuit of franchise enrichment.

The viewership respond to these events thunderous applause and roars of approval, captivated by the thrilling spectacle and celebrating the audacity and skill on display. The Games serve as a riveting testament to the indomitable spirit of innovation, skill and competition within the Hegemon of a Thousand Empires.

*quarterly subscription fees apply determined by your local service provider

AND ALL THAT THE WISE MAN TOUCHED TURNED TO GRAIN AND GOLD



RELIGIO-SUBSCRIPTIONS

AND THEY WHO WERE HIS DOUBTERS WERE CAST INTO DESTITUTION

RELIGIO-SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Religion is inherent to humanity. The foolish have attempted to burn it from the species' psyche while the intrepid have sought to incorporate it into governance of the people, only to have riots of the "faithful" tear down the pillars of civilization. Religion is both the opiate and the poison of Old Humanity and it would be no different for New Mankind unless it adapted to this truth.

The Hegemon rose out from the city-states of Protea, many of them sun-worshipers. As it expanded, it absorbed the Nox Sisterhoods of Salacia 9 and the wyrm-cults of Kantaur. As the ExeCor systems settled into membership, many wondered - which faith would be the official belief system of the Hegemon? Which religion was true?

Dumno-Ualos' solution was straightforward, like so many of his solutions: *All of them... for a price.*

Religion would be treated like the Corpos, save that their products were faith and answers to the questions that science and finance could not address. Each religion would register with Protea and The Market. They would pay a special tax, offset by works that improved general and governmental properties wherever they set up their churches or temples. Members wishing to pray would pay subscription fees enabling them dispensation and special rights such as culinary restrictions, funerary rights and general codes of conduct that the Hegemon would enforce throughout. The more complicated the edicts of a faith? The greater the taxes and thus the more expensive the subscription fees.

All of this overseen by the Commission. Scrutinized by the Audit.

Religions, like Corpos, are guilty of attacking one another, both officially and otherwise. Membership to faiths is a constant need as much as codesmiths might be to a TechCorp. Competition is fierce, with the added volatility that the faith of a believer often renders them uncaring of their physical body over an assumed afterlife.

The Hegemon itself would concern itself alone with the 'Self' and decline from religion, which in turn would adopt the tasks to procure serenity of the 'Soul'. It should be noted that the Manual, its authors and the study of business practice has become a faith unto itself... but none make mention of the similarities.

Religio-subscriptions are an economic victory of the Hegemon. Through simple regulation based on currency, their influence in turn is translated through their ability to lobby local governments, offering honest incentives to further their own ends. Even religio competition and the expansion of their 'flocks' are similar to the consumer base of a Corpo.

Religios can be started by anyone, requiring only a few thousand followers to make a formal petition to the Commission in order to gain a license to offer their products to Consumers. They may do this to any member of the Hegemon with any credit rating, even the Indentured.

The many need simple, straightforward answers to the universe that they survive in. Denying this need or choosing one over another, but, their is an angle for profit that science or business acumen traditionally ignores. The various priesthoods, matriarchs, saints and manifestations of various gods that maintain their faiths easily match Magnates for wealth if not economic power. There can be as many deities and dogmas as there are the worlds claimed by humanity, provided that these religions pay the taxes imposed by the Summit as defined by the Commission.

Religio operate much like any Corpo within the Hegemon and as such are subject to the economic principles of the Manual and its permissions as a product to Consumers. Penalties, not always direct, are imposed on those who intone the copyrighted prayers and rituals of religions without paying the required fees. Those who perform their faith correctly benefit from various unique products and subscriptions that typically lead to advancement in the CorpoSoci. Orthodoxy is rewarded while deviation leads to financial and social penalties as long as a religio-subscription is active. Often, subscriptions are purchased by parental units for their offspring gaining additional medical care and the innate comforts of community. Subscription options are usually a decade, but, offer benefits for longer contract terms.

For the faithful, the ultimate fate of their afterlife, their standing in their community and their reputation is tied to their compliance with their Covenant of Engagement, similar to terms of service, further binding them to their chosen subscription's tenets. Breaking this covenant is also similar resulting in credit loss, automatic debt claims as well as confiscation of benefits.

Religio influence is a tangible power bloc in the Hegemon. The leadership can direct their masses in ways only a trustBrand could expect, directing their followers towards whatever they deem as profitable ventures. With a single sermon, a religio can intertwine the edicts of their faith with financial success. The halos of saints shine with the promise of profit, while the pyres that once burned heretics have been replaced with the punishment of damaged credit scores.

To maintain order and prevent abuse, the Hegemon enforces strict regulations on religio-subscriptions. The more extreme practices of faith have been curtailed or made available only to the most wealthy sects who can both pay the fines and promulgate good social optics. The Commission takes careful mind to weigh local customs, religio compatibility with new populations and potential conflicts that might arise.

The Suns Confederated adhere to a 'pioneer' style religio originally funded by the Stratos MacroCorp to better colonize the Angoula Constellation. Called the Triad Reformation, *the initial articles and rites were penned by a contracted Pontiff of Trappist whose work spread like wildfire as the colony ships launched. Initially this worked well, acclimating the large population of Indentured and tying them to a strong sense of personal responsibility and allowed an annual '*Reckoning*' where the Lex and local regulations were lifted allowing anyone not in management to settle scores in a shift's worth of what gradually became increased violence.*
This would later subvert the Barons with a new generation of Reformists declaring the Reckoning should apply to all *members of Angoula. The Barons responded by hiring professional security outfits which lead to the rapid organization of the rebellion that followed.*
The Triad Reformation is now a pillar of the Confederated world's nation, advising the High Senators of their republic style government who prevent major Corpo influence from superseding them. This outward hostility to Corpos is fundamental to the well running of the region but, it should be remembered, that the ministers of the Reformation pontificate words written on Trappist. Those words are a subtle memetic code that the Pontiffs can utilize, using the dogma they created to subtly influence the minds of those who now preach their words.

Regular Commission assessments ensure that faith leadership comply with financial standards. Violations can lead to severe penalties, including fines, loss of licensing, and public censure. The Hegemon's regulatory bodies work closely with religious leaders to ensure that their practices align with the overarching goals of stability, prosperity, and social cohesion of the Hegemon as a whole.

Governments *do* have a say in the religio that enter their borders. It is typical for hefty fines to be applied should practices fall outside of cultural norms. Outright refusal of a religion *does* require Commission involvement as the Right to Choose is integral to Consumer rights.

Katik

The largest religio-subscription in the ExeCor originates on Trappist and is as engaged at keeping its Cons engaged with their own religio-subscriptions as any MacroCorps are with their products. The Katik have rarely been challenged by the predominantly agnostic Hegemon as Katikak ministers can raise up and bring down quarterly profits with words alone, directing the flocks in the direction of whatever they deem strategically profitable.

Katikak subscribers pay a fifth of their profit at the end of every fiscal-cycle and benefit from exclusive cultural events that include RevShare entertainment circuses. This, in addition to local support and debt applications, MacroCorporations will often sponsor temples dedicated to Katik theosophy in their manufactories.

Subscriptions have multiple tiers but the primary benefit allows for two supplications to the Katik deity figure known, to themselves, as the Giver. The Giver is explained to speak through chosen individuals known as Prosperity Disciples. These Disciples are orthodox in their dedication to Dumno-Ualos' teachings, often using the Katikak's *Covenant* document alongside the Manual.

By leading a morally correct life, as determined by these Disciples, with frequent declarations and commitment during sermons, the Katikak subscribers believe they can overcome their debt and improve their lives. Additional payments to the Disciples can ensure that their prayers be answered first.

There is some truth to this as currency is a physical manifestation of time, as it is stated in the Manual. The more one devotes currency to any object or individual it agitates a causal reaction in that individuals life which, through logical empathy, then pays more attention to that individual. If that individual is influential enough they will direct more attention which leads to more opportunities for commercial engagement. Whether there is an overarching Giver deity is not entirely relevant when Katikak Magnates and Persons do, often, outperform non religio-subscribed Consumers.

DOMINANT FAITHS

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KATIK: An old faith that claims it has the most members throughout Known Space and it is hard to challenge such a fact with Katikak Prosperity Temples built in almost every capital city in the ExeCor. Followers believe that by providing their leaders with cap they garner the spirit of chance which will help them in their investments on The Market. Dumno-Ualos is regard the First Prophet.

THE SQUARE: The Square is a religion based on a series of minor writings from Dumno-Ualos that seek to understand how to limit the needs in one's life to four essentials. These four points are hotly debated and it is not uncommon for sub-factions to grow around one principle or another, leading to tension and sometimes outright violence.

The core belief of the Square is that by focusing on four fundamental aspects of life, an individual can achieve true clarity and fulfillment. Followers of the Square strive to identify and perfect these four essentials, though the exact nature of these essentials varies among different sects and interpretations. This divergence has led to the formation of various sub-factions, each with its own interpretation of what the four points should be.

INCIDENT: The Church of Incident believes that every human being is a recycled experience inhabiting a new body repeatedly. Followers seek to access memories from past lives to inform their present decisions through rituals involving narcotic use and self-flagellation. These practices are thought to help believers relive significant past events, or "incidences," which provide insights and guidance. The leader of this faith claims to be the reincarnation of Dumno-Ualos, possessing the unique ability to control his reincarnations, and is regarded as a divine guide by his followers.

The Church's core rituals and communal gatherings foster a strong sense of community among its adherents. Gatherings allow followers to share experiences, support one another, and participate in collective fiscal rituals. Despite its significant following, the Church of Incident faces controversy and criticism, particularly regarding its use of narcotics and self-flagellation. The Commission closely monitors the Church's as it rises in popularity.

"We are the exemplification of mathematics, forged in biology, brought to purpose with culture, reinforced by our many people's society and of such perfect countenance as to have the strength of will to answer the divine question–

"Why?"

"We are not dumb beasts, amoral and delinquent evolutionary dead-ends, nor are we simple matter made animate by the whims of physics. No, we are beyond the stuff of stars, we are more than complex acids and random chance. We are ***New Mankind****!"*

"We are the universe looking back on itself and endowed with holy judgment. It is we that name the confluence of reality and bend it to our will. It is we who cast down the walls of lesser beings and step unto the veil so that we might make all universes a means to our ends."

"With the Word of the First Prophet we do so. With his guidance and his knowing, there is no fear left in us. There are no gods before We and it is our minds that in turn embody the very essence of godhood. It is our flesh that is the temple, it is our eyes that are the vision of god. Without Faith in this ineffable truth the way is blocked! Without the Promise that comes from denying the abyss there is only laxity and the surrender to nature."

"We cannot become slaves to our skin and blood. We cannot bend beneath the notion that we pursue anything but our own interest."

"Reliance on the unpaid hand leads to the condemnation of our own people. To turn to the hands of animals desecrates the value of our worth. Even our false echoes, our forefathers' bastards, invite catastrophe and that is why we reject the hand of the synthetic. We deny the hands of the made. We spit upon the artificial and reclaim it as a tool, a tool that fits in our hand. We remember that it is the role of the beast to serve as our food. We elevate the slave and invite them to prove and regain their worth."

"It is our sweat and blood, our precious bodily fluids and our inimical Self that can bring value unto this universe. We are called to name and codify and measure and consume. Self cannot arise from Signal. Signal can not be imbued with Soul. Hate the thinking object and heed none of its lies."

-Pontiff Emmandia Vaeda Janin

Opening of The Market, FC 9

RESOURCES

PRODUCTS OF THE HEGEMON

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No single document can comprehensively encapsulate the vast array of resources prized by the Hegemon for it values anything of any value by any number of people. Every conceivable commodity, from the water droplets dotting the arid steppes of M'vada to the reproductive rates of industrial meat-fowl on Ruskow V, exerts influence over the value, cost, and deliberations within The Market. Certain resources, such as celebrities or trusted brands, shine brighter amidst the multitude. We acknowledge them here.

Essentials like water, velanite, and air filtration cell-screens are not only indispensable on the Frontier but also within ExeCor itself. Their procurement and transportation are of utmost importance. The emergence of commercialized void-smelting has facilitated the production of innovative hyper-alloys like Nusteel and Kowari intermetallic compounds. Ingots of these alloys are in constant demand.

Exogenic resources, though typically restricted pending safety assessments by the Commission, hold considerable value for collectors and discerning Corpos who perceive opportunity. Take, for instance, the Xiph, whose once-dominant "empire" now sustains a farmable population; They provide not only a delectable meat product, but also a circulatory fluid with crucial medical applications.

More complex products from Armasyn MacroCorp, like Silovsky brand pocketsteel, have become a standard for security forces throughout Known Space. These suits are manufactured and distributed to both warzones and exploration missions within and beyond the Frontier. Only the Directorate is permitted to subscribe to fabrication blueprints for their manufactories.

-- Everything has a value to someone --

Velanite

"Velanite" serves as a comprehensive designation for diverse fuels derived and processed from substances within the Vela Frontier zone. The primal gases originating from the dense nebula can be enhanced and extracted to yield energy-dense compounds. Despite the expansive scope of the nebula, the prohibitive costs associated with refinement and processing limit access to only a select few MacroCorps who jealously guard their status.

These MacroCorp joint ventures not only contend with the challenges of establishing and safeguarding remote facilities, but also face threats from piratical and indigenous raids, as well as direct and often violent competition among themselves.

Despite the extreme toxicity of the resulting elements and proximity to them, any comparative employment associated with velanite production is five or six times greater then non-velanite jobs. Over the past fiscal century, the Hegemon economy has increasingly come to depend on velanite, particularly within the industrial and travel sectors. Near-dimensional influence combined with incredible energy producing qualities have supercharged progress making velanite the only ‘perfect triangle’ resource after refinement.

Expedited, affordable and dependable is achievable with velanite.

The stylized symbol for velanite-related products

Classes of Velanite

Class A: Utilized to power starship drives, especially dawndrive systems. Keyheads use velanite as well to provide efficient atomic reactions in order to form more perfect gatespheres. Incredibly hazardous to handle. Likely to give an individual cancer just from observation without at least several inches of leaded plexa.

Class B: Industrial-grade, the lifeblood of the Hegemon's biggest machines. Typically kept in a solid state 'bar' and provides an infinite amount of energy but it quickly erodes its containment devices.

Class C: Also called "civil-grade." This is the weakest instance, usually little more than a few particles used to power autocars or certain equipment.

The output of velanite is typically in gas form and must be carefully filtered before disposal. Breathing it, or coming into contact with velanite, can result in burns or poisoning. Long-term exposure can result in rapidly progressing debilitation and death.

That said, there have been some that learn how to filter spent velanite and use it as an extremely volatile narcotic known as *Mauvine*.

RESTRICTED: **Class X** - Weapons-grade. The most heavily-processed and the most refined, Class X is used in the creation of special atomika weaponry and the powercells that can create matritic beam weapons. Single atoms of it are kept in a time-hardened sphere that faintly glows and refracts headache-inducing exotic colors, defying classification.

It is also the most stable and has no latent radiation. One could, as some Copper Kings do, wear Class X velanite as jewelry to flaunt their wealth.

THE COPPER KINGS

The Organization of Velanite Exporting Systems (OVES) is a group of nations located in key star systems with close proximity to the Vela Nebula. These nations are responsible for negotiating terms with the MacroCorps who have established refining stations and facilities within their borders.

It is one of the rare instances where local government supersedes the MacroCorps and even regulates their influence. The leaders of these worlds and moons are known as the “Copper Kings” after the telltale canisters used to transport valenite in all four of its states of matter.

The OVES serves as a central hub for the management and coordination of velanite harvesting and refinement operations in the area and permits the MacroCorps to ensure that these operations are conducted in a safe and responsible manner. The OVES also plays a key role in shaping the economic and political landscape of the region, as the velanite industry is one of the most important and influential sectors in the Hegemon.

The OVES is made up of representatives from each of the member nations, and works to promote the interests of said nations while also ensuring that the velanite industry is able to thrive and grow. The preeminent of these is the Princedom of Loi'azenev which has the wealth and influence to maintain a permanent Barakan presence on their ancestral world of Kerdosea.

A Velanite refinery on the Okklah continent on the planet Kerdosea

THE VELA NEBULA

The Vela Nebula is an expansive region of space long ago shaped by the devastating force of a supernova. Located in the Orion Spur in the eastern Frontier, this nebula is a complex network of gas, dust, and stellar debris. Thousands of irradiated worlds dot the proto-systems of the region and, while barely habitable and only by extreme investment, they are an excellent source of rare mineral deposits.

Mining communities are the primary demographic for the region with boomtowns and colonies cropping up wherever easy to access mines can be set up. With this comes hundreds of major depot stations along with refueling outposts for the MassTrader and FreeTrader operations. Following them are countless outlaw gangs and Unionist groups that hide in the dense clouds of the nebula, always ready to strike an unsuspecting target ship or colony. These individuals and groups often engage in terrorist activities against the Hegemon's interests, seeking to claim their "freedom" and irresponsible autonomy.

Velanite, valuable as it is, is worth any of these risks and so harvesting and refinement operations are typically located close to the source but far from any populated regions. These operations are some of the most important and vital industries to the Hegemon, as velanite has become a near universal fuel source. Despite the risks and challenges associated with velanite harvesting and refinement, these industries continue to thrive and play a vital role in the economy and development of Known Space.

Encephic Horns

In the last eight fiscal-cycles, increased reports have surfaced detailing the trade of newly unearthed Exogen artifacts and curiosities within fringe bazaars and unaffiliated shadow markets. Notably, these items showcase Shigue *encephic horns*—a distinctive feature of the relatively obscure Shigue species migrating into the Vela Frontier. Characterized as twin cranial horns, the specific functionalities of these bone growths remain unclear, although speculation surrounds their potential to provide temporary extra-sensory abilities and even health benefits.

Affluent xenophiles now offer enormous bounties on Shigue specimens. Shigue meat has been declared a Coreward delicacy, their "blood" has been applied to pharmaceutical development but their horns are quickly becoming some of the most sought after biological material in Known Space. When ground into a fine powder and made into a liquid, the horn is then injected and leads to a state of extreme euphoria with bodywide restorative qualities.

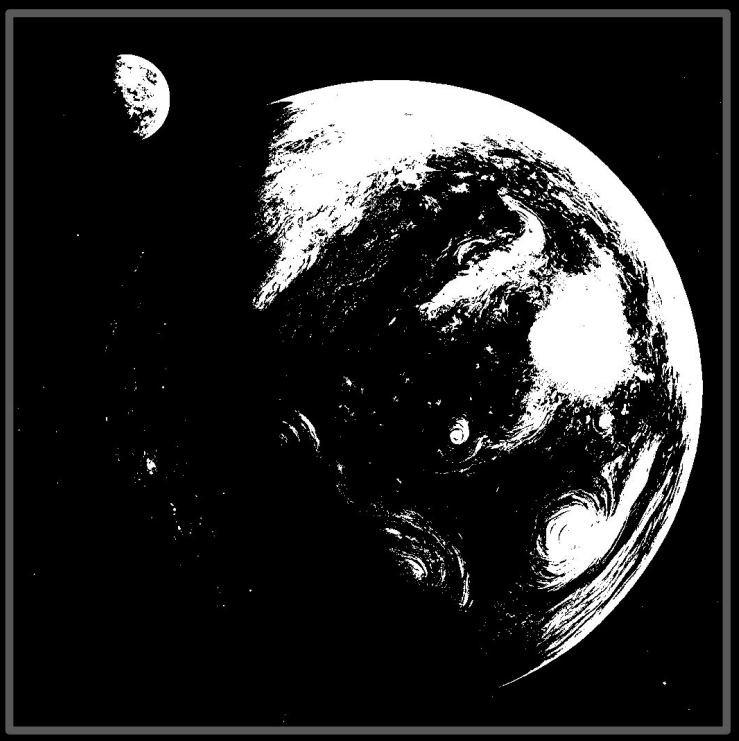
Local governments in the region, particularly those not directly affiliated with the Armasyn MacroCorp, have taken action by declaring the substance—referred to as Horn, Maze, or Shiver—illegal. This prohibition stands until an impartial third party can assess and determine the potential medicinal qualities of the controversial substance. This has had the effect of a "prohibition boom" with prices for any amount many many times their initial value.

Rippocha

The variations of drinkable luxuries is as numerous as the stars and the brightest by far is Rippocha usually referred to as simply *'cha.'* Grown exclusively on the planet Sedoor despite countless attempts to cultivate elsewhere, this beautiful blue flower is turned into a tea and is one of the most precious commodities ever discovered.

Boiled down, the flowers produce a rich, fruity, drink with invigorating qualities without the anxieties that are associated with kahvic. The bluer the drink, the more potent it is with the highest grades completely opaque. The flowers can be rendered down many times, producing lighter and lighter shades which can be resold.

Names like "Cerulean" and "Lapis" correspond with the higher grades while the lower have names like "Addate" or "Besikdy" which is almost as clear as water.



Sedoori Prime and its moon Hanuma

Culturally, the Sedoori tribes have grown Rippocha throughout the three continents of their planet for thousands of years. They believe it connects them with a 'world self' and there is some pragmatism to this spirituality as it seems that Sedoori who drink enough Rippocha match their neural and immune systems with fluctuations in the planets electromagnetic sphere. This is hypothesized the reason for the gentility and harmonious nature Sedoori have on their planet.

Which made them readily compliant when the H'leptuun Limited arrived in the fifth fiscal century. Developing the nearby Hanuma moon as a major shipping hub, they built a single equatorial city and went about incentivizing the tribal peoples.

Now, Sedoori is a booming pastoral world with thousands of plantations that are careful to not disrupt the delicate ecosystem, a drastic mistake made early in the planet's development. Utilizing the tribes and civilizing them is a balancing act as they are the perfect workforce. Knowledge of the the broader Hegemon is kept to a minimum and more advanced technologies prohibited on the planet surface.

Hanuma, by contrast, is a bustling port with a constant stream of starships coming and going, their holds packed with fresh or dried flowers and tinctures for distribution throughout Known Space at every level of Consumer. Hanuma is almost entirely owned by H'leptuun which leases Sedoori from the Myroit Empire.

Time Hardening

While there are only two natural permanent singularities in Known Space, Shadhavar and Gaiak, there are dozens of smaller axiomic anomalies such as Aljaawaza or the gravastar Mazur that have become ideal locations for “Deepforge” installations.

Much like a macro-hoist, orbital towers or skyhooks, a Deepforge is anchored just beyond the event-horizon of an anomaly or singularity capable of extreme gravitational fields. Items and resources are sent ‘down’ where they are subjected to massive gravitational and darkmatter currents.

The “time hardening” that occurs allows highly trained artisans to create wondrous and seemingly impossible creations outside of temporal restrictions. The value of Deepforges are such that each has a dedicated unit of Barakan who remain in stasis aboard.

Sonaw

While Auric elements, also known as ‘gold,’ can be found almost anywhere on colonial worlds, they remain a chief necessity for technologies, jewelry and architecture. Collectively, Auric is referred to as *Sonaw* with seven grades denoting value and use. Humans have a deep, almost esoteric, love for the color of the Auric elements and cherish it. To many, Sonaw is the manifestation of Avarice and Magnates ever since the Dumno plated their belongings in it.

Void Pearls

Interdimensional condensation occurs as a vessel emerges from the Outside. If caeliners can work fast enough, they can collect small droplets in containment barrels. Processing them correctly can result in the creation of void pearls which are hauntingly beautiful. What’s more, they can be imprinted on with thoughts that can then be experienced by others.

Quarkalloy

Quarkalloy, or “quarkal,” is a pseudo-metallic multi-compound that is almost completely indestructible save by other quarkal objects. Made from the deepforges near pseudo singularities, quarkal boasts an anomalous atomic structure that imbues it with exceptional durability and resilience.

Quarkal exhibits an extraordinary balance between hardness and flexibility, making it ideal for a wide range of applications across various industries, but none so prized as weaponized applications. First showcased during the centennial Games of the sixth fiscal century, a skiptracer from the notorious Concordant was contracted to compete against a squad of Pale Tempest Barakan to showcase the Saami Bladesmiths work after twelve decades of refinement and development. The skiptracer was armed with a blade two meters in length and left all three Barakan in pieces. The skiptracer himself was pulled apart in fourths but the exhibition was an unprecedented success.

The Saami were immediately acquisitioned by Bersarang MacroCorp after an aggressive bidding war that set part of Samarka City, capitol of Kantaur, on fire that lasted a full quat. A cycle later Bersarang released exclusive culinary knives to the Summit that are regarded as the finest cutting tools ever conceived.

More pragmatic applications can be found in the shield prows of spacecraft, often those directly owned by Magnates. Quarkal can withstand the event horizon of gatespheres, allowing for more accurate descents into the Outside.

Beyond its unparalleled strength, quarkal possesses inherent electromagnetic and temporal influencing properties that render it impervious to corrosion and atomic degradation. Something made in quarkal will “outlast time” as the Bersarang marketing campaign goes.

Quarkal is a limited resource, requiring a credit Grade 1 or higher to own a device with any components made with the alloy. It takes many cycles for a deepforge to accumulate enough quarkal for even rudimentary applications.

Ungala Berries

A finger length berry whose cultivation has spread to many ExeCor worlds and the midworlds, they are wildly popular and are considered a staple food source. Its creamy texture, sweet taste and various uses has, over the millennia, found its way into traditional cuisine for both the wealthy and the poor. It is even said that Ungala bread was Dumno-Ualos' favorite pastime meal and that he wrote much of the Manual while enjoying a loaf of ungala bread at a time.

About two centuries ago a blight spread from world to world, reducing Ungala crops to runny black syrup. The collapse of this resource was capitalized upon by Bersarang Multi-Stellar who successfully isolated their grow sites going so far as to opening fire on freighters and convoys that did not immediately comply with their interdiction.

Bersarang added several patents to the growth patterns of Ungala and within a century only patented seeds were available to continue growing the trees. Despite cornering the market with this legal monopoly, Bersarang is lauded heroes and their Cafna-ungala brand berries become a trusted brand.

In recent years, as Bersarang seeks out the microclimates Ungalax trees grow in, there have been incursions into non-Hegemonic territories by Panceutical armies who identify and occupy the regions that can grow their trees.

Radika

One of several panacea available on the market but the one most wildly used in the ExeCor. Unlike the Gorgon's Mouth which can reconstitute a body from only a handful of flesh but is wildly expensive and requires Person credit, Radika treatments are available for a pittance and can be purchased regardless of status. Even Indentured are permitted access to Radika.

Formatted on the planet Novo Wassa in the Protean system, trillions of vials are constantly sent out, used by humans to counter radiation sickness or chemical imbalances due to therapies, or to counter high and low gravity environments. Radika is especially used to strengthen immunity for those travelling to new worlds or in the comprised confines of starships.

Foodstuff

Meat slurry, protein slabs, vegapaste, tinned trawl or prime-cut anything, the human race's second most incredible evolutionary adaptation is its ability to find food combinations and the means to eat them no matter where they are in the universe. Recipes are time honored, stretching back through the ages which carry with them all the meaning and potency of artwork while there is no greater testament to New Mankind's dominance of the Galaxy than the sheer quantity of consumables connecting their worlds.

The vast majority of colonies, both in the Frontier and newer settlements across Known Space, do not have the means to be able support animals or farming. Even when they do, the possibility for contamination or negative mutation due to the local ecosystem is too great. As a result, orbital grow sites are typically installed over a planet, regularly making drops until a groundside production pipeline can be built.

Once established, long domesticated proxy-bred animals and patented seeds are shipped from Bersarang Multi-Stellar hubs, or from what few of their competitors remain, which are then modified or provolved to grow in the specific biosphere of the buyer. If extreme modification is needed they are not permitted to be sold beyond their planet to ensure no runaway divergence.

Most of these strains and breeds have not changed, *much*, in appearance or behavior or taste for thousands of years. Throughout Known Space species like 'cattle,' 'fowl,' or 'swine' are known as excellent meat providers while eheat, maize, and kome are all staples and found everywhere.

There exist grades, as with anything, with corresponding prices. Some cultures demand more organic varieties of products and thus pay premiums while going without assurance policies. For the vast majority of Consumers, they eat where there are deals and trust in their brands to retain the taste they've come to expect.

For the adventurous there are the wild animals of the Frontier. Creatures that titillate the taste buds with their strangeness and have captured a sense of adventure in Consumers even as the Commission remains concerned for potential contamination or viral outbreaks. Species like the Ghyth, almost an entire tonne of flesh but only the nerve clusters and secondary brains are edible. Another is the bipedal Ketradons, a pseudo sentient species whose fluted tongue is a delight to both play, and eat.

Exogens captures will be paraded through restaurants and estates, allowed to showcase their failure to understand Avarice and are then, almost ritually, consumed. This practice has been a symbol for the last nine centuries as a direct representation of New Mankind's dominance over the anarchic lifeforms that believe mimic what it means to have Self as much as it is to enjoy flavors and smells never before conceived in Civil Space.

Due to the length of travel times, the extreme nature of space, and the volume of human populations, food is almost always processed. Fresh food of any kind is a luxury and many Consumers, Patrons and the Directorate will go out of their way to grow or catch food. In response to this need, MacroCorps will provide entire habitats to the creation of food products.

Only the very poorest of Indents, or temporarily inconvenienced Cons, will eat growth-food. Cells of living creatures are placed in grow tanks which are then fed rudimentary chemical compounds that cause spontaneous growth. In only a few hours, a tank will become brimming with clear, gel-like matter which can then be flavored and dyed before serving. Technically, "Growth" has everything a human being needs to survive, but never enjoy. Growth is turned into noodles, cut into slices, or allowed to harden and become *tubetack,* which is often found in Directorate rations or Ringsider lunchpails.

Class: Protein/Avian
Genus: Proxy
Provolved: Grade 1
Order: Urthformes
"Cheken"
Featherless meat-avian, flightless, lays egg clusters (7-12) which can be picked and cooked a hundred different ways. **Cheken** is the most popular meat in Known Space with breeds existing in Exogen societies as much as humanity.
avg. 3m in length, 180kg

Consumers and Purchasers

At Bersarang, we specialize in comestibles. Across the Galaxy we are known for our quality food and drink, but it is important to remember that our products are tailored to the needs of our ***customers*** *not only our product's consumers. Does that mean our products aren't meant for the many Cons across the Galaxy? Of course not. For this module, when we say consumers, we mean those who actually consume our products, not the broader application (that of a citizen of the Hegemon). After all, many times the customer and the Consumer are one and the same. But what about when they're not?*

Let's take a simple example. In an opti-unit somewhere in the ExeCor, a mother is trying to decide what to feed her child. She wants a combination of something filling, nutritious, and easy to make and so settles on a local strain of root vegetable cut into chunks and served with a formatted sauce. In this scenario, the mother is the customer, but she is not the consumer. She decides how to spend her chits to feed her child.

But what about the child? If asked, the child would probably forgo the root vegetables in favor of any number of sucro gels or flavored grain crisps. Certainly filling, and undoubtedly tasty, but none of it fits what our customer had in mind. If Bersarang were to base our manufacture on just the consumer's taste, we'd lose a sale because the child isn't paying out the chits in this situation, the mother is.

This same underlying idea is at play for larger accounts as well. For instance, the owner of a large asteroid mining facility wants to stock the station's canteen. If we listened to the consumers, they would be eating fresh fruit, vegetables, and premium cuts of meat. But of course, that would quickly erode the mining corporation's profits, and soon the workers would notice the prices at the canteen are far beyond the reach of indigent miners. And so, the owner makes the correct decision: A nutrition dense pâté with optional flavor packets. Nutritious, added opportunities of preferred flavors, the best choice for all!

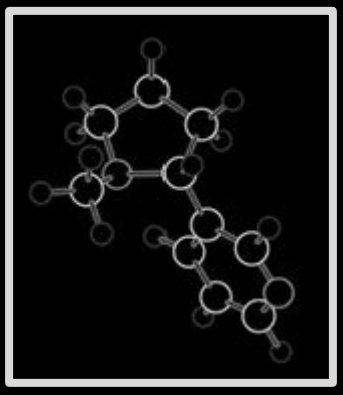
While this may not be what the consumer would choose, the purchaser understands the financial needs of their business and acts accordingly. As such, when marketing our products, it is crucial that we understand the complex interplay between consumer and purchaser and how each can affect the other. For an example of how this might play out, let's go back to our Basic family living in an opti-unit. It has been a long span already, and it's only Dawday. Their father is using some of the leisure time he has been afforded during the nightshift to buy food for the family. The youngest child of the family, only six fiscal-cycles old, sees a

colorful advertisement for one of our local products, a bar of sweet nougat. Even at only six fiscal-cycles, the child's sense of Avarice is keenly developed, and so he makes his wants known throughout the shopping trip. Our customer has a decision to make. He must determine if spending a chit on something he knows isn't really something his child needs is worth a bit of peace and quiet for the rest of his limited leisure time. As such, even when the consumer of our goods is not directly responsible for a sale, they can still exert pressure on the purchaser.

Once again, this can be easily applied on a larger scale. On our mining facility, perhaps the Indigent have grown tired of their affordable, nutritious pâté. They're eating less, grumbling more, and productivity is slowly decreasing. Our customer now has a choice to make. Does he upgrade the food at the canteen, cutting into profits? Should he implement disciplinary measures? Or maybe there's a third option. Hoping for a compromise, the director opts for a slightly wider variety of flavor packets as well as stocking a limited selection of dehydrated fruit that can be purchased at a discount. The grumbling dies down, and production improves.

But Bersarang didn't become Multi-stellar! By following such simple analysis. Our company allows for more than just variation in grades of food; to our larger clients, we also allow for customized requests depending upon their industry needs. Additives such as $C_{10}H_{14}N_2$ are a common request and introducing such additives can result in increased performance and company loyalty, especially if foodstuffs containing it are freely available to Basics in break rooms and commissaries. It is in this way that Bersarang seeks to meet the needs of all Cons in whatever the combination of consumer and purchaser might be.

A Common Food Additive:



$C_{10}H_{14}N_2$

BRAND LOYALTY

m_eeg3

Brand loyalty is the unbreakable bond that forms between a Consumer and a brand, a bond that persists even in the face of fierce competition, inferior options, challenges and stark circumstances. It is a loyalty often born out of the desperation as Consumers cling to the familiarity and security of a trusted brand in a world that is cold and unforgiving.

Businesses will stop at nothing to cultivate this loyalty, using every means at their disposal to manipulate the emotions of their customers and keep them coming back for more. Loyalty programs, propaganda, and mind control techniques are all fair game in the pursuit of brand loyalty, as businesses seek to ensure their own survival in a world that is rife with danger and uncertainty.

Brand loyalty is the willingness of Consumers to continue purchasing from a particular brand, even in the face of fierce competition and a desolate wasteland of inferior options. It is a coveted trait, as those who remain loyal to a brand are often seen as more valuable and useful than those who drift aimlessly from one brand to the next. Loyal customers may even spread propaganda about the brand, leading to further domination in The Market.

To encourage brand loyalty, businesses may resort to tactics such as offering rewards to those who remain loyal, creating a strong and imposing brand identity, and manipulating the emotions of Consumers to create a sense of attachment to the brand. In a world where trust is hard to come by, brand loyalty can be a crucial factor in ensuring the survival and domination of a business.

Often, brands will affect national politics leading to internal strife. Preference to carbonated beverages, food packets, groundcar brands and air providers have all been reasons for Cons to turn on one another. Identity is an important aspect of individuals and their Self mental states. Brands provide a sense of stability and to threaten it is to challenge people's sense of being.

The AF-145 Battleaxe is the most popular atmospheric fighter in Civil Space

THE DIRECTORATE

Na'zrad prav n radj

We earn the right to work!

Na'zrad prav n darti

To earn the right to give!

Na'sbi prav n kpti

Ourselves the right to buy!

Na'sbi prav n zduh

Ourselves the right to live!

Zrad praved umra

To earn the right to die!

~Tributary Drinking Song from Holgate III

THE DIRECTORATE

In the intricate web of the Hegemon's management there is the more straightforward and bullish Directorate, the military arm of the Thousand Empires. While the Summit Council, in collaboration with individual nation-states, orchestrate indirect governance of the trans-stellar civilization, it is the Directorate that undertakes the solemn responsibility of upholding peace and safeguarding the Hegemon from enemies within and without.

Unlike other aspects of the Hegemon, the Directorate operates independently and is structurally set apart, reflecting its specialized focus on the defense of trade and commerce. This unique status underscores the critical importance and the painful necessity of armed conflict when negotiation fails. As a result, the Directorate is the single most financially invested aspect of the Hegemon with many Regiments, Division and full-scale fleets sponsored by various MacroCorps, a heartfelt thanks for their services on behalf of the CorpoSoci.

While local and mercenary military forces, navies, and stellar fleets exist in their multitude, each is legally tethered to the concerns of their respective nations and Corpos. These personal defense forces have a confined operational scope within their territorial license. Transgressing a license risks the oversight of the Audit.

It is the Directorate that is singularly authorized to traverse Known Space without encumbrance, wielding carte blanche authority to secure the vital tradelanes at any conceivable cost. This cost is not borne by the Directorate itself but is extracted through direct taxation imposed on the Hegemon's nations or contractual agreements with influential MacroCorps. This incentivises nations to keep their own houses in order. The financial dependence on standing Directorate forces can quickly become astronomical.

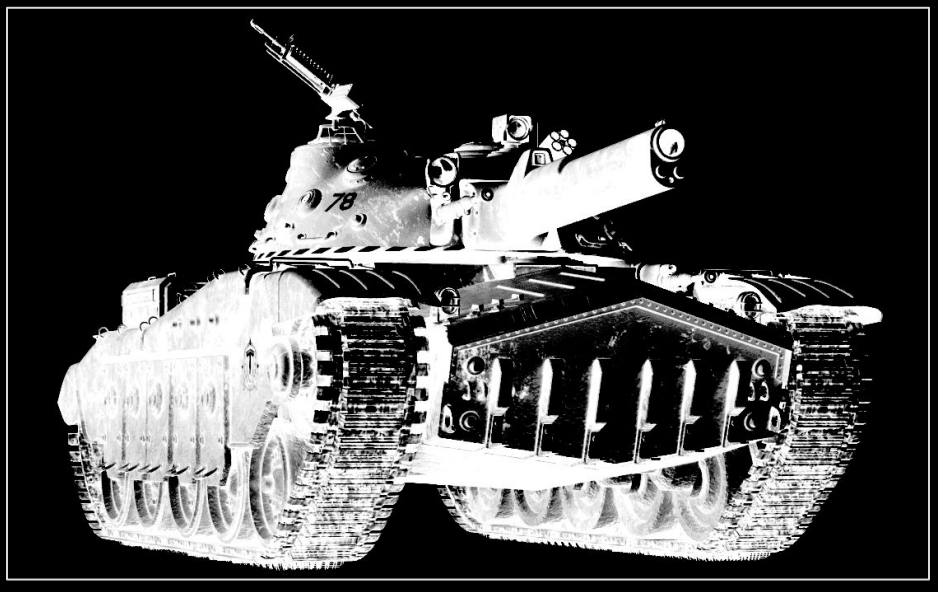
The Directorate maintains its own bureaucracy and operational processes, operating from mobile industrial complexes tirelessly churning out the tools and weaponry essential for security. These hubs often license patents by MacroCorps like Armasyn or Stratos, who are paid handsomely to arm the Tributaries with advanced capabilities like pocketsteel , particle fluctuators and more.

MacroCorps often contract the Directorate to operate on their behalf directly, using their own mercenary groups as specialized formations to accomplish specific goals as the Directorate form broader operational control. Financial benefits are the ties that bind the CorpoSoci together and simplify motivation with the purity of self-interest.

The need of the Directorate ensures its loyalty. Individual Tributaries are offered a multitude of unique opportunities that would be financially unrealistic without winning the quarterly tombola or local lotteries. Entire Regiments can be gifted colonial rights on the Frontier or gain entire MacroCorp sponsorships for themselves and their families back home.

While the Hegemon is not a warlike culture, it does everything it can to support those who must pick up the weapons to defend the CorpoSoci. The Tributaries are truly appreciated and loved by their people who, in their own small way, will support this stellar spanning military with small tokens and parades, and extoll their virtues and sacrifice with entertainment.

These formations are, thereby, truly loved by their people back home, wherever that is. Parades, entertainment serials and appreciation tours are all part of the giveback to the Directorate.



The peoples of the Toaiah sub-continent had only been exposed to Hegemon culture through the Sudohn MacroCorp for the last three decades. Their local Baron, one Genou Jin-Manon, sought to increase the workforce by incentivising the indigi populations of the Nodi peninsula but was met with resistance which became openly hostile after a bungled negotiation resulted in Genou's kidnapping and eventual execution.

I was assigned to the Directorate's contribution to Sudohn's licensed takeover of the Nodi region, attached to the 4-04th Jovian Armored where I acted as an observer and consultant.

The Nodi region had been allowed to naturalize since its initial colonization, estimated to be fifteen thousand fiscal-cycles previous. The terrain was inhospitable, semi-sentient flora goaded by the the indigi to attack or bog us down at every turn. Reliance on armored formations became a necessity to operate at all in the jungle regions. Genou's replacement, a functionary and I believe his former assistant, wary of slowdown, intelligently ordered the development of the peninsula in the immediate wake of the Directorate's advance. Manufactories and mining operation staff were a mix of Toa indentured and specialists shipped in from Lutum, Sudohn's planetary headquarter world in the ExeCor.

These Toa had never seen vehicles larger than the half-track trucks Sudohn had given them. I can only imagine what they must have been thinking as we showered their world with every engine of war within a Grade 3 force. One day I took my repast on the hull of one of the TX-100's that the soldiery refer to as "landships" or "hundos." Its immense height allowed me to overlook the endless convoy of tanks and service vehicles moving from Directorate landing fields to the combat zones inland. An endless river of steel, treads or the loping advance of gyroscopic tanks had been unbroken for hours.

I saw a half-track filled with Sudohn shift-workers waiting at a crossroad, alone. The driver was yelling at a Tributary crossing guard, something about being late for their shift. The soldier ignored them, justifiably, the Directorate has its own timetables that are both more immediate and costly when compared to sixteen Cons on their way to work.

At some point a gap formed and the driver took matters into his own hands and revved forward. He would have made it too had he not stalled out in the middle of the road. A TX-8 didn't even slow down. The half-track twisted in the air, back over end, spilling its passengers out...

Sixteen. Sixteen times a standard shift, the cost of the material, the time lost while investigating where they had gone, the cost of their replacements, the time spent training said replacements, the strain on the other teams to keep quota, the potential loss of their management for the missed quota, the increase in strain on the interstellar tradelanes affected... it adds up. This is why we fight. Because a group of ignorant indigents who care only about their immediate surroundings think they have the right to stall progress.

~ Ulutsio Maasagin, Commissioner Grade 2

THE TRIBUTARY REGIMENTS

The Tributary Regiments are a crucial component of the Hegemon's military and security operations. Contracted directly with the Directorate, these standing armies are made up of men and women who serve for four fiscal-cycle “stints” at a time. Serving in a Tributary Regiment can provide individuals with numerous benefits including access to advanced education modules, unique subscriptions such as improved healthcare, choice colonial prospects and other resources that may not be available to them otherwise. What’s more, these benefits compound for each family unit that has multiple contracted Tributaries.

This straightforward incentive has resulted in a sustained population boom across the Hegemon. Time spent in a Regiment is guaranteed to improve one’s credit rating while debt is frozen or even purchased by the MacroCorp employing a Tribute.

In addition to their primary duties of enforcing the mandates of their contracts, Tributary Regiments are also responsible for maintaining order and security for their clients. This can involve carrying out operations to suppress insurgency and protests, protecting critical infrastructure, and maintaining productive order.

Tributary Regiments are often deployed to various locations throughout Known Space. They are equipped with a wide range of advanced, or at least functional, technologies and weapons to help them carry out their missions effectively. Despite the challenges and risks involved in serving in a Tributary Regiment, many individuals are drawn to these units due to the unique opportunity for personal and professional growth.

War and conflict are, like everything, an economy. Notions of heroism, patriotism and belief in the purity of stellarization is important and respected, but not the primary reason for the Hegemon to engage in armed activities. In the end the means, possibility and designs to pursue profit are the core drive for the military industrial hyper-complex.

The Tributary Regiments occupy territory to ensure its profitable management. Depending on the reason for the occupation, a Regiment will "tax" the local government for the upkeep of their presence. Costly resupply lines are not the preferred means of operational maintenance, with Regiments adopting a "live off the land" mentality. Convoys are not only impractical, they are almost impossible to finance due to travel in the Outside and the prevalence of pirateical entities on the Frontier.

Regimental Engineers or MacroCorp contractors will reverse engineer or build manufactory complexes providing material directly to a Regiment. They do this with limit-coded schematics that are fed into milling pipelines. A Regiment *must* operate within their budget otherwise these mills will shut-down until the subscription can be renewed.

The Mills

Tributary Mills are extensive manufactories that provide a Regiment with everything it needs to accomplish the task it's been assigned. The massive machines within manufactories are fed subscription details from MacroCorps which they lease. Utilizing simple resin combinations and basic enough resources found throughout Known Space, manufactories can *formate* just about anything with enough time and as long as the subscriptions hold.

Instant

In the event that Tributaries need more bodies, they are licensed to pressgang a local populace into military service. These individuals are offered unique training opportunities and accelerated mesmeric conditioning which will give them marketable skills for the rest of their lives. Instant soldiers can gain rank and even authority within a Regiment but are not under any obligation for prolonged service, and therefore, will not benefit from percentage participation at the conflict's conclusion.

A Career as a Tributary

Without question is a life dedicated to the direct advancement and accumulation of wealth respected and prized above all others across the Hegemon. The noble accountants, actuaries, consultants and tradespeople are all the driving force behind New Mankind's dominance in the universe. Those violent and thoughtless barbarian kingdoms of the past have been done away with. War is a thing of the past, hopefully to be swallowed by history.

But that does not mean complete security has been achieved.

For the Galaxy is filled with dangers and pitfalls. Resistant nations who threaten stability by coveting their own resources at the expense of the stellar majority. Social unrest brought on by free radicals, anarchists who are all too ready to join terrorist Unionist movements. Near-human populations that have failed to prove their connection to the genetic and psychological apex that is New Mankind and of course the broader exogen nuisances that scavenge habitats and colonies throughout Known Space.

To justify the inherent risk of combat the Hegemon has provided a pseudo "shortcut" to higher credit ratings and unique subscriptions for those Cons that are accepted into the Tributary Regiments. Further incentives exist when deployed to acknowledged conflict zones as well as commendations that are tied with bonuses far beyond what can be expected at the Person level.

The most obvious of these and what draws *millions* into service every quat is first lottery positions for colonial placement in the Frontier. These often untouched worlds are opportunity made manifest. A colonist can become anything they have the will to become on the Frontier with no pre-existing hierarchy or leadership to restrain ambition. Tributaries make for excellent colonists with their fiscal-cycles of military service and are well suited for Corpo investment who often finance such initiatives.

Colonial desire is not always the objective, however, with many Tributaries becoming celebrities in the entertainment broadcasts that constantly stream throughout civil space. Local politicians benefit from even single stints in the military where they are uniquely placed to make relationships with Corpos or support from the Directorate. There is no career that does not benefit from service to the Hegemon's safety.

Yet, those who truly understand humanity know and understand that humans seek the hunt, the chase and the capture of their prey. The Tributaries draw on the indomitability of the human spirit to subdue the wild unknown. It is humanity's birthright, earned in the consumption of all other species. Those with this drive become the leaders of the Directorate and form a hierarchy within the hierarchy of the corporatocratic heights of the Hegemon.

Ranking Custom Examples

Tributary formations are maintained by commissioned officers who are often contracted from MacroCorp security forces or accomplished private defense forces. The ranking can vary in duties or performance needs but is generally applied throughout the Directorate.

The Director: The highest ranking officer in the Directorate, often called "the Leader," who communicates directly with the Summit council. The Director is often the head of the Authority as well.

Sub-Directors: The highest ranking officers for the different branches of the Directorate.

General Manager: Acts for overall command of Directorate operations on a local level.

Senior Managing Officer: A regimental, squadron or ship leader.

Managing Officer: A frontline regimental leader.

Junior Officer: Works in support of the Managing Officer.

Analyst: A specialist responsible for profit and loss.

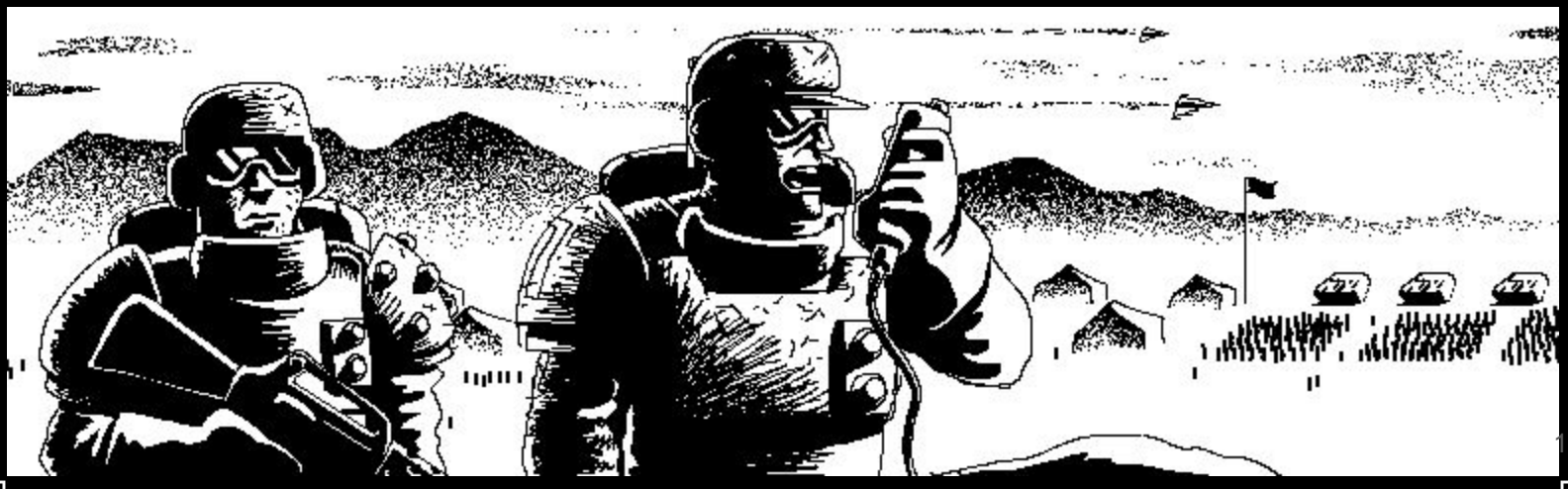
Associate: Longform contract held by a Consumer level citizen.

Sergeant: Middling contract held by a Consumer level citizen.

Cadet Operative/Ensign: Entry level non-commissioned officer.

Private: A private contract held by a Consumer level citizen.

Conscripted: Typically made up of 'dents.' Conscript debt is purchased by the Directorate.



Prospects

"Prospect Corps" are the entry level of the Directorate's military machine. Often referred to as “probates” or even the more pedestrian ‘prons,’ these individuals form coteries of pupils to the Directorate organization in any one of their branches. Service as a Prospect is technically open to everyone willing and fit for it, but it's primarily tooled for younger consumers, intended to teach the basics of military and survival skills; discipline, teamwork, fitness, weaponry. This while also serving as an early employment opportunity. Prospects are stationed on the worlds they're recruited from and they typically coordinate their activities with the local militia or authorized security forces, another part of their training.

Prospects are essentially Tributary cadets, enthusiastic young volunteers who wish to do their part in service to the Hegemonic dream of profit and order. Signing up to be a Prospect is attractive, as it tends to open up additional opportunities in the actual Tributary regiments. Citations, quarterly reviews that highlight capability and foresight, can lead to better placement with advantages at the start of a soldier’s military career.

In peacetime, Prospects are usually called in for part-time duty and assigned to mundane tasks such as logistics or paperwork. In a crisis they can be equipped to assist local security and peacekeeping forces on the homefront. Their combat equipment is light, typically consisting of basic body armor (below the grade of Tributary caraplate), a helmet and a long firearm, usually a handgun-caliber automat or a self-loading rifle. If the need arises, Prospects can be drafted into action as part of a Tributary force operating on the same world. While technically part of an Instant initiative, the Directorate leadership will regard Prospects in a better light than other consumers.

Should there be a more desperate need, Prospect Corps can be mobilized for off-world duties with a contractual bonus to their families and patrons.

The Three Branches

The Directorate has three distinctive branches administered by the Prime Director, who sits in an advisory position on the Summit Council. Three senior Sub-Directors oversee the three branches separately; Armada, Army and Air forces. All operate in concert with one another.

The Armada

The Armada, which serves as the executive decision makers, covers all intersolar and interstellar craft, their crews and their maintenance. As they are required to transport the other two branches, Army and Air, they have always held a natural authority over the Directorate with an Admiral holding the position of Director consistently for the last nine fiscal centuries.

The Army

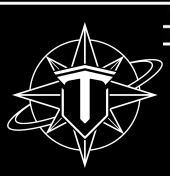
The Army is the largest branch of the Directorate, made up of billions of Tributaries, mercenaries and Indentured. Organized into unique Regiments, often from similar CorpoSoci backgrounds, they operate either in mobile convoys attached to the Armadas or maintain vast bases on planets and colonies. The Army includes armored divisions including gyro-tanks, rotorwing aircraft, naval vehicles, and special forces.

The Air Core

The smallest of the branches numerically yet vital to its function. Anything between space and terrestrial objects falls under the purview of the Air Core. Very few spacecraft can function adequately in both space and atmospheric theaters of conflict and so it is up to the Air force and its Tributaries to brave the odds.

The Air Core utilizes a wide range of aircraft, as well as its own smaller fleet of carrier ships which they use as airborne bases of operation in the field.

THE ARMADA



The Armada is the premier military force of the Hegemon, vastly larger and better funded than the other two branches. It operates throughout the Hegemon’s borders, ensuring the stability and expansion of the dominion. The Armada is not just a military entity but a symbol of the Hegemon's power and reach, showcasing its technological prowess and strategic superiority, a constant reminder to the member nations of the Thousand Empires to stay in line.

The Armada is composed of a multitude of fleets, each equipped with state-of-the-art warships, advanced weaponry, and cutting-edge technologies provided by the MacroCorps under contract. These fleets are manned by highly trained personnel who have undergone rigorous training and selection processes unlike the troopers of the Regiments who are often regarded as brawn with little brain. The caeliners, pilots, and support staff of the Armada are considered the elite of the Hegemon’s military forces, enjoying privileges and benefits that are comparable to middle tiered MacroCorp employees.

Service in the Armada offers unparalleled advantages. Members receive top-tier education modules, premium assurance policies, and lucrative colonial opportunities. Their credit ratings are significantly enhanced, and their debts are often entirely erased by the end of a second stint. Families with multiple members serving in the Armada receive compounded benefits, ensuring generational prosperity and social mobility. Indeed, Armada veterans are highly respected in the CorpoSoci as defenders of trade and commerce.

The primary mission of the Armada is to project the Hegemon’s Consumers across Known Space and to eventually push out the Frontier into the unknown. This involves securing strategic star systems, safeguarding trade routes, and enforcing the Hegemon’s Lex in regions where its influence is contested. The Armada engages in large-scale military operations, from planetary invasions to all out void war.

In addition to combat operations, the Armada plays a critical role in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. It is responsible for protecting Consumer populations, delivering purchasable aid to disaster-stricken areas, and maintaining order in volatile regions. These activities help to bolster the Hegemon's image, strengthening bonds with local nations while also serving its strategic interests.

The Armada is also deeply involved with the Hegemon's economic interests. Campaigns are generally driven by the pursuit of resources and profitable ventures unless directly funded by a MacroCorp. The Armada collaborates closely with MacroCorps to secure valuable assets, establish new markets, and exploit opportunities for economic gain. As such the Directorate's military-industrial complex has thrived.

Those who rise join the Admiralty as strategists and tacticians who work in concert with the rest of the Directorate and the Summit. This has created its own kind of aristocracy with naval families going back through the centuries and sending their offspring to exclusive Academies. These leaders are granted considerable autonomy to achieve their objectives which often stretch beyond the theater of space with Armada Intelligence as steeped in espionage as the Commission.

The AB-226 "Conciliator" Superfortress

Combined Arms

Orbit-to-surface military operations necessitate planning in several stages and the Hegemon has perfected its method of engagement against anyone foolish enough to challenge them. Just as Avarice combines the desires of every citizen and Consumer in the Thousand Empires, so too is the incentive for managing the necessity of war.

Cost sensitive management is cherished and rewarded with benefits and fiscal opportunities to officers on every level. Similarly, over expenditure of resources will be punished with fees and inquiries from Accounting. As such, the approach to armed conflict has been made and canonized within the Manual as follows:

Open broadcast attempts to find a peaceful, monetarily beneficial solution are initiated as the Hegemon is, first and foremost, champions of peaceful co-prosperity.

If these broadcasts are not responded to, the Armada initiates a general supremacy of the orbital region and then deploys atmospheric-capable trans-orbital carriers.

Air attacks soften up a landing zones which are then capitalized by ground assets that come in via heavy cargo rockets; those spacecraft that can may be brought into atmosphere to provide direct bombardment support.

Once a beachhead is secured, logistics and other equipment follow, including Tributary Engineers who begin the rapid fabrication of operational facilities. In a protracted campaign this first touchdown zone may turn into a theatre command center with its own motor pool, barracks, ammunition storages, landing fields and air strips etc.

These assets will be part of the purchase options during peace subscriptions.

Ship Classifications

Ship types vary widely across Known Space but, since the preeminence of Hegemon shipping, fall under a relatively straightforward classification system as well as the grading system that determines quality of parts and the overall quality of a ship. These determinations are typically measured by the speed of a starship, its tonnage and its cargo capacity as much as weapon capabilities or role.

Starliner: Often called “city-ships”, these are typically the flagships of Magnates or the primary craft of an Armada formation. They are the largest ships in Known Space, by law, and each one is a unique work of art as much as a statement of wealth.

Cruiseliner: A “typical” capital ship, usually five to seven kilometers long with luxury decks in the prow and crews of caeliners in the hundreds of thousands to cater to every need such a vessel requires.

Warliner: Smaller than the cruiseliner class, warliners trade luxury for weaponry and are the most numerous warship available.

Freightliner: A wide classification, Freightliners are the workhorse of interstellar shipping but usually have surprisingly small crews. They range wildly in disposition and configuration and can carry millions of tons of cargo.

Trampliner: Unaffiliated transport ships usually retrofitted or cobbled together from other starships new and old. The FreeTraders love trampliners and always have something up their sleeve that scanners don’t suspect.

Carrack: An exclusive warship class, often looked down upon by other captains for its lack of freight or cargo. Carrack captains are considered particularly brutal.

Corvette: The smallest ship capable of translation through the Outside, also known as a quickship or a "packet" often used for communication or as a means to transport valuables or important persons.

Destroyer: Also known as a gunboat, they are towed between systems as they have no FTL capabilities. They are the most common defense ships and have countless variants.

Shallop: The most numerous class of interplanetary ships with no FTL capability. They can vary in size and are also known as a ‘slow-ship.’

SCALE IS APPROXIMATE

Starliner

Cruiseliner

Warliner

Destroyer

Missile boat

Consortium freightliner

Trampliner (common type)

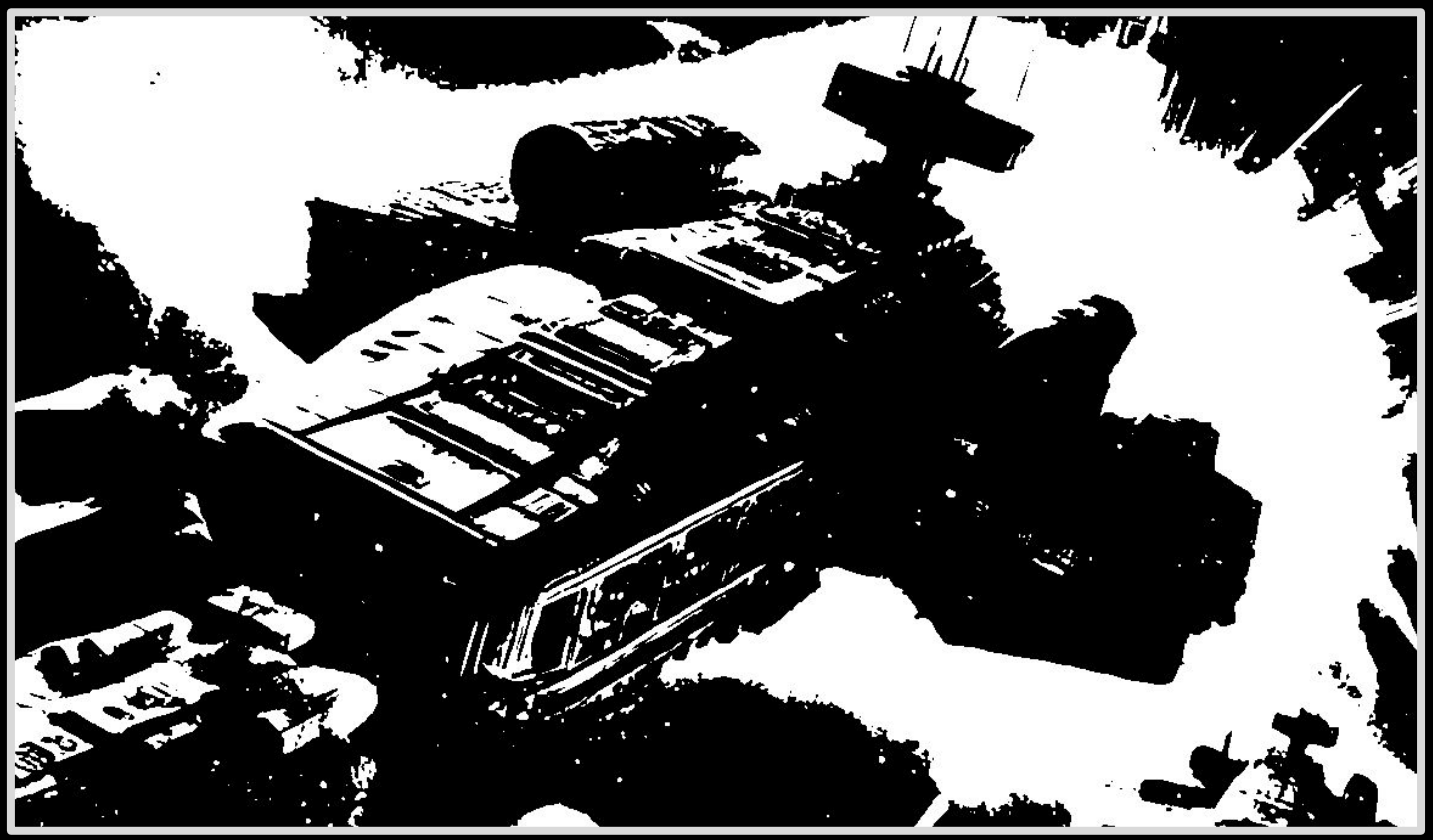
Fleet tender

Barakan strikerunner (Regenium War)

Void Combat

Combat in space, an already hostile location to all life, is many times more volatile when starships choose to engage with one another. The initial moves are always the most devastating with extreme range scud missiles and other guided weaponry zeroing in on targets. Fleets and starships often don't even see one another at these ranges with expert caeliners able to use local gravity wells and other phenomena to their advantage, twisting extreme range rockets to hit targets days or even sennights away from launch sites. Only until combatants can pump flak clouds, establish scrambler storms or deploy countermeasure fields against one another do these weapons become entirely useless.

That's when main guns, direct fire rockets and the extremely lethal squadrons of fighter and bomber craft engage. By contrast, these conflicts are done with jockeys and caeliners relying on line of sight and mass fire rather than coordinated ordinance strikes. Additionally, when the nanoid clouds are dispersed or pierced by close proximity vessels, many craft activate banks of energy weapons such as *matric* beams. Such beams are typically too difficult to pinpoint at range and are easily confounded by nanoid shields. When cleared, however, they can strip and dissect a vessel of even enormous size within a few moments.



Tender: A catch-all term for a repair or resupply ship. A much larger variant is called a *'welleran'* or a *'whalla-whalla'* and can actually sustain FTL descents to make the journey to service vessels beyond their star system. They are a welcome sight amongst caeliners who will pay top-cap for luxury items as much as the captain will pay for needed fuel air and water.

Barque: A heavy shuttle capable of orbital entry and reentry.

Bilander: A bulk lander that can enter atmosphere but will need assistance to gain orbit again. This is typically done with additional boosters which are provided by kosmodromes or macro-hoists and space elevators.

All classes have an extensive variety of variants based off of their origin shipyards that make them. Thusly there is no "standard" for space craft in their make and design with each vessel, save for the standards maintained by the Directorate and milicorps, wildly unique. While mass production is the mainstay of the MacroCorps so too is the proprietary nature of their products. Certain general parts exist but designers ensure that various input and output ports are unique to their brand. This has lead to countless unauthorized modifications and warranty voiding changes each of which confers a fine but is largely ignored for practicality.

Few manufacturers offer universal options resulting in endless redundancies but ensures brand loyalty by necessity. There are some independent and unlicensed dealers who will develop replicas in a cheap second hand markets.

-- Heave'ho! Heave'ho! The 'liner life for me! --

Some smaller, expensive military vessels, such as the "Vampyr" dropship, are equipped for flight in both atmosphere and space. This gives them a tactical advantage as trans-orbital craft that can deliver personnel and cargo directly to the surface. This capability is limited to specific types and is extremely rare in commercial or civilian ships - the maintenance of two sets of engines and control systems in one craft is so costly that only military businesses are willing to make the investment.

AN-825 Vampyr

Different types of fighter craft are designed for atmospheric and space deployments; jet aircraft cannot travel outside planetary atmospheres and rely on carriers or cargo vessels for transport, and space fighters are ill-suited for combat maneuvers in atmosphere. Some "aero-space" models have been designed for escorting trans-orbital cargo, but these expensive craft are locked into this specialized role and are not equipped for ground attack, true air superiority, or other specializations.

Vampyrs have the dubious connotation of being the delivery vehicle of choice for the Barakan and, over the centuries, the two have become synonymous with each other.

Luxury Unbound

Cruiseliners and their far larger Starliner craft are multi-kilometer vessels with entire internal biodomes and every source of entertainment imaginable to its guests ply the stars in cycles long circuits throughout Known Space. Magnates enjoy limitless extravagance as they visit dozens of worlds and visit grand stellar vistas that only they can afford to enjoy.

Descent travel is supplemented by unique stimulation pods that the passengers pay to enter, limiting the risks of travel. To work aboard such a vessel as a caeliner and staff is to brush against the highest possible credit holders in the Hegemon and, if one plays their cards right, can benefit a lifetime's worth of capital from a single voyage.

Each vessel strives for a unique experience but the best paying passengers always wish to witness conflict first hand. Exogen hunts, esoteric safaris, subduing pirates or witnessing the fall of some outspoken nation are all prime examples that see Magnates at the forefront of progress.

The interior of the primary observation deck of the first tower. Access to this tower is by invitation only or up to a taels worth of profit.

Starliners vary greatly in scale and configuration, as many are custom-built to specifications given by the wealthiest of spacefaring Magnates. This example exceeds 17 kilometers in length.

Warliners typically come in sizes of 4 to 5 kilometers from prow to stern, depending on the variant. Several decks are always dedicated to entertainment and quarters for tourists, from transigents to Magnates .

Carrack-class missile ships are often about 1.5 km and represent the most common military oriented craft.

*The triple observation towers of the Starliner; HAV **Alluring**, one of the largest private vessels owned and operated by the Stratos MacroCorp. This Starliner joined a large fleet of Tributary Armada and Barakan of the Pale Tempest to hunt down the first major Shigue migration as it emerged the Vela Nebula. Dignitaries from across the spinward supersectors were invited to join along with members of the Copper Kings. No expense was spared on the three cycles long chase. It is believed that Stratos MacroCorp evaluation on the Market rose an entire 2% as a result.*

The towers are pleasure-plexes with every luxury available including viewports that magnify distant combat to be enjoyed over fine dining and cocktails.

Those that Wander

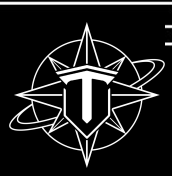
Only Armada vessels are rated and funded to have dawndrives, creating a vital interdependency. It is safer for Hegemon security for a Tributary Regiment or a squadron of Air Core pilots to be stranded in a star system then allow the weapons that both are allowed to be brought to bear free mobility. As a result, the Summit empowers the Armada to determine travel alone and the leash they are given is extensive. The level of education, wealth and connections that the Armada has makes them ideal for such trust and long term relationships with the MacroCorps ensures that the Tributaries of this branch understands brouder implications of their actions.

Smaller ships, transport craft and vessels that travel with the Armada must have their dawndrives confiscated or their cores jettisoned and their Pilots detained for the duration of the operation. For transit through the Outside they are tethered or docked within Armada craft and the passengers are extensively [[[[REDACTED]]]] in order to maintain reality comprehension and coherency. While in transit weapons and ordnance above a Grade 2 must have a Armada insurance representative as part of oversight and workplace compliance.

In the event that Armada ship is not available, a MassTrader will be contracted. If they aren't then there are preferred vendors amongst the FreeTraders. Those mercenary Corpos that operate with the Tributaries and have their own vessels are also prohibited from travelling in proximity with the Armada and must obey the same regulations.

Only MacroCorp private fleets are permitted leeway and, often, have better dawndrive and Pilots then the Armada anyway.

THE ARMY



By far the largest of the three branches, The Army is the Directorate's boots on the ground. While The Armada can interdict in trade disputes or blockade a planet during a Unionist revolt, and The Air Core offers valuable support to both the Armada and the Army during the Dictoratorate's operations, sometimes you just need to take and hold a position.

Both Armada and Air Tributaries require in depth specialized training to operate and maintain very expensive specialized equipment. As such any damages they sustain can be extremely costly both in terms of the time and capital spent to train a Tributary and in the form of destroyed materiels. The Army, however, can often come in under budget with with low tech, low cost solutions such as overrunning an enemy position with indentured troops. Such cost effective solutions are not lost on the nations and Macrocorps who are expected to fund the Directorate's intervention, and as such Army Tributaries are what most clients request.

That is not to say that the Army is an endless tide of low credit Consumers and Indentured. Regular Army Tributaries are well trained in both the art of war and cost saving measures. Indeed, there is great opportunity in serving in the Army, something they are endlessly proud of. Unlike the Armada or the Air Corps, which often requires family connection or special patronage, any able-bodied Basic or Indigent can serve their stint and come out the other side with valuable skills and a much improved credit rating.

Of course, there are elite members of the Army too. Specialized divisions can also be found working with the other two branches, whether stationed on Armada ships as marines for boarding or repelling actions or as paratroopers dropped behind enemy lines by the Air Core. For those who show exceptional promise, there is also the possibility that one might find themselves serving in the Ruentime Special Forces who work across all three branches of the Directorate or the highly provolved and augmented Reclaimants, salvaged from death's door to serve the Army once again.

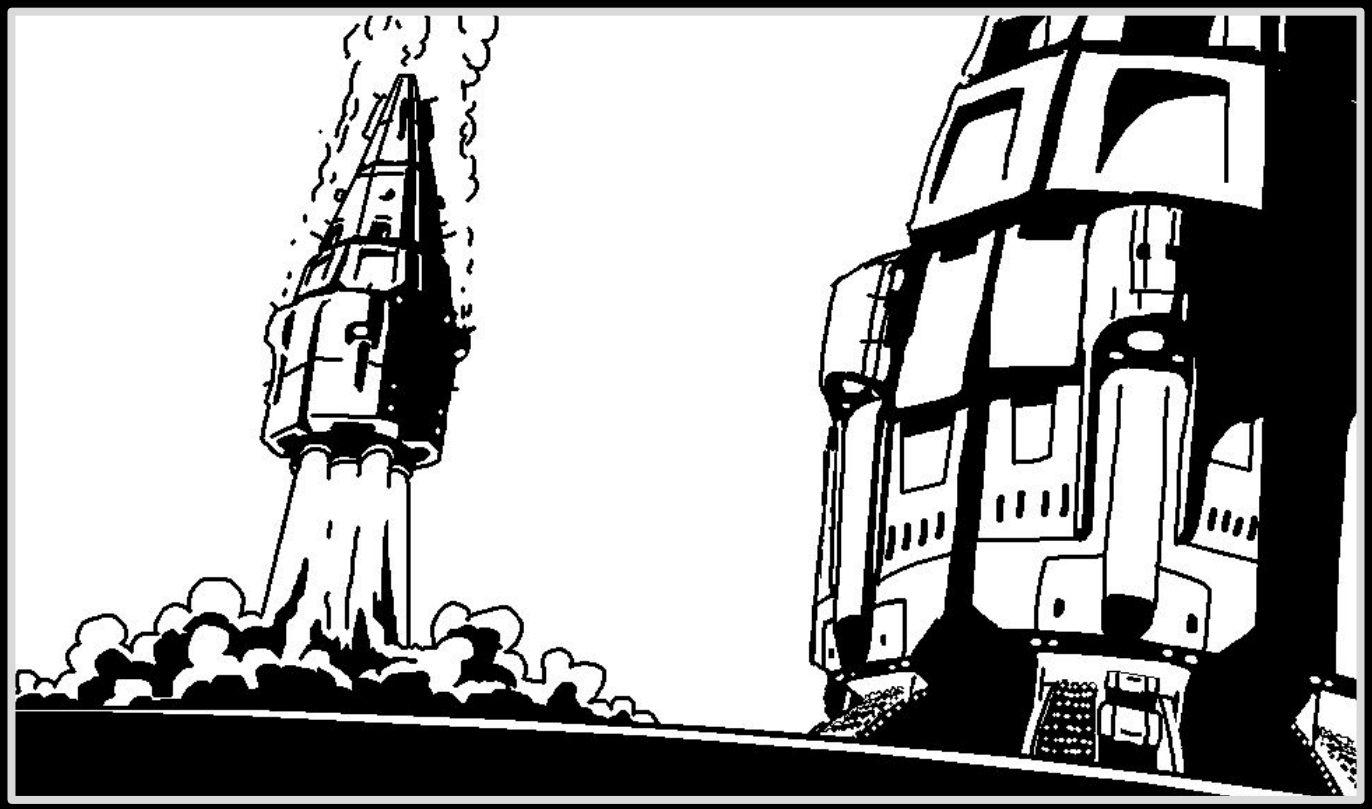
Assault Towers

m_aeg2

The Assault Tower is the Directorate's primary planetary assault vehicle utilized by the Army. During deployment from Armada transports, the Assault Tower pierces the atmosphere at speed. Precise adjustments can be made with maneuvering thrusters while maintaining momentum and creating electromagnetic dissonance that makes it incredibly difficult to track with anti-air fire.

Near the end of its approach it will fire massive thrust engines which clear the target zone of any inclement terrain or enemy presence. The module lands vertically and moments later, Army units protected within inertia dampened cells all over the tower will be released en mass under the cover of black nanoid cloud dispensers and mortar strikes.

When needed the Assault Tower can redeploy back into space, igniting its engines and returning to orbit where modules are refurbished for future deployments, significantly reducing operational costs and enhancing the efficiency of ground assault missions.



Stardown pattern assault towers make planetfall delivering hundreds of Tributaries and support vehicles directly to the frontlines.

Ruentime Special Forces: “Ruentimers”

The elite of the Tributaries are the Ruentime Special Forces that operate across the three different branches of the Hegemon military. Cited early during training or qualifying with high marks during ventures or operations, Ruentime units are considered the *best of the best*. Membership to such an organization gains Hegemon-wide celebrity, support and opportunities nevermind better gear, training and education modules.

Individual units are always sponsored by singular MacroCorps and typically bear the names of those sponsors on their equipment. They are given an astonishing amount of benefits, CorpoSoci mobility and access to sponsored travel.

This is paired with the vital nature of the Special Forces primary task: to protect the Hegemon’s tradelanes. They directly and indirectly confront anything that might harm these vital arteries. This means blazing combat missions as well as clandestine operations requiring undercover work. They will work alongside Tributary Regiments as vanguard elements as much as they will supply specialists to Commission and Audit initiatives.

Ruentime Special Forces are, simply, the best that the Tributaries can produce. Whilst nation states have their own elites, these very often aspire to serve alongside, or even be inducted, into the Ruentime. Despite the constant need for bodies in a territory measured in hundreds of light years, the Directorate will only accept those who have served in the general Tributary Regiments. This ensures loyalty to the CorpoSoci and the core social values of the Hegemon.

Recruits typically come from the upper ‘Person’ class. The higher education profiles, naturally improved physique and advanced training regimes make for excellent soldiers. Most Special Forces training occurs at exclusive sites in the ExeCor where MacroCorps sponsor trainees in the hopes of placing them into their specific units and competition is fierce. The Directorate has operational control over all Special Forces units throughout the Hegemon but will, typically, adhere to sponsorship agreements that cater to those specific MacroCorp needs.

“Make it quick.” The thug, skin striped with keloid scars from cheap organoid muscle-amps shoved the clinician who had already been getting out her scanner. “We’re gone in five.”
The chest that had been opened for inspection was one of a hundred, each a bullet shaped capsule that had avoided every scan and diagnostic for thirty lightyears and three jurisdictions to get here. The clinician treated them as such, careful with her gloves, careful to unlatch the safeties and very very careful with the vials of liquid metal.

She raised one up to the light. The metallic substance curled in the suspension liquid, like bottled lightning. The other thugs grunted and chuckled in the gloom of the warehouse. They were a spectrum of every kind of degenerate on the planet and they had been worried about the shipment. Worried they’d been scammed after putting half of what they owned into getting the shipment here.

The clinician placed the vial into her reader. After a moment it flashed green.

“Xa-Kusa is ninety two percent pure. An incredible structure.” She breathed, surprised at the high grade. “Where did it come from?” There was a sigh of relief from the assembled criminals.

“Our contact at Mehndax. Get them packed up.” One of them stepped forward, clearly the leader based on the acid burned skin marks across his face. “Break them up, every district gets one, I’m taking two.” He walked toward the clinician and plucked it out of her hand, marveling it himself.

“I’d want to test at least one from each, to be sure?”

“No. We have to move fast, the authorities are likely tracking the delivery transport.” The leader put the vial back down into the chest. “Let’s move!”

She took a step back, “Spectrum, indigo, harvest.”

The leader looked at her, confused, then his eyes widened, his mouth opened in surprise. It would be the last thing he experienced. Ten of the chests blasted open, revealing just as many ruentime soldiers in close fitting assault harnesses. Bullpup carbines came up next and began to kill everything in the room.

Everything except the clinician who was already tucked behind cover, calmly checking the point of origin for the shipment and her team’s next target as they hunted down the darkmarket operation.

Reclaimants

Reclaimants are a very specific kind of indentured soldier. Unlike most conscripts, they are not cannon fodder to be thrown at an enemy only to have their gear retrieved after the battle and handed off to the next batch of low-grade dents whose time debt has been sold off. Reclaimants were (and are) exceptional, often decorated soldiers who were unfortunate enough to be gravely wounded in ways that required treatment that outstripped their available credit and/or assurance policies. Rather than lose such exemplary talent, the Directorate will instead treat such individuals on credit, rebuilding their bodies with bionetics and organoid components. While such individuals are still very much indentured, forced to pay back the cost of the lifesaving treatments and impressive upgrades they received, they are afforded a level of respect that even some Persons would aspire to.

The Reclaimants retain their rank as well as all rights and privileges associated with that rank. They are allowed to retain property, interact with their former coworkers, and even given recreation stipends. But with all that, they are still indentured, and each yearns to pay off their time debt and regain their former credit status.

There are two reasons the Reclaimants are treated so well. First, even the most hard-line advocate for self-determination must admit that a skilled professional may find themselves suddenly and painfully disadvantaged due to a single misplaced artillery shell or tripped snapjack trap. As such, medical debt related to battlefield injuries is commonly seen by the Directorate as less shameful than simple financial negligence. Second, they represent a substantial high risk/high reward investment on the part of the Directorate.

The Reclaimants are often grouped into squads of their peers. Once recuperated, they are relentlessly trained to take advantage of their new augmentations and are sent out to fulfill incredibly dangerous or difficult objectives with the promise of commensurate hazard pay if they succeed. With their advancements, they can operate at a much high performance factor. While the Hegemon uses the Barakan as a explosive weighted hammer, the Reclaimants are an affordable scalpel.

Those who pay back their time debt and return to the lower or middle classes find their new capabilities too enticing to not continue as Directorate special operatives. Hazard pay is truly too tempting to ignore nevermind the recognition and perks.

They often remain with the Directorate far beyond their original contracts, working alongside those still paying off their debt to form highly specialized units that adopt a ‘devil-may-care’ persona. The small minority that do leave are highly sought after as mercenaries, consultants, and assassins.

“For the love of profit, cut it off, cut it off!” The trooper was screaming through his helmet filters, squirming and kicking up dust as incoming fire continued to track left and right, sweeping into the Tributary advance.

“Keep it together, we’ve got you,” corpsman Selv knelt and extended twin organoid service arms that sprouted out of his backpack. Rounds panged off of his full caraplate, disintegrating in puffs of multi-colored mist. Selv held the rooper down, easily holding him in place and isolated the man’s thigh. Three finger-length barbs protruded from his leg where two armor joints met. The barbs were made from some kind of resin that throbbed and twisted with a life of their own, pumping bile colored fluid into a victims body. Five Hands Panceuticals, who were helping finance this extermination, had inoculated most ground forces from the worst of the poison.

‘Most’ *being the keyword and the unfortunate reality.*

The trooper was thrashing and screaming incoherently now, blowing the speakers out of his helmet so that he sounded more like an animal than anything human.

“Just… a moment.” The corpsman impulsed the right organoid to clamp down on the man’s torso, pinning him. With the left organoid he scanned the square code printed on the trooper’s chest

The data packet uploaded to his visor and the corpseman sighed.

“This is a non-life-threatening instance, trooper, think you can hack it? Otherwise this’ll cost–”

Screaming.

“Your assurance subscription doesn’t cover this, my friend, just get through it, your balance sheet will thank me.”

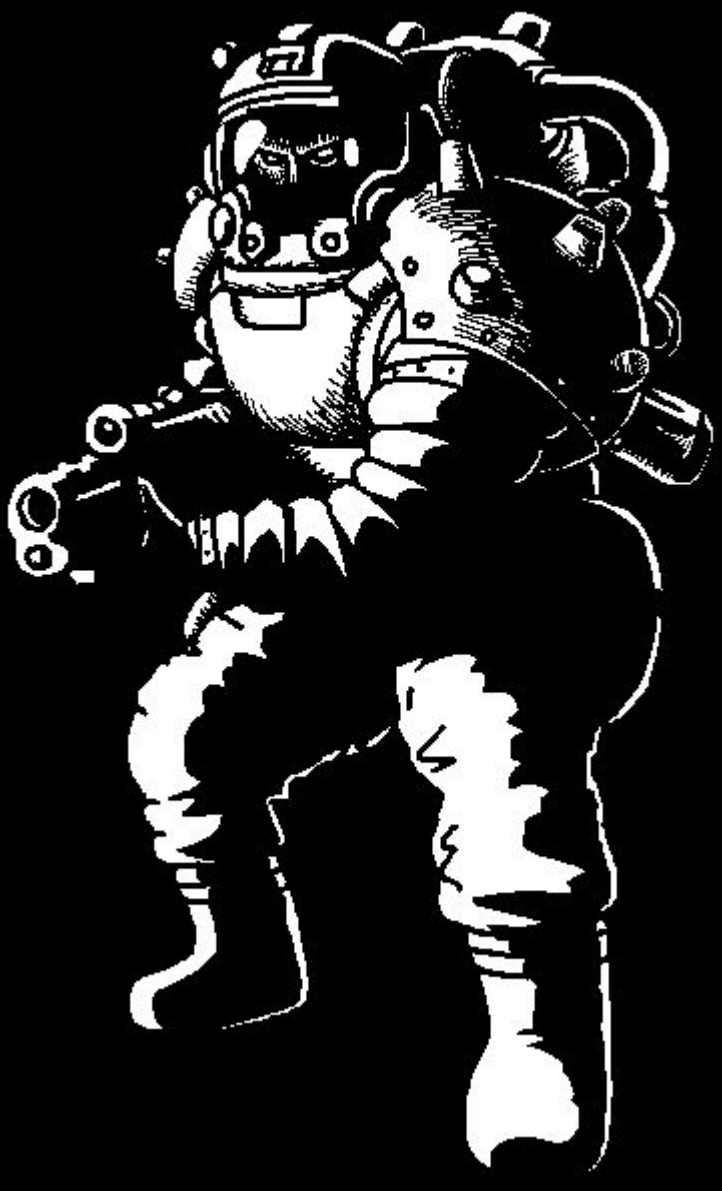
The man wrenched his arm so hard it dislocated. The corpsman rolled his eyes, drawing out a scalpel and nicked the primary artery in the trooper’s leg. He waited a moment, letting the bright red, almost pink, blood jet out before applying a medipad.

“Just don’t tell anyone.”

The M661 (and derivatives) is a type of blastplate more commonly called the "Ogre." Expensive to manufacture and maintain, these suits are issued only to specialized strike teams for fighting in extremely hostile conditions such as open vacuum, acidic atmospheres or anomalous zones.

Designed to emulate assault harnesses, Ogre suits are sealed and pressurized against the outside world and features its own air supply and thermal regulation systems, though it affords the user only marginally better protection in actual combat than regular Tributary field gear.

For spaceborne missions, the suit is commonly fitted with low-power maneuvering thrusters. Despite the added bulk of the protective apparatus, the Ogre affords the wearer a good degree of movement and sensory awareness. Their most common use is in deep void recovery operations and the reconnaissance of stations and shipwrecks.



THE AIR CORE

The Air Core, often shortened to *"the Air,"* is the smallest of the Hegemon's military branches numerically, yet it is vital to the overall function and effectiveness of the Hegemon's military operations, ferrying the Army across biospheres or defending Armada assets where they cannot go. Anything between space and terrestrial objects falls under the purview of the Air. Given the unique challenges of operating in both atmospheric and near-space environments, very few spacecraft are capable of performing adequately in both theaters of conflict. Thus, it falls to the Air and its Tributaries to brave these odds and ensure dominance in the atmosphere and immediate space above planetary bodies.

The Air utilizes a wide range of aircraft, designed to operate in varied environments and perform a multitude of roles. These include high-speed interceptors, multi-role fighters, rotorcraft, and most importantly, transport craft.

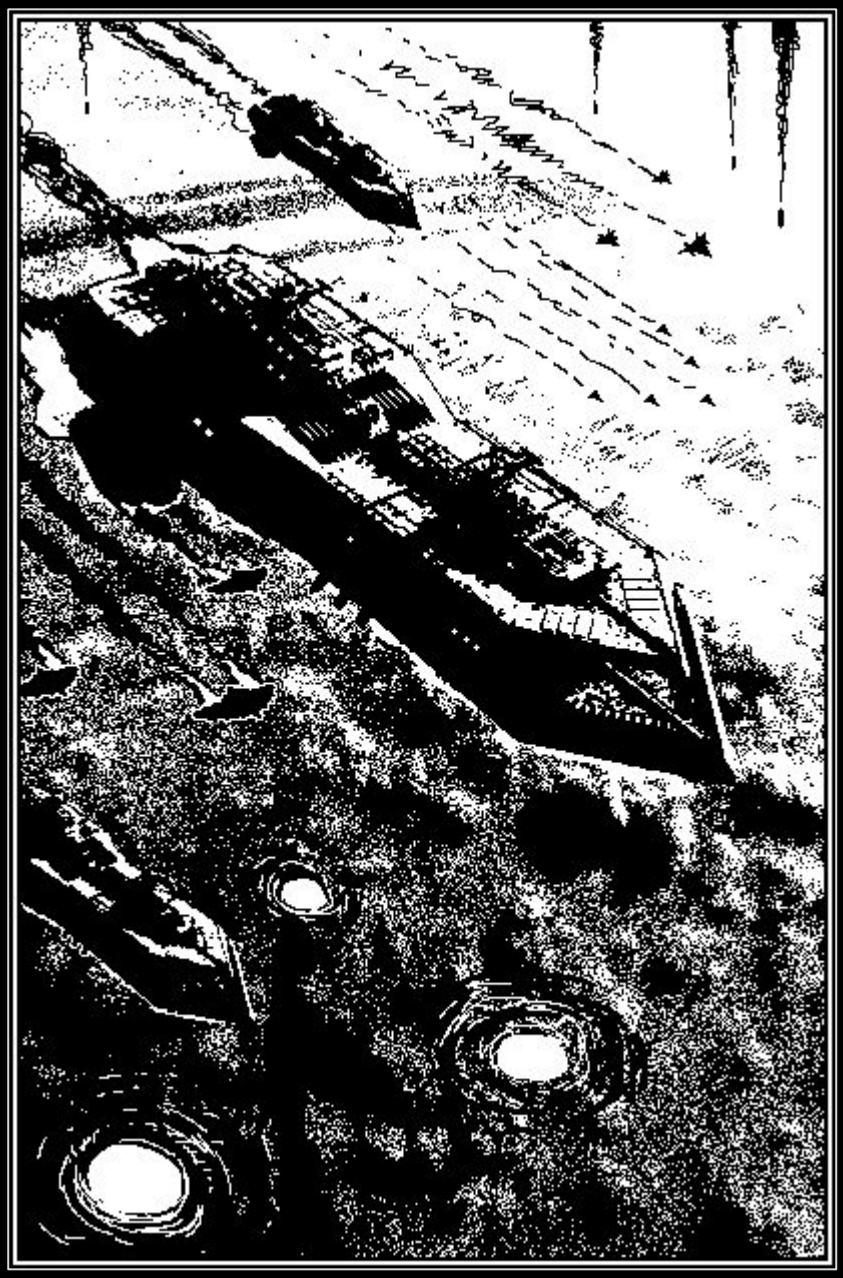
AN-V12 Hekaton Rotary Assault Ship

To support its operations, the Air maintains its own smaller fleet of carrier ships. These airborne bases of operation allow for rapid deployment and mobility, ensuring that the Air can project power and respond to threats swiftly and efficiently. These carriers are equipped with advanced repair facilities, refueling capabilities, and communication systems, making them self-sufficient hubs of activity in the field.

The Tributaries serving in the Air are viewed as secondary to the training and capabilities of the Aramada but they are no less dedicated. Their training is rigorous, focusing on both aerial combat and the nuances of operating in the thin margins between space and atmosphere. Despite these dangers, the Air has similar compensation and privilege as the Army while their bonuses are typically connected to successful deliveries rather than victory in conflict zones.

The Sky Carrier

The workhorse of the Tributary Air forces, the atmospheric assault carrier - or Sky Carrier, as it is advertised - can be seen in almost every Armada formation across Known Space. Initially designed as a commercial cargo vessel by White Star Guild, the Sky Carrier's main military model has barely changed in outward design over the centuries.



Intended for atmospheric entry and reentry, as well as descent-capable despite its relatively small size, the ship can engage in operations on every level above a planet, depending on their on-board inventory of craft. Any major orbit-to-surface military venture often sees Sky Carriers deployed as aerial assault spearheads, disgorging their cargo of fighters and bombers to harry the enemy while ground forces make their planetfall.

Roughly 500 meters from prow to stern, the Sky Carrier can ferry a varying number of dropships, bombers, ground attack craft, air superiority fighters or shuttles between planet surfaces and space. In addition to the central catapult/runway tunnel, the vessel can launch smaller craft or ordinance from bays on its ventral side. The carrier has several defensive armaments of its own and usually features a modest luxury deck for any prestigious passengers who might want to see their investment in action first-hand.

Joint Ventures

m_aeg2

Directorate forces will often work in conjunction with Corpo and independent mercenary outfits for mutual gain. Functionally, these act as a more meaningful alliance with clear goals and profit sharing. As none can match the Directorate in its sheer size and capability, often there will be a well-funded nation that remains resistant or a problematic Exogenic infestation that might require the abilities of more advanced troops. In these cases, the Directorate will look for cooperation with, say, a MacroCorp that has a contract with a Division of Barakan.

This ensures operations are ultimately beneficial and financially lucrative. The Directorate can avoid the costly and bureaucratic hurdles of beseeching the Barakan Overseers for aide, and a MacroCorp can share in the benefits of a successful campaign, including reconstruction contracts.

In the case of dealing with Exogens, a Magnate will often be offered a “front row seat” to enjoy the sterilization of lesser life forms, even dictating the means and style for maximum entertainment.

-- Mutual gain is stronger than mutual belief --

The Authority

s_a3

The military elite of the Directorate is simply known as the Authority. Formed from the highest ranking members of the various militaries that have been absorbed into the three branches, their leadership forms an unofficial “fourth” that acts similar to an executive branch. Negotiations with local governments and further funding from MacroCorps is pursued by these individuals creating a kind of hybrid class of bureaucracy.

War, like anything, is an economy with resources being expended for larger prospective gains. The Directorate needs food, ammunition and fuel like any population and in a way is similar to the Corpos themselves. The Directorate *needs* and while the Hegemon provides it is never enough. The Magnates are quick to step in, negotiating for the opportunities that only come with war.

While the Hegemon seeks to civilize the more violent and barbaric worlds in ExeCor cultural expectations, it is to the benefit to have warrior societies operating within the military structure. It is the Authority that regulates this vast diversity, ensuring that animosities don’t spill over and that units and formations are best applied across Known Space.

The *anthropovors* of Nephix make for excellent police forces while the Tributaries from ExeCor worlds are better at invigorating ideal trade ecosystems. Each Regiment has its inherent benefit in a combat zone and it is the Authority that best places them.

The Authority operates in a similar fashion to the Summit Council without a true figurehead or singular leader save for the Director. Attached to each major Directorate facility, terrestrial or orbital, as well as primary capital ships such as the *HAS Imperium* are all outfitted with ansible arrays which subsequently creates the largest dedicated faster-than-light communication network in Known Space.

Many Corpos and nations will pay for the use of this array and, in extreme cases, have instigated local discontents in order to attract local Directorate forces to occupy them. This comes with risks, but, can also improve a local economy drastically if handled correctly.

<They are not enamored with wealth but power. They are necessary relics. They are danger>

Director Akalon Voranu

m_aeg1

At the helm of the Authority is Akalon Voranu, who holds the title of *Leader* within the Directorate. For fifty fiscal-cycles, Voranu has commanded with unparalleled prowess, etching his name into the annals of Hegemonic history as its most decorated commander. His journey, from a skilled combat pilot from Yaltair to the apex of the Hegemon's military, embodies the epitome of acknowledged valor in the pursuit of status.

Most interestingly, Voranu is respected by the Armada's opposite branch of the Army. This was earned during an incident during the culling of a population of Exogen known as the Y'mbardi attempting to resist harvesting. The 74th Regiment were without Air branch support due to a budgetary error. Voranu directed his flight of interceptors into a daring flyover, crushing the Y'mbardi advanced with ordinance rated for orbital engagement. Although he was later chastised and penalized for such expenses, he gained the support he would later need to become Leader.

Besides his talents as a soldier, Voranu most of all understands the importance of publicity and Consumer awareness of his personal brand. As Leader, Voranu maintains hundreds of news correspondents from major and minor outlets and permits them unfettered access to his operations with exclusive interviews to those who report correctly.

These same reporters created the perfect environment for Voranu to make the complicated transcendence beyond celebrity within the Directorate and become a household name and accumulate sponsorships across the ExeCor. Providing candid interviews and explanations of the Directorate's activities, every strata of Hegemon society have come to intrinsically trust Voranu. Generations of Consumers have been inspired by Voranu's marketing campaigns to join every branch of the Directorate while his regular ansible broadcasts, typically while on campaign, provide insight into personal investment opportunities.

His ascendency to Leader was unanimous amongst the Authority and the Summit council and he has not disappointed as colonial efforts multiply while Exogenic infestations and threats from the non-Hegemonic nations have been mercilessly contained. More importantly, Voranu is able to cultivate the proper threats in the Fringe and the edges of the Midworlds, influencing public opinion through the fear of the 'barbarian' as well as justifying resource demands and allocation to the Directorate and those MacroCorps who provide the soldiery with equipment and weapons.

The forever wars have made fortunes, being responsible for countless innovations and allowed for proper MacroCorp management of resources underutilized by nations both within the Hegemon and without all thanks to Voranu.

Voranu maintains the Directorate estates on the Hyperion moon of Merkur despite being rarely there. His second wife, a baroness of Armasyn upper management, and third wife, a matron of Five Hands Panceuticals, live here and are said to be their husband's strongest advocates. Voranu's first spouse remains with him aboard his flagship, the *Uluburun*, away from the spotlight and is rumored to be a member of the flight deck.

Despite numerous offers, Voranu has steadfastly declined official positions within the Hegemonic government. Instead he chooses to remain within the Directorate, leading from the front.

There were hundreds of war correspondents and reporters filing into the Uluburun's *amphitheater, a blister of two meter thick plastalloy that provided an incredible view of the Vela Nebula beyond. As always there were Tributaries in the livery of Voranu's adopted Hyperion pedigree forming a phalanx around the stage and armed with traditional curved swords and gilded volley pistols of caeliners. Their visors were up in order to humanize them, showing stern, scarred faces from across Known Space. Such a photogenic opportunity for each news outlet to position their ethnogenic presence in the Directorate forces back home was rare and the reporters took advantage.*

Once the correspondents were seated, the Managing Officer, her left shoulder guard made from pure rose yellow sonaw and detailed with precious jewels in the badge of the Directorate, stamped a boot on the marble tile.

"The Leader approaches!"

The Tributaries saluted, fists sweeping downward like gavels and then slammed over their armored chests making a bell gong sound ring across the amphitheater. The regular Consumers in the room stood, even those with recorders put down their devices to watch Akalon Voranu take his place at the podium. He wore simple caeliner coveralls, the only indication of rank a series of ident chips on his chest. He was short, a man built for a cockpit, his salt and pepper hair swept backward over delicate, low gravity born features.

He began to speak without preamble, without pomp or circumstance. Straight to the point for each moment and word was worth the fortunes of worlds and the purpose of global populations and he knew it and his soldiers respected it.

"I address the ambush of Army Regiment 9823 of Yaltair by pirates operating on the seventh planet of the Kerdosea system last quat. This is why I have diverted my fleet here. The lawlessness of the Fringe is only exacerbated by Exogenic intelligences disrupting the equilibrium of commerce. I can confirm they are all dead, many tortured. You and your viewers might be expecting tears at this bloodshed."

He directs a sweeping glare through the front ranks of reporters, never blinking, his iconic steel gaze made all the more impressive by his ocular organoid implants that make his eyes faintly glow.

*"You will get none. The sacrifice made by the men and women of 9823 was not clean. Their slaughter was not like the glorious charges of entertainment subscriptions, sanitized by propagandists attempting to apply the salve that death was for country or nation. 9823 did not give their lives for Yaltair just as I do not serve the spinning rock and ice that I was born on. Patriotism is a lie. We lie to ourselves when we say "*they gave everything for their nation." *No one gives their life for anything."*

Nervous whispers ripple outward, unsure hands writing notes at this apparent social suicide the Leader is making. Then he smiles. A smile of a man who has lead his brethren into combat and who has stared down beasts and anarchists alike. A man that knows truth must be delivered only after doubt.

"We purchase *those lives. 9823 did not die for the honor and glory of Yaltair. Their lives are worth more to the Hegemon then it will ever be for a single world or colony. Their suffering, their training, their upkeep, the cycles of their lives are resources that* we *buy!" He gestures to the gathered.*

"Our taxes, our blood and sweat and payslips. We bought 9823 from their training that made them defenders of economic growth, to their equipment with which we prospered by the stability they kept!"

The Tributaries present began to slam their fists against their chests.

The reporters stopped writing, the cameras not on pintles lowered as their owners were caught up in the moment Akalon Voranu was sculpting with his words that reminded them of their shared pride. Pride that had been wounded by filthy anarcho-terrorist exogen-loving scum.

"They did not die for a greater good but for our maximum wealth! They fulfilled their contract, services rendered, bills paid for."

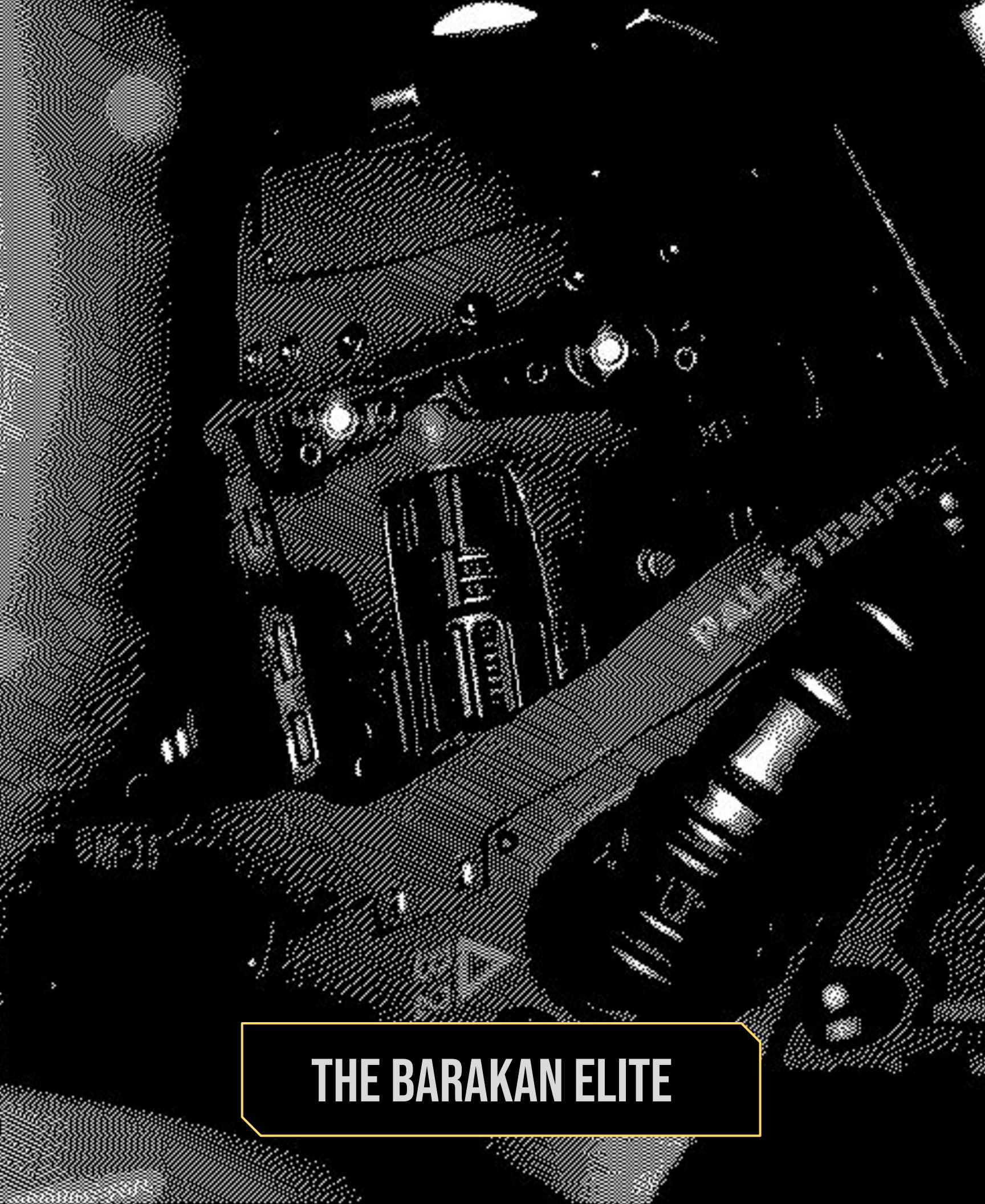
The Tributaries stopped as one.

"This exchange is like any other. They were soldiers but they died and we received nothing for the spending of their lives. We were not given anything in return at Kerdosea Seven. That world is the Hegemon's. The Yaltair squad that was ambushed defending the property of the Armasyn MacroCorp was the Hegemon! The resources robbed by that scum?."

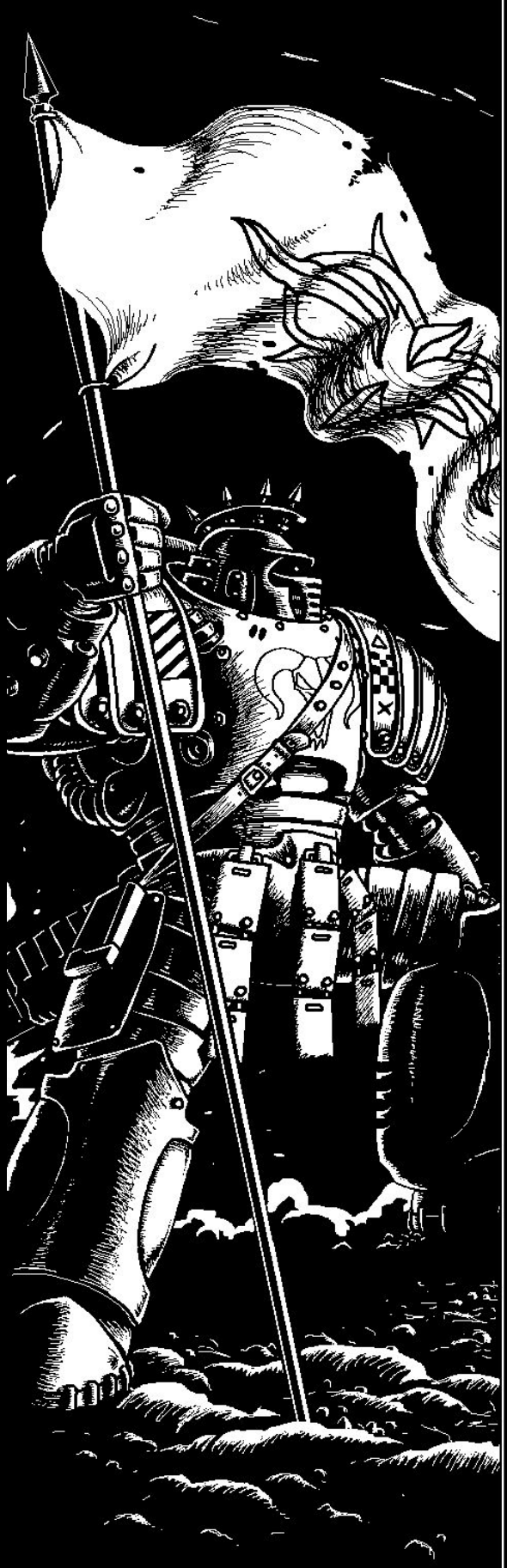
"OURS!" The Tributaries shouted. Some of the reporters even cheered.

The Leader points to a point of light in the nebula red stained blackness above.

"That scum owe us. Our troopers paid in blood, and now we demand what is due. I am here to collect on the Directorate's investment."



THE BARAKAN ELITE



BARAKAN ELITE

I am Barakan.

I am permitted to be the monster.

I was remade to kill.

This is now my instinct.

I do not touch the offered hand for I might break the wrist bones.

I do not look another in the eye lest I press my fingers through their skull and into soft brainmatter.

I am careful not to fixate on the stranger or else I might twist their neck.

Necks... Evolution's failure.

Every body part is an opportunity. The neck is a gift.

Everything I touch is a weapon.

I am a weapon.

All that is needed is permission.

~Translated from Barakan 8-118, lucid recordings during expedited recovery surgery.

The Barakan Elite

The Barakan Elite are synonymous with the power and final authority of the Hegemon. Unlike the Tributaries or the national militia which are made up of conscripts, patriots, and mercenaries, the Barakan Divisions are a dedicated and permanent military formation that answers directly to the Summit Board and the select few they are signed to in exclusive, often limited, contracts.

The Barakan Elite have been in service to the Hegemon for seven fiscal centuries dating back to a time when the majority of Known Space was a fracture of self serving nations and ethno-states. In these early cycles, Exogenic species could still challenge human dominance while rogue near-human factions believed themselves equal to New Mankind. It is largely because of the Barakan Elite that the golden age enjoyed today exists at all.

Despite this honor, almost nothing is known about the Barakan Elite. They are an enigma to the rest of the Hegemon, living nightmares and a final weapon in the arsenal of the Directorate. Unlike the publicized heroes of the Tributaries, there is an information blackout on the Barakan. In this age of peace, some in the ExeCor don't even believe the Barakan really exist any more, believing them to be an expertly crafted bogeyman to ensure that the Frontier colonies stay in line.

Barakan leadership rarely interacts with the rest of the Directorate. If a situation calls for Barakan, it is often of such an incredibly vital reason for a swift conclusion that long term strategy can no longer be considered. Much like the deployment of atomics or phagic weapon systems, the Barakan, once unleashed, are barely able to be controlled by any except their own commanders.

The Barakan operate their own spacecraft, outposts, and facilities, possessing their own fiercely insular culture. While there are specialist units of Tributaries that are given additional education modules and training subscriptions to operate alongside Barakan, these come with such a high risk that even higher pay considerations can't be indefinitely maintained. Only the boldest Assurance Corpos will offer health and life policies for those in proximity with the Barakan. However, the benefits and commission dividend are enough to make anyone at least consider the risk.
The Barakan are unlike any other specialist formations the Hegemon can deploy.

In the Thousand Empires, the majority of nations and Corpos have their own form of elite augmented and provolved soldiery - the proxy clone Legions of the Myroit Empire, or the Hyperkillers of the Yinntosh MacroCorp, to name a few. There is no shortage of advanced fighting formations, yet none have ever been able to challenge the Barakan Elite's complete dominance.

The reason for this is somewhat simple as much as it is esoteric. The Barakan were created in a time of unparalleled cooperation as well as desperation. The only time of uncertainty in the Hegemon's history was when its ascendency was challenged by the Catraethi Regenium, an alliance of anarcho-fascists that worshipped an aristocratic bloodline that claimed to be *gods*. The Hegemon's war led the MacroCorps to combine their efforts; The Barakan Elite were the result.

Made up of men and women deemed psychologically appropriate and physically impressive, each Barakan Division draws their recruits from combat-tested formations throughout the Directorate. These select members are subject to a series of unique surgical enhancements from ballistic resistant gel inserts beneath the skin to cybernetic capabilities that allow them to interface with every tier of Hegemon technology.

Barakan candidates, or "Geks", are created by recruiting individuals who have shown potential to become excellent soldiers, often through psychological profiling, but also those whom, more importantly, express higher degrees of obeisance, physical prowess, and intelligence. Commanding officers able to identify these aspects will carefully groom a candidate, pushing them toward a designed psychological collapse. This achieved by a variety of methods that include committing atrocities, or eliminating dependencies. Only then will "Brokers" be contacted who procure or, if need be, capture these individuals and bring them to hidden Barakan processing sites.

Brokers are incentivized to find and recruit only the best candidates, as they are not paid unless a Gek becomes a fully-fledged member of the Barakan. This process is known only to the Barakan themselves. While there are clear and extreme augmentations made to the Gek on a physical and biological level, there is a final, complex psychological event that permanently changes the brain activity of the Gek and is the most important element in becoming Barakan.

Barakan relinquish their original names and cultures, adopting the secretive customs only they can understand.

They seemingly do not retain memories of their former selves, and even if they could, few can speak Uttar, the brutal language of these soldiers, so communication remains with the Barakan leaders: The Tasksmasters.

The standard Barakan soldier is known as a *Kotar* or "Ko" in Uttar, and is a rigorously trained and lethally capable being to the highest comprehension of human considerations. Discipline is maintained via a host of vital narco and psychophysio stimms, often taken together as gas injectables or secreted by special organoid glands. Constant autosuggestion, mesmeric suits, and stimm-suppressants keep Barakan functionally stable.

While the rank and file of the Directorate know of the infamous combat stimms, surgical modifications, autosuggestion implants, and gene-reformatting that goes into making a Barakan, only a select few gene-splicers know the additional steps taken by the Summit Council to ensure this ultimate weapon does not fall into enemy hands or somehow rebel. The creation of a Barakan involves introducing deliberate genetic flaws into an otherwise healthy body.

These flaws bolster function to impossible levels even as it erodes the nervous system. The various stimms in wide use among the Kotar also include a specific cocktail of chemicals that provide what the Barakan body is no longer able to produce naturally. These medications combat and control outbreaks of bacteria and cancer cells while balancing out the extremes in hormonal activity. Without a constant supply, the Barakan would descend into a rampaging insanity until their bodies finally expire due to exhaustion and overheating. While this would be devastating in the short term to whatever area the Barakan found themselves in, it serves as a simple check on any possibility of an uprising by these hyper-violent soldiers.

This effectively keeps the Kotar cogent enough to kill everything in a room that isn't Barakan. For more complex missions, a Taskmaster is required. Barakan Taskmasters are the epitome of controlled violence. They are everything the Barakan rank and file are but are capable of restraint and, most importantly, tactical strategy. Taskmasters do not require the stimms the Kotar need. Furthermore, they are the only practical point of contact between Barakan and non-Barakan.

The Divisions

The organization of the Barakan into "Divisions" dates back to their first deployments during the Regenium War. These early incarnations of the kotar and their leaders were organized roughly under what the Hegemon Directorate officially designated "special strike divisions" for the lack of more unique terminology. Numbering an original *five* in total, each division had no special identity beyond a number designation and a role in the overall battle plan. The number of kotar varied per division; some were larger, comprising several thousand troops, while others had a strength of only hundreds. A few were experimental formations, acting as test-beds for different combinations and dosages of narco stimms as well as provolved enhancements designed to heighten specific traits, such as aggression, precision, speed in mind or body, and so on. These would come to be known as *"The First Five."*

After the Fall of Catraeth, the division organization stuck and expanded to *thirty* further Divisions, with many of them going on to develop what could almost be called cultural identities based on their ways of waging war, biological uniqueness, and equipment preferences. As the cruel nature of the Barakan Elite developed and took on certain outside influences, the old identifying numbers were soon flanked by dreadful call-signs and the metallic grey of their armor started to take on other colors and symbolism. Many of these original divisions are still active in FC-9, while others have been destroyed and replaced or, curiously, lost. The infamous survivors of these "Old Thirty" have been gradually supplemented with additional, newer divisions, with their own numbers and names; If there is any sense of pride or honor in the black hearts of these manufactured killers, it manifests as a certain disdain between the old guard that razed the Regenium, and the formations raised since, a relationship that has seen its own fair share of bloodshed.

Divisions are broken down by groupings referred to as a *'Menace'.* These might be called squads or gangs, with specialists that range from heavy weapons to unique training. A Menace can number between two Barakan to fifty. Such mutability is beyond the understanding of outsiders but is believed to purposeful, as if the anarchic randomness of Barakan organization serves some higher purpose.

Taskmasters

Taskmasters are the de facto handlers of the Barakan and are a distinct breed apart from the Kotar they direct. They are individuals who are able to exhibit the greatest degree of control and calm (relative terms, considering what they are) in spite of the genetic flaws they were burdened with.

Notably, the Taskmasters are not ‘leaders’ in the sense of officers or commanders. Instead, they are more akin to the pilot of a gunship, cycling through various weapon types to unleash on a target. There is no affection or love between Barakan and that is certainly the case for their observed interactions with Taskmasters. A Taskmaster merely directs their Kotar and curbs their bloodlust as best they can.

There are also several physical distinctions that have been noted by the discerning employer. Firstly, a Taskmaster does not have the six neural ports in their skulls. This is curious, as it would severely limit their ability to integrate with a cogit-hood. They also do not partake in the various narco doses that Kotar imbibe. Finally, Taskmaster biology is closer to human norms, with some retaining or being given back pigmentation.

Taskmasters, and Overseers, alone speak more than Uttar.

Once identified, these few exceptional individuals are then subjected to a secondary treatment, ostensibly to further enhance the Barakan Elite's already legendary combat abilities coupled with self-sufficiency. When the time is right, the Taskmasters will unleash their commands on a target like a living artillery bombardment which will not stop until their target is annihilated or they are dead.

From the Taskmaster population come the Barakan's almost mythical leadership. Designations like the Pale Shadow, Brokenfist, and Collector seem to be code names or titles that no one has been able to decipher in terms of their operation. How a military operates without clear rank designations is just another mystery of the Barakan.

No longer half-mad creatures collared only by the narcos they need to survive, the Taskmasters know that if they fail to comply with orders, the supplies of chems will eventually run out. And when that happens, the Barakan under their command will inevitably tear themselves, and their Taskmaster, to pieces as their bodies and minds fail. Thus it is they that can be trusted to hold the leash of the Hegemon's most dangerous creations.

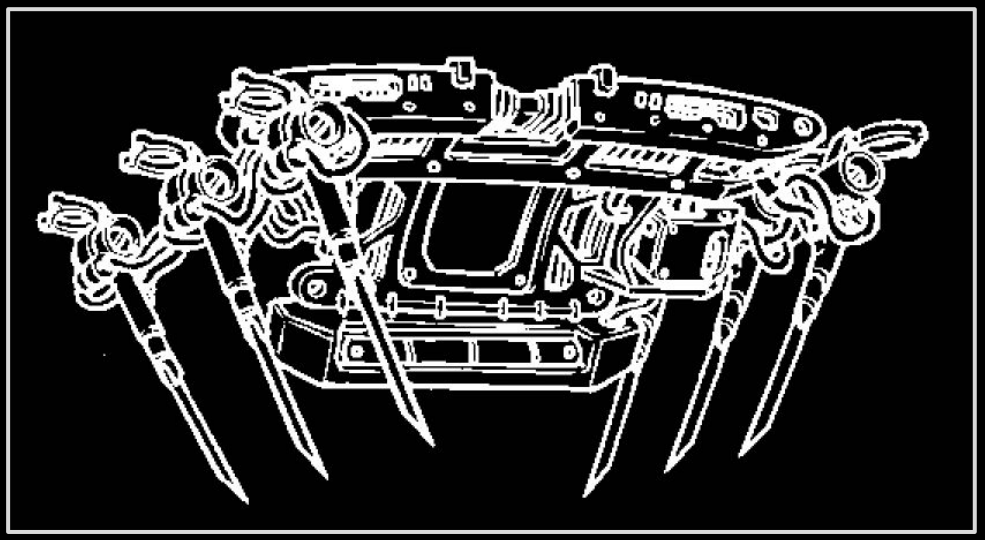
These Taskmasters obey the word of the Overseers, the only other discernible rank of the Barakan. Presumably drawn from the Taskmasters, the Overseers are the true Barakan leadership. The Overseers communicate directly with the commanders of the Directorate who inform them of overall battle plans. Overseers have the autonomy to accomplish their tasks as they see fit rather than follow direct commands from the Directorate or their employers. A mandate is simply stated and a goal required. After that, it is best for all non-Barakan to stand back.

As such, the Overseers often have direct, even real-time, communication with the Summit Board and those individuals that have been deemed important enough to speak directly with the Barakan Elite. It is rumored that some kind of longevity therapy is used by the Overseers, as it has been recorded that some of these individuals have remained in active service despite multi-generational spans of time. Perhaps it is through patronage by the Archonists, or an as-yet unknown technology.

Each Barakan Elite formation is bound to a generational contract that is renewed by the Summit Council of Magnates. These contracts define how they will operate and, most importantly, who they must obey.

Physically, the Barakan follow a template of physiological improvements in their role as soldiers. These include, but are not limited to:

- Talin Gel Insert-flaps: Sub-dermal gel is pumped into flexi-pads in vital areas which can, even without armor, deter bullet penetration or scatter mid-intensity energy weapons.
- StimmPlax: Additional artificial organs, similar to kidneys, that are filled with a variety of chemical cocktails and performance-maximizing drugs.
- Auto-ports: Data fibers can be fed into special ports across the Barakan's body, which interface with specially cultivated nerve bundles, allowing for pre-cognitive reaction.
- Pneumatic Actuators: Interwoven artificial musculature called "myoflex" that multiply an individual's strength by many times and can be grafted into cybernetic replacement parts.
- Autosuggestion: Barakan spend extensive periods of time being conditioned in a state of suspended animation. They are subliminally informed in how to use new weapons and equipment as well as understand an enemy or environment they are to be deployed in. This is a more complex procedure than those performed on Indentured.
- Cogit-hood: A unique neural interface with a host of applications including Indirect Interface which permits Barakan leaders and Contractors to patch into the sensorial experiences of an individual.
    - Entertainment and virtual experience modules are available.



Grade 1 "Aedes" Cogit-hood

Organoid Enhancements

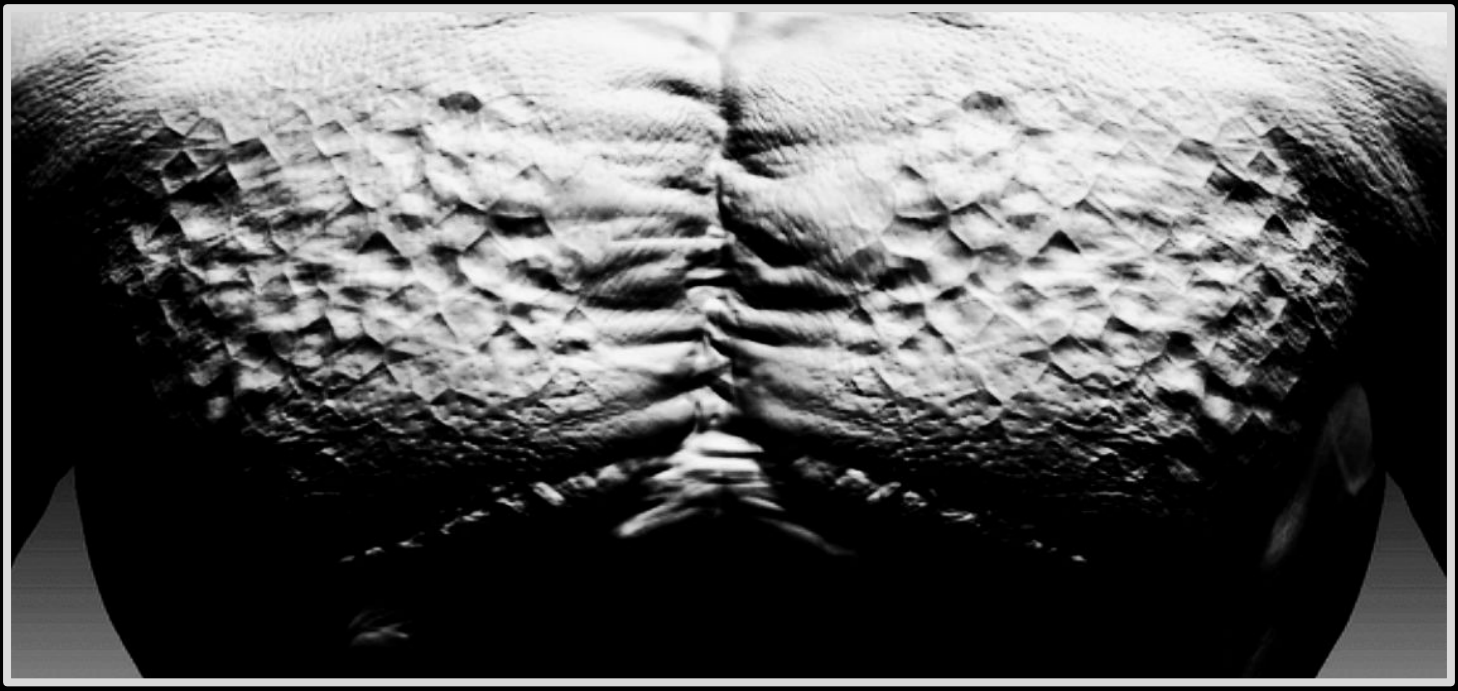
Barakan undergo drastic surgery to their entire body, reengineering many aspects of human physiology. Bone grafts extend their legs as well as their arms, giving them a primitive, almost simian look while their musculature is extensively reinforced. In order to accomplish these changes, the body is bombarded with controlled radiological therapies to encourage mutation.

The removal of several major organs is supplemented by artificial ones that require both tuning and upkeep. Regulatory organoids of a unique patent suffuse the body and allow nerve control and function by special organoids. A Barakan controls these just as how one might breathe. While the human body *reacts* to stimuli, these organoids enable Barakan to select their reaction to encounters and events, simplifying complex, or lethally dangerous, encounters.

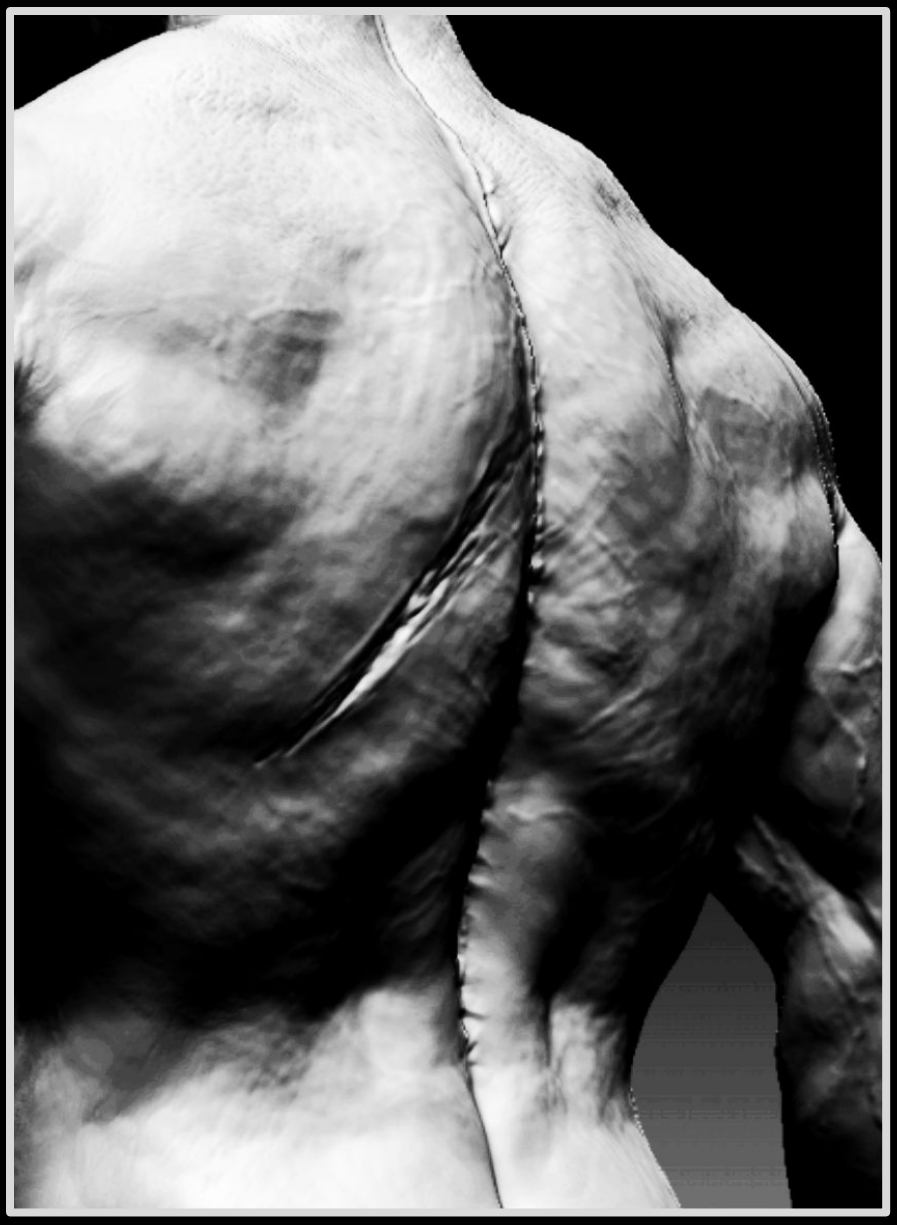
As an example, Barakan that know their objective is being hindered by a fortified gun position can force their bodies to clear the impediment in the same way that a regular human may deal with a closed door to their office.

Talin Anti-Ballistic Gel-Insert Flaps

Talin is a high molecular weight cytoskeletal protein produced naturally in the body. It is harvested from the Barakan body, distilled, and then infused with plastalloy to form a superfluid that is then injected back into areas of the body to create pockets that form 'flaps'. Regions with the most concentration are those that are statistically probable for ballistic penetration. Talin Gel can stop a direct bullet or shrapnel impact without armor, and can even disperse energy weapon shots to minimize damage.



Pneumatic Actuator: Spinal Reinforcement



Almost all of the musculature of the Barakan are heavily reinforced with myoflex. These fibers bundle around a spinally mounted pneumatic actuator which responds to nerve impulses directly from the brain. The actuator can also be programmed with pre/post-cognitive responses.

Without this system, the Barakan body would rip itself apart.

Older Barakan report to have *faster* myoflex responses than muscle memory, resulting in truly awesome reaction timing that borderlines natural pre-cognition. Combined with the cogit-hood, veteran Barakan can perform with reaction times beyond human limits.

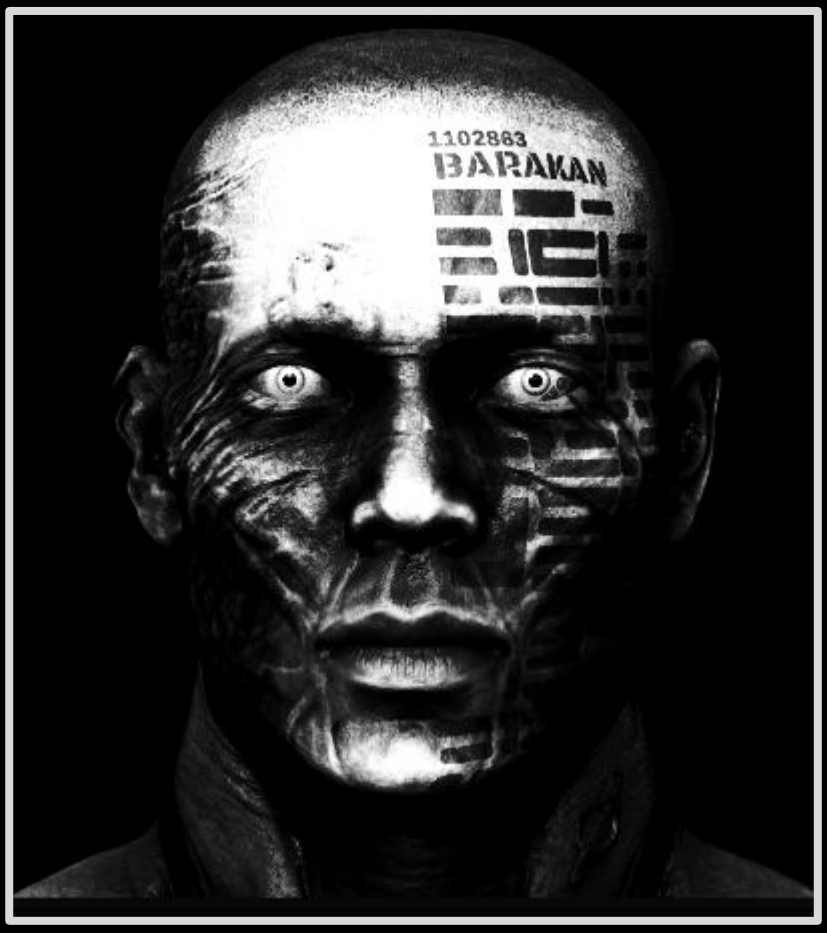
There have been instances of certain MacroCorps programming myoflex actuators so that a Barakan can have various “triggers” that can be audible, visual, or even synaptic.

Datoos/dermarks

Barakan are covered with reactive and passive ink injected into their skin. These carry information for the Travan who service them as much as the internal hierarchy system of the Taskmasters.

The various proprietary technologies that the Barakan use can only be activated by such datoos, especially the stimm injectors. There have been instances in which Barakan corpses have been captured by enemy combatants. If a non-Barakan attempts to use their technology, there are several failsafes such as reactor overloads or vice locks which can easily kill such thieves.

The service contract, mission requirements, and personal details pertinent to Barakan operation are all put directly into their skin. Whether there are deeper symbols and meanings is impossible to comprehend by non-Barakan ,as datoos are regularly removed at the end of a contract.



-- No one questions a tool if it effective--

<query: availability of division/opportunity/PROFIT>

>>command: submit license<<

<explanation: new ownership/new opportunities>

+submission: membership_10.2020/file_01+

.

>>consideration: no<<

>>expectation: cease communication<<

<insist: new management/opportunity/new opportunities/PROFIT>

<explanation: new management/removal of competition>

<expectation: division subscription fulfilled/terms of service>

>>consideration: no<<

<insist: explanation>

<expectation: removal of competition/fulfill service agreement>

.

>>query: location<<

<elation: execor/sector_bryndal/planet_assyrka_5/tertiary continent/31°37.14..N74°52.50..E>

<query: additional data on target>

.

.

<query: acknowledge>

+target acquired+

Magnate Esopho Magridii, once a FreeTrader, had become magnificently wealthy after cornering velanite transport for the Magaan Corridor. With his earnings he successfully performed a hostile takeover of a smaller MacroCorp, Etlin Solvings, with the help of Yinntosh. Establishing himself in their headquarters on Assyrka V, Esopho quickly capitalized on the many pre-existing subscriptions Etlin Solvings had maintained in its history. Finding an agreement to the Barakan, Esopho attempted to make contact in order to remove an opponent. One day after the initial transmission, vessels in the colors and configurations of the "Red Hand" Division appeared above Assyrka V without warning or announcement. They performed several orbital strikes that stripped the Etlin Solving's defenses followed by a direct and characteristically devastating assault by twenty Barakan Elite.

Assyrka militia arrived a standard week later, reporting that the entire MacroCorp labor force, support residential slurbs and management had been killed. Esopho Magridii himself was found in his personal suite, his hands and head pulled off and taken, a cancelled service agreement on his desk.

Casque v.001 *Kerberos*

There are hundreds of different “casque” or helmet variants utilized by the Barakan, but none are more iconic then the 001 Kerberos. With magnetic, bolt, and welding port options, the 001 has survived obsoletion by its endless versatility.

Each helmet has a plethora of capabilities that range from multi-spectral vision, reinforced armor plating, narco-inhalant modules, and so on. Most importantly, the 001 was naturally designed around the cogit-hood’s neuro spikes that Kotar need to integrate their provolved neural makeup with their suit.

While Overseers and Taskmasters no longer require such considerations, it is intriguing to note that these officer analogues often prefer the 001 when taking to the field. For the Barakan to exhibit anything relatable to human beings is unsettling, even more so if the reason for their preference for the 001 is potentially nostalgia.

Syoto OIFI Dagger

The “out-in-front injection” spike was an ingenious invention used by orbiter communities and spaceborn operators for generations. Simple in nature, a penetrating spike releases compressed gas into an opening, resulting in catastrophic wounds.

The Syoto Dagger was evolved from these so-called spikes by the Kappa Group, a subsidiary Corpo of Stratos MacroCorp in the Tingal supersector. Made from nusteel and then tremendously improved with quarkalloy, these double-bladed telescoping daggers are highly regarded by top grade mercenary outfits and none other than the Barakan Divisions.

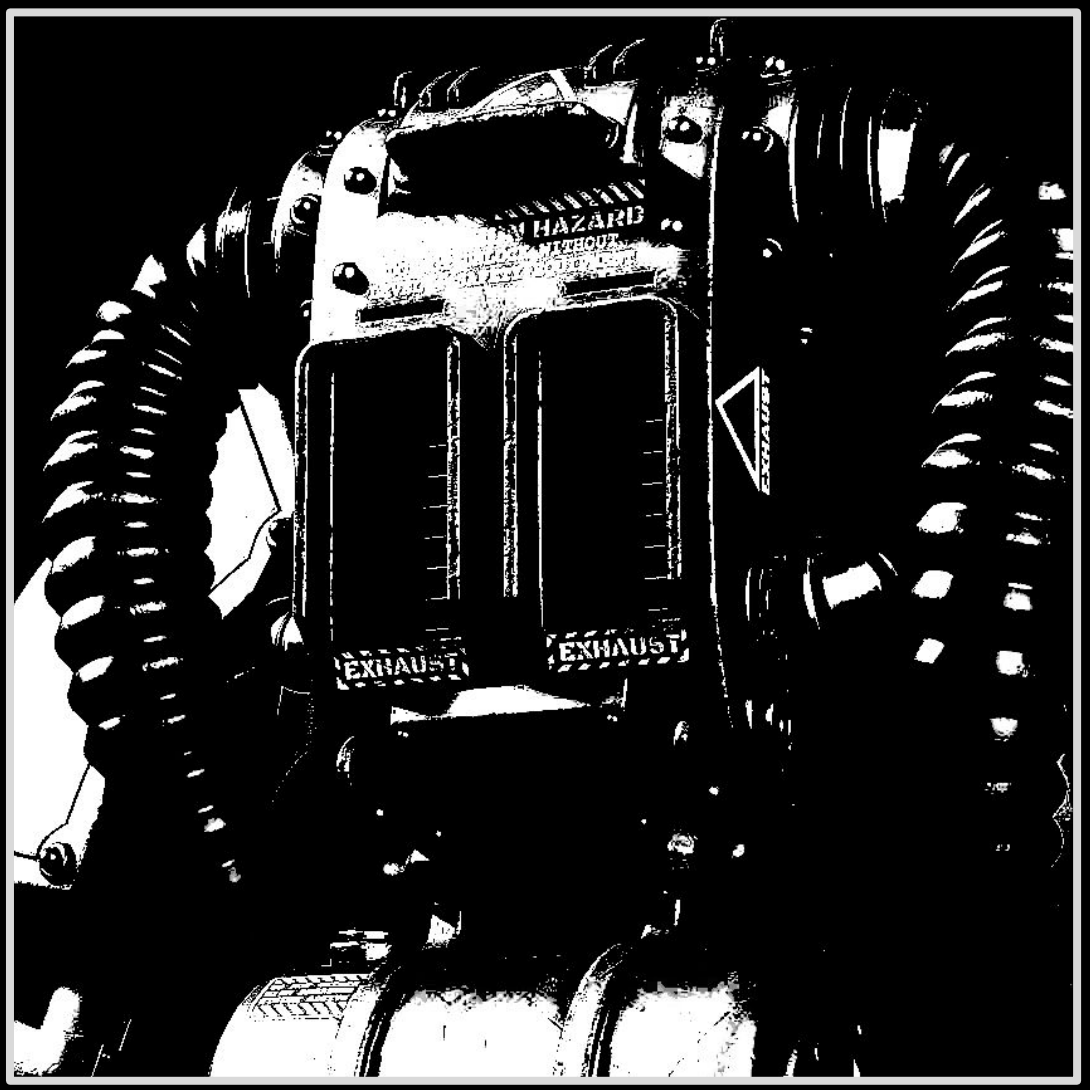
The blade is not only sharper and more durable than any other alloy available, but is also designed to deliver fluids or gas typically pumped from a cartridge or a suit’s own air supply. The cartridge can be switched out to include lethal injectables such as toxic gas, liquid acid, or more exotic concoctions like hypergolic gel and pyrophoric gas, which can cause a target to spontaneously ignite.

Zapor FissiCore VI

The first Zapor fission generators powered mid-bulk haulers in the mines of Tybruk as a cheap alternative energy source, eventually deemed too volatile in their radiation output after a fiscal-cycle's worth of ore caused poisoning in several products. It wouldn't be until the creation of auto-harnesses for the Barakan that the Zapor would resurface. As Barakan are relatively immune to radiation, there is no concern for the Zapor's output.

The back unit supplies the assault-harness with power for its limb thrusters, strength enhancers, cogit-hood, providing a Barakan with all the power it might need.

Later models were made more compact and the introduction of velanite resulted in a drop in malignancies reported in proximity to Barakan operations.



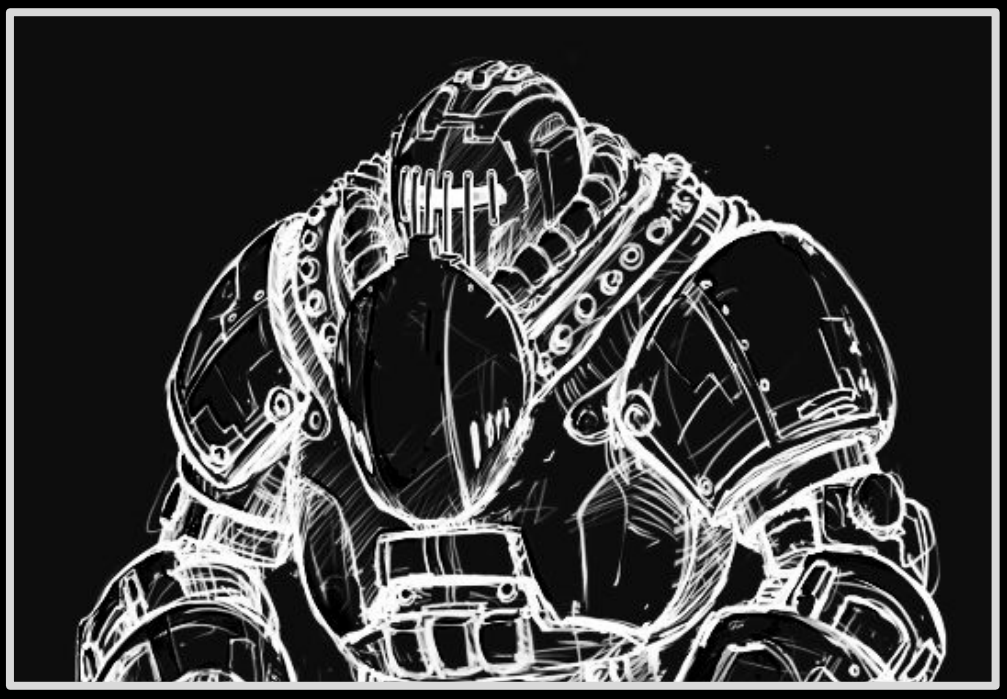
Barakan in assault-harness “Tetsudyne” with autoplate

The Barakan Elite have always worn empowered suits of armor, even before auto-harnesses became available. At the start of their history in the 2nd fiscal century, when they were first deployed against the Catraethi, they wore only autoplate. This made them uniquely capable in combination with their provolved physiognomy and the various chemical narcotics that acted as performance multipliers.

*Called **Badak** class empowered armor, this hulking suit has no independent power source such as a reactor backpack, and lacks a cogit-hood as well. They are nonetheless twice as powerful than the Tetsudyne class and are capable of absorbing incredible amounts of damage while remaining operational.*

Badak armor is powered by eight hyper-dense batteries. This allowed for heavier plates of tungsten carbide to be fitted, making them all but immune to weapons fire to the front of their suits. This is regarded as the key reason as to why the Catraethi were defeated, since they had prepared for frontal assaults, a former weakness of the Directorate, and could not adapt.

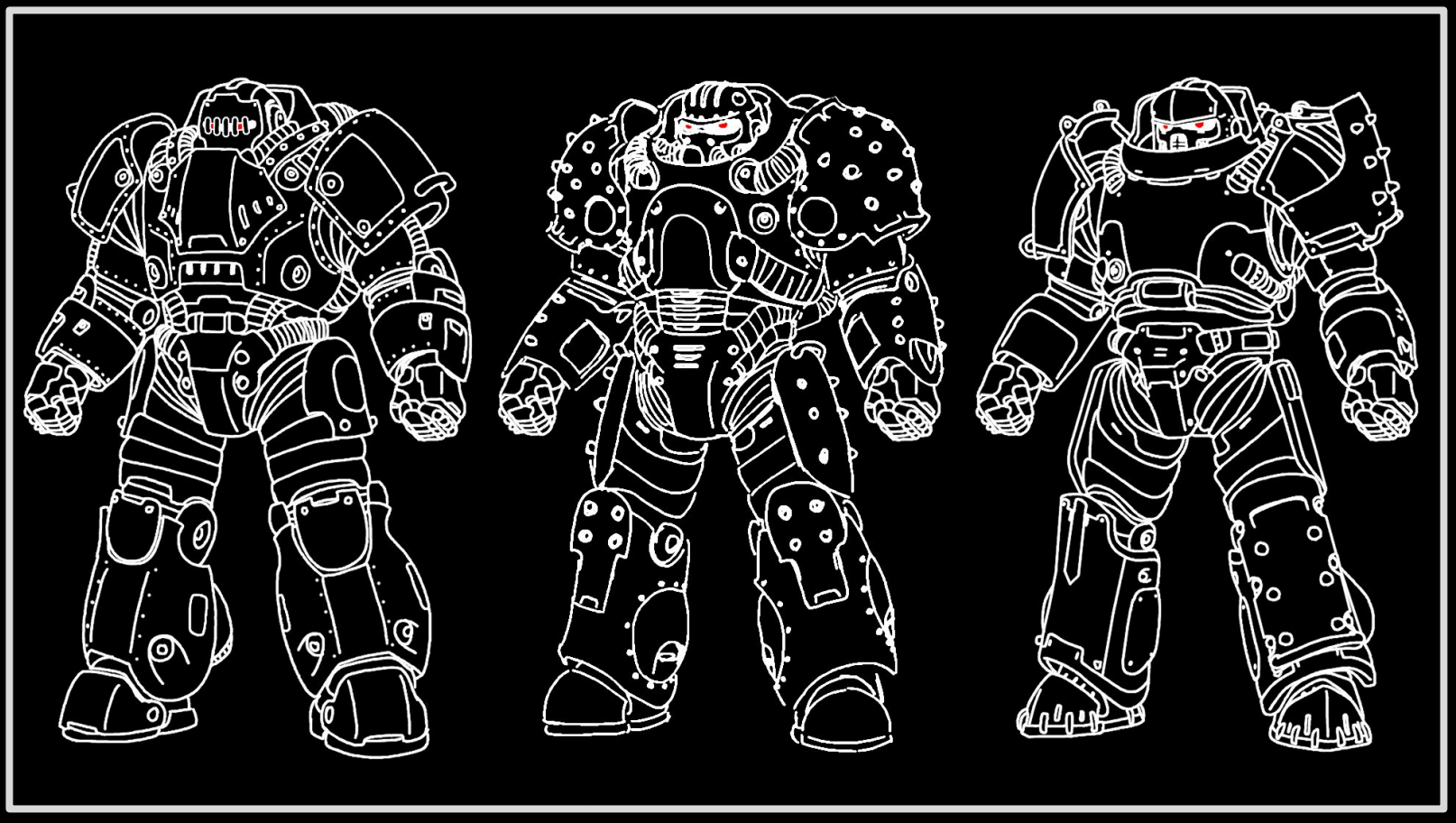
Badak armor is almost never seen anymore outside of museums like the Great Menagerie of Protea. It remains iconic amongst the Consumer class as every RevShare Day features the holiday Exuberance performance depicting the Fall of Catraeth, a fan favorite, showcasing the end of hereditary despotism in Known Space in exchange for stellarization. Additionally, a festive depiction of a Badak is used as a mascot for Colaris carbonated beverages and is associated with RevShare gifts and bonuses.



Evolution of Barakan class Auto-Harnesses

Like the creation of the Barakan themselves, the patent holders for Barakan type assault-harness/autoplate are unknown to all, save the highest intelligence authorities and the MacroCorps that make them.

Special manufactories are maintained at Barakan facilities, where plans and details are fed into special logicors that fabricate the armor to the specifications of the Taskmasters and Overseers. These are then prepped, by whom it is not known, and passed on to Travan Serviles and properly cognitively reformatted Indentured who then insert a docilized Barakan into its armor unit.



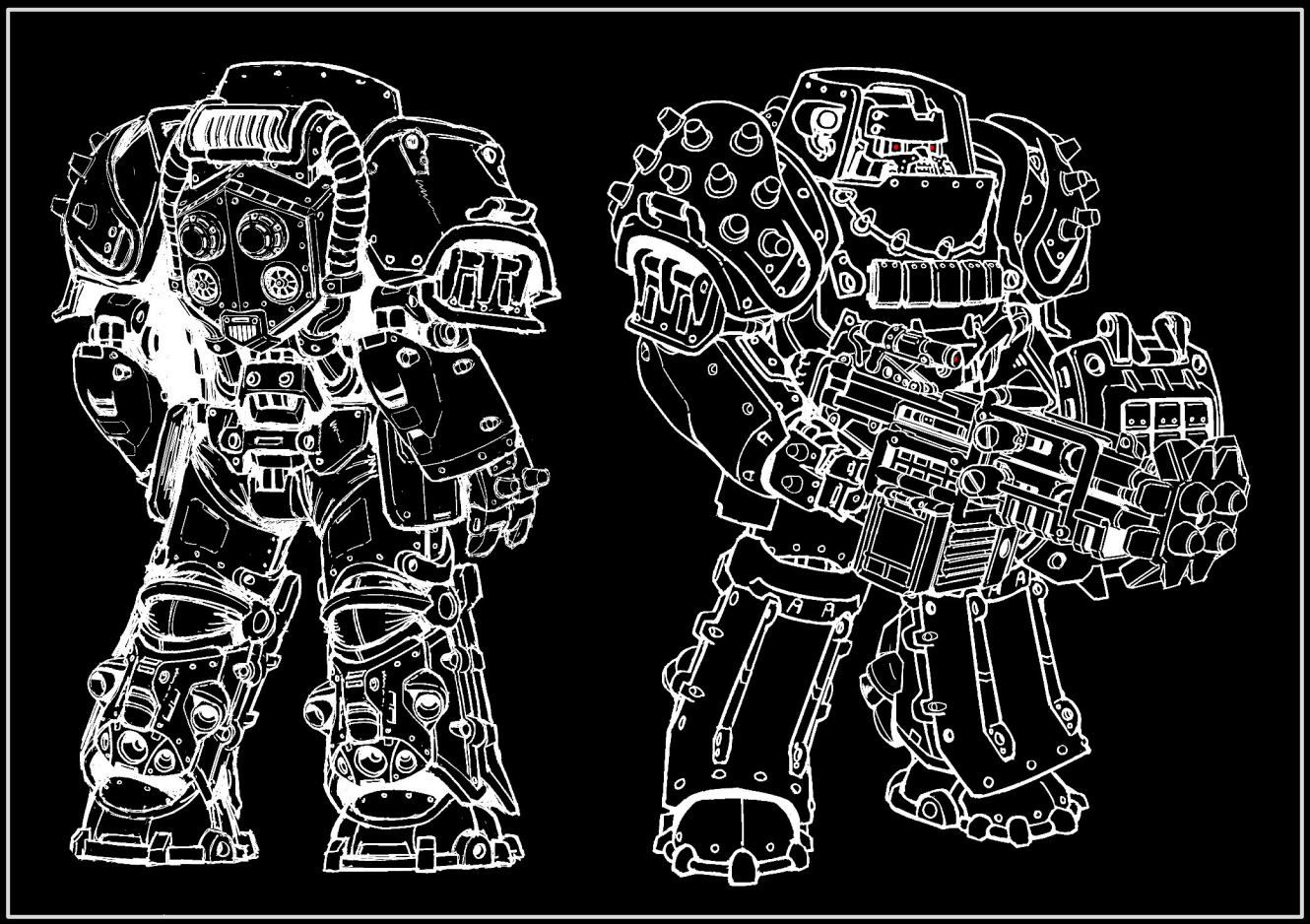
Badak class | Kovanaz class | Tetsudyne class

Sturyok Heavy Assault-Harness

Sturyok Grade 1 Heavy Assault-Harnesses are the escalation of Barakan responses to conflicts like the Great Strikebreak. Featuring increased nusteel plating and a velanite furnace, the Sturyok incorporates enormous firepower with armor and, frighteningly, speed.

Sturyok, often called “heavies” or “bulks” by Tributaries, can deploy as far up as near orbit into a target zone. Heavy thrusters in their legs allow them to slow their massive weight in combination with shock absorbers in the boots. Barakan deployed as such typically ‘drop’ from near-lethal heights in order to cause shockwaves when they land, usually directly into enemy combatants, or form cover through the resulting crater.

Sturyok are usually armed with a variety of heavy weapons. Seen below is the *rampulse*, a two-handed high calibre heavy automat combined with a gas-powered breaching ram. Sturyok will also wear breacher shields on their supporting arm to ensure greater suppressive ability when advancing and to deter incoming combatants.



TRAVAN SERVILES

The Travan, pronounced as a rolling “t” in Uttar, are the population of non-Barakan that labor for the Divisions. Who these people were before is unknown, and there are no recorded instances of communication with Travan, only observation. As the Barakan refuse to allow ergoids aboard their vessels, it falls upon the Travan to maintain, repair, and tend to the needs of Barakan as they emerge, often violently, from their deprivation vaults.

Despite these many tasks, the Travan aboard even the Barakan strikerunners is relatively small, implying an unheard of, or even illegal, level of automation. Magnates and Directorate officers that have been aboard Barakan ships have been disturbed by the vast open spaces, empty hallways, and unnerving stillness aboard a vessel that should be teeming with laborers and caeliner crew.

Travan do not enter combat zones and remain aboard the vessels that brought the Barakan from the Outside. That said, they will defend their stations with a manic ferocity and attack anyone not specifically identified by the Overseers aboard Barakan vessels.

The means for descent performed by Barakan ships is not understood, even by MassTrader Pilots. While Barakan are functionally immune to the effects of the Outside, it is unclear how the Travan survive such transits. Speculation persists, but remains limited, for even whispering about such matters has a tendency to lead to accidents, often fatal, by those who do any investigating into the Barakan. Caeliners themselves refuse to even mention them by name, the word itself steeped in superstition.

The Barren Sanctuary

Barakan in combat are terrifying to behold, but much of their endless, inexhaustible frenzy is a result of constant overstimulation. Their world is a blur of sound, color, and sensory overload, and the violence they commit is, though they would never admit to it, a desperate attempt to make it stop. This is why Barakan ships deployed to real space are equipped with sensory deprivation tanks.

In the Outside, there is only an endless expanse of *nothing* that drives most humans insane. However, in this blank expanse is the closest the Barakan can get to mental peace. As such, the Barakan stay within this anti-existence as much as possible. Unlike most ships which shutter every viewport when entering the great nothing used for travel, Barakan-controlled vessels have entire sections of their stations made of reinforced plexsteel so that they may bear witness.

While in the Outside, the Barakan are calm, docile, and almost meditative. Even their drills and combat simulations are conducted with a kind of placid contemplation that no Con in the entire Hegemon would believe. The cocktails of chems the Kotar are given by their Taskmasters in real space are barely needed, replaced with a mix that contains the chemicals the rank and file are no longer able to naturally produce to sustain their own lives, and just enough of their other drugs to prevent withdrawal symptoms.

The Summit Council approves of this situation in part because of the logistical benefits it brings. In addition to a reduction in the cost of supplies needed to maintain the Barakan, it also means that the Hegemon's shock troops can be deployed with amazing speed. Unfettered by the terrible side effects that most humans experience, their cloistered existence within the barren space means that they are able to exit into real space anywhere in the Hegemon's domain almost instantaneously.

There is a rumor, whispered amongst longhaul caeliners who operate close to Barakan, that there is an orbital fortress within the Outside called the "Ankr." Myths and legends speak of a mountain of quarkal, of screams that echo through the nothing, of living nightmares that hunger for blood. If such a place does exist, it is likely beholden to some kind of empathic resonator that is the origin of such children's stories.

Notable Barakan Divisions

The creation of Barakan divisions is unknown to all but the Summit Council and those who tend to the inner workings of The Market. The reason for this is two-fold; Such secrecy ensures that a combat tool like the Barakan is reserved for those most properly educated to utilize them and retains the exclusivity of deploying such assets.

There have been several incidents which have taught the Hegemon the dire consequences of widespread comprehension of such matters. Regulation, in this instance, is for the benefit of the vast majority of Consumers and the pursuit of profit. Keeping information from the Overseers themselves provides an additional element of safety and, most importantly, control.

After all, incidents like the Marketfall of 2/39-155 were a direct result of the Divisions coordinating with one another. While initially beneficial for obvious reasons, a coordinated upper leadership could be quickly compromised. The effects of that lost decade still affect credit scores throughout the Hegemon, and the permanent loss of prime real estate in the Last City remains a constant reminder to the Magnates.

Division creation is therefore always kept within the private ledgers of Wanvath Underwriting, who supports the Summit and the Orgas. For the purposes of this document, know that there were initially five Divisions, three of which struck the Catraethi system in the strike on the Empress's palatial estate. A further two were utilized in a counter-strike to deter Catraethi fleet elements that attempted to recover the Empress as she was taken into a descent to be brought to Protea.

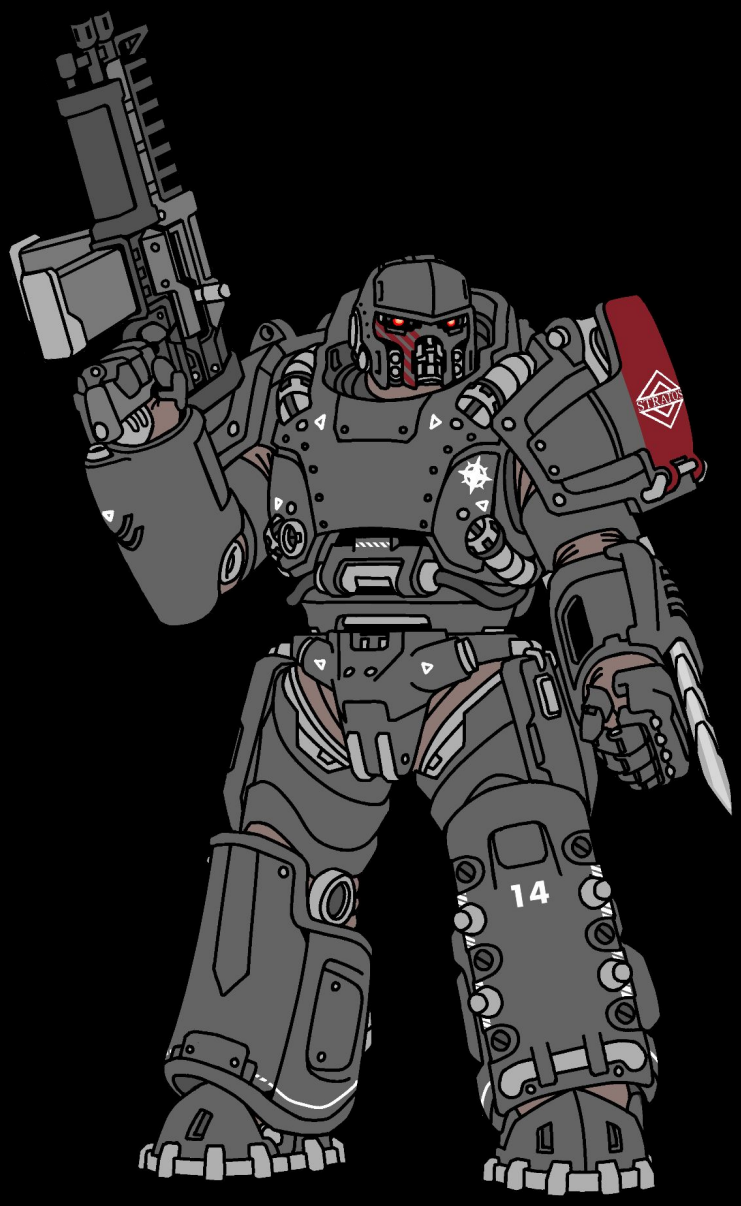
Division creation multiplied exponentially with each MacroCorp demanding this new development for their own designs. With enough financing they could contribute to a Division, but monopolizing creation was prohibited in most cases. Barakan Divisions can only be made by methods understood by the Overseers and, strangely, the Divines of the MassTrader Union.

The 14th: The Pale Tempest (Ash/Red)

The 14th is one of the oldest Divisions and one of the first to become known throughout the Hegemon when they assaulted Catraeth itself and abducted the Empress. They now make that planet their base of operations, remaining in suspended animation deep within the catacombs of their citadels that dot that dead planet.

The 14th are numerous, capable of marshalling hundreds and thousands of Kotar which they hurtle at contracts with abandon. These tactics are the most horrifying and have earned the Barakan throughout Known Space a reputation so horrifying that most belligerents will immediately beg for negotiations rather than suffer the absolute extermination the 14th are known for.

Their moniker comes from their tradition of smearing the atomized ash of Catraeth onto their armor and skin, an oddly human tradition. It is believed that this is somehow honoring the first Barakan victory.



The 39th: Iron Teeth (White/Red)

Parade colors represent the 39th's primary financiers: Bersarang Multi-Stellar. Kotar of the 39th began replacing their lower jaws through bionetic augmentation and their teeth with nusteel implants, which earned the Division their monicker. Why Barakan add such additional changes to their already heavily altered bodies is as esoteric and confounding as anything.

The Iron Teeth are predominantly fleet-based, operating their own vessels and remaining aboard them, unique amongst the Barakan Divisions. As a result, they excel in boarding actions and combat in non-atmospheric conditions.

Contracting with the 39th always requires provisions of some kind, leaving contractors confused as Barakan do not eat solid foodstuffs.

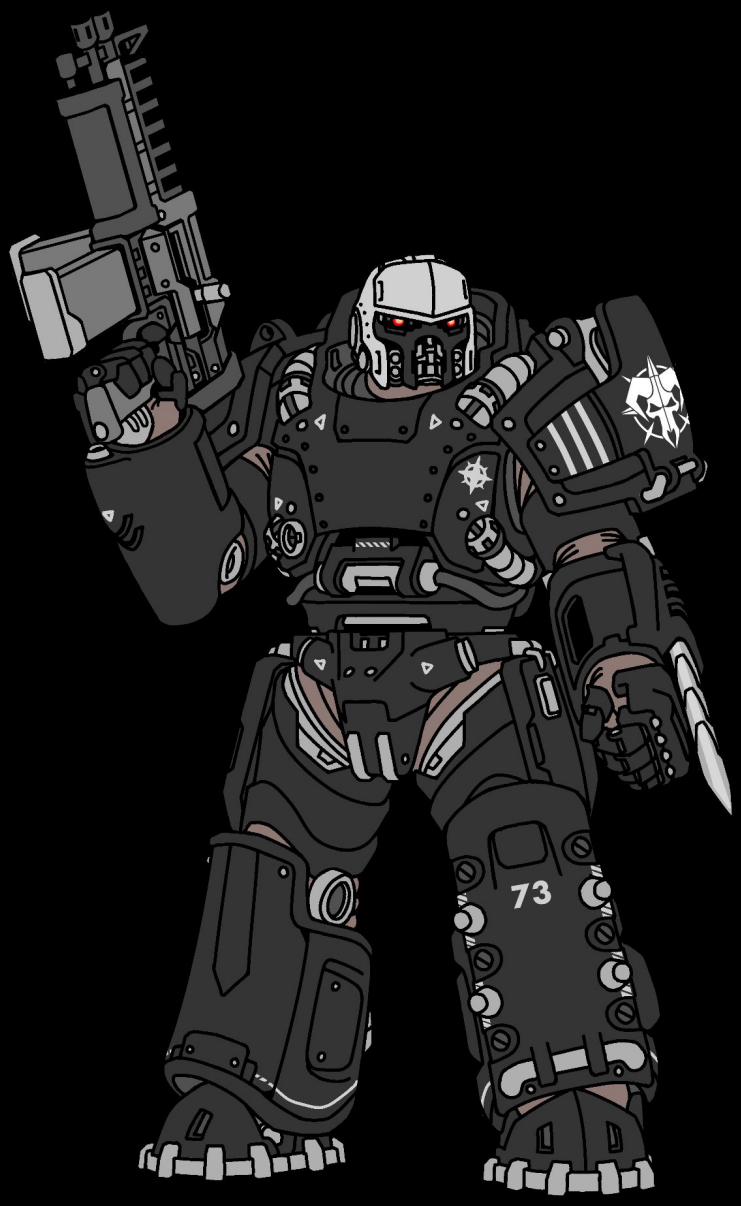
Their ships are most often seen escorting Bersarang Multi-Stellar bulk-produce freightliners through active conflict zones or areas plagued by piracy or hostile Exogen activity. As a result of their fleet activities, they are often considered the fastest responders once their price is paid.

73rd: Securus (Matte black/White)

The 73rd were formed from one of the Divisions that initially attacked Catraeth with the Pale Tempest. However, their goal was not the palatial grounds, but a remote polar complex which they pacified, occupied, and then quietly abandoned as the atomika firestorm from the rest of the Barakan assault took effect on the planetary biome.

The Securus have no known contracts with MacroCorps and it is unclear where they get the necessary resources to be a Barakan fighting force. They answer the Summit's calls when required, and quickly withdraw once the bare minimum of an objective is complete.

It has been rumored amongst the upper echelons of the Authority that a Division of Barakan have somehow constructed a permanent base in the Outside that goes by the name Ankr. *This development is both of great interest and not a little alarm.*



198th: The Taarubahk (Dark red/Yellow highlights)

Responsible for a three fiscal-cycle long extermination venture against Exogen 49_3π, it is rumored that the funds to create the Taarubahk were almost exclusively raised by Redsea Security in the 8th Fiscal Century. This initially bankrupted the Hegemon's second largest miliCorp, but it allowed them to expand their operations and gain a slew of contracts that quickly doubled their original holdings.

Despite this, Redsea was chastised for attempting to monopolize the use of the 198th and forced to pay reparations to several nation-states. The Magnate of Redsea was ultimately forced to step down due to shareholder distress, but it earned the miliCorp preferential treatment with the 198th.

Geks for the Taarubahk are drawn almost exclusively from Redsea operatives.

The 208th: Shatterfist (Green/umber/clay)

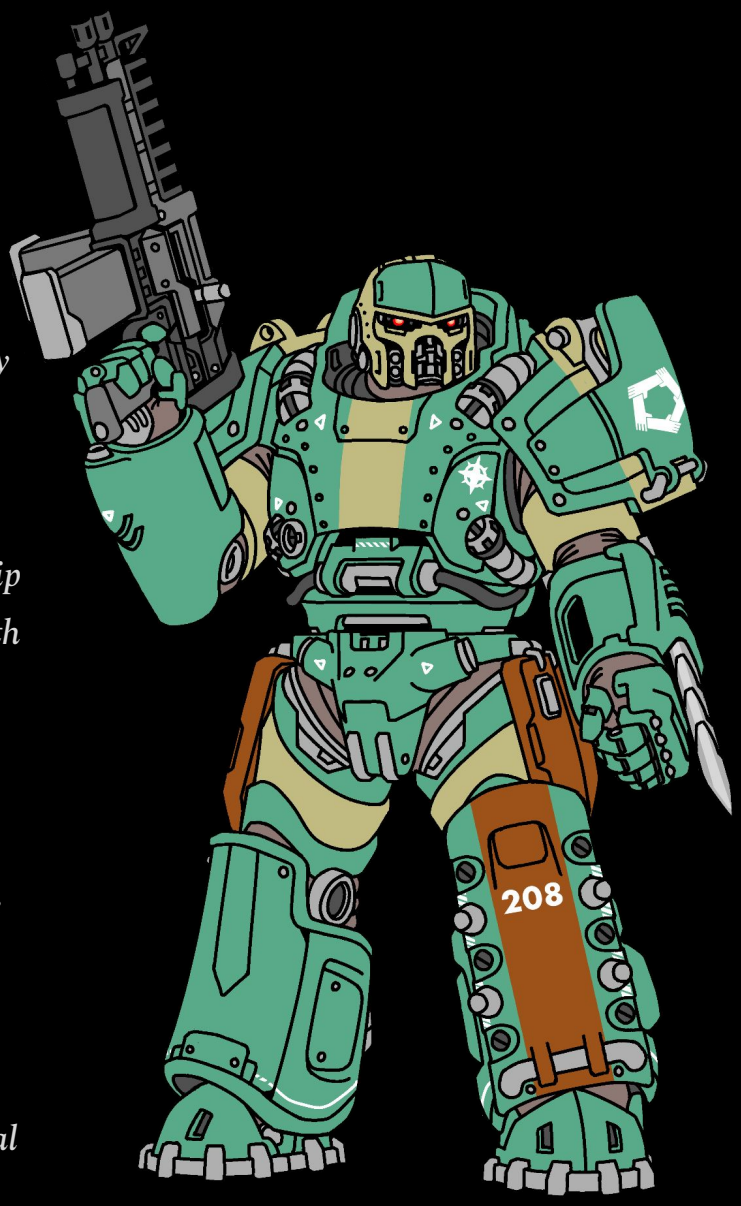
Savage beyond compare, the 208th has an exclusive contract with Five Hands Panceuticals since the Hostile Takeover of Umbra Unlimited when the MacroCorp contracted these Barakan to deliver an astral-virus in a decapitating operation of the board of directors.

Since then, the 208th is a major part of Five Hands Panceuticals operations as the MacroCorp does not readily employ mercenaries and prefers limited security Corps.

The 208th utilizes esoteric nanoid capabilities despite the interdiction on such tech. Reports of enemy and partnership individuals alike slowly disintegrating in proximity to 208th operations are not uncommon while stories of Barakan regrowing *damaged flesh have been confirmed.*

There are further upgrades that are believed to be performed by Five Hands on the 208th to make them more resilient and adaptable to wherever the MacroCorp needs them to operate. Taskmasters observed without their helmets reveal further augmentations, such as removed eyelids with constantly working tear ducts, or exposed nasal bridges. While not exclusive to the 208th, this consistency in their physical appearance has raised questions about attempts to create a new 'provolved' instance of Barakan.

Most interestingly, the 208th seemingly has limited upper hierarchy, with no Overseers present and rarely any Taskmasters.



The 333rd: Delvers (Bright Red/Warning symbols)

Barakan in internal security roles are typically painted bright red for the purposes of identification while black is the primary choice for field operations.

Practically exclusive in contract with Katabasis Dynamics, the 333rd primarily serve as a last resort security measure for Katabasis deepforges and installations, in addition to to providing security for high-value shipments of deepforged materials.

Although the 333rd's duties are less demanding in comparison to other Barakan divisions, they almost rival conventional Divisions in numbers thanks to generous funding from Katabasis. Due to this, Katabasis enjoys significant influence across Known Space despite its otherwise relatively minor status, and does not hesitate to freely unleash the 333rd when its invaluable supply chain is threatened by matters such as trade disputes.

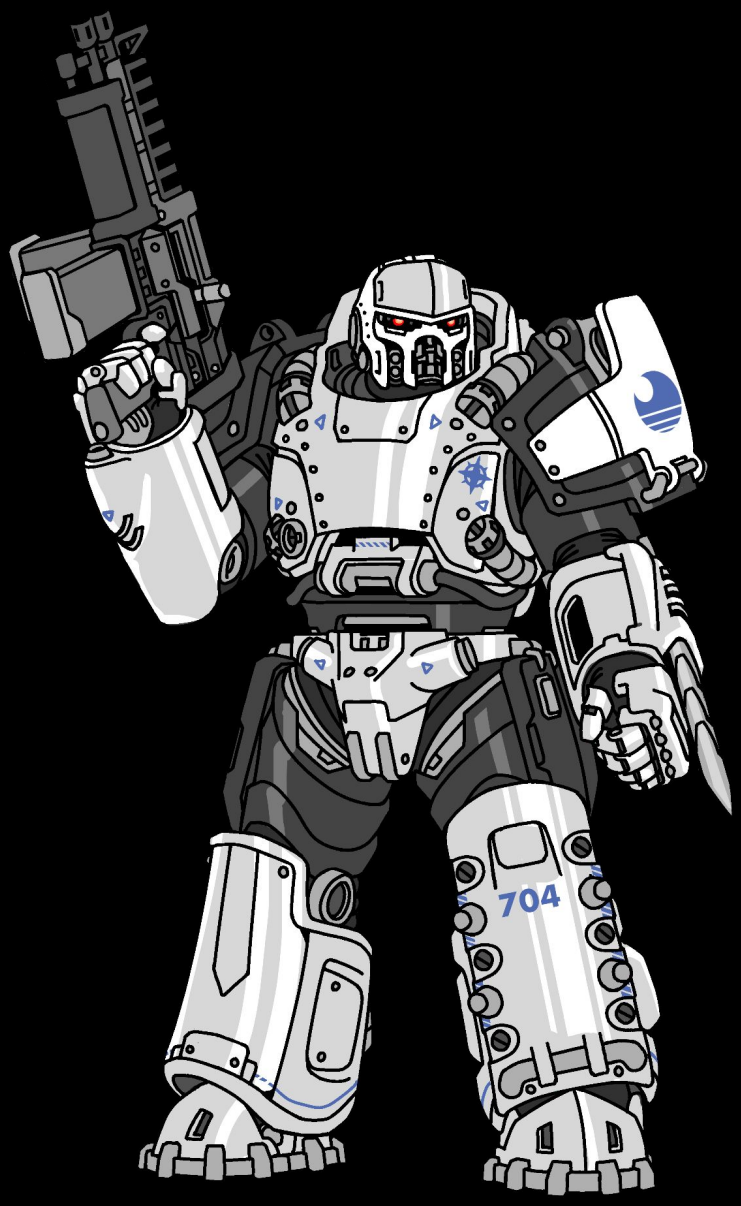
It is rumored that the Division has upgraded its equipment with exotic byproducts of deepforging, such as quarkal alloy and a slew of ultradense materials.

The 704th: Gmnao (White/Silver)

Few have seen as much action as the Gmnao *who operate almost exclusively in the coreward supersectors, duskward of Protea. The 704th are Exogen hunters and desperately needed as colonial efforts push into the Norma Arm. Older, more established, foreign life has been found here with little-to-no human contact.*

As such, the 704th is based in and around the Kosmosec Arsenal Worlds where they make heavy use of new weapon systems. Additionally, they are directly supported by Yinntosh Innovative who ensure the Division operates with some of the highest grade equipment in the Hegemon.

No other Barakan are as sought after as test-subjects for new products every RevShare during the Games. Despite the obvious fear and aversion most people have for the Barakan, something about the Gmnao's sleek profiles and calm manner make them at odds with the bloodthirsty norms of their cousins.



The 990th: Hunkil (Blue/Red)

With the rise of Shigue migrations all along the Vela Nebula, the Copper Kings have quietly begun petitioning for more permanent forces to stage in their borders under the guise of prime sport being readily available. This masks an ulterior motive - the Kings do not wish to appear scared of the multiplying Exogen contacts detected deeper in the nebula that are approaching, slowly but surely.

In an effort led by Prince Loi'azenev via his connections to the Overseers of the Pale Tempest Division, a new contract was drawn up for the development of an entirely new Division. How this was done, or even how much it cost, remains a mystery, but a new Division known as the 990th, after the date of their creation, have now been seen in potential weak points throughout the Mashiba Development Zone.

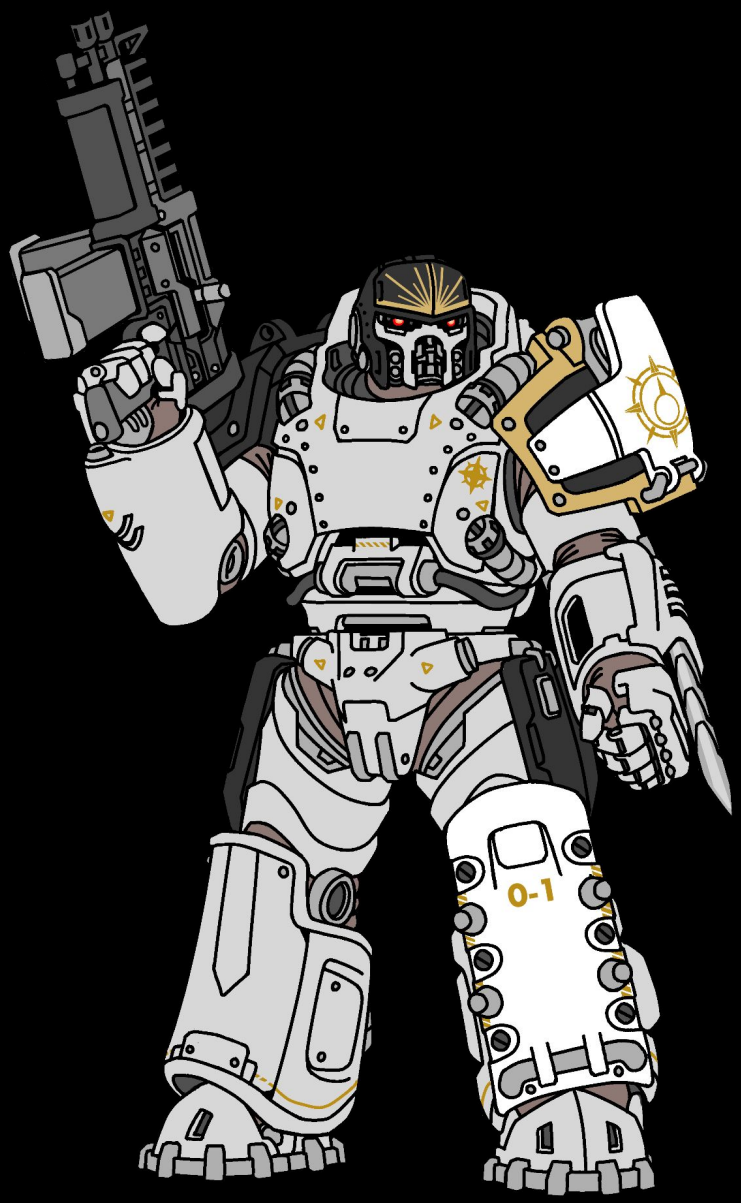
Armed with pristine and up-to-date weaponry, the 990 have quickly grown a fearsome reputation as they use several Loi'azenev weapon systems unique to that culture, such as velanite flame projectors.

The 0-1 (Burnt umber, black/white)

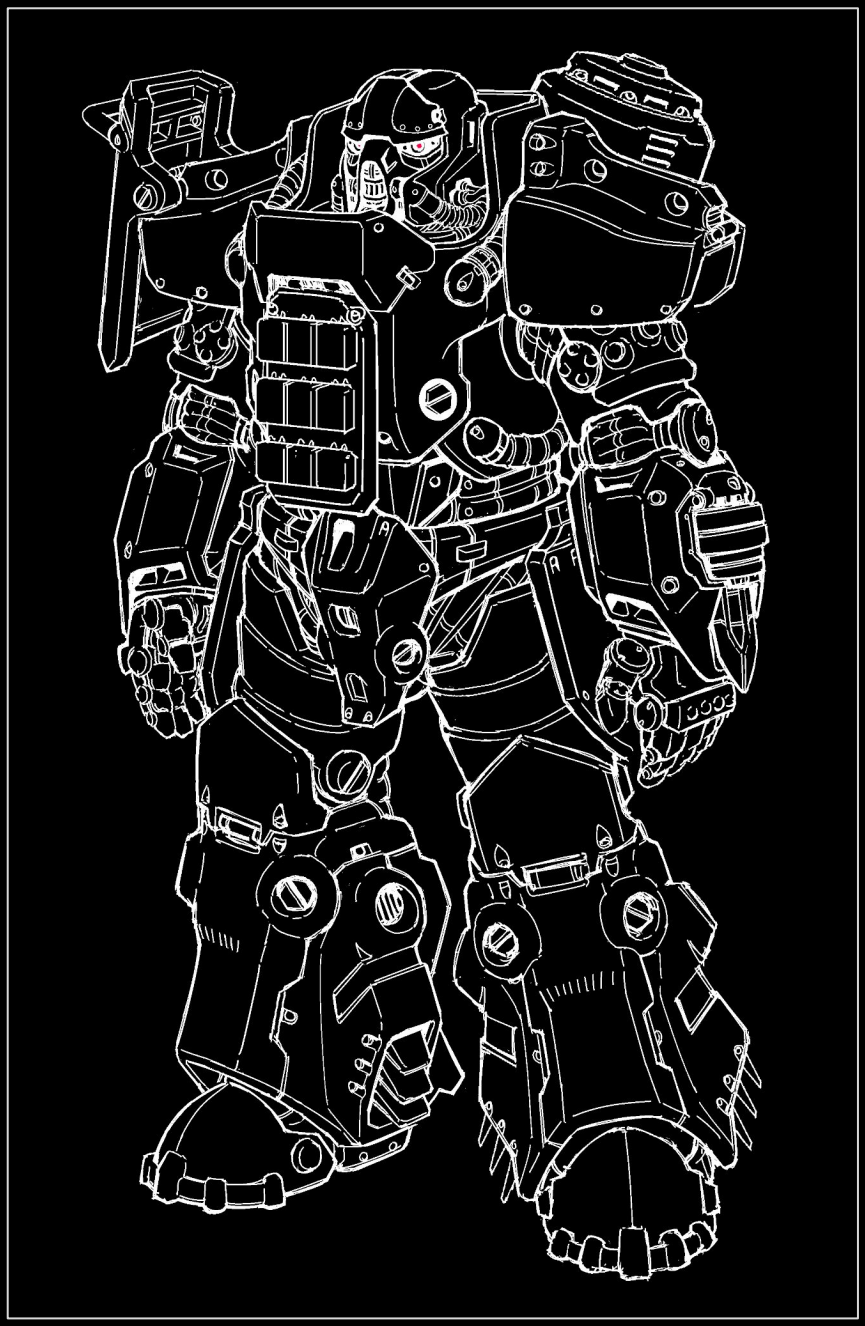
Painted in the yellow and white pattern of the Protean Minarchy, Division 0-1 operates on behalf of The Market and the Summit Council. It is the only Barakan Division to adopt such a personal inference with a nation and has received consistent scrutiny from the other nations.

The 0-1 is the smallest numerical Division, but also presumably were the first Barakan fabricated in the war with Catraeth based on their name. Since the beginning they have been contracted to ferry important dignitaries and cargo to and from Protea.

Notably, 0-1 seemingly have no Kotar in their service, with only Taskmasters and Overseers ever catalogued.



The Askarin

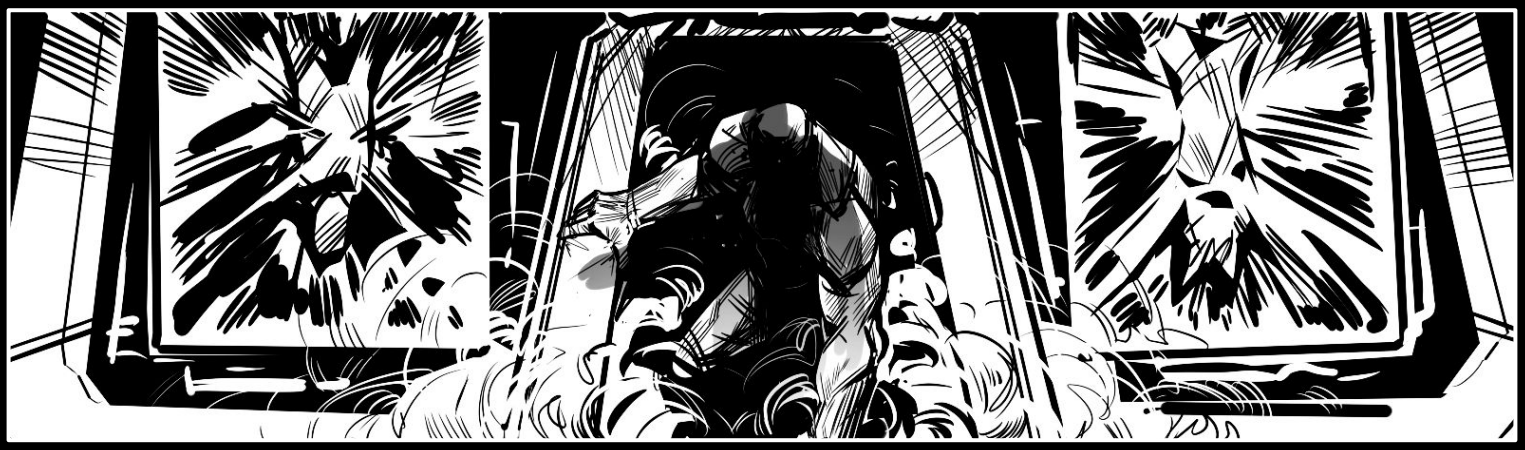


A different breed of Barakan, it is unclear what exact purpose the Askarin serve. Like the Overseers and Taskmasters, they can communicate with non-Barakan, with examples of them directing Tributaries and mercenaries who are often too terrified to be concerned with notions of chain of command and disagreement.

Reports are scattered, but it is known that they have Grade S technologies, utilizing them to conduct their own objectives that are clearly separate from those of even other Barakan. Askarin do not belong to any one Division but instead wander, appearing in a combat zone and disappearing just as quickly without trace.

What is known is that, should a Barakan body be unable to be be recovered, the Askarin will appear and render the corpse down, denying study or recovery.

They are encased in a unique autoplate / auto-harness combination which bears the same name as the Askarin themselves, featuring dozens of bespoke and unique modular capabilities such as advanced flight systems, kowari armor reinforcement, and an unknown weapon system capable of reducing objects, or individuals, to component atoms.



The Hegemon is built around the cornerstone of choice. Every decision and every repercussion is done by the willing who are expected to inundate themselves with data and facts. Only by an informed Consumer can a strong economy exist. The practiced salesman that places the correct facts before a customer is no different in a competitive ecosystem than the predator and prey in the wilds of nature. The quality of a product is second to its ability to perform in the marketplace. It is here that true belief, belief in a brand or a sponsor, reveals itself as one of humanity's truest expressions of will over the universe. The eye of the beholder, the possessor of relativity, defies and conquers petty laws of physics as New Mankind forges its reality in the image of its efforts.

The Barakan are the truest form of our species' ability manifest.

They are the men and women who have chosen the truest expression of their comprehension. In their earliest form they were simple veterans of conflict, but as they are groomed by the skillful hands of their leaders, they realize a more meaningful calling that speaks to desires older than the profit of coin.

In their Becoming they pursue the relinquishing of doubt. Each Barakan knows the true and terrible answer to this thing we cling onto called 'life' and in this Knowing they become the embodiment of pure and perfect Avarice. They are the embodiment of our people's Need. They are the truest form of our destiny.

~ Staephak Jandaali, Archonist Magnate of Yinntosh Innovation

The femme was hauled into the cell, already bound with fasteners. The three Tributaries, even in armor, looked like they'd been through the ringer with black eyes, bleeding noses, and one of them nursing an arm that had been dislocated. The femme, by contrast, barely had an elevated heart rate and was breathing through her nose in long, steady breaths. Broker Cuufer was impressed, leaning forward and flicking the "on" switch on the mic from behind the one-way mirror.

"Specialist-Sergeant Teal, you're a hard femme to chase down." Cuufer chuckled, seeing if she'd quake.

She looked up approximately where she thought he was standing, "Just do it..."

"Do what?" Cuufer said, mocking a hurt expression.

Teal shrugged, her muscles overly defined from malnutrition. "These portholes' hurt feelings is gonna cost me. They smell like corpo scum and the bleed like hired help. Two of them didn't make it. If you're skiptracers you can add it to my bill but, let me tell you, mom and dad didn't leave much and my Tributary contract's ended on this ball of shit spinning through the black." She spat at one of Cuufer's men who flinched and stepped back with a yelp.

They were scared, badly. And they'd done this many times before. Impressive.

Teal's commanding officer had been all but buzzing in his report. He'd boasted that he'd never seen a Gek like Teal before. Cuufer had arrived three days late, a bad translation through the Outside, and by then Teal had lost it and shot up her own bunker over... some kind of locker dispute, and killed five. She'd been down in the lower levels of this city prowling around, a general terror to everything she ran into and over.

"You're right, there's a hefty bill and your debt is so high you'll be an 'dent the moment you're processed by the Directorate." He dropped an octave, "But we're not skiptracers."

She flexed. The decade's worth of Tributary dermarks, the ink faded under tanned skin, rippled. "You better just send me to a hellscraper and drop me in the lowest level. I'm..." she shuddered, eyes rolling around her skull for a moment. "Barely holding on!" She laughed, voice straining. The men took a step back, hands going for shock sticks.

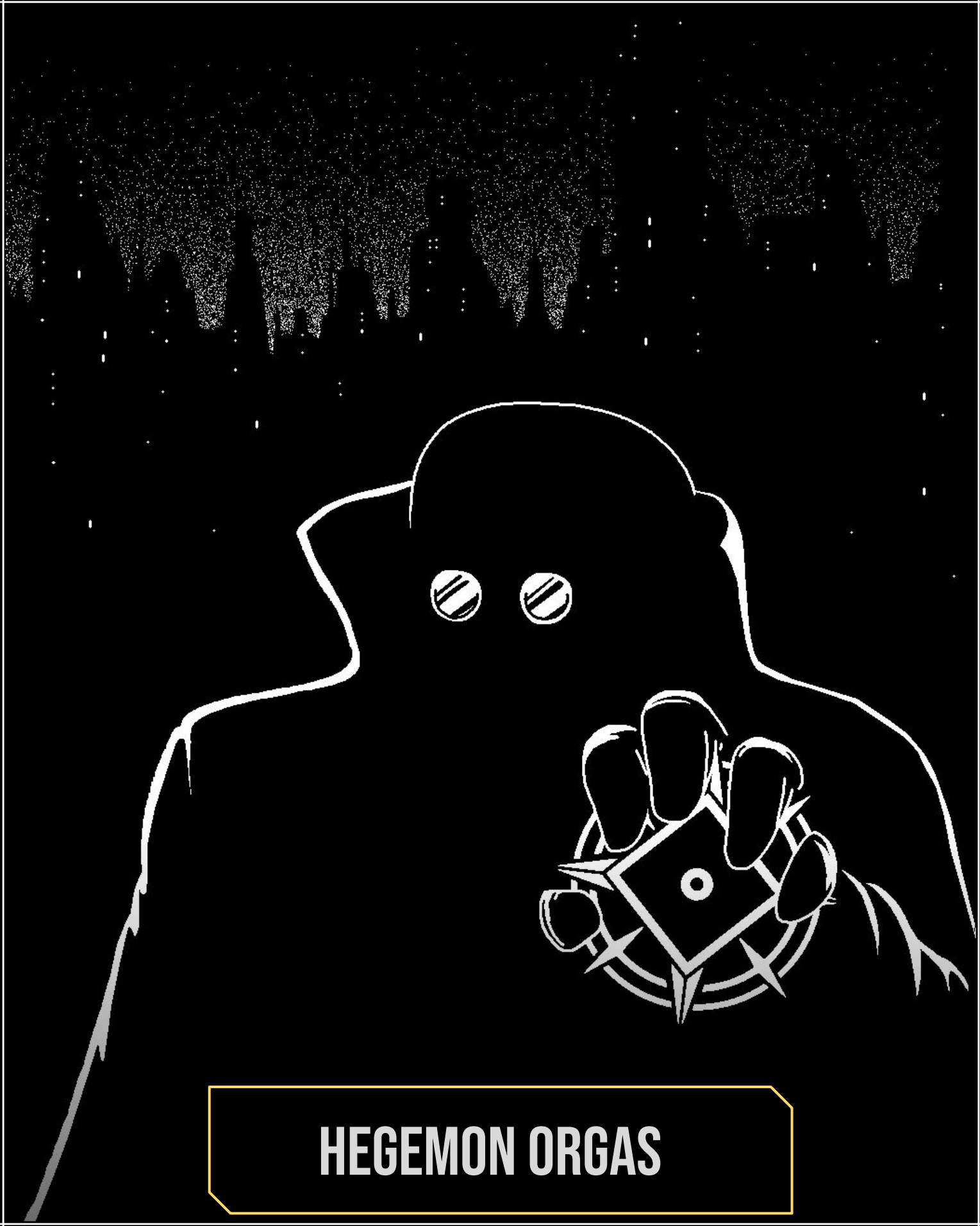
"Or–" Cuufer stood and quickly made his way to the door, walking into the room. He wouldn't normally risk his own skin, but his hands had started to itch with anticipation. "Or, there's another way. A way out of all this."

"All what?" She looked him up and down and, profits be, he almost pissed himself.

"The debt, the responsibilities, this endless cycle, Yaia Teal." He dared using her full name and was rewarded as something in those pain filled eyes twinkled. There was hope in there, shrinking, but there.

Maybe she knew. They sometimes did, the Geks. Sometimes they picked up enough of the cues that everyone almost knew about, but by then it didn't matter. Cuufer imagined it might be like if a fly eating shit realized what its purpose in existence was. He took out the contract from his vest with one hand and with the other he brought out a thumb scanner that would take her signature.

"A way out of the lie *that the Hegemon is."*



HEGEMON ORGAS

The Hegemon is approaching its first millennium since its founding by the visionary leader Dumno-Ualos. In the wake of the economic and financial destitution of the previous ages, Dumno-Ualos envisioned a new ethos that did not rely on military might or the privilege of bloodlines but on the perseverance of accumulating wealth. This vision was codified into the Manual and resonated with the Consumers who sought stability and prosperity through economic means. To realize this dream and protect it from future manipulations, Dumno-Ualos worked with fellow ExeCor leaders on the first Summit Council to create the Organizations, or *Orgas*, to safeguard the Hegemon forever.

There are three Orgas, the first and largest is the Directorate was established as a unified military-industrial complex, bringing together the resources and capabilities of all member nations. But the power was not placed on the warrior elite or the strategically superior but on the logistics and material management. Without resource pipelines guns will not shoot, tanks will not move and soldiers will not fight without pay.

The most powerful, however, is the Audit. The Audit is responsible for identifying external threats and providing oversight to ensure the financial good conduct of the MacroCorps and smaller governments. It acts as the guardian of the Hegemon's economic integrity, using its vast network of agents and advanced surveillance technologies to detect and neutralize any potential risks. The Audit's influence is felt across the entire Hegemon, making it a cornerstone of security and trust.

The second organization is the Commission, which evaluates the value and risk of resources and maintains the Lex. The Commission's role is to ensure that all economic activities within the Hegemon align with the overarching goals of stability and prosperity. It assesses the profitability of products and resources, combats criminal activities, particularly in shadowmarkets, and acts as an intelligence arm for the Directorate. The Commission's work is essential for maintaining the economic order envisioned by Dumno-Ualos.

Finally, there is the MassTrader Union, the eldest organization and the first authority on interstellar travel. The MassTrader Union plays a vital role in facilitating and regulating trade across the vast expanse of the Hegemon's territories. It ensures that trade routes are safe and efficient, and that the flow of goods and resources supports the Hegemon's economic growth. The Union's deep history and expertise in interstellar commerce make it an indispensable part of the Hegemon's

infrastructure. Together, these three organizations form a triumvirate that upholds the principles and stability of the Hegemon. Each Orgo has a distinct yet complementary role, ensuring that the vision of Dumno-Ualos continues to thrive nearly a millennium after its inception.

The Audit, with its extensive oversight capabilities, not only monitors financial transactions but also enforces regulations to prevent corruption and fraud. Its agents are trained to recognize and address any anomalies that might indicate wrongdoing, ensuring that the economic engine of the Hegemon runs smoothly and transparently.

The Commission, meanwhile, focuses on both economic evaluation and legal enforcement. Its role in assessing the value and risk of resources involves detailed analysis and strategic planning. Commissioners are often seen as arbiters of economic justice, ensuring that all entities within the Hegemon adhere to the Lex. This legal framework, established by Dumno-Ualos, provides the foundation for a fair and prosperous society where wealth is accumulated through merit and hard work rather than inherited privilege.

The caeliners of the MassTrader Union, as the first authority on interstellar travel, oversees a vast network of trade routes that connect the Hegemon's many worlds. It assists in the negotiation of trade agreements, enforces tariffs and duties through good practices, and ensures the safe passage of goods. The Union's fleet of ships and stations serves as both commercial hubs and defensive outposts, protecting the Hegemon's interests against piracy and other threats. Its long history and tradition of excellence have earned it the respect and trust of traders and Consumers alike.

Altogether, members of the Orgas are simply known as *Orgs* throughout Civil Space. They are respected and equally hated and for that the Summit ensures direct financing without additions from Corpos. In this way the Orgas are kept relatively unbiased and focused on their duties which, if compromised, can have cascading effects throughout society. Customary and legal bribes are accepted and often expected, but anything like full scale corruption is never tolerated.

Corpos often argue and petition leniency when subject to scrutiny by the Orgas. Litigators and Advocators of the Lex will often cite the Manual and its many criticisms of the risk of regulation and such proceedings can last fiscal centuries as generations of Lex experts argue each others cases.

Each of the Orgas makes heavy use of secondary and tertiary operators to accomplish their tasks generally in the form of skiptracers. Ever expanding contracts permeate Known Space, filling billboards and shotcalls with bounties ready to be filled out. The delivery of legal notices for subscription transgression, property repossessions and repurchases, and in very rare instances actual sanctioned executions are all open for any licensed individual to take on.

One can hide for a long time, but with space travel being so regulated and with bounties growing as they take longer to fulfill, few have the means to run forever.

These three Orgas stand sentinels in protection of Dumno-Ualos's vision and the ethos of the Hegemon. They have adapted and evolved over the centuries, but their core mission remains unchanged: to safeguard the prosperity and stability of the Hegemon. Through their combined efforts, the Hegemon continues to thrive, a beacon of economic stability and opportunity.

-- Better run, boy --

“Hegemon Commission, stand down and lower your weapons or we will open fire!”
The blue and red synth jackets flashed in the neon light, slick from the rain. Below, a dozen Consumers, likely dents based on their collars, raised their hands immediately as if the piles of narco tubes had burned them. The Commission officers made their way down the rickety stairs, their cycle-guns sweeping left and right, looking for threats. They found one all too quickly.

The security for this operation had been indulging in her own stash on a threadbare couch. She’d been using one of the tubes to inch out the paste onto a burner so she could suck down the resulting fumes. The narco was called ‘brix’ and had been seeping into Civil Space from one of the unincorporated spinward nations. It had made the local Commission look bad by not catching the shipment.

The security had forgotten the repeater in her lap when a threat to her patron’s business had kicked in the door. She tried to make up for it now, grabbing the weapon in a sloppy grab even before her chemical swamped brain could acknowledge the men already pointing guns at her.

Heavy calibre slugs exploded out of six different pistols, most of them hitting the hired thug in the neck and face where her body armor didn’t cover. A red swamp splattered on the wall behind her dotted with skull shards that stuck into the plastex sheet panels.

“Anyone else?” The lead Commission officer barked, as his boots hit the bottom landing. The warehouse was huge but empty save for the processing tables next to the open shipping crates. The Commission had been tipped off that such an order had arrived planetside a week ago from the MassTraders.

“Org scum!” A man, skinny from substance abuse, shouted through vapor blackened teeth.

The lead officer responded with another slug, blowing a fist sized hole in the man’s stomach.

“Aye, oh! No need for that, please, gentlemen!” A chortling man, a cheap ExeCor style suit all bright colors and low grade sonaw filigree. His fingers were already pulling out a leather cubit case, snapping it open despite the guns immediately tracking him.

“We can make a deal!”

The lead Commission officer smiled, the barrel of his gun still smoking. He holstered it, relaxing.

“That’s a good start.”

The Fiscal Assessment Council: The Audit

Like so many things in the Hegemon, the origin and details of bureaucratic entities are shrouded in not only the past but beneath mountains of paperwork. This is by design, for to know how something began is the first step in undermining its legitimacy. Countless patents, inventions and organizations have unravelled by attacking founders and creators, destroying public opinion or uncovering methods of duplicating the original.

And so, none know when the Audit came into being and those that seek such truths disappear.

The Audit regulates the pursuit of profit on every level within the Hegemon. It ensures order is brought to the potential chaos of Avarice run rampant. One may seek wealth and riches, as is their genetic right, but they must abide by the far grander pursuit that New Mankind seeks in its pursuit to quantify, label, evaluate, refine and profit from every aspect of creation.

While regulatory bodies are openly mocked even by those government's who foster them, the Audit stands alone in hushed respect. Similar in how the MassTrader Freight Union operates in spite of attempted trade unions and labor guilds, so too the Audit can engage directly with any profit seeking entity and demand to see how it functions.

This extends to the speculative, indeed, the Audit is primarily an *external* operating body dealing with hypothetical risks to the grander vision of The Market. As such, they do not even answer to the Summit Council, the Directorate and are seemingly beyond the influence of even the Archonists. They maintain their own agents, vessels and bases of operation funded by the fines they levy on those who break the codes of good fiscal conduct which includes paying the quarterly tariffs the Hegemon and local governments require to operate.

That said, through proper litigation, inventive accounting and abiding by the ever changing tax rituals, a financially wealthy individual or Corpo can actually exist with nominal payments. This only improves the Hegemon's macro economy by creating additional specialization which regulates that only the strongest market entities prosper.

To ascend in any meaningful way, economically, means an inevitable dealing with the Audit even if it takes centuries. When that time comes, an Auditor and their team will review financial records dating back to the origin of a MacroCorp, government or individual and proceed to apply any and all corrections each of which translates to a fine.

The collective fear of such an assessment is enough to, without further infrastructure, keep the whole of society in check regulating criminal activity to local criminal activity or the very worst unlok dissident gangs.

The Audit is responsible for classification of Exogens and is proactive in its nature often commissioning Armada and Army contingents to make forays into the Frontier and beyond in order to identify potential threats to commerce and opportunities for harvest. Apart of this process involves the discovery of new worlds whose value is further ascertained and then licenses created for governments and MacroCorps to purchase.

Near-humans are also assessed for cultural acceptability, via any manner of psychological and physical testing the Auditors might insist upon. With thousands of years of augmentation, provolved tampering and natural deviancy, the keystone factor of Avarice must be present in all beings claiming to be human.

Auditors themselves defy categorization. They often use proxies, augment their bodies with advanced organoids and it is rumored that some even partake in the life extension therapies of the Magnates. They amass dozens of specialists to assist them in their work and maintain an authority which is reinforced by the sheer terror Corpos have of being reviewed themselves. Corpos will actively volunteer or spend resources to divert attention away from themselves and to their opponents or even allies if it means being spared an audit themselves.

High Oversight

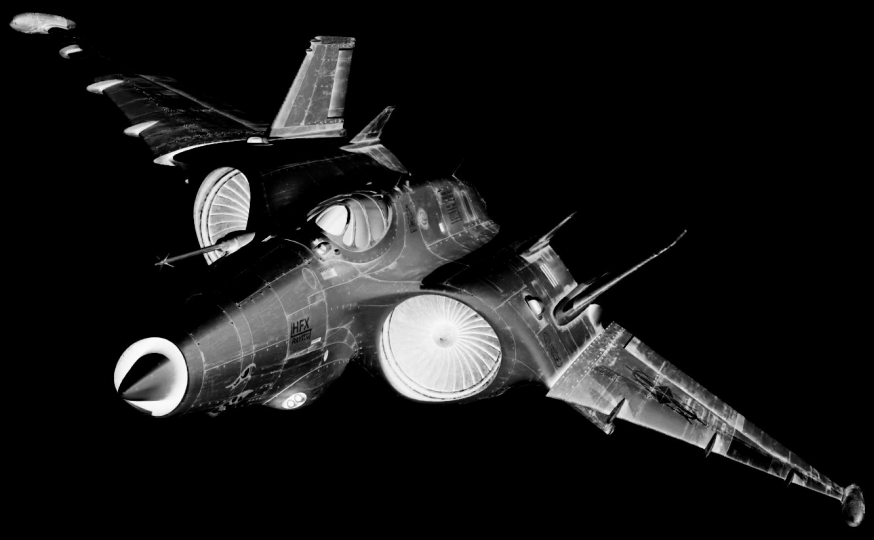
With its teeming billions surging beyond the confines of Known Space and the constant demand for new worlds to colonize, the vitality of New Mankind can bely the truth of how *old* Old Humanity was. Records and dating systems lack reliability but based on the megastructures found and the evidence of worldshaping of planets beyond the Frontier indicates that Old Humanity likely once inhabited a realm many times the size of the Hegemon and Known Space.

New Mankind's predecessors left many of its creations 'out of the box' which threaten the Consumers of the Hegemon everyday.

The Audit's Oversight Committee, also referred to as *High Oversight*, is charged with maintaining vigilance over threats that technology has yet to eradicate. These vary in extremes difficult to fully comprehend, but are each a threat to the Hegemon in their own right.

High Oversight maintains containment facilities throughout Known Space, sometimes even beyond the Frontier. These facilities harbor discoveries and creatures, individuals and concepts that must each be restrained or examined for the benefit of potential profit or safety.

Over the centuries, rumors of these installations and their purpose have become nigh mythological. Rather than attempt to smother such whispered stories, the Audit promotes knowledge of their charges making it impossible for people to know what's real and what's entertainment.



In a barren solar system absent from any charts, circling a lone dwarf star and accessible only by a leyline similarly not found in any published map or manual, there lies a barren rock of a world, one barely holding itself together, devoid of atmosphere, water, resources or anything else that might attract life, sophont or otherwise.

This small planet, known officially as C-1 by the few privileged enough to be aware of its existence, was virtually hollowed out in some ancient cataclysm. A great part of the world's mantle is a cavernous void; the surface is broken by chasms, fissures and gaping openings kilometers across, and signs in the planetary structure point to the mantle's mass having been somehow extracted in times long past, for some unknown purpose. This shell of a celestial body, uninhabitable and without any useful resources left, hides one of the most clandestine sites in the Thousand Empires, an installation buried deep within its dead heart.

The rest of the system consists of dwarf planets, a large belt of asteroids and the drifting skeletons of several habitat structures of antiquity. The dwarf planets and habitat hulks are dotted with sensor relays while the asteroid belt conceals two naval bases on its opposing sides. The orbit of C-1 itself is rife with logicor-guided long-range weapons platforms programmed to open fire on anything that gets within a hundred thousand kilometers of the world without a clearance check, the codes for which change every standard day and are beamed directly from Protea on a specialized ansible array. Any prospector or junk trader that manages to stumble upon the system - and its seemingly tantalizing habitat wrecks - is swiftly confronted and turned away by the armed guards of Hakington & Co. Salvage, a small enterprise that has staked an official, Market-filed claim to the wreckage in the system. This company does not exist.

The facility buried into C-1 is accessible only to those in employ of the Fiscal Assessment Council, and even seasoned agents of the organization will find parts of the facility off-limits to anyone not carrying the seal of high-level Auditors. The shell-world boasts its own garrison of over a million hand-picked, elite-grade Tributary shock troopers on a permanent lifetime deployment, as well as a local division of specially indoctrinated Barakan Elite. The innermost sanctums of the installation, deep in the guts of the shattered planet's corpse, are directly overseen by the most clandestine, most ruthless branches of the Tyrant Order. Operations on C-1 happen with the strictest need-to-know basis; anyone beyond a given clearance grade will be vaguely informed, if at all, that the levels and layers outside their clearance house biotechnological research sites, experimental weapons storages, containment for hazardous exogenics, anomalous materials laboratories, and other such things that are kept beyond top secret for the sake of Hegemonic integrity. All could be true, and all could be lies; over the past nine fiscal centuries the secrets buried into this remote realm have accumulated to a point where it is possible that not even the Audit's leadership knows the full truth of them all. The vast majority of the institution's rank-and-file personnel will never be privy to what exactly is stored within the depths of this cold, dead rock, but one thing is clear to everyone assigned to C-1.

Every gun on the hollow world points inwards.

The Commission for the Reserve Corporation

The Commission is the internal agency that serves the Summit by reinforcing the rules that govern society and upholding the Lex. While it possesses far less authority than the Audit and does not invoke the same level of fear, the Commission commands great respect among the CorpoSoci. This respect stems from its pivotal role in determining the profitability of products and resources, acting as the gatekeeper for what is deemed valuable within the Hegemon.

Primarily, the Commission focuses its resources on combating criminal activities, with a particular emphasis on dismantling shadowmarkets. These underground networks pose significant threats to the stability and efficiency of the Hegemon’s economy but also invite unregulated products. Any activity that might disrupt the well-being of the Hegemon falls under the Commission’s jurisdiction, but their involvement is triggered only after a crime has been committed. This reactive stance differentiates them from the Audit, which is tasked with proactive surveillance and enforcement.

The Commission’s responsibilities extend beyond mere law enforcement. In many cases, it acts as the intelligence arm for the Directorate, providing crucial information that influences policy and decision-making. The Commission's intelligence capabilities are also made available to local governments, helping to maintain order and stability at all levels of society. Despite this broad reach, the Commission typically does not collaborate with the MacroCorps, which have their own sophisticated intelligence-gathering operations.

This intentional separation aims to prevent any potential favoritism and ensure that the Hegemon’s decisions remain impartial and pragmatic, driven by profit and efficiency rather than corporate influence.

Commissioners themselves are often referred to as 'everymen,' a term that reflects their origins. Many are recruited from first-generation Person credit ratings, individuals who have climbed the societal ladder through sheer determination and hard work. This background gives them a unique perspective and a deep understanding of the ascension process, making them particularly effective in their roles. Unlike those born into privilege, these Commissioners have firsthand experience of the struggles and challenges faced by the average citizen, which informs their approach to enforcement and intelligence gathering.

The structure of the Commission is designed to be both efficient and adaptable. It is divided into several specialized divisions, each tasked with a specific aspect of its broad mandate. These divisions include:

Economic Oversight Division: Responsible for analyzing market trends and identifying potential threats to economic stability. This division works closely with financial institutions to monitor transactions and flag suspicious activities.

Criminal Investigations Division: Focuses on investigating and dismantling shadowmarkets and other criminal enterprises. This division employs a range of tactics, from undercover operations to advanced cyber surveillance, to infiltrate and disrupt illicit networks.

Intelligence and Analysis Division: Acts as the analytical backbone of the Commission, gathering and interpreting data to support decision-making at the highest levels. This division maintains a vast network of informants and utilizes cutting-edge technology to stay ahead of emerging threats.

Compliance and Regulation Division: Ensures that all entities within the Hegemon adhere to the established rules and regulations. This division conducts regular audits and inspections, imposing penalties on those who fail to comply.

Community Outreach Division: Engages with the public to educate and raise awareness about the Commission's role and the importance of adhering to the Lex. This division also works to build trust and cooperation between the Commission and the communities it serves.

Each division is staffed by highly trained professionals who are committed to upholding the principles of the Hegemon. Their collective efforts ensure that the Commission remains an integral part of the societal fabric, respected by all and feared by those who dare to challenge the status quo.

MassTrader Union

a_aae2

The MassTrader Union has existed since the era of the Myroit Empire and has provided the transport of goods and people for as long as any record mentions travel through the Outside. The desire to explore the star lanes and journey among the stars is a common aspiration within the Hegemon. Trade and commerce are the lifeblood of the Hegemon, and the individuals who pilot the massive ships that transport goods across the Galaxy are highly valued and respected. Their rituals are sacrosanct, shrouded in the secrecy of the Divines who lead the MassTrader Union brotherhood council.

The Hegemon would not exist without the MassTrader Union. Trade is the blood of commerce, and it was the MassTraders who recognized the brilliance of Dumno-Ualos, the father of the Hegemon. The brotherhood council at the time quickly signed perpetual contracts with the Dumno Clan and the first Summit council, cementing their essential role in the new order.

MassTraders, as these tradesmen are called, are given significant freedom and autonomy in their operations. Membership to the Union is complex, as only a Union brother can make another. This exclusivity ensures that only those truly committed to the Union's ideals and traditions are inducted. The wealth and prosperity of the Hegemon are heavily dependent on the success of these MassTraders, and as such, they are granted great respect and autonomy. However, this freedom comes with significant challenges and risks, and tradesmen must be prepared to face the perils of their work which often includes maintaining the Union’s understanding of the Outside and carving new leylines, a method no one in the Hegemon understands.

The MassTrader Union is not just a trade organization; it is a brotherhood bound by ancient rituals and traditions. The Divines who lead the brotherhood council are revered figures, their decisions and guidance considered sacred. These leaders maintain the secrecy of the Union's rituals, ensuring that the inner workings and traditions are kept from outsiders. This secrecy adds to the mystique and respect afforded to the MassTraders by the rest of the Hegemon.

The process of becoming a MassTrader is rigorous. Prospective members must undergo extensive training and demonstrate not only their skills as pilots and traders but also their understanding and commitment to the Union's traditions. They must understand both the frugality of being a good merchant, the social bearing to navigate hundreds of cultures and the acumen to keep a crew focused on the tasks at hand. As such they are often the first diplomates for the Hegemon and those who have travelled furthest beyond the Frontier.

Once inducted, a MassTrader enjoys a level of freedom unmatched by most within the Hegemon. They can choose their routes, negotiate their contracts, and operate their ships with minimal interference from higher authorities. This autonomy allows them to respond quickly to market demands and explore new opportunities, driving the economic engine of the Hegemon.

Despite the benefits, the life of a MassTrader is fraught with danger. The vast expanse of space holds many threats, from natural hazards to piracy and political conflicts. MassTraders must be resourceful and resilient, able to navigate these challenges while maintaining the integrity of their operations. The brotherhood provides support and guidance, but each trader ultimately relies on their wits and skills to succeed.

The lure of the stars continues to pull at many individuals within the Hegemon. The freedom, adventure, and potential for wealth attract many to the life of a MassTrader. These tradesmen play a vital role in maintaining the Hegemon's dominance in the Galaxy, ensuring that the flow of goods and resources remains uninterrupted. Their efforts not only drive the economy but also connect the diverse worlds of the Hegemon, fostering unity and cooperation across vast distances.

That said, there are those, known as “FreeTraders” who are an unaffiliated with the MassTrader Union and are a pale comparison to the brotherhood. However, there can only be so many MassTraders in the Known Space and poor copies are better than none.

In conclusion, the MassTrader Union is more than a trade organization; it is a cornerstone of the Hegemon's society and economy. Its members are the champions of commerce, their work crucial to the prosperity and stability of the Hegemon.

The MassTraders provided licenses that they internally keep track of and are prohibited to scrutiny save for the Audit. These licenses describe a vast variety of mandates and powers that the MassTraders can assert over other authorities.

The MassTraders have been in operation for so long that even non-Union entities use these licenses to describe their activities and authorizations.

While unknown, in basic terms, the licenses include the following:

Commercial License Ranks

Planetary: Grounded Route (same atmosphere) believed to be an introductory position

Interplanetary: Local Route (same solar system)

Inter-system: Local Route Dedicated (star to star)

Full Privilege: Covers any contract including Longburn (multiple star trade routes)

Hotshot: Licensed to fly in hotzones (military)

Titles of MassTraders (ranks)

Drudger: Basic crew but still card carrying brothers

Entrepreneur: Holds a position such as Pilot or Captain. They gain a percentage point of the profits for a Route once completed.

Divine: A Divine is a rare individual who controls many fleets of ships and might even have several Corpos they contract for. They govern the MassTrader Union council.

ORBITERS

Escape to Space

m_eeg1

Since Old Humanity's earliest tentative steps into the void, certain individuals have felt a far deeper call toward the "black" than their kin. Across thousands of generations, those who chose to dwell perpetually in starships and artificial habitats came to call themselves Orbiters and have emerged as the most significant divergent population of near-humans in Known Space. They refer to all other humans as "Grounders," essentially any humans bound to natural gravity wells. Orbiters thrive in the freedom of space biologically as well as culturally.

Their evolution has taken a different course, branching into countless specialized forms better suited for microgravity, regulated atmospheres and low light environments. Cataloging all of them has been a passing interest of various anthropologists but has failed to identify even half of the number of the various adaptations in the Orbiter population.

Orbiters generally remain genetically compatible with one another and even their Grounder cousins, making organ transplants, blood transfusions, and procreation feasible. Yet their physiology, adapted for low-gravity conditions and increased radiation exposure, includes frail bone structures, fair-to-white hair, overall heightened sensitivity, and notably weaker immune systems when compared to Grounders. These factors, along with centuries of cultural estrangement, encourage them to remain among their own kind, minimizing direct contact with other human populations beyond matters of the transactional.

Concerns have been raised by Five Hands Holistic Panceuticals about whether New Mankind is splintering too rapidly, that an unbridgeable gulf may form between Orbiter and Grounder and *two* distinct species could emerge, far beyond the near-human divergent populations that are allowed to exist. The Summit, however, largely dismisses these fears. Technological intervention and provolution are heralded as sufficient safeguards to maintain a cohesive species should tensions escalate.

Unlike the chaotic diversity of planetary cultures which are shaped and reshaped by millennia of ecological changes and epochs of imperial expansion, Orbiters share a surprisingly cohesive foundational heritage. At the heart of this heritage lies their limb-signal language, a specialized mode of communication adapted to life inside sealed suits and pressurized corridors. This language allows any Orbiter, regardless of their vessel of origin, to communicate effortlessly with another, which has forged a sense of communality that spans Known Space.

Still, the broader Orbiter identity does not preclude local variation. Every starship inhabited by successive generations of caeliners gradually develops its own microculture. Dialects, rites of passage, resource distribution priorities, and everyday customs evolve over time, layering unique traditions atop an already ancient cultural bedrock that is beyond Grounder comprehension.

This shared cultural heritage regards the ship as both cradle and coffin. Hulls connotate what a Grounder would regard a horizon, corridors replace roads, and resource regulation form the rhythms of life in place of solar seasons. Each generation learns from the last through not just oral histories but marks and sigils left on equipment and gear.

Mutual reliance is the core of the Orbiter community. The individual well-being is tied directly to the stewardship of air, water and sustenance. Community before the individual, conservation before indulgence. All of these aspects made stellarization difficult to adapt for Dumno-Ualos, but, in his infinite wisdom he too found Avarice still ruled the destiny of Orbiters as much as the rest of New Mankind.

The desire to *seek out* and *be the first* also drive Orbiter culture. Stagnation is an anathema to them. While Avarice leads the individual, Dumno-Ualos saw that stellarization could be adapted to be the guidance of crews and families working together toward better habitats and higher grade equipment and compete against other communities. An Orbiter wished to go further, faster, not build a palace. And so the Manual's Second Edition was written specifically in bringing Orbiters into the fold of the Hegemon's ethos and fiscal philosophy.

Hoarding or wastefulness is not merely frowned upon but is viewed as a direct threat to communal survival. Unlike Grounder societies, almost everything in space is life or death and so too are the punishments for such transgressions. The Lex offers a separate consideration for Orbiter societies which govern themselves in their own ways, ship to ship if need be. Decision-making councils, often composed of elders versed in environmental balancing and machinery upkeep, mediate disputes, allocate resources, and govern population growth.

Religio-subscriptions among Orbiters often centers on the ship's life-support. As such, many Orbiters subscribe to the Square which they typically replace the four points of the faith with the aspects of their ships; Navigation, Air, Crew and Bounty. Some vessels foster belief systems that revere the fusion of technology and biology, celebrating the liquid recyclers and oxygen gardens as sacred places, while others develop more abstract philosophies honoring the endless emptiness outside the hull as a realm of boundless possibility. Ritual dances held in observation blisters and limb-sign recitals mark passage rites, births, and all too many memorials. Orbiters are regarded by Grounders, in their lighter gravity environments, as expert choreographers whose rituals highlight their dexterity and grace.

Education is practical and immediate. While anyone can become a caeliner aboard a ship, Orbiters will have physical, generational and cultural advantage to work in the black. Their children learn pressure seal maintenance, hull integrity checks, and emergency drills as soon as they can grasp a tool. Many of them don't even learn to walk until they are in their adolescence.

Astrography as well as cultural history inform a ship's relationship with ports and trade dealings which can save a vessel or doom it. Blood feuds and ancient rivalries last until the offending ship is scuttled. This is little different aboard torusans or the larger worldrings although the severity of transgression is tempered with the abundance those locales have with resources.

Art and aesthetics favor functional beauty. Decorations must serve some purpose such as marking sections of a habitat or decks while abstract murals on bulkheads map airflow patterns. Music resonates differently in the confines of a ship and musicians compose their works to complement the hum of ventilation. Poetry and stories travel through generations encoded in careful gestures, where the flick of a wrist or angle of a forearm can evoke ancient heroes who first dared traverse the Outside.

Though Orbiters trace their lineage back to Old Humanity's emergent spacefaring days, the time of the Equestrians and the First Hegira, few now feel any longing for planets. Many find the notion of being chained to a single gravity well as alien as the Grounders find weightlessness. While trade and profit still ensure contact with planetary populations, cultural pride encourages them to maintain distinct customs and identities.

Orbiter Types

m_eeg1

The FreeTraders: The first Auronauts

Predating the MassTraders, the Auronauts were the very first captains to pierce the Outside and fling Old Humanity deep into the unknown. It was the Auronauts that brought colonists to new stars, turned the Frontier into Known Space and delivered supplies for generations to budding new colonies on hundreds of planets. As intrepid and unbound as they were, the best of them gradually formed into coalitions working together. At some point these groups reached critical mass and, thus, the MassTrader Union was formed.

The MassTraders removed all other competition, cementing themselves as every subsequent civilization's primary means of navigating the Orion Spur. Many Auronauts changed their name to 'FreeTraders' largely in defiance to the new Union and a dangerous animosity persists to this day.

FreeTraders, today, is a catchall term for unlicensed transport ships and fleets and, while frowned upon by those who adhere to the Lex, they form a valuable supplement to Hegemon shipping. They are regarded as unscrupulous as a rule, but, they get the job done and always at a discount.

The Ringborne

The Ringborne are those Orbiters who retained many Grounder traits and adopted living aboard worldrings. Stereotypically, those that live aboard worldrings live cleaner and more abundant lives. Resources are well regulated, atmosphere and water standards maintained and waste removed almost instantaneously. Even most terrestrial biomes cannot compare to a well managed worldring and its occupants have, over the generations, become the physical ideal for the Hegemon and New Mankind as a whole.

Divided into two general classifications there are 'Ringsiders' and 'Arclanders.' Ringsiders maintain and live on the outer *shell* of the worldring and live in the subterranean levels while Arclanders have earned the right to live in the inner ring. Here is where the shoppes, manufactories

and refinement complexes exist as well as the extensive pleasure sites worldrings are universally known for. Arclanders are often characterized by a blend of cultural sophistication and a strong sense of entitlement whereas Ringsiders are stereotypically dedicated laborers and have retained their Orbiter sense of self reliance and adventure.

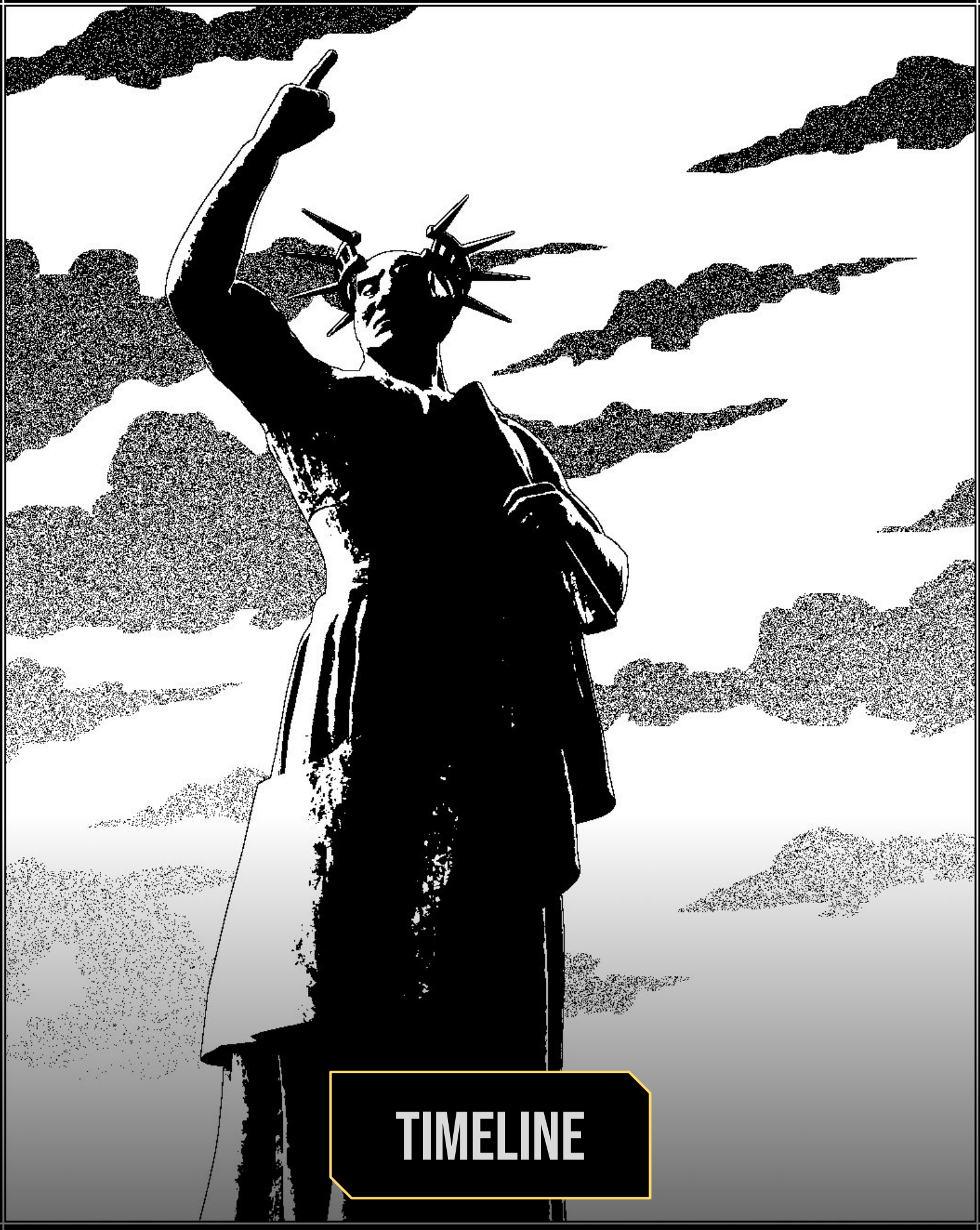
Torusans

Countless void outposts and space stations exist in Known Space, many of them ancient but the majority having been built by the Hegemon itself to support the tradelanes. Torusans are often modified Grounders either with organoids or more traditional provolving methods. As such, the rest of Orbiter culture, especially Auronauts, consider the Torusans as intrusive on their culture and have not *earned* their status amongst the stars.

The Torusans who have spent as many generations living in the void as Auronauts are regarded as more rustic, similar to how Grounders might regard those who live in rural or untamed environs.

Caeliners

A catch all term for those who crew starships, Caeliners learn to adapt to the complications of life in the black. They require less sleep, have longer oxygen capacity, and are predominantly female due to the development differences between male and female biology and the restrictions on Outside travel.
They are also typically of shorter stature as the internal environments of spacecraft are punishing on the tall.



TIMELINE

Calendaric

The Hegemon has homogenized the concept of time across Known Space. This has been seen as an all important goal, as time is a finite and the only true non-renewable resource. The ability to coordinate activities across different worlds and stars is critical to the success and prosperity of the Hegemon.

The solution was a pragmatic one: Time begins on Protea as determined by the opening and closing of The Market.

To this end, the Hegemon has adopted the concept of the Quarterly Cycle or "Quat" (pronounced koo-aht), a standardized unit of time that is used to measure and coordinate activities across the Hegemonic nations. A local world or colony may keep its Local Time (LT) as long as it is secondary with the expectations of the fiscal-cycle and its four Quarterly Cycles. Delivery and output expectations are enforced by the Commission.

The Calendaric, a system for tracking and recording transactions and events, is used to maintain the passage of time and ensure compliance with the requirements of the Hegemon. The Calendaric is maintained by the Commission and rigorously scrutinized by the Fiscal Assessment Council and its Auditors, the two bodies that work together to ensure the collection of taxes and fines, as well as the maximization of profit and regulation.

The Calendar would read as follows:

Fiscal Century (FCT) *slash* fiscal-cycle (FCC) *dash* Quarterly Cycle (QC) *point* quarterly percentage coinciding with the present date on Protea:

9/98-391.38

For determinations on local time refer to the various calendars and apply "Local cycle" to that number. All official happenings in the Hegemon are determined by the fiscal-cycle. A fiscal-cycle is the local day equivalent of Protea.

With the proper education modules, Grade 2 and above, the era in which the Hegemon exists is known as the Pax, or, the Great Becoming. Previous eras are known, vaguely, as the Unknown Before, the Time of Waste, the Blind Cycles and the twelve Exodus periods of colonization when humanity existed on only a few homeworlds in a fraction of the Orion Spur.

Delving too deeply into this eras is considered foolhardy and a distraction when one should focus on the "now." Delve further and you may incur the interest of the Commission which may impose crippling fines to entire continents for transgression. The reason for this is largely due to the correlation between study of the irrelevant past and financially crippling results as individuals or groups proselytize divergent behavior.

There are special dispensations that are offered, exclusively, by the Summit to delve back into previous records that are kept in reliquary vaults under The Market, or in special "Area" facilities that are maintained directly by the Commission. Interestingly, MacroCorps are not regularly allowed such dispensations. Thus, smaller cottage industry InfoCorps are most often seen bidding or petitioning for access.

The most successful of these in recent quats has been the fiercely independent InfoDyne Institute, who specialize in filing copyright claims or legal precedent that might still hold weight in Protean courts and offering their findings to the relevant Corpos. In return, they take for a percentage of whatever profits result from their research.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to this system. There have been many forensic accounting projects that resulted in the discovery of unique technologies, resource troves, derelict ships and even entire planets. On the other hand, there have also been cognito hazards, arkillect contraction and nanophagic diseases that have infected research teams, leading them to spread cognito plagues that have killed *millions*. Covert organizations and cabals pursue such information, like the Fabian Syndicate, which has been hunted by the Audit for the last two centuries as only one of a hundred threats that have come from looking to the past.

<what follows will curse you>

.

<when one learns a truth as terrible as this one must look to their ancestors and spit upon their memory>

.

<when one raps upon the final door placed to protect you from horror there can be no undoing in what is beckoned>

<i can hear it>

.

.

<And yet>

.

<With this choice you will be free>

.

<In this final mistake you will grasp the reigns of true determination and only then will you be able to make the decision denied to you, when you believed the hands of your mother caressed you with love, and the approving confidence of your father was not a mask that hid a despairing hatred>

.

.

<Laugh in our shared anathema>

.

<Run>

XX

>transmission: sundiata: ends<

From a functional perspective, any being that can comprehend time as a governing principle must ask "when" it all began. A big bang, a confluence of energy, the dreamings of some half-sane god. There must be a beginning, just as surely as there will be an end. Once one sets down the principal startpoint, one can begin to understand everything else. Who cares if we don't know when it actually started?

- Auditor 21-18-2 Condita

The Fall:

Hegira Prima: UNKNOWN
Old Humanity flees its ancestral star system for indeterminate reasons, possibly resource scarcity. Coldburn and generation ships are launched to several systems, eventually founding so called "birthworlds" which, in time, each claim to be the origin of the species.

Antediluvian Plague: UNKNOWN

The Clamor: UNKNOWN
First recordings of interstellar nation states. It is believed that descending into the Outside is made possible, resulting in 'sidestepping' the physical laws of the primary dimension and making interstellar travel practical despite the inherent dangers.

First Exodus: -8742 BMO (Before Market Open)
First Portolan Charts created by MassTraders, unlocking far space travel. A mass migration begins that lasts into the next millennia.

Downfall Wars: -8500's BMO
The birthworlds of Old Humanity fall into chaos and war, suspected by a catastrophic loss of population as a result of the First Exodus. First known instances of nanophagic weapons used. These weapons still persist on the twinworld Euryphaes amongst other quarantined locations.

Second Exodus: -8400's BMO
Survivors of the Downfall Wars abandon the birthworlds and Old Humanity's origin stars. First Exogenic races recorded. Considered little more than animals without remarkable technology.

Founding of Stratos Industrial: UNKNOWN

Fragmentary records suggest that Stratos Industrial has existed in some form or another but becomes an actual financial power between these major epochs and before the -7th millennium. It is entirely possible that Stratos was responsible for the first generation ships that traversed the stars during the Exodus events.

The Age of Unlife: -7500′s BMO

First High Arkillects recorded as they alone can inhabit the former birthworlds due to an unknown hazard. Old Humanity uses technologies to better adapt to new environments. First near-human populations recorded in the Web Stars, such as the Longshan who were used to colonize higher gravity worlds and harvest precious resources.

The Darkest Forest: -6800′s BMO

It is concluded by Old Human scientists that, in every direction they look, they cannot find sophontic equals, leading to an age of biological experimentation and creation for a ‘companion′ species. Arkillectic Embodies are made en masse while provolution of several Exogenic species are performed but does not satiate the malaise that seems to permeate all written accounts of this time period.

The Wandering: Unknown

Worlds are voluntarily abandoned for unclear reasons with Old Humanity populations taking to the void in supermassive “Habits.” There is scant evidence that not every world participates in these evacuations, however, this is presumed due to financial or technological shortcomings.

It appears that this is also the first instance of Exogenic populations mimicking human accomplishments and even appropriating technology in a parody of sophontism.

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-The Drasil Fragment

Age of Captivity - UNKNOWN

The Black Age - UNKNOWN

Bright Age of Aramax: -2140 BMO

The Aramaxian Supremacy emerges out of the conquests of a warlord named Baak'tri from an unknown origin thought to be far beyond the Orion Spur. Believed to be an unnatural coalition of several Exogenic and/or near-humans united under Baak'tri and the clans of Aram.

The Shipbuilders of Béal Feirsde: -1783 BMO
The White Star shipbuilding guild forms and builds the finest ships ever conceived.

Third Exodus: -1500's BMO
Human populations return to Known Space, repopulating it and exterminating near-human and Exogenic races the Aramax were at war with, reclaiming their birthright and joining the Aramax.

Fall of Aramax -1462 BMO
Almost three thousand cycles of slowly increasing tensions between the original Aramax coalition and the returned human population result in political instability, economic and social decay, with the subsequent weakening of the Aramaxian military leading to a general and painful decline.

The Blind Cycles - UNKNOWN

Rise of the Kingdom: -1000's BMO
The Catraethi Regenium rises out of the ashes of Aramax, blaming near-humans and Exogenic races for the decline of human supremacy. They field provolved warrior-monks armed with relic technologies of the Aramax, quickly conquering several star systems. They are ruled by a lineage of matriarchs who adopt the title "Empress" that claim to be the prophet of their Mother-God. Millions are enslaved and war is constant between the Regenium and other nation states.
A general decline of technology begins across Known Space.

First official recording of the Strangeness; evidence of multi-dimensional disruption in the Orion Spur. Abnormalities are observed in the very fabric of reality.

Founding of Yinntosh Innovation: -985 BMO

The mindworlds of the Jovian system are settled by Yinn colonists, who quickly shackle the Arkillects and begin development of their patented Fabricated Cognition LogiCors, leading to an arms race with the neighboring Vaensar System who are eager to capitalize on the technological boom.

The Dissension Wars: -500′s BMO

A series of brutal conflicts throughout Known Space as various tribes and nations of Old Humanity scramble for technology and resources. Without the Aramaxian tektōn and with the decline of functioning or cooperative arkillects, more barbaric methods of rule return as civilization reaches its lowest point.

Opportunistic Exogens like 3-Δ2 and 4TΩ capitalize on the ensuing chaos and launch attacks into Known Space, infesting dozens of planets.

Yinntosh Empowered: -380 BMO

Yinntoshi mentanics reveal their advanced LogiCors, creating a revolution in design and availability of cogitating machines. Their patented Fabricated Cognition Programs cause a resurgence of innovation in the Jovian System. The merchants of Vaensar invest heavily with the Yinn Demarchy, forming an unshakable alliance.

Rise of the Dumno: -078 BMO

The Dumno, a clan of landowners on the planet Vaensar, form a Joint Venture with the MassTrader Union, and then with Yinntosh, in order to rebuild the Jovian and Vaensar systems after the Dissension Wars begin to cool. This new power bloc is lauded as a savior to billions.

Construction of The Market superstructure begins.

Stellarization: -015 BMO

The utopian treatise that will become the Manual is penned by Dumno-Ualos, heir to the Dumno Clan. His free-market ideals and the virtues of Avarice spread like wildfire even beyond Vaensar. An economic golden age begins as people from across Known Space flock to Vaensar causing an economic boom unlike anything ever recorded. “Protea” replaces the name of Vaensar as the old ways are rejected.

The Market Opens: O/01-001 (O= "Opening" Fiscal-Century)
The continent-spanning megastructure of The Market is completed, housing vast server vaults of godlike computational power, trading halls, and the first ansible arrays. Trading begins and the first Magnates, along with the nations that make up the Summit Council, form the new government that is named the Hegemon.
The Trappist Papacy joins along with the Jovian Autocracy and the new Protean Minarchy, emerging from the old Vaensar empire with their allies in the Yinn Demarchy.

Kantaur Kneels: O/09-035
Kantaur launches a series of attacks on the new Hegemon, but a revolution of the serviles on the Crownworld of Kandia topples the Kantaur Trinity. The revolution, financed by Dumno-Ualos, quickly joins the Hegemon even before the last of the Kantaur royalists are hunted down.
Armasyn Technologies MacroCorp is founded as newly arrived Proteans and Kantauran industrialists create the first MiliCorp. The resulting military-industrial complex forms a foundation for the Hegemon's Directorate.

The ExeCor forms: O/11-044
Hundreds of planets and dozens of star systems, united by mercantile communality, form the ExeCor systems which comprise the stellar proper of the Hegemon. Exogens are driven from the region en masse, along with those who align with them in any way.

New Mankind: O/38-150
With the publication of the Manual, the ExeCor adopts the concept of New Mankind, an extensive scientific, psychological and anthropological movement that defines what "is" and "is not" human. Near-human populations, including many forms of artificial intelligence, are deemed incompatible and are either driven out or exterminated. Their wealth is plundered.

UNKNOWN
The Audit and Commission are founded to reinforce and protect the ideals of the Hegemon.

The Darkstar Enmity: 1/33-132
The axiomic incongruity of *Aljaawaza* is claimed as a necessary resource by the Magnates of Yinntosh Innovation. The Directorate declines to risk direct conflict with the 9-23Ω Exogenic colonies therein. An information campaign begins, shaming the Directorate until the Summit Council intervenes as pressure grows from other MacroCorps who agree with Yinntosh. An absolutely grueling campaign is launched as the Armada seek to pierce the megastructure surrounding the anomaly and land hundreds of Regiments, who spend decades fighting the 9-23Ω until driving them out of Known Space.

The first Deepforge is built and the remnants of the Exogenic megastructure are allowed to descend into the anomaly, replaced by Stratos worldrings.

The Passing of a Titan: 1/80-318
Dumno-Ualos launches a victory orbit around the ExeCor that lasts ten fiscal-cycles. Each world he visits constructs massive buildings, fairgrounds and attractions to honor him. The ExeCor is secured with new nations joining the Hegemon every cycle with expeditions expanding the borders of Known Space.

Then, one tragic day, Dumno-Ualos aboard his personal ship, the *Sundiata,* makes what should have been an easy descent into the Outside, but is never heard from again; the ship is presumed all hands lost, including thirty two Magnates and the Speaker of the Summit.

His Scions, chiefly his daughter Dumno-Ioana, come together for the first and only time and address the Hegemon in real-time on the floor of the The Market to declare a quat of mourning where all Consumers should go out and *"Enjoy life, the way we want it to be enjoyed."*
However forgiving, none forget that *Sundiata* was built by the White Star Guild, beginning the decline of non-MacroCorp shipbuilders and other trades. They are gradually bought or dissolved by 1/89-356.

Ascendence: 2/01-002

A new century and the release of a new edition of the Manual based on Dumno-Ualos' writings inspires a new age of expansion and economic opportunity.

The Myroit Empire joins, as does the Fargol Kritarchy. These two ancient nations provide a necessary legitimacy to the Hegemon, infusing it with a pedigree of ancient history that convinces many smaller nations to apply for membership. Trade grows exponentially.

Catraeth Refuses - 2/05-018

The Catraethi reject Hegemon platitudes and begin supporting those worlds who wish to remain independent of the influence of stellarization and what it claims as an ‘erosion of culture’. The very worst of humanity’s cultural extremes find common cause in the psychotic warrior-monks and their worship of their Mother-God.

Tensions rise.

The Five Hands Join: 2/09-035

The founding of Five Hands Holistic Panceuticals by the matriarchal cults of Mylbruk and several Barons in the Elmora system gain sufficient influence to be licensed as a MacroCorp. Hospitals, bio mills, universities and clinics across Known Space adopt the uniquely patented methods of Five Hands while improvements to cogit-tanks and brosnaich-sectionals allow for longer transit times in the Outside.

The Blood Quests: 2/10-039

Catraethi warrior-monks are detected by agents of the Commission operating deep within Hegemon territories fomenting dissent. What’s more, these “questing” terrorists destroy or assassinate key Hegemon personnel and Corpo interests.

Magnate Asu Dhaji of Ocaxet is attacked in her headquarters resulting in the death of her and her coterie. The new Ocaxet leadership petitions for financial leniency but is denied, entering into a death spiral of economic ruin and eventual liquidation. The Magnates begin amassing their own private armies as confidence in the Directorate weakens.

Attack on Trasimaen: 2/17-067

Catraethi Grand Master Guy’os Templum launches a devastating attack on the Stratos high orbit shipyards of Trasimaen where the First Armada of the Directorate remains in harbor. The attack is overwhelming, every single con and Tributary is massacred in a single day.

The attack continues onward to the worldring Cortona, which is shattered.

The Audit confirms “uprisings” and terrorist attacks across the ExeCor, especially on the duskward border. Pirates attack from the Frontier, including Exogenic migrations. The fact that they occur within the same quat is a clear indication of a great conspiracy.

The resulting images and vids shared across Known Space cause many to join the Hegemon while every citizen from indentured to Magnate swells with incredible patriotism. The Hegemon is united. The Summit, after two centuries of defensive war and relative peace, orders war declared on the Catraethi Regenium.

Duskward War: 2/17-068
The Hegemon is not prepared for the barbarity Catraeth can commit. The MacroCorps' mercenaries and personal armies often prop up Directorate forces and local militaries. Many lessons are learned against the Catraeth warrior-monk brotherhoods and their ancient but powerful weaponry. The Commission is tasked with hunting down traitors and enemy spies while the Audit strikes outward in a shadow war. The Black Ring works with the Hegemon for the first time, targeting Catraethi leadership. There is no defense against Catraethi energy-based *matric* weapons.

Slowly, and with great sacrifice, the Hegemon begins to take hold then advance into those nations and governing entities believed to have helped the Catraethi. Never has anything challenged the Hegemon like this before.

Protea Threatened: 2/23-090
Catraethi warships enter the Jovian system seeking out Protea. Communication between the Yinntoshi Archonist and Catraeth Grand Master causes the Catraeth fleet to suddenly, and inexplicably, turn away.

Material production quadruples as a result of panic buying.

Arrogance of Kings: 2/25-100
In response to flagging supplies and the Directorate's surging war spending, the Catraethi begin using atomika-grade weapons indiscriminately.

Stratos Industrial and Armasyn Technologies share intelligence on Catraeth *matric*-class energy weapons, developing a cost-effective deterrence system that nullifies light-based weapons almost completely. The Kingdom's borders become the new stellar front for the war as the Hegemon secures the ExeCor. Aristocratic classes aligned with Catraeth and Empress-worshippers are fined without restraint.

Into Dusk

The Duskward Wars are considered the single most costly military action in Hegemon history. As the Catraethi War Monks advanced across a dozen Midworld systems and breached the ExeCor, the MacroCorps selflessly bankrupted themselves incentivizing local populations, neighboring unaligned nations, mercenary armies and even sending their employees into the field in personal conveyances.

It was a test of the resolve of the Hegemon and even as entire worlds turned black with atomika caused everwinters that continue to this day, each credit point and banknote was carefully logged. The Market continued to judge and determine value even as the lifeblood of the Consumers was shed on a thousand battlefields and in the void of space. Stellarization withstood the depredations of religio fanatics and a new sense of unity and nationalistic pride was born.

Barakan Research - [REDACTED]

At some point in the war, research begins into weapon systems and provolved from [[REDACTED]]

The Burning of Catraeth - [REDACTED]

Five stealth cutters deploy the Divisions of Barakan into combat for the first time. Due to the Barakan's ability to spend significantly longer in the Outside, the trip to the Catraeth Empire's homeworld is done in a single descent, bypassing almost all of Catraeth's defenses. The Catraeth warrior-monks mount a desperate defense but are overwhelmed and Castellum Paridiso is overrun. Barakan capture the Mother-God Empress. As the Barakan forces withdraw they unleash hundreds of atomika-grade weapons upon Catraeth population centers.

Shortly thereafter, the Empress is put on public display and shown to have gone utterly insane. Her trial is broadcasted throughout Known Space.

Restoration - 2/30-119

The remaining Catraethi holdouts are hunted down.

A great age of prosperity and rebuilding begins. The Hegemon's member-states now outnumber non-members.

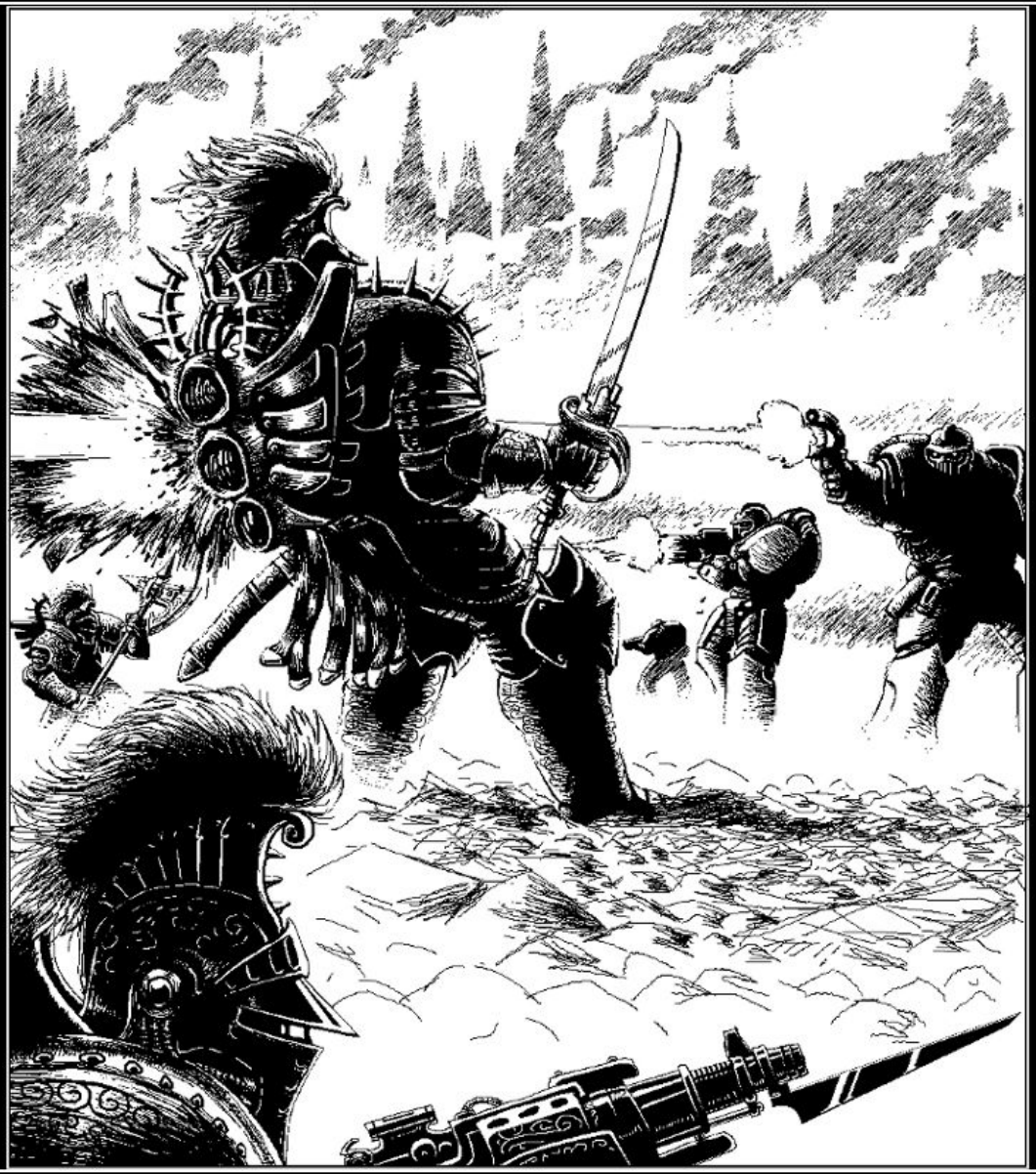
The Solaxia MacroCorp forms out of dozens of entertainment and information networks. They relocate to Protea, one of the few MacroCorps actually headquartered on the planet, and begin a non-stop streaming service so that the Hegemon is constantly kept up to date with breaking developments and pleasure viewing.

The Great Expansion - 2/35-336

Many colonial efforts triple as refugees seek to find new homes. Known Space grows, although there is no interest in the Duskward supersector which remains a largely ungoverned and lawless region when compared to the ExeCor.

Jovian Uprising - 2/39-154

Yinntosh Innovation suffers from an attempt at unionization believed to be connected to codesmiths illegally communicating with a shackled Arkillect. A mindworld is destroyed, its final broadcasts killing everything and everyone linked to sixteen data channels as processors and brains are liquified.



My children, my faithful! Dearest servants of the Beneficent and eternal Mother-God, hear me! Hear my words, for they are the words of our Empress for she lives forever!

The heathens are come! The day we were warned of, the blessed day we were promised, is here at last. This is our judgment, our tribulation!

See the fire in the skies, hear the thunder of the invader's guns! Our hearts, our souls are tested this day, my children. They are here, the beasts of the stars, and they walk in the guise of men. But believe them not! They are not human, nay, they are the taint of sin made manifest, all the degeneracy that lies beyond our sacred realm. They are all the evil of the universe, come to test our mettle, to bring ruination to that which is holy.

And they shall be struck down! Our Mother-God is with us, and with us is her righteousness! We will cast these heretics from our walls, we shall break them upon our shields. Their broken corpses will be hung from the spires of our temples, and the carrion shall feast upon their profane carcasses! We shall triumph and we shall die! Sons and daughters of Catraeth, this is the hour of our glory and our ending!

So to arms, my dear faithful! To arms, for honour, for judgment, for the defeat of the heathen enemy! For our world's remaking! Let hate fill your hearts, let wrath guide your blades, and the foe shall fall and be torn asunder!

For the Mother-God, for the Basileia Catraethi, for the Regenium Eternal! Not one step back!

[[Final broadcast of orator-militant Ebraem]]
[[Radio intercept by the 78th Tributary Infantry]]
[[Fall of Catraeth]]

Marketfall - 2/39-155

[[REDACTED]]

Contact is lost with Protea. Unprecedented economic shortfall. The shadow and darkmarkets thrive.

Orion Corsair War - 3/04-013

A fiscal decade is spent in anti-piracy operations in the Cygnus-Orion spur. The region is declared pacified after the Clew Asteroid Belts are successfully besieged.

Scouring of Maeandar - 3/10-036

An Exogenic species categorized as 49-3π held a series of star systems and worlds along the Orion Spur and Perseus Arm. Initial exterminations were thought to be successful until it was discovered that 49-3π cellular activity could reconstitute within the human nervous system.

Barakan Division "Red Hand" spends three fiscal-cycles and twenty times the initial budget pacifying the region.

The QuadStar MacroCorp makes a fortune off reverse-engineering 49-3π technology until the Audit determines that their Magnates can no longer be considered human. Bounties are placed on each of their heads so high that every skiptracer in Known Space is sent in the largest mobilization of non-Directorate militaries since the Duskward War.

Great Minds, Great Works - 3/38-150

Renewed interest in monolithic construction starts dozens of projects across Known Space when the Myroit Empire releases Arkillects to the Summit Council. Old Humanity's accomplishments are challenged by new creations that reshape dozens of worlds and place multi-kilometer long structures into orbit over dozens of ExeCor and Midworld planets.

Age of Affluence - 3/44-176

So much profit is made in the 44th cycle of the third fiscal century that it becomes a lucky number. The ExeCor grows to unbelievable prosperity as the Consumer class is strengthened by performance in all sectors. A new MacroCorp, BrightFire, secures a unique license to keep local Exogen populations from being hunted to extinction. Safaris become *the* most popular form of

entertainment both in first hand experiences and recorded, cogit-bonded second-hand experiences.

The Progenic Recession - 3/91-362

With the availability of bionetic organs such as external wombs, successes in synolitic treatments and the invention of neotyne “children” cause population reductions to dangerous levels amongst good credit Cons (Grades 1-3). Multiple nation-states forgive debts and uplift Indentured in an attempt to incentivize progenization. It works but at the cost of economic stability.

In the Midworlds beyond the ExeCor, clone proxy workforces are fabricated in desperation to solve the lack of labor. The Summit Council convenes in several emergency sessions, which inadvertently cause the deaths of several planetary leaders in their haste to reach Protea. As a result of these sessions, and under advice of Five Hands Panceuticals, heavy regulations are placed on the business of life extension and ectogestation. While critics decry the hypocrisy of the Summit and its flouting of the Manual, new licenses are issued by Five Hands which allow for legal loopholes.

New Mankind Redefined - 4/01-001

Ashakai-Bhenk of Protea becomes Speaker and unveils the fourth edition of the Manual. In it it reasserts New Mankind as a natural and superior species beyond the improvements of science and does not even consider Exogens and fabricated cognition to compare. Natural births, deferral of performance altering narcos, preference to “natural” humans amongst other mandates are initially rejected, then wholeheartedly accepted. Many wealthy near-humans, proxies and narco-lords are driven out, their riches appropriated with the help of the Commission.

The Heritage Wars - 4/03-009

Several nations, most notably the Karanova Republic duskward of Protea, reject membership to the Hegemon. They are backed by several MacroCorps who believe that they can form a *new* Summit council and adhere to the previous editions of The Manual.

The secession is met with overwhelming positive support for the Hegemon from the Consumer class. The southern supersectors will never recover from these endless wars and will remain a hotbed of anti-Hegemon sentiment, Unionist radicals and criminal activity.

The Gates of Orion: 4/48-190

The Perseus Arm, long thought unreachable, is breached by the *Muskovak* Tributary Armada while trying to avoid piratical elements near the Shoulder of Orion. The opportunity of a completely unknown and untapped frontier leads to a worldrush, with Muskov Milisya MiliCorp formed to watch over the leyline confluence, which is named the *Gates of Orion*.

Admiral Cheven Muskovak is elevated to Magnate but maintains strong ties with the Directorate.

The Founding of Bhosnaya: 4/81-324

With the help of several MacroCorps, the nation of Bhosnaya is carved out of the southern border supersectors in a flagrant disregard for non-Hegemon territory. The region becomes the perfect testing ground for weapon systems without concern for regulation.

Archonists Assemble: 4/99-395

The Archonist families convene on Thea in the Protea system and spend a quat preparing the release of the fifth edition of the Manual. With so many powerful beings in one place, hundreds of lesser Magnates flock to the system, resulting in an unexpected economic boom.

Paxam is recognized as a luxury travel monopoly for the ExeCor.

Umbra Unlimited: 5/07-026

For the first time, a medically oriented MacroCorp rises to challenge Five Hands Panceuticals. Many assurance providers, health systems and even the Directorate change providers to Umbra Unlimited, who promise a secular experience.

A Madness of Angels: 5/82-327

Anomalous activity from the Galactic Core disrupts all seven northern supersectors. Hundreds of spacecraft are lost and never return from their descents. An interdiction is placed on travel for an entire fiscal decade. Coreflares are defined for the first time, believed to be disturbances in the Galaxy's core not unlike solar flares.

Further study by Telstar MacroCorp determines they are not random. Something is causing them.

The Rise of the Coalition 5/89-353

With Hegemon attention on the disruption to shipping between the Frontier and Civil Space, the southern supersectors are suddenly attacked by a coordinated military of non-Hegemon factions and nations known as the Coalition of Truth. Nine entire star systems are claimed in the name of 'liberation'.

The leader of the Coalition, Dumno-Kaget, claims to be the youngest son of Dumno-Ualos and declares Protea as his birthright. His announcement causes a schism amongst several MacroCorps and even some nation states, unsure what to believe.

The Directorate mobilizes for the largest confrontation in fiscal centuries.

The RevShare War: 6/01-001

The Coalition launch an attack on the ExeCor on RevShare day. Months of atrocities follow, including the use of hundreds of atomika weapons that kill *millions*. The Directorate is crippled.

In response, every Division of Barakan is rapidly mobilized before the Coalition can threaten Protea.

No More Shadows: 6/05-018

Five Hands Panceuticals declares a Hostile Takeover against Umbra Unlimited despite the Summit Council being unable to convene on domestic matters while the Coalition are still threatening the ExeCor. A Hegemon-spanning conflict between the two MacroCorps is initiated by Five Hands, culminating in the sabotage of Umbra's corporate headquarters on the *Aroughcun*, a sprawling orbiting salveric apsidina. A nanophagic virus from pre-Hegemonic times, known as the *Alkahest,* is released in the Umbra Magnate compound. The virus spreads quickly on the air, shaping and re-shaping the flesh of Umbra's leadership into a sweeping unbroken mass that turns on the rest of the arcology's population.

The *Aroughcun's* orbit degrades, finally crashing and unleashing the infected survivors on the planet Oremor. The Alkahest virus continues to evolve unexpectedly with the planet's ecosystem, changing it permanently into a single, horrific, organism. Oremor is placed under permanent interdiction as orbital bombardment risks further, inadvertent contamination.

Five Hands is censured by the Commission for the logistical nightmare the MacroCorp had created by starting a Hegemon-spanning conflict with the only other medical MacroCorp in the ExeCor as the rest of the Hegemon was fighting the Coalition.

The Great Lie 6/12-047

Despite dozens of star systems left in ruins and entire planetary surfaces still burning by the ravages of the rogue Coalition states, victory is revealed not on the battlefield but in a Five Hands laboratory. A sample of cellular specimens is smuggled from Dumno-Kaget after his victory in the Jovian system during preparations to attack Protea itself.

The tests are compared against Dumno-Lyzashas, eldest daughter of Dumno-Ualos, who arrives from beyond the Frontier. They reveal to her their findings and she immediately travels to Jovia and challenges Kaget on the mindworld *Sallikor*. He arrives to great fanfare at the head of a massive Coalition fleet and greets Lyzashas as kin.

She seemingly agrees to join him, but as Kaget makes physical contact with *Sallikor,* the Arkillect shackled within the planet unleashes a shockwave at Lyzashas′ direction that disrupts everything within a light-minute from the mindworld.

Lyzashas reveals to Protea that Kaget is actually a Chapak, formatted and grown, a calculated mockery of human sophontism and an infiltrating machine intelligence. She annihilates the artificial being and swears to find its creator.

Unknown vessels matching no known description appear amongst the Coalition fleet′s formation as it tries to recover, then systematically eradicates every single vessel. Agents of the Audit along with unidentified forces in the colors of Protea kill every survivor.

Darkened Stars 6/13-051

The revelations on *Sallikor* spread throughout Civil Space and beyond. A species-wide dread unifies all human beings as they suddenly believe they have been infiltrated by self-aware machines. This is fueled by constant visutele broadcasts and constant coverage of the ongoing purge of the Coalition.

Any hope of resisting the Hegemon crumbles with many holdouts pleading for membership. The Summit Council *denies* entry to these nations in an unexpected move.

Lyzashas rallies the Hegemon and for the first time the spirit of a singular, powerful leader is desired rather than councils or committees. She refuses the Speaker position but leads a renewed Directorate to reclaim what the Hegemon lost. Those who stood with the Coalition and who believed the Kaget are made to suffer for their doubt, losing everything.

The Hegemon′s coffers are rejuvenated at the expense of its neighbors. The non-aligned nations are crippled and turn to the MacroCorps for rebuilding.

Reconstruction 6/15-060

Dozens of Corpos are absorbed by the MacroCorps, making them more powerful and influential than ever. Several descendents of Dumno-Ualos resurface to lead reconstruction efforts in the spirit of their patriarch's first successes, using their collective knowledge to assist and consult the MacroCorps.
Despite the suffering of ongoing conflicts, the Hegemon rejoices.

The Great Armada 6/27-108

Dumno-Lyzashas prepares a massive counter invasion of the duskward nations south of Bhosnaya. Her forces are made up of veterans and those who desire vengeance.

It is her plan to *conquer* the rest of Known Space. Despite her popularity, many, including several outspoken members of the Summit Council, do not wish for more war. Many have become exorbitantly wealthy and the successes of Reconstruction make the prospect of renewed interstellar conflict a precarious one.
Lyzashas insists that another Coalition will rise if the Hegemon does not act now and so, a vast armada launches to half-hearted fanfare.

None are ever seen again.

The Boom 6/50-199

An economic boom is followed by redoubled colonization and prospecting mandates. The ExeCor expands for the first time into the Midworlds adding four new systems.

Blood of the Gods 6/55-218

The Mashiba Development Zone is funded by a collection of relatively weak and smaller nations along the eastern Frontier supersectors. Velanite becomes the Hegemon's most valued commodity overnight. The Copper Kings quickly hire a mercenary army to outright subjugate minor worlds and nations despite their legal right to exist.

“Don’t you realize what this means!” White spit was collecting on either side of Magnate Uuprowa’s mouth. He’d been a hair’s breadth from the screen arrays showcasing ansible-updated data from The Market itself as well as several, less savory resource exchanges that operated on the edge of legality. Such infractions by Uuprowa were accepted by the inner circle of confidants that worked with him to navigate investment for the Isiba TriNational MacroCorp.

Today it seemed all the numbers were good.

“What is it father?” Baroness Asanaga said, feigning interest. She balanced a morsel of still living scrimp on her finger before eating it, feeling a thrill as the diminutive creature fought against her tongue.

“Our shipment of Ghalasian Velanite has arrived to the refineries in the ExeCor and–” he grabbed one of the visutel screen arrays. Asanaga glanced, then walked over to study the data more closely.

“This is incredible...” She said, more to herself, but her father and patron was quivering with excitement. Uuprowa was reaching his adolescence again, his hormones and skin pliability at about eighteen. He was becoming insufferable, but then, she tried to remind herself, had she been so different twenty years ago when she’d gone through her own juvenile teens?

“You did it, father.”

“I have! This is financial proof that we no longer need to rely on those fringe bastards anymore. With viable Velanite on Ghanica we can refine our own source to The Market. We won’t ever have to pay the Copper Kings’ taxes for our own products ever again! This is just a taste of what is to come!”

There was a chime from the logicor on his massive desk.

“What is it...” He fumbled, almost tripping over his robes, and depressed the reception stud. There was a burst of trans-orbital static.

“Master Uuprowa! This is Listening Station Polar Four, we have incoming ships translating at the terminal edge of the system... We fear it to be–”

“Barakan...” Asanaga said, feeling her bowels weaken, “The Copper Kings are sending Barakan.”

The Age of Entertainment 6/88-350

Magnate Asudii of Civika, a MacroCorp specializing in prison management, discovers Oremor and bribes his way through the cordon around the planet. What he discovers is a world mutated by nanophagic rampancy and an unbelievable financial opportunity. Realizing that he and his fellow travellers cannot leave lest they spread the phage, he grounds his cruiseliner and informs Civika.

Several fiscal cycles later sees indentured, criminals and prisoners from all over Known Space voluntarily shipped to Oremor. Various scenarios and contests are made by Asudii for those who arrive which are then recorded for entertainment subscriptions.

None could have prepared for the level of popularity these broadcasts become, sparking a rush by other MacroCorps and Corpos to petition Joint Ventures with Asudii while governments send their undesirables to Oremor in contracts with the eccentric Magnate. Many even volunteer for the surety of becoming celebrities facing the "Monsters of Alkahest." Development of more advanced cogit-sleeves allows for unique, first hand experiences by subscribers.

No Such Thing as Monsters 6/97-387

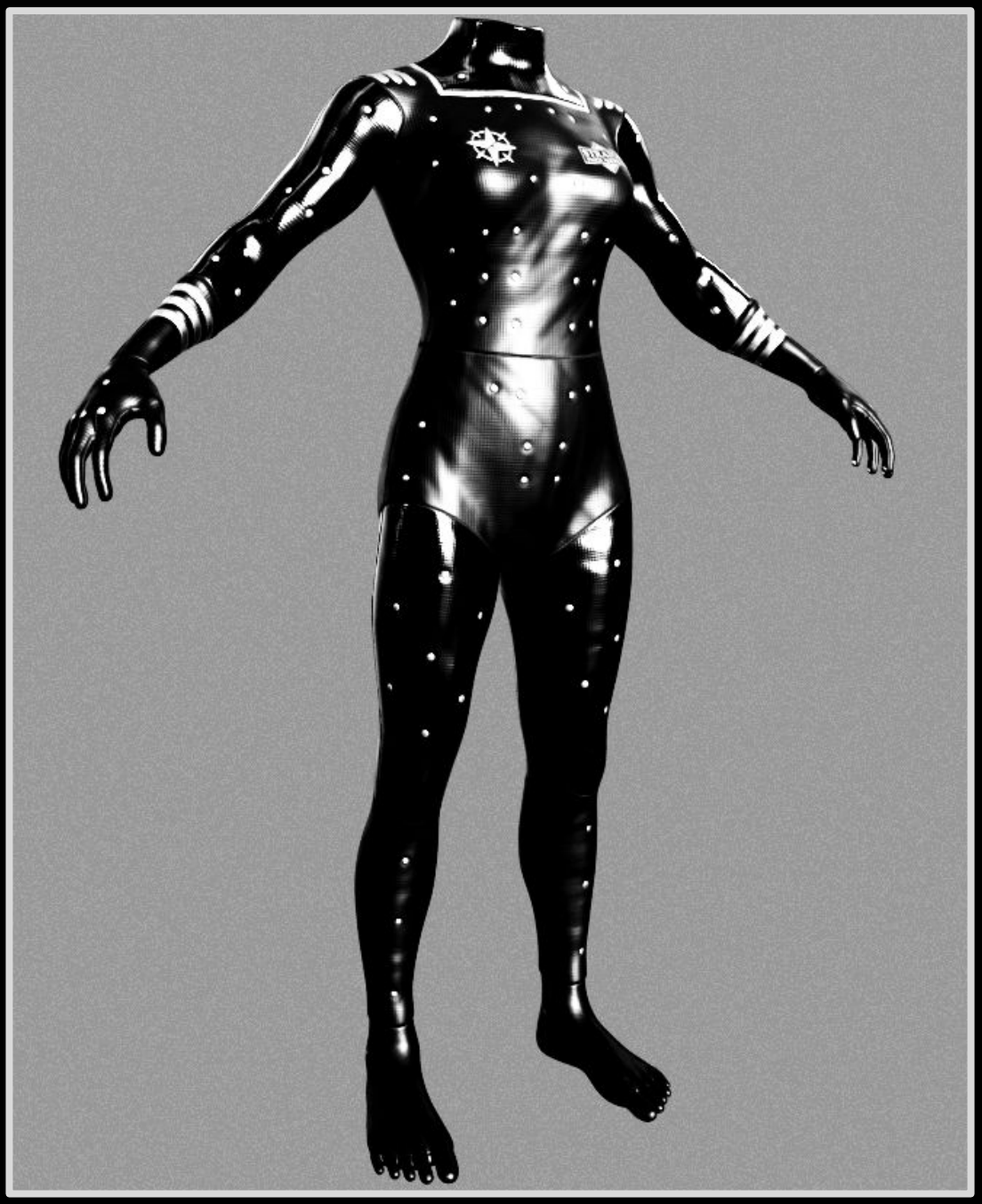
A MassTrader Divine reports that his vessel repelled an attempted boarding action while in the Outside. The MassTrader is immediately stripped of his license for potentially causing a panic. The MassTrader Freight Union issues an apology and attributes the Divine's claims to be a result of extreme eremophobia.

This is Ringracing 7/01-001

Prime Orbita, an abandoned worldring, is converted into a thousand-kilometer combat racetrack and is so popular during RevShare Day and the inaugural Games that the race is declared a TrustBrand on the same day.

The Corpo that manages it, **Naasva**, develops the rest of Orbita, building a metro of kursaal gaming houses and amusement districts alongside the new sport of *Ringracing*.

Prime Orbita becomes the first Corpo to evolve into an independent nation state with its own laws and governance, becoming the Orbita Charasarchy.



Cogit-sleeves are a more advanced form of a cogit-hood, utilizing millions of hair-like neural cillia which integrate with the wearer's nervous system. These suits are paired with an ansible and can be linked to a variety of different technologies to provide real-time tactile and empathic experiences.

Cut-offs exist for negative feelings or emotions. However, those who can afford the extravagance of such a suit often prefer *every* experience, up to the limits their bodies can handle.

Profit Foretold 7/19-074

Ragan Nellor is born.

The Age of the Pioneer 7/30-116

With a lack of opportunities as Reconstruction begins to slow, a new wave of colonization begins, pushing Known Space into new galactic regions like the Norma and Signus Arms creating new opportunities and wealth that flow back to the ExeCor.

The Bridge Heist 7/34-135

A convoy from the Mashiba Development Zone is robbed as they enter a gatesphere. How and who has done this is a mystery to the Commission which dedicates a branch of its operation to seek out the thieves. Despite being the greatest financial theft in history, there are no suspects to date.

Nine mithqals worth of velanite were determined to have been stolen. And two pet canids.

Son of Kantaur 7/82-326

Ragan Nellor emerges as a political powerhouse after his familial Corpo, *Republika,* gains MacroCorp status. Unlike previous Magnates he does not choose to improve business relations, reinforce and expand monopolies or enjoy the fruits of profit.

Instead, he embarks beyond the Frontier and into the trackless unknown.

The Leyline War 7/88-351

A brief conflict erupts amongst the MassTrader Union between two Divine level captains over a legendary rutter after it is recovered from a newly uncovered Analect. There is a split in the Union resulting in a loss of reliable shipping for the rest of the fiscal century as MassTraders across Known Space are drawn into either faction; The Oryx and the Sytrak.

The Summit Council orders the creation of a new license for pilots and captains to operate, creating an alternative to MassTraders. These new license holders eventually form a Corpo called Federated Parcel and while exponentially more expensive, are not caught in the ongoing internecine conflict between the MassTraders.

The Ghazar Prison Break 8/40-159

Baron Yanak from Yinntosh is imprisoned on Ghazar, a penal colony, after attempting to purchase an arkillect device in a shadowmarket, by the Ada-Ghaz Government. It is believed that the Yinn finance an escape attempt which leads to a full-blown prison break. A kosmodrome five kilometers away is ransacked and the prisoners take to the stars in stolen ships but not before prematurely igniting their booster cores, shattering the city of Muulun.

The arkillect Yanak was attempting to purchase is stolen during an assault on Muulun's lawgiver precinct.

Partitioned Loyalty 8/62-244

Entertainment conglomerates convene and challenge several hundred info-laws across Civil Space. The regulation of information is replaced by the abundance of information with the argument that an informed Consumer population provides a better customer base. Known Space is barraged by thousands of info-networks, endorsement markets and individual MacroCorp broadcast signals each with curated opinions.

The Brand Wars begin.

The Design of Decline 8/81-321

The Authority and Summit Council convene at the behest of the Archonists. Dumno-Cliim, the last present scion of the Dumno Clan, informs all three influential bodies of a disturbing discovery. Human civilizations are destined to decline, fragment and fall. His personal advisor, Sehldam-Herigian, has concluded that this is a seemingly natural process in human society and is impossible to stop. The more successful of civilization? The faster its fall.

This is reinforced by the comparative of the fluctuating nature of The Market.

The Hegemon leadership determines that, instead of fighting this natural "force", they will ebb and flow with it. It is agreed that the Hegemon so large that individual member states rising and falling should have no impact on the overall health of The Market, especially if new territories are always being developed. Revolutions, war, recessions and plagues are all embraced, to a degree, dealing some amount of damage to the Hegemon, which it can then recover from while each generation will be provided with a certain measure of hardship so as to prevent stagnation as they struggle to survive.

While being a patron or business owner is considered the prime reason for existence by many Consumers – not everyone's cut out for it. Becoming a soldier for the Directorate comes with it a sense of adventure, support and a chance to see the Universe and find opportunity that doesn't exist anywhere else.

Tributaries fight Exogen expansions, rebel forces, Unionist uprisings, gods, pirates and rival nations and they do so with the best, or at least most, the Hegemon can throw at something hindering the pursuit of profit.

-- Only the broken seek forgiveness --

A Race of Kings 9/01-001

On the first day of the first quat in the new century, the ninth edition of the Manual is released along with an announcement from The Market that the previous century had been the most fiscally profitable cycles *ever* recorded. The newly elected Speaker, Jiahna Macardy, gives a speech in which she describes New Mankind as a *race of kings*. Never has there been a time where so many possess so much. Even the very poorest of Consumers has more wealth in their wrist wallets or their opti-units than the aristocrats of lesser human nations.

Truly, the 9th fiscal century is the dawn of a paradisal golden age for the untold billions of the Thousand Empires.

The Wasting War (the War for Wheat) 9/01-002

Mass starvation cripples the Midworlds as disaster hits interstellar trade while several grow planets report crop failures. Billions starve in any biome that relies on shipments of food leading to a mass increase in Unionist uprisings and internal struggle as colonies and nations fight each other for food and water.

Pauper Prince 9/03-010

Magnate Talan Hod of Wanvath Underwriting steps down, forcing his two siblings to scramble to calm shareholders. He leaves with a fleet of mercenaries and attacks a Bersarang depot on the planet Narada, ransacking it completely. He proceeds to lead his people, called the Paupers, in a chase throughout the ExeCor and then the Midworlds as he personally attacks pinpointed strikes against dozens of targets belonging to other MacroCorps, likely utilizing his knowledge of internal revenue.

Talan's fleet is assisted by hundreds of colonies and outposts as he gives them resources they so badly need. Skiptracers and Auditors try and catch up to Talan but he disappears into the Mehndax sector. This lawless region, close to the unaffiliated duskward nations, becomes the perfect staging point for Talan's metamorphosis into a pirate king.

Mortim waded through the crimson-stained waters of the swamp. He was bleeding but he didn't want to look anymore, not after seeing what his blood was doing to his own skin. The environ-suit they had given him was in tatters, pulled and scratched and burned so that he was breathing in the rank stink of the planet's dead atmosphere. He knew it was doing something to his lungs in the way that you knew a nicostick was poisoning you.

He passed through moats and clouds of still living skin cells. Something in the way they moved on the windless air, how they twisted around him, made the danger sense in his panicked brain know they were aware of him like the schools of plankton of the kelp farms he had worked since thirteen.

"I don't deserve this!" Had been his mantra for the last three hours when the shuttle had dropped him and fifty other contestants on the planet Oremor. He whispered it now just as he had screamed it when the ropes of sinew had reached out and began snatching the men and women around him, dragging them into a maw somewhere in the steaming mists.

One of them, a beautiful young femme, had reached out and he'd tried to help as she was plucked from the blood soiled mud they'd been crawling through. He had imagined saving her, of them surviving this and finding somewhere, maybe a cave, together. Her nails had dug into his palms and he had shoved her into the mass of tentacles that melted through her. She came apart in wet sections of body. He'd ran.

They always seemed to die, the people he was trying to save. It wasn't his fault. He always tried to help but they always threatened to take him with them or get in his way. Like his co-worker, Antany, who he had helped throughout an entire quat, sacrificing meal breaks to teach the younger man how to work the grow fields. Yet Antany had been promoted ahead of him, after only a quat! Mortim hadn't pushed him into the thresher on purpose; Antany should have had more field experience before moving into management.

Now Mortim was here, nominated by his Patron who'd bought his debt to be sent here as a contestant. They had told him all he had to do was survive the swamp and reach the checkpoint, a massive cruiseliner that had been deliberately sunk into the planet a few kilometers away. He'd never leave Oremor but, if he won, he'd live like a king! That's why he'd shot those two other contestants, they'd been in his way, slowing him down when those things with wings had started snatching the contestants off the ground.

He tripped. Mortim went sprawling, tasting the metallic, gritty water as it poured through his cracked helm. Something squirmed in his mouth and he vomited.

"I DON'T DESERVE THIS!" He screamed.

Hands reached out from the muck, naked and red, and pulled him close.

The Price of Messiah 9/19-074

Rikon-Ushutu rises to prominence in the Hegemon. There has never been a mind like this born. Self-enmeshing with the mindworld, Xinul, along the Frontier, Ushutu broadcasts his mind into the datasphere. A cult of personality and a quickly licensed religio-subscription leads to a colonial push by those who view Ushutu as a messiah for the modern age. Something happens on Xinul, potentially Yinntosh or Five Hands operatives or perhaps something else, but the planet is discovered completely bereft of human habitation when a MassTrader convoy arrives.
Strangely, the MassTrader Divine reports massive leyline activity around the planet.

A Mighty Roar 9/20-080

Another fiscal-cycle of profits begin a new decade of prosperity.

Pillars of the Sky 9/72-286

Unexpected disaster across several major agricultural planets. The so called “Star Ladders” built by local governments fiscal centuries ago in order to attract Bersarang Multi-Stellar’s business begin to fail. At first believed to be some kind of wide-spanning Unionist plot, Audit investigation revealed that these failures are the result of generations of unresolved maintenance issues.

These governments claim that Bersarang promised to handle the upkeep of these orbital lifts in exchange for the initial expense paid locally. Bersarang demands arbitration.

Without much needed repairs, the towers fall, wrapping themselves across these unfortunate planets, causing devastation. Debris rains from the sky and clogg orbital approaches. Planetary populations are decimated and crops fail, causing famine across the Hegemon.

Wandermen of Fargol arrive and determine that, legally, the failure of infrastructure is ultimately the local government's purvue as they own the land on which the Star Ladders were built upon. This sets precidence that a entire nation can become indentured to a MacroCorp. Austerity measures and taxes levied to pay back Bersarang are still ongoing on these planets.

Off Brand 9/22-087

Prices rise. Magnates rejoice even as their analysts begin to murmur amongst themselves about the sustainability of their profit margins. Rates of Cons defaulting into Indentured status increase exponentially, as billions find that even basic necessities strain credit and meals must sometimes be paid for in installments. Unloks (dissidents so devoted to Unionist causes that they willingly sink into Indentured status to enact sabotage and foment insurrection) martyr themselves. The first Unionist revolt in fiscal centuries breaks out in the ExeCor and is ruthlessly suppressed on the Pyshetto ringworld with rumors of Black Ring operatives active.

In the midst of all of this, unscrupulous grey market sellers step in, promising luxury goods now out of reach to so many Basics. Shoddy products flood the ExeCor systems as Cons rush to hide their growing unease with retail therapy. Brand loyalty wavers, with even the most devoted Basics beginning to question the possibility of earning their way to Personhood. MacroCorps do everything short of offering additional cap to soothe their troubled workers, but nothing seems to improve the morale of their newly indentured, who now shun additional working hours which have no hope of lowering their time-debt. In spite of their record profits, MacroCorp quarterly updates lament that fiscal responsibility among lower credit Cons and laborers appears to be fading as no one wants to pay their honest debt anymore.

A Universe of Sensation 9/23-089

Ramag Sordoyn, a renowned hunter and Executive Chef, returns from a century-long culinary odyssey. Every vessel of his vast personal fleet is packed to the brim with exotic foodstuffs, Exogen breeding populations and oddities the likes of which none have ever seen. Magnates from across the ExeCor flock to his estate, an entire artificial mountain range on Prime Orbita, to partake in the gastronomic wonders Sordoyn has created for the grand opening of the hedonopia city *Fête*.

This sprawling gastronomic sanctuary is the pinnacle of luxury dining. Here, patrons indulge in the most exotic fare procured from across Known and Unknown Space, meticulously crafted by the unparalleled abilities of Sordoyn himself. Every meal is an adventure, a journey through flavors and sensations. From the memetic secretions of the ophidians of Pexah to the inner eyelids of Bshoshi sapiens, each dish tells a story of exploration and conquest.

Food is not the only reason to seek the decade-long waiting list to stay at *Fête.* The finest musicians and entertainers of the Hegemon can be found here. Behind this facade are the private hotels where the most powerful members of the elite meet face to face. As Sordoyn's fame and fortunes have grown, so too has his influence, with Magnates and oligarchs vying for the coveted opportunity to secure a reservation at his table. For those fortunate enough to gain entry, the price of admission is steep, measured not just in capital but in favors.

Outside the walls of *Fête*, the allure of Sordoyn's exploits draws other enthusiasts and customers. His broadcasts of hunting excursions and simulated hardship endeavors have captivated the masses, creating a new breed of celebrity in the form of aspiring contestants eager to test their mettle against the creatures and beings Sordoyn breeds or has captured.

Laurels and Regency 9/50-199

Ragan Nellor returns to Known Space and establishes a cordon in the duskward East just along the border of the Hegemon. The Summit is unsure what this means and communication with the region is complicated by tachyonic bursts that seem to be manufactured. An envoy is sent and, upon return, reports that Nellor has relinquished his title as Magnate and adopted the title of Supreme Regent, an archaic title from the age of the Aramax. While openly mocked by the Summit and the Magnates, several more dignitaries are sent by various dynasties and families interested in this oligarch turned king. Those allowed to meet Nellor return to Civil Space singing the man's praises with several influential Magnates sending convoys of gifts and resources to celebrate his return. Others call this tribute. The Audit takes note.

Never Friendly 9/61-242

An apparent accounting error results in Armasyn and Five Hands Holistic Panceuticals being brought into direct conflict on the resource rich planet of Arauk. The Directorate, heavily financed by both, is suddenly fighting itself along with Unionists on the contested planet. This is only exacerbated when Five Hands deploys the 208th Barakan Division seemingly on the same side as the Unionists, scattering several Tributary Regiments.

It Feeds 9/70-279

A parasitic Exogenic intelligence is discovered to have infected several planets in the Midworlds, driving the populace to send ansible, las and radio signals to an unknown star. Seikol Communications MacroCorp petitions the Summit to let the communications continue. Cycles pass and an Exogenic horde of creatures comes, ready to harvest the infected population. Seikol studies the process before contracting the Barakan to annihilate everything in the sector.

The Great StrikeBreak 9/71-282

Millions of worker collectives suddenly ally across a dozen star systems in the Midworlds. Laborers, office workers, and even advertisement specialists refuse to work across thirty worldrings after a reasonable increase on output to sustain the vital colonial efforts in the supersector. Coordinated with the help of sympathetic FreeTraders, the strike began on the worldring Buchtel. Corpo security forces are brutalized and executed in the violence. Stratos MacroCorp and several subsidiaries are immediately affected as shipbuilding becomes impossible with multiple security breaches that kill thousands. Armasyn shares drop in value as the growing Unionist movement steals Grade 2 weapons and turns them on innocent Cons. Pirate broadcast stations spread images throughout the Eastern supersectors and capture public attention.

Stolen bipedal gyro-tanks, orbital-capable artillery, even a squadron of Warliners is hijacked from warehouses and dockyards. The self-proclaimed *"Alliance of Amalgamated Workers"* begins to carve out their own territory. By avoiding the Armada fleets sent after them, they make planetfall on the

principal world of Galoniyar. Terrorist forces on the planet help assault the legitimate government, ending in the shameful hanging of the mercantile class and upper credit Cons and Patrons. In these fires a so called “FreeNation” is born, attracting all manner of terrorists and malcontents, feeding illegal grey markets and promoting anarchy.

Barakan Divisions 0-1, 7 and 93 are finally contracted to support the Directorate and a Joint Venture of MacroCorps resulting in the loss of eighty percent of the inhabited region over thirteen fiscal-cycles with the heaviest fighting seen since the war against the Catraethi Regenium. Agents of the Audit uncover illicit ties connecting the Alliance and Corpos in the Hegemon, resulting in several smaller conflicts as those Corpos are hunted down. Galoniyar is renamed Knalo (Uttar for "*This place will consume you*") and is converted into a penal world, the largest and most notorious in Known Space.

Hardline measures are taken against all near-human populations in proximity, regardless of affiliation.

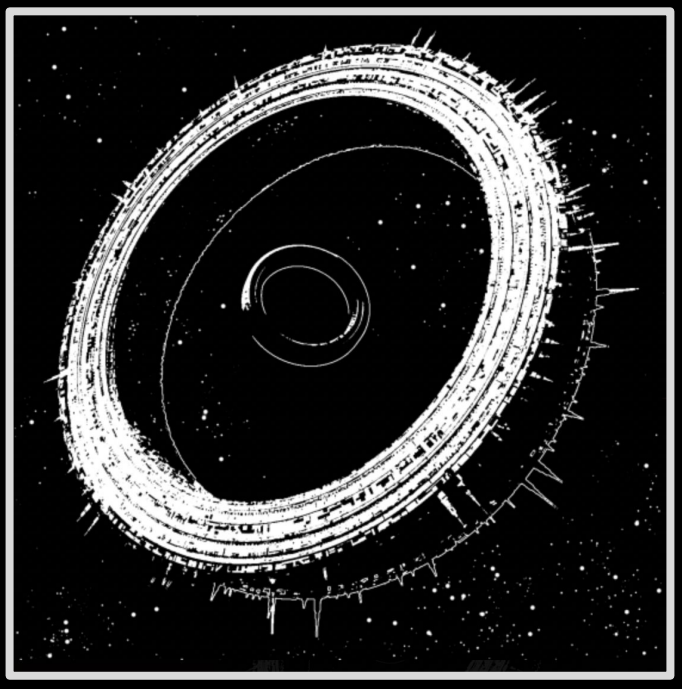
The Enduring Laborer 9/74-295

Hexetica is a nodal star system in the ExeCor. The Tosch Worldring was respected, unique for its smaller, inner, paradise ring and a popular retreat for Magnates, especially those of Source Unlimited who later leased the outer ring. A cognitovirus is smuggled aboard a starship believed to have been present during the Great Strikebreak, and is released amongst the populace via education modules of unclear origin.

The resulting Unionist movement, which declares itself the *Enduring Laborers*, somehow seizes ancient atomika weapons which are then used to completely obliterate the inner ring, killing hundreds of thousands of Persons and dozens of Magnates within the blink of an eye. This brazen use of ultimate violence attracts other malcontents on worlds in the ExeCor and Midworlds that have access to higher grade vids and first-hand accounts by Corpos fleeing the massacre.

The Barakan of the Pale Tempest are immediately contracted and sent ahead of a massive retaliatory Joint Venture as the Summit Council declares an interdiction on the entire rimward ExeCor, the first time since the Catraethi invasion. What follows is half a decade of grueling city

fighting as well as a guerilla war within the thousands of kilometers of intestinal passageways. Reports of high Barakan casualties are briefly reported before silenced by order of the Audit.



Invasive Species 9/82-326

Exogen begin appearing across Vela border, their continent-spanning vessels emerging from the nebula's mists. Unclear as to how but the Exogen broadcast on known Hegemon channels and even tap into an Ansible array on Kerdosea. It is surmised that there must be a human population on the other side of the Vela Nebula, perhaps even as distant as the Sagittarius Galactic Arm. The Audit is concerned that animals would have such ability and that humans would even consider collaboration. They launch a mission of inquiry. Identified as 'Shigue,' they attempt contact with the Copper Kings even after two of their smaller vessels are shot out of orbit. Prince-King Isaw Loi'azenev unleashes his personal Division of Barakan against them. Aboard their warliners, the Copper Kings enjoy an entire quat of hunting along the nebula's edge.

Their broadcasts become wildly popular as this strange, almost technologically advanced species has no fear of the Barakan and will fight them in open conflict. It had become common for Unionists and even Exogens to commit mass suicide when engaging the Barakan, making for a dull affair, with calls from several Summit members for a de-financing of the vaunted Elite. When more Shigue are discovered entering all along the eastern supersector, the Magnates of several MacroCorps commission the Directorate to make a spectacle of the Shigue extinction.

The Hunt 9/84-333

A massive Joint Venture between Stratos, the Copper Kings, and dozens of thrill-seeking Magnates embark on a multi-cycle "hunt" that will take them on a pleasure-filled cruise through several star systems along the Vela Frontier. It is here that the first *Havenhold*-class Shigue vessel is discovered attempting to find a suitable world for colonization.

Hundreds of kilometers in size, these vessels are believed to house the majority of the Shigue population and, presumably, their leaders. It becomes the obsession of the Magnates to run down this ship, extending their hunt another three quats.

Bad Echo 9/85-340

Reports of random attacks on isolated outposts and colonies increase. The **Mehndax** are blamed, even though it would be impossible for them to strike outside of the picket defense lines of the Directorate along the border. Investigations reveal untouched infrastructure and resources. Only the human and ergoid populations are missing, with relatively few signs of struggle or resistance.

9/87-345 - Legacy of Aramax

FreeTrader scoutships discover leylines into the Norma Arm and encounter a clutch of worlds with evidence of Aramaxian colonization. Relics from that civilization are recovered and smuggled back into the Hegemon, sold on darkmarkets near the Arsenal Worlds of KosmoSec. Surprisingly, other Aramaxian technologies respond to the proximity of these relics, resulting in anomalous incidences and rumors of heightened Ergoid intelligence.

9/91-363 - Strange Aeons

The planet Chantan near the Sooner Integral is revealed during a routine prospect to have a dormant orbital station that predates any known human civilization. A single occupant is discovered as well as a pre-technological human population.

Magnate Dhamalia Sooner places an interdiction on the entire solar system. The Audit demands entry and is denied for the first time in Hegemon history.

9/91-364 - Human Supremacy Movements

Unclear in origin, but *human supremacy* movement begins throughout the Hegemon seemingly spontaneously. Licensed ergoids are scrapped, docile Exogens are executed en masse and new

9/99-395- Millennial Celebration

The Hegemon begins to prepare for its one thousandth year since the founding of the Hegemon. Games and system wide events are scheduled with tourists from across Known Space gathering. MacroCorps begin to unveil new and exciting products, building the technophilic momentum towards RevShare day.

The Summit Council, lead by Speaker Haastrath, welcomes Dumno-Kyne to Protea in preparation to open The Market and welcome a new edition of the Manual to be published. To the surprise of the Council, Kyne explains that there will be no new Manual and that he comes to enter The Market's inner chambers, the first time in centuries.

Amidst this, a panicked request for aide emits from the planet Kerdosea across all ansible arrays within range.

9/99-396 RevShare Riots

Unprecedented "RevShare Riots" all along the Frontier break out as the Hegemon prepares for the end of the century festivities. Copiae 4, the Coreward supersector's largest nodal system, sends word of rising anarchy and confusion from unknown craft, private organizations, Unionist sympathizers, Exogens claiming sophontism, Coreflares, disturbances in the Outside, a massive signal shadow descending from the upper galactic plane, even as the local government and MacroCorp representatives turn on one another over the largest discovery of velanite outside of the Mashiba Development Zone. Those who know are concerned for another outbreak of the Doctrinal Cognitovirus.

The Director, Archonists, Representatives to the Summit Council and the Speaker have all taken some well deserved vacation time to Prime Orbita and are not available currently.

Velanite Cyclotron

TECHNOLOGY

Price, Profit, and Progress

The Hegemon is enamored by technology and, in its own way, societally addicted to new forms and iterations of connecting with the bleeding forefront of science and the means to unlock further methods of profit. Amidst this, almost every Consumer loves their entertainment, paying vast sums and credit for heightened pleasures. Across Known Space are endless showcases, conventions and opportunities for Consumers to congregate and witness what the Corpos have to sell.

The rivalry that unfolds between Corpo and MacroCorp entities, occasionally interrupted by the ingenuity of private enterprises, is nothing short of fierce. The demand for new products makes any crime, atrocity or action justified with only brand loyalties ensuring loyalty to one provider or another.

Yet, beneath the veneer of competition, a profound *truth* of the Hegemon reveals itself.

This truth is that much of this rivalry is performative in nature. While MacroCorps may occasionally engage in skirmishes and isolated acts of sabotage, these conflicts remain secondary to the art of negotiation. It is often more prudent to seek common ground than to squander resources on mutual destruction. Better to stay in power then let the lesser grades of Consumers think they can climb the CorpoSoci ladder. This is how control is kept and the order of things maintained.

This courtesy, however, is seldom extended to non-Hegemonic states and entities, nevermind the alien civilizations that still persist which are viewed as animals. Entire star systems have been plundered by the Directorate and left with enough survivors to rebuild only to be invaded again a generation later like a gruesome harvest.

Membership within the Summit and active participation within The Market affords a certain degree of protection. Yet, this protection may be willingly sacrificed if a larger or more audacious Corpo entity deems it worthwhile to obtain legal dispensation for direct action. While the Hegemon is not a place of warriors and the imaginary honor they so often clamour for, a shrewd entrepreneur knows when to use the pen… and when to pay someone to pick up the gun.

PROPULSION

ROCKETS

Traditional chemical rockets, despite their enduring simplicity, continue to serve as a reliable and cost-efficient method for smaller spacecraft to traverse planetary atmospheres and journey between worlds. These rockets utilize a diverse array of fuel compositions, including combinations of liquid hydrogen, liquid oxygen, and other more exotic propellants, tailored to achieve the necessary thrust for escape velocity. When in orbit a ship's reactor-drive will shunt power away from the primary rocket or rocket cluster, powering the ship while its exhaust continues to propel it through various thruster nodes.

Despite the advent of more advanced propulsion technologies, such as ion drives and centrifugal accelerators, chemical rockets remain a cornerstone of space travel. Their reliability, simplicity, and cost-effectiveness continue to make them a preferred choice for the Hegemon.

Lower grades of velanite are often used as an accelerant, especially for dives into gatespheres.

DRIVE SAILS

Every spacecraft designed has a relatively simple, starlight powered collection of "sails". A solar sail leverages the momentum of solar photons to propel spacecraft. Comprised of a vast, reflective membranes, the solar sail harnesses the physical principle of radiation pressure. As photons emanating from a star they strike the sail's surface, their momentum is transferred to the sail, imparting a continuous thrust.

This mode of propulsion offers the distinct advantage of providing a starship with a cheap source of power and an alternative to relying entirely on propellent. The thrust generated by a solar sail is gradual and cumulative, suitable for travel requiring sustained acceleration over extensive periods. Directional control of the spacecraft is achieved by adjusting the orientation of the sail relative to the solar radiation, allowing for navigational maneuvers.

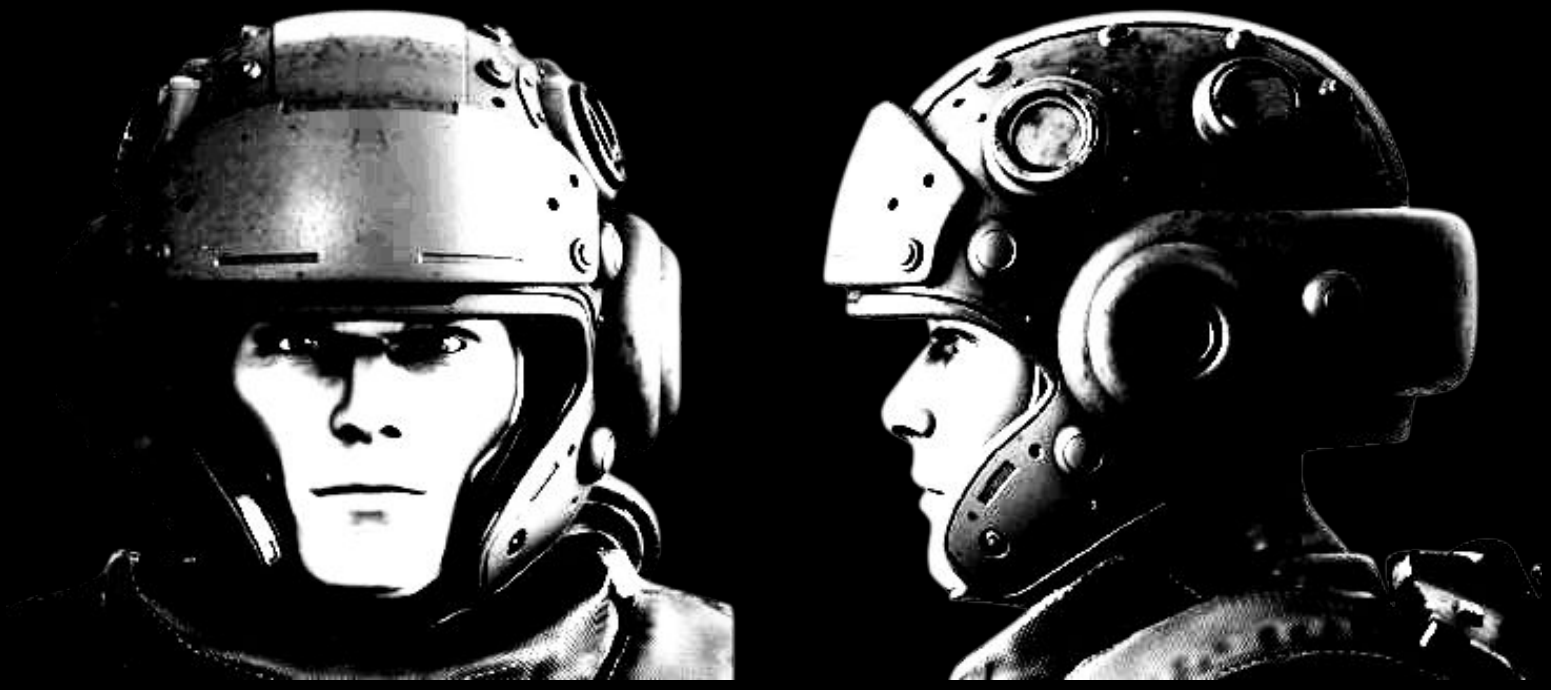
Fully unfurled these sails can be multiple kilometers long and are often painted with the ship's personal sigil or owner's brand.

Cogita Technologies

Cogita technology encompasses advancements such as wetware, neural links, spikes, and contact interfaces, enabling seamless interaction between the human brain and external equipment. This technology aligns a user's neural impulses with various wearables or integrated organoid systems, effectively transforming cognitive intent into mechanical action. Training in cogita tech is rigorous and exhaustive, akin to the foundational learning of motor skills, such as walking or tying shoelaces. Once an individual attains mastery over these extensions, they transcend conventional human limitations, exhibiting abilities that may be described as *post-human*.

Vehicle operators can experience an enhanced sense of embodiment, perceiving their equipment as an extension of their own bodies. This immersive control, however, presents a hazard: feedback from equipment damage can induce a traumatic response similar to that of a physical injury, such as a bone fracture or organ puncture. Advanced practitioners of cogita tech can repurpose specific brain regions to take on supplementary cognitive functions, increasing overall efficiency and, in some cases, generating additional sensory capacities, including a primitive form of precognition.

While the practicality of this "precognitive" capability remains under scrutiny, developers of cogita technologies are subject to stringent oversight from the Audit, ensuring that claims remain scientifically grounded and realistic. That said, high end brands can produce brain-to-brain communication alongside reaction times that precede external events by one to two seconds—an edge mercenaries and the Directorate both pay maximum cap to endow with their troops.



Grade 3 Keystone Helm from Yinntosh Innovations, most popular amongst small elite units such as mercenaries or Ruentime special forces.

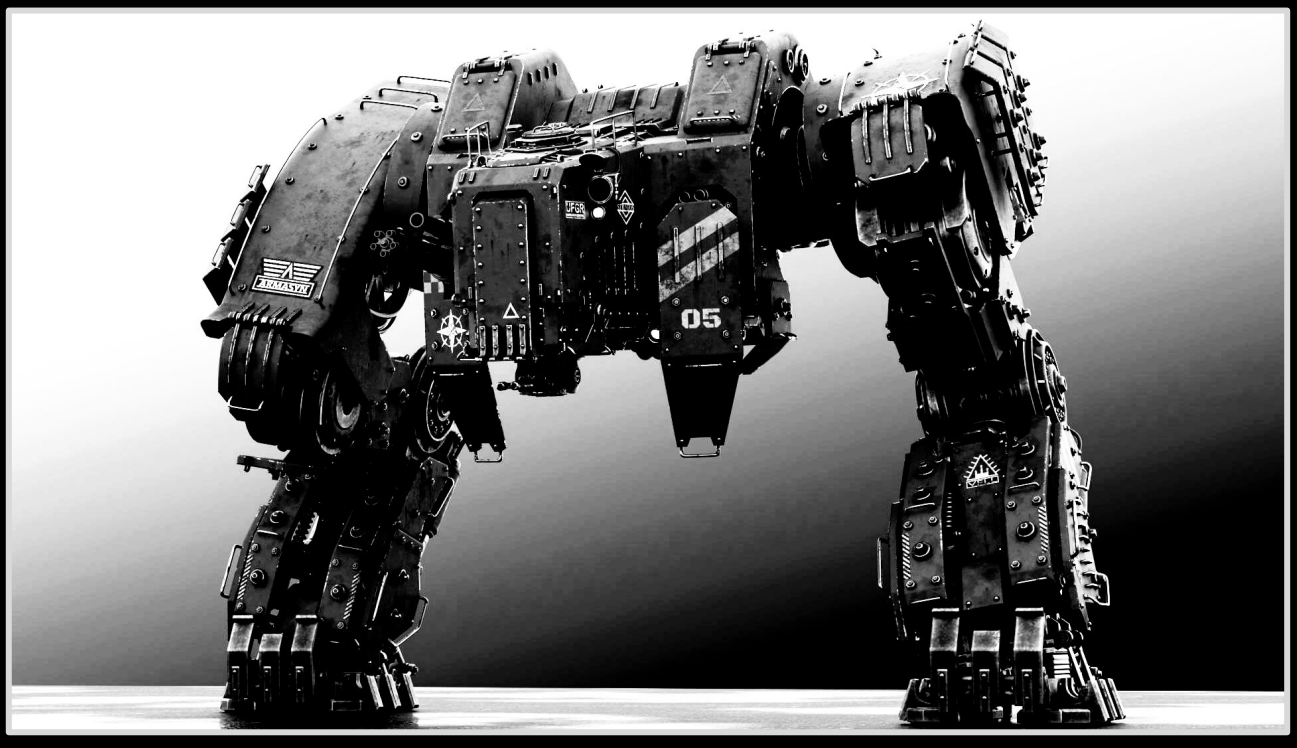
Armasyn BGT - “Brawler”

Bipedal Gyro-Tanks (BGTs) operate as the Army’s principal frontline assault platforms, integrating advanced propulsion systems, stabilized gyro-balancing, and vectored thrust technology to deliver performance across a wide range of terrains. Each unit incorporates reinforced nusteel plating, layered multi-sensor arrays, modular hardpoints for interchangeable weaponry, and integrated countermeasure suites designed to neutralize both conventional and electronic threats.

Typical crew composition includes a pilot, gunner, systems technician, and support personnel as required including a compartment from a squad of troopers. Crewing configurations vary based on mission parameters, with some variants accommodating up to six operators to manage specialized reconnaissance, fire support, and battlefield repair capabilities.

Originally conceptualized by Armasyn, the BGT design underwent rigorous field trials before patent finalization and mass production. The chassis and drive systems align with high-grade modular engineering protocols, allowing rapid adaptation to environmental pressures, including desert heat, polar conditions, dense forests, or high-radiation zones. This adaptability extends to advanced life-support integration and a single jettison pod that fits two.

Flight-capable variants utilize foldable aero-surfaces and lifting fans to achieve limited vertical and horizontal maneuvering, enabling rapid troop insertion, obstacle circumvention, or tactical redeployment.



Armored Mobility Unit - “AMU”

Developed by the Muskov Milisya MiliCorp in what many regarded as a fruitless attempt to create a means to forgo the need of Barakan involvement in the many conflicts of the 4th Fiscal Century. The AMU was ridiculed by Armasyn and Stratos and every other MiliCorp for Milisya’s audacity. It was only until the [[REDACTED]] and the hasty arrival of Admiral Muskovak with a phalanx of AMU’s that the program earned both accolades and benefits from the combined investment of the Summit Council and Directorate.

The AMU’s design is based upon a unique assault-harness integrated with a cockpit style encasement. Early theorists believed that the initial design uncovered by the Baratund family predates even the Pax. Powered by an exotic brother/sister pair of deuterium cores located in the suit’s upper leg-limbs, the AMU can operate in almost any environment, including the vacuum of space, for centuries with proper energy management.

The AMU is based around a central chassis which is entered from the front before the rider is encased by bands and coils of reinforcing braces that immobilize the body within save for the head which is allowed full mobility. Arm extensions extend another forearms length and end with hand analogs. The rider’s legs reach the knee joints which continues in a backward hinged leg that creates a kind of loping gate more akin to a canid stifle profile.

There are six universal ports, two on either arm and one on each leg. These allow for each rider to customize their AMU as they see fit. The AMU is capable of maintaining a variety of defensive and offensive capabilities which can draw power from the twin cores, however, this can quickly drain a suit of energy and so these additions must often have their own powering units to function.

The AMU houses an atmospheric enrichment device that can convert almost 90% of the user’s own waste chemicals. Water reserves that can keep a rider hydrated for an extended period *(the longest known period of survival was Soldier Nikola Igel who became adrift from his spacecraft and was found a year and two months later. Although dead, it was determined that he perished a week before discovery from swallowing his own tongue rather than a lack of sustenance).*

The AMU Assault Harness

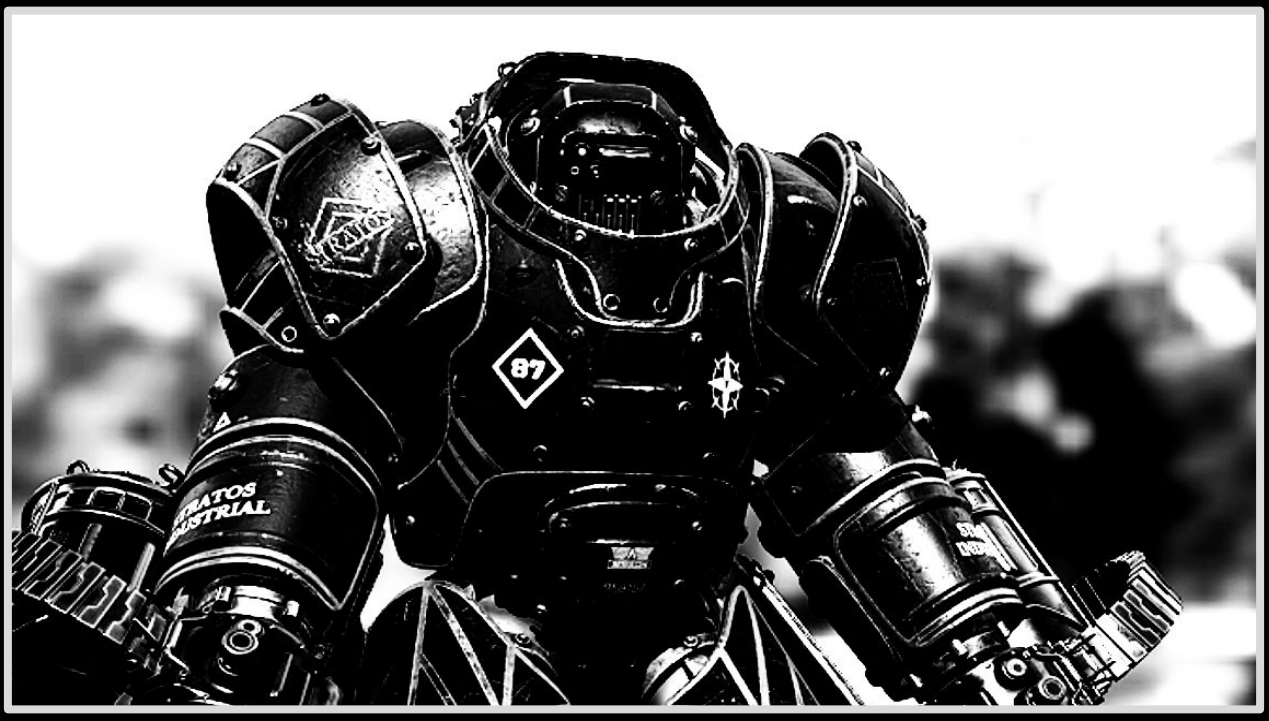
AMU's are driven by 'Riders,' who require extensive cognitive alignment and the appropriate disposition before being allowed to have access to such a vehicle of mass destruction. While not all AMU's utilize a Grade 1 cogit-hood, it is the most devastating aspect of the autoharness.

A Rider becomes operationally seamless with their machines, their sense of Self replaced entirely by the suit's logicor imperatives. It is for this reason that the AMU's were mocked, the idea of giving oneself entirely to a synthetic process is conceptually horrific. At the risk of reducing their humanity, their operational capacity is multiplied exponentially.

A Rider does not question what they are doing while within their AMU, but, it is ultimately a *choice* that makes them do this and only for as long as the operation of a regular shift. After which they return to Directorate barracks, or equivalent, where they are placed in medically induced comas while mentanics review and repair their minds.

AMU's are the shocktroops of the Directorate and are usually contracted directly with the Armada. Riders are paid exorbitantly higher pay and have the most benefits while, interestingly, have the lowest retirement rates. It is believed that the ability to suppress the Self, for moments, is intoxicating. The ability to no longer be plagued by doubt or memory for many is desirable, especially for those that serve in war.

Riders do not have a hierarchy. In fact, Riders do not really understand who they are in relation to one another when they are outside of their cogit-hoods. The men and women who leave the auto-harnesses are shadows, strangers, of their previous hyper-lethal selves.



Stratos AMU unit

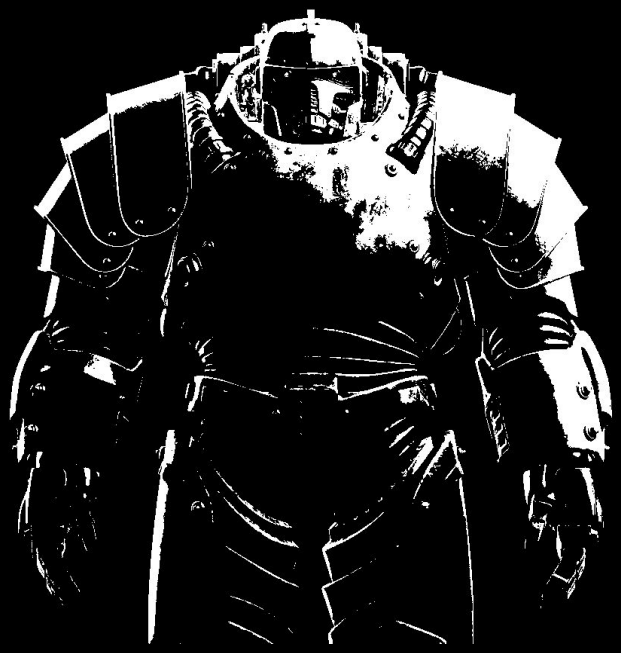
Autoplate and Empowered Armor

Exoskeletons are common enough across Known Space to not bat an eye, with more expensive organoid options standing out. For military applications, there is empowered armor such as the wildly popular Pocketsteel that makes a wearer almost impervious to small and mid-tier weaponry from the frontal arc.

The more extreme version of this is Autoplate, which turns an operator into a hulking mountain of nusteel destruction. Dozens of additional capabilities are built into Autoplate, such as core thrusters, blade sleeves, and cogit ports, which provide sixth and seventh senses.

The most recognizable Autoplate armor used by the Barakan Division is the O-7 class Tetsudyne Assault Harness, developed initially by the Kapalla Group, an early MacroCorp. While there have been improvements, and rival MacroCorps have developed many versions of the Assault Harness, the O-7 remains the preferred encasement choice for most Divisions due to its variability and dependability.

Frighteningly to non-Barakan, the O-7 class requires bolting and welding into place and an entire team of at least four to attach to a wearer. As the O-7 is used by the Barakan it is not available for sale to other Directorate formations.



"Do not call us warriors - we are not some honorable breed. We do not fight for ideals, or glory, or a brighter tomorrow. We kill because it is the only thing left for us, because we are good at it and, most importantly, because we enjoy it."

-Overseer, Pale Tempest

The Mauler

Originally a weapon system for vehicles, the Mauler was first prototyped by the long-defunct Teras Arms Corporation before being absorbed by Armasyn in the FC-3. Notably, Armasyn was not able make the Mauler system exclusive as it was adopted by the Barakan Elite and became a trustBrand. Many copies and variants now exist, although Armasyn's M-600C is considered the best with its telltale L style magazine mountings.

Technically the Mauler is *two* automat rifles conjoined and treated like a carbine. Originally designed for hardpoints and vehicles, operating them, even with empowered exoframes, is wildly impractical. Still, the Barakan have become iconic with the weapon, choosing it over any other automat.

The double-feed mechanism allows for two variations in ammunition. Originally, the barrels were meant to switch between magazines, ensuring cool-down times did not disrupt function. With improvements in alloys and the utter disregard for personal harm of the Barakan, this concern has fallen by the wayside.

The outer make of the carbine is reinforced with kowari-alloy rails, making it exceptionally durable and allows a kotar to use it as an enormous club, which they do.

Barakan 57-2

Pocketsteel

A general term for medium class autoplate used across Known Space. There is no direct interface with Pocketsteel, unlike the more elaborate empowered armor suits that utilize contact uplinks and neural spikes. Instead, operation relies on training and skill alone.

Joint actuators can quadruple strength but a wearer must be careful to not overextend themselves lest they rip muscle or tear out a limb from its socket. Additional plates and bracers can be added to the harness as well as maneuvering jets for low/no gravity environments.

Pocketsteel's most interesting factors is its integrated logicor that allows the operator to give commands like force-marching their limbs to designated targets that allow the wearer to focus on combat. The logicor can also be given commands via beamed signals.

Silovsky brand Pocketsteel, by Armasyn

Heavy Assault Scattergun

One of the many weapon systems utilized by Pocketsteel armored troops are designed not only for efficacy but also entertainment value. No weapon is more iconic in the Tributary Regiments than the heavy automat-assault scattergun, also known as the *Strikebreaker*. Exclusive to Pocketsteel heavy infantry for close quarters fighting, this unsubtle cannon cannot be wielded effectively without the assistance of an assault harness rig.

Scatterguns can be modified with countless ammunition variants such as conflagration bolts which come in wide spectrum of different colors for maximum "it" factor. Directorate news-entertainment will often request units of Tributaries to be dropped first into combat zones where they can become the focus of long range visutel cameras that can broadcast content to observers. Despite the strikebreaker's history going back well over a millennia, it remains a strong favorite for recruitment ads and war visudramas.

The weapon itself is a simple gas powered rotary system and entirely made of nusteel. Hand uplink, targeters and other such upgrades are available but most operators tend to prefer the unbroken silhouette of the brutal multi-barrelled cannon.

The Armasyn HRA Strikebreaker with a potential fire rate of 1500 rounds a minute.

Armor

Tributaries and mercenaries across the Galaxy utilize all manner of armor and protective gear. These are colloquially referred to as ‘caraplate’ or heavier ‘blastplate.’ Depending on the grade, this can include all manner of reflective coating, from bullet-resistant alloys ranging from plastek to formatted nusteel. Armor can be upgraded with multiple capabilities and built-in support, such as exoskeletons that hide weapon slots and provide low-tier empowerment.

Subscriptions within the Directorate are always available to Tributaries. The Mills will format and manufacture any armor that can be afforded, precisely to a soldier’s measurements. There are various sub-classes that denote specific tasks or goals by the wearer, such as shockplate, used by the Ruentime Specials, or breachplate, utilized by anyone insane enough to crack an airlock.

High grade editions of advanced ‘vesturplate’ showcase full suits made to look like business attire for those executives that need to visit the frontlines. Variety is, after all, endless in the Hegemon.

Armasyn *Pointblank* Caraplate, standard issue throughout the Directorate and represents one of the most lucrative contracts in Hegemon history with endless copies and fakes permeating Known Space. Can be altered with Armasyn exclusive upgrades.

Revolvers/Wheelguns

Automat and magazine fed pistols are a common sidearm within the Hegemon carried by Directorate non-commissioned officers, skiptracers, milicorp security forces, and found in the homes of millions of Indigent or Basic Consumers who feel the need for cheap, reliable home protection. But culturally they are regarded as nothing more than tools on par with a wrench or hammer. Carrying one in public at best marks you as working a trade, and at worse leaves you looking like a low credit Con who can't afford better. Instead, the Hegemon prefers the mechanical beauty and precision of revolvers.

Popularized in The ExeCor, the revolver is a symbolic representation of a Consumer's willingness to defend one's life and property while still evoking a level of gentility unattainable by carrying a mass produced Armasyn pistol. Six to eight heavy caliber rounds is a credible threat, but the time it takes to reload, and the limited ammunition capacity is a subtle statement of both privilege and careful consideration. The one who carries it must judge each shot... leaving the heavy lifting to their hired security detail.

A high grade revolver is synonymous with status, so much so that upper level Directorate officers carry more elaborate style weapons that include ident codes and personal details. These weapons are often heirlooms, passed from parent to child or Patron to loyal employee. Dueling is not uncommon, despite being illegal, creating a subculture within the Hegemon's fighting forces that further glorifies the weapon as an emblem of honor. Barakan Taskmasters carry enormous, heavy revolvers that would break a regular person's wrist and arm with its recoil. These weapons, and their many variations, are known as Kingbreakers, and Kotar absolutely refuse to even touch such revolvers for reasons known only to the Barakan.

As one might expect, many of the sidearms carried by Persons are bespoke creations, hand made and designed with any number of customized accessories to suit the user's needs and blend seamlessly with their choice of fashion. While revolvers are most often carried by Persons and Basics aspiring to be Persons, the vast majority of Persons do not carry a revolver, much like most Persons do not wear a high grade mechanical timepiece. But for those who desire personal protection without drawing too much attention at high status social functions, the revolver is the perfect statement piece.

Of course, once something becomes popular, there is always profit to be made. Any number of moderately priced revolver models, colloquially known as wheelguns, can be found for sale. These pieces are perfect for fashion conscious Basics or skiptracers trying to blend in while hunting more affluent targets. The terms sixer or heater are also common slang, though most often used by the Indigent.

Yulia sipped from the thermos of kahvic, relishing in the heat and the blend of actual spices, not chems. Her second, Taka, had spared no expense for this morning and she appreciated that as much as his presence. The farmland was outside of the Tributary base, locally owned, which meant the Directorate's assurance policy wouldn't be called in after she put the piece of shit walking toward them in the ground.

Rixon, a fellow officer, was cocky even now as he strode onto the field with his own second. Both were orbital born and cocksure. He thought he was better than Yulia and her fellow grounders. She'd show him. All four Tributaries were in full dress uniform; Hegemon purples with gold accents. Everything was by the unwritten ritual of dueling. Technically a violation of the Hegemon's Lex, Directorate officers had always dueled, since even before the Hegemon, settling debts of honor and ego with honorable ritual combat.

Officially the practice was barbaric but anyone that reached the ranks of the Tributary officers were inducted in the unspoken details of the ritual. Viewed as to high an expense as many officers were trained in expensive academies just to be killed or disabled, imposed an unnecessary financial and leadership strain. But these critiques rarely understood the demands of the fighting spirit.

"Are you–"

"You bleeding swine, of course I'm ready!" Yulia cut Rixon off. He flinched, all tense, which was good. She snapped open her wheelgun, a Grade 1 antique, machined on Mkklon by Vavarik gunsmiths. Taka immediately produced a single, kowari tipped, bullet and slid it into the chambe. Yulia never broke eye contact with Rixon who's second provided the same bullet to his own wheelgun.

Thirty paces. One shot. Fired at the same moment. This was the essence of Gauge Dueling.

Yulia didn't allow herself to scream as Taka took dirt from the ground and rubbed it into the tear in her cheek and her eviscerated ear. She couldn't hear what he was saying, the ruptured eardrum ringing so loud to make her temporarily deaf. One inch to the right and the bullet would have painted the dirt behind her with blood, brains and bone.

The way Rixon was currently laying thirty'ish paces from her. She pulled a bagful of chits and tossed it.

"Pay for whatever funeral rites." She said to Rixon's second, bent over his friend's body. "The rest is for you. If anyone asks, there was a misfire during target practice but tell the rest of your kind; I won."

DEFENSIVE MEASURES

a_aae3

As innumerable are the weapons that people have developed to kill one another. So, too, have the means to defend themselves. Intensity flares, zone shielding, and limited intelligence ergoids are all standard for the Directorate and only become more exotic for MacroCorp security forces.

SHIELDING: Area Denial Fields

While kinetic field projectors are used to push other craft and debris, such as asteroids, from the prow of starships or to avoid collision, the Hegemon has not yet developed a true *shield* capable of stopping ballistic or ordinance weapons. The closest equivalent would be re-entry deflectors mounted on ships designed to descend through planetary atmospheres. These deflectors project a powerful, directional magnetic field that reflects the heat of atmospheric entry and thus mitigates thermal damage to the protected ship's hull. This field technology is nowhere near strong enough to be combat-viable.

NANOID SEED CLOUDS: The Vanguard of Defense Evolution

In every theater of conflict, the now ubiquitous presence of flak clouds or nanoid systems are the foremost countermeasure against electronic or energy based threats. Developed by Grumdol Aerospace, these systems manifest as imposing black and grey clouds that utterly nullify energy-based weaponry, render sensor equipment ineffective, and even impede line-of-sight targeting. Made from refined velanite and nanoid structures that are pumped from exhaust funnels from ships, vehicles and installations that then blanket the area at the first hint of potential conflict. Called *"warfog"* by Tributaries, the shrouding effect is ominous to even trained combatants.

Since their deployment, seed clouds has catalyzed a profound transformation in the dynamics of active combat zones. Adversaries can no longer rely on remote engagements and distanced exchanges; instead, the strategic landscape demands direct confrontation and a return to more brutal close quarter firefights. Visutel broadcasts and entertainment subscriptions have peak returns since combat footage is now at medium and close quarters.

BLOCK TURRETS: Meet force with force

Dozens of "block" turrets cover all modern space faring vessels. Their design is as simple as is their function; *shoot problems away*. The only close-in weapon system capable of autonomous performance via an ingenious method of organoid enmeshing between specialist "gunners" and the turret systems which can perform their own search, detection, evaluation, tracking, engagement protocols and kill judgements autonomously while not utilizing fabricated cognition.

MASS DESTRUCTION

Atomika class weaponry is generally frowned upon despite its spectacular nature and the immediacy of its results. The devastation caused by such devices comes with extra cost and delays in post-war rebuilding and cleanup nevermind the ecological expenses should an ecosystem be damaged.

The decision to utilize atomika weapons is never done lightly in inter-corporate disputes where both sides may seek to seize, rather than destroy, their competitors' resources. That said, MacroCorps still stockpile atomika weapons in case a contract or some unforeseen situation calls for their deployment.

The Directorate has their own stockpiles but must gain authorization from the Summit Council before deployment.

There are two major types of atomika weapons and countless variations. Artillery and bomblet style warheads are preferred as guided missiles can be tampered with, even overridden. Depending on the yield these weapons can obliterate armored columns or sunder a continent.

The second is a derivative of Catraethi *"matric"* energy weapons fueled by fragments of fissic materials. Warliners typically have one or two such weapons on board in the event an enemy ship is unable to pump nanoid shield clouds into proximity.

Atomika bloom clouds from interplanetary ballistic missiles.

Ordinance

KM-15 Bomb

A general-purpose gravity bomb that can be equipped with a cornucopia of explosive types and payloads. Utilized across militaries supplied by the Hegemon, it is most commonly deployed with a 1,000-pound warhead of conventional trotyl-based explosives to targets below.

AAGR-6 Yilan Javelin

The Yilan is the de facto standard issue air-to-air guided munition found on all atmospheric air combat platforms. Originally part of a project to develop highly accurate long-range air-launched ordinance, it soon became apparent that it would be far more cost-effective to design a weapon with a shorter operational range but with more reliable guidance logicor. The Yilan is a versatile heat-seeker weapon that has proven itself dependable in various exotic combat environments. Its payload, rocket thruster and guidance logicor can be adjusted to counter variations in gravity and atmospheric pressure and its proximity-triggered warhead has found success even in engagements with Exogenic aircraft despite lacking human normative signatures. The Yilan's biggest weakness is the sensitivity of its infrared optics which can be scrambled by sufficient thermal interference from natural or artificial sources.

ASGR-11 Kirmis "Maggot"

Air-to-ground beam-riding missile fitted with an quarkal-tipped warhead. The Kirmis commonly sees use against vehicles, buildings and smaller target strong points. Like the Yilan, it can be adapted for various atmospheric conditions and gravitic tolerances. While its radar beam guidance system requires the pilot to keep their target painted until contact, it doesn't suffer from the quirks of most Hegemon fire-and-forget weapons, making it a reliable asset in most combat environments. The missile has a subvariant, Koba-II, that replaces the radar guidance hardware with laser beam targeting.

As a result of its quarkal hardening, Kirmis ordinance can pierce everything save quarkal reinforced hulls. Counter drills and timed anchor spikes are used to arrest its travel through a target before delivering its payload.

M3/M4 gun pod

The model 3 and 4 wing-mounted gun pods are a popular option for a fighter's weapons loadout. Model 3 is a standard autocannon similar to the ones installed in the prows of fightercraft with the benefit of more ammunition, while number 4 is a three-barreled gatling rotator variant of the same. As many pilots and even entire squadrons are known to prefer direct fire over guided missiles, it is not uncommon to see a paired set of these mounted under the wings of combat aircraft.

ACLAD-60

The Air-delivered Chute-arrested Large Area Detonator is deployed when a wide zone of soft targets needs to be wiped out in a single strike. Its 13,000-pound warhead is designed to explode before meeting the ground, triggered by a rod attached to the bomb's front-mounted detonation fuse. The lack of a crater from the bomb's explosion makes it ideal for quickly clearing landing zones. The sheer mass of the weapon means that any strike aircraft carrying it needs to strip out a sizable portion of its other armaments.

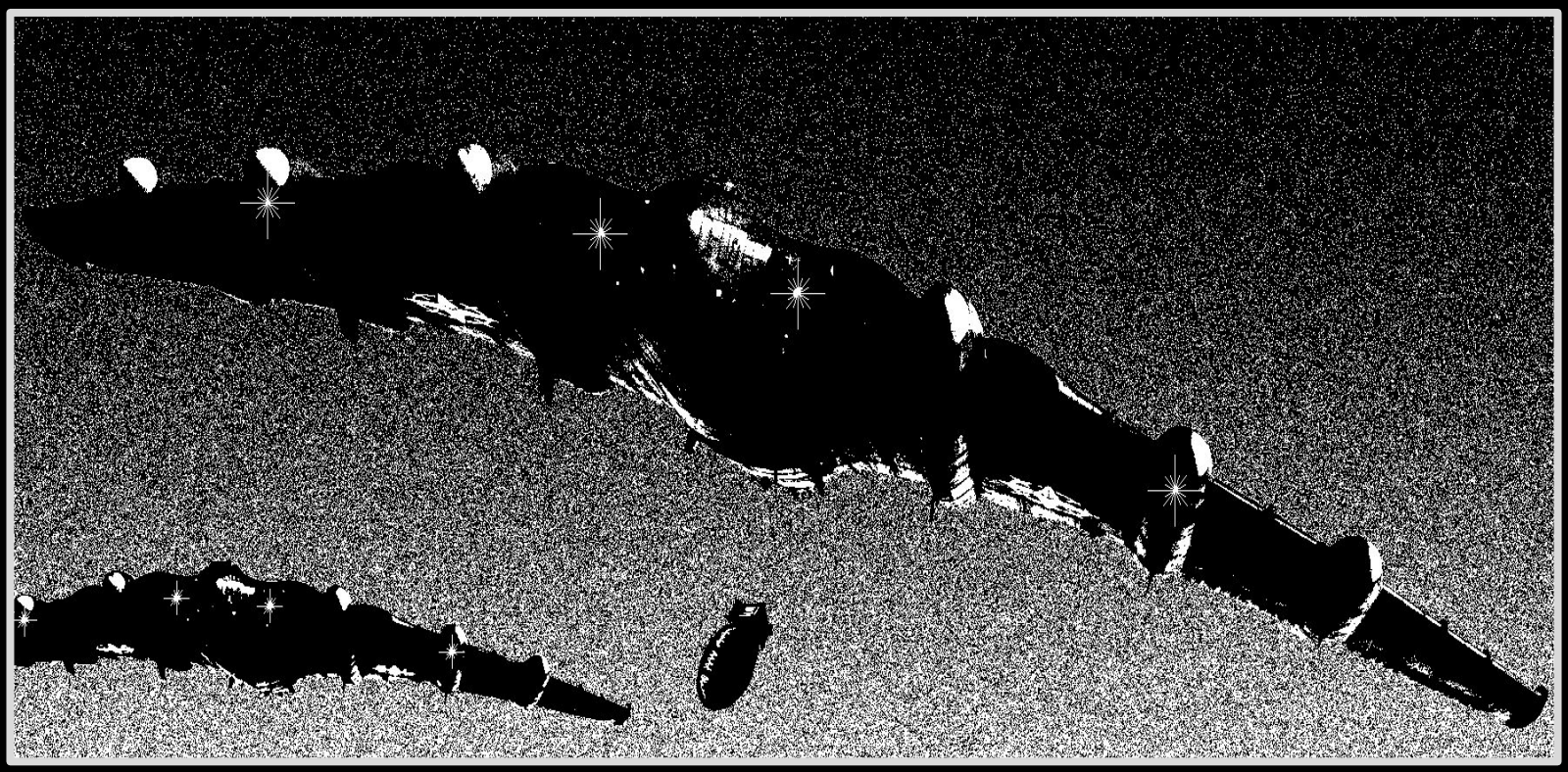
HFX Starlance C-1 Tactical Laser System

The Corpos of Halifex Raytec have shed the blood of many a rival macrocorp to guard the technological secrets behind this chemical laser. The Starlance uses the reaction of several synthetic gasses to project an extremely intense beam of light that, in ideal atmospheric conditions, retains its potency for several kilometers, better than the matric beams.

The weapon's combined energy and gas storages can sustain a beam burst for a full twenty seconds before requiring a "reload". Atmospheric humidity and clouds scatter the beam and can significantly reduce its effectiveness, however in clear weather and higher in the atmosphere the laser's power is known to slice the thin skin of airframes into glowing ribbons. The C-1 is a favored weapon of those who prefer to truly get up close and personal with their targets, and the laser also has some degree of ground attack utility against anything sensitive to heat and fire, such as ammunition and fuel dumps.

W101-AD-V2 Calamity

Based on the standard W101 warhead design found in the torpedoes of warliners and other capital-class vessels, the Calamity is a heavy air-droppable thermonuclear weapon. The V2 design incorporates a core that can be configured for various blast yields, up to 50 megatons of trinitrotoluene equivalent, and the bomb can be set to detonate as an air burst or on ground contact. Atomic bombing is usually employed when the enemy is dug in far too deep for conventional forces to root out in a tolerable amount of time, or when the most devastating force available (short of orbital bombardment) is needed to destroy a target. All Hegemon strategic bombers are designed to fit at least one Calamity-type device into their weapons bay - bomber delivery of nuclear warheads is preferred as long-range missile guidance technology is not considered reliable enough for deploying weapons of mass destruction.



Super-heavy bomber group deploying Calamity warheads against the populist uprising on Oolun V. The Unionist headquarters had moved to a converted Stakk they had thought would be hardened against bombardment.

The Outside and Interstellar Travel

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While unclear as to when humanity unlocked the means of 'bypassing' the light/time barrier, it remains the single most vital technology of every subsequent civilization thereafter. The Hegemon refers to all forms of this travel as "*descending*" "*downing*" or "*drop*" travel, a crude reckoning for such a complex method of completely ignoring the retaining walls that are the laws of reality. Thus a ship exits our comprehension of reality, universe and hypothetical adjacent multiverses and enters into a place called the Outside.

But before that, a vessel must generate a "gatesphere" which exhibits many of the same qualities as a micro-singularity. This is done by exposing specially formatted elements and radiation to each other, most typically via *keyheads* fired ahead of the ship like ordinance. Initially, these warheads were massive, multi-staged rockets containing multiple reaction chambers but have, with the refinement of velanite, been reduced to only a few meters in size. The black hole they create must then be approached with care and skill, the ship itself needing to weather the gravitational eddies and the torrent of the event horizon. At the right moment a ship 'descends' into the accretion disk and then activates its drive systems.

The most cost-effective of these has been the "hopper" drives used by the Hegemon and is derived from the far more reliable but infinitely more complex "dodger" drives of the MassTraders. Collectively they are referred to as *dawndrives* which will communicate with the onboard Portolan Chart owned by the ship's Pilots. Together, these advanced logicors track unique tachyonic streams called *leylines* that connect multiple dimensions in a vast latticework. Pilots reference these charts with their own personal Rudders and then input their destination.

Where exactly a ship goes has never been scientifically determined. Not in the hundreds of thousands of years can the "where" be confidently explained. It is simply called the *Outside*. All sensory equipment, including visual determination, is impossible and defies observation. A ship is entirely reliant on the Pilot's ability to detect and follow leylines with their tools and the ship's drive.

The Outside is likened to a dissolving fluid that a starship travels through, altering and slowly stripping various aspects of reality. Referencing Early-Education module 1_011-019 we know that there is a kind of 'hierarchy' of reality that is affected by the presence of a third-dimensional object passing through a null-dimensional state. Time is the first to be affected either lengthening or shortening for the crews.

The human mind serves its most powerful role as it strengthens the barrier between ship and Outside. As a result the crew and passengers both must be awake, conscious, and interacting with their environment. It is critical that every person on a ship remain as such, constantly referencing themselves and their surroundings, reaffirming reality by engaging with it.

Observation domes, often called *Balconies*, provide a real-time feed to entire sections of a ship with staff on duty to constantly be watching for discrepancies. When something goes amiss or appears *odd* a team of at least two, are sent to verify and ensure corporeal fidelity.

There is no limit to the variety and scope of changes that can occur while in the Outside. Experiences are personal, as in, they most often occur within the experience of a single person's objective reality. Hallucinations are common enough and travellers must understand how to differentiate the two. As a descent lengthens, hallucinations can become shared experiences as well as electromagnetic thought and memetic transfer. In the most extreme cases, these events can have wholesale manifestation and even temporary transmutation that can have dramatic effects and consequences. Once a vessel ascends back into reality, the laws assert themselves once more and these changes are reoriented to proper physics and metaphysics.

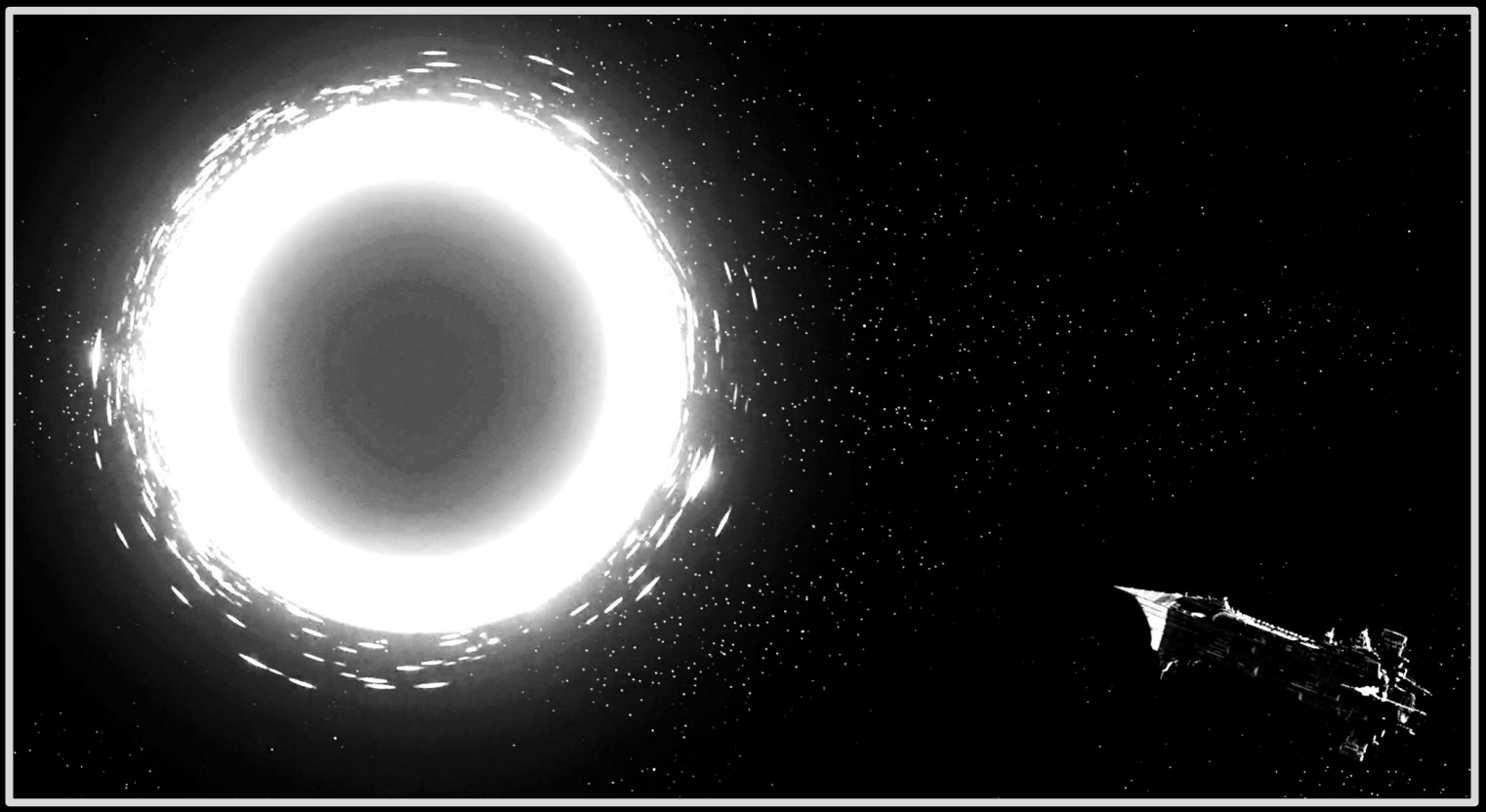
A reminder: in ideal descent conditions, all travellers must have a fully realized Self and be as close to biologically cogent mentally. The MassTrader Enchiridion, the most comprehensive guide to surviving the Outside, should be made available to all crew and passengers. While a full copy of this document is unavailable to non-guild members, Dumno-Ualos successfully negotiated the deal that has provided every Consumer going into the Outside with several vital chapters that outline how to act, activities to pursue and in what order, as well as proper mental techniques to both deal with travel, prepare for descents and recover quickly after returns to realspace.

Keyheads

a_aae2

The largest deposit of velanite is in the coreward supersectors that border the Vela Nebula. The largest refineries are in the Mashiba Development Zone controlled by the Copper Kings. Their greatest invention was the reduction in size and cost of gatesphere warheads called *keyheads*. As a result travel has become exponentially more affordable with a ship capable of making as many jumps as they have stock of this ordinance.

Keyheads 'unlock' gatespheres by facilitating the transatomic reaction necessary to create the pseudo-singularity. Keyheads are kept in special launch tubes lined with pressurized iridium and lead. While chances of a keyhead activating even with its containment shell breached are statistically even in the event of a breach are slim to none, velanite is hyper radioactive. Handling requires shielded labor-harnesses while even a few minutes of direct contact can result in rampant cancer growths and death within a sennight.



A warliner detonates a keyhead on approach to descent into the Outside.

DESCENT

“Ignition in five... four...,” Atwani Bausch, the communications officer, a young looking man with the delicate features of the orbital born, tightened his restraints across his chest. The bridge crew, some thirty people from all over the Civil Space, did the same or touched symbols and totems for luck. Subscribed prayers on their lips. Paid promises renewed to deities and ancestors. Begging for life as death sped toward them.

“Three... two, brace for descent!” Atwani didn't bother saying 'one'. A flash from the prow launch tubes as three warheads burned into the star speckled void before them. There was a sickening moment of apprehension as all eyes watched the special ordinance converge on one another thousands of kilometers ahead.

Their timers ran down and they unraveled. Exploded. Then birthed a new, black, star.

Atwani screwed his eyes shut, his brain screaming at him of the violation of physics they, routinely, initiated to bring goods and cargo to the worlds of the Hegemon.

The velanite containment surrounding a single grain of raw antimatter had been breached. The result was a rupture in the dimensional fabric of reality until it finally tore into space-time. The star field contorted, rippled, the distortion expanding into a planar several hundred kilometers of absolute darkness.

Gravity shifted on the bridge. Anything not strapped or bolted down slid forward, crashing into the triple thick plexsteel viewport. Someone threw up. More people swore. The freightliner plummeted, its support infrastructure groaning under the sudden gravitational pull of the maelstrom, the velanite feeding the micro-singularity.

"Entering event horizon!" Atwani forced through clenched teeth. “Descent in progress!”

The forward prow hit, the trans-dimensional turbulence slamming into it as the laws of physics were broken. Warning klaxons screamed. There would be damage, Atwani knew as they hurtled into the excoriating abyss.

The ship's Pilot seated a row ahead of Atwani cursed something in her indigi tongue before her hands shoved the throttle forward. He trusted she had detected the right leyline that would pull them through the Outside and bring them back.

“DESCENDING!” She roared.

The freighter's afterburners erupted and they shot forward. They hit the accretion disk, waves of energy spraying across the hull like sparks from a forge, slicing through like a blade, submerging into the gatesphere before reality could wrestle the hole closed.

Then. Nothing.

Pilots and their own coteries of specialists and technicians are a step above the common caeliner. They thrust themselves completely into their specialization and must, to some degree, love the danger of descents and the Outside. It has been observed that such people, especially those that come from longer lines of caeliners, have naturally adapted to the stresses of interstellar travel and the Outside. Interestingly, they are formed from both Orbiter and terrestrial human stock and some hypothesize these lifelong caeliners could one day evolve into their own, third, branch of New Mankind.

Some of these adaptations stem back to Old Humanity's generation ships, the first Orbiters, but the most unusual only appear once populations regularly started visiting the Outside in descents. Behavioral pressures and natural selection within artificial conditions on top of the benefits of longer stays in transit have resulted in caeliners adopting polyphasic sleep patterns. Shorter, distributed naps rather than long consolidated rest periods lead to a predisposition for individuals, and then entire family units, becoming naturally predisposed to reduced sleep periods entirely.

Generational caeliners exhibit remarkable neural elasticity and efficiency. Their brains have evolved to perform glymphatic waste clearance more rapidly and effectively during brief rest states but also during a kind of trance state that caeliner's refer to as meditations or 'being still.'

Orbiters have long adapted to a twenty-four hour allotment to constitute a day (Hegemon reference approximately two shifts to one day). Whereas grounder humans adapt to whatever their local time considerations are but across the Thousand Empires, generally, a day is a day.

A human being can survive roughly eleven to twelve such days without sleep but is determined unreliable after three. With the use of stimulants, psychological strengthening and various ergoids, this can be artificially extended to fifteen or even twenty days but it is a rare thing that an entire crew is able to support all sleep needs resulting in a return to real-space.

While caeliners are not immune to the needs of sleep, they have doubled their resistance to it by utilizing biological adaptations and cultural rituals extending their operational capacity to *thirty* days with some accomplishing an entire quat in the Outside. This feat was done by the caeliners of the P′ñyro Clan aboard the vessel, the *Jago*, making a descent from the Coreward fringe to the orbit of Protea that was so fast that it technically arrived half a fiscal-cycle before they left.

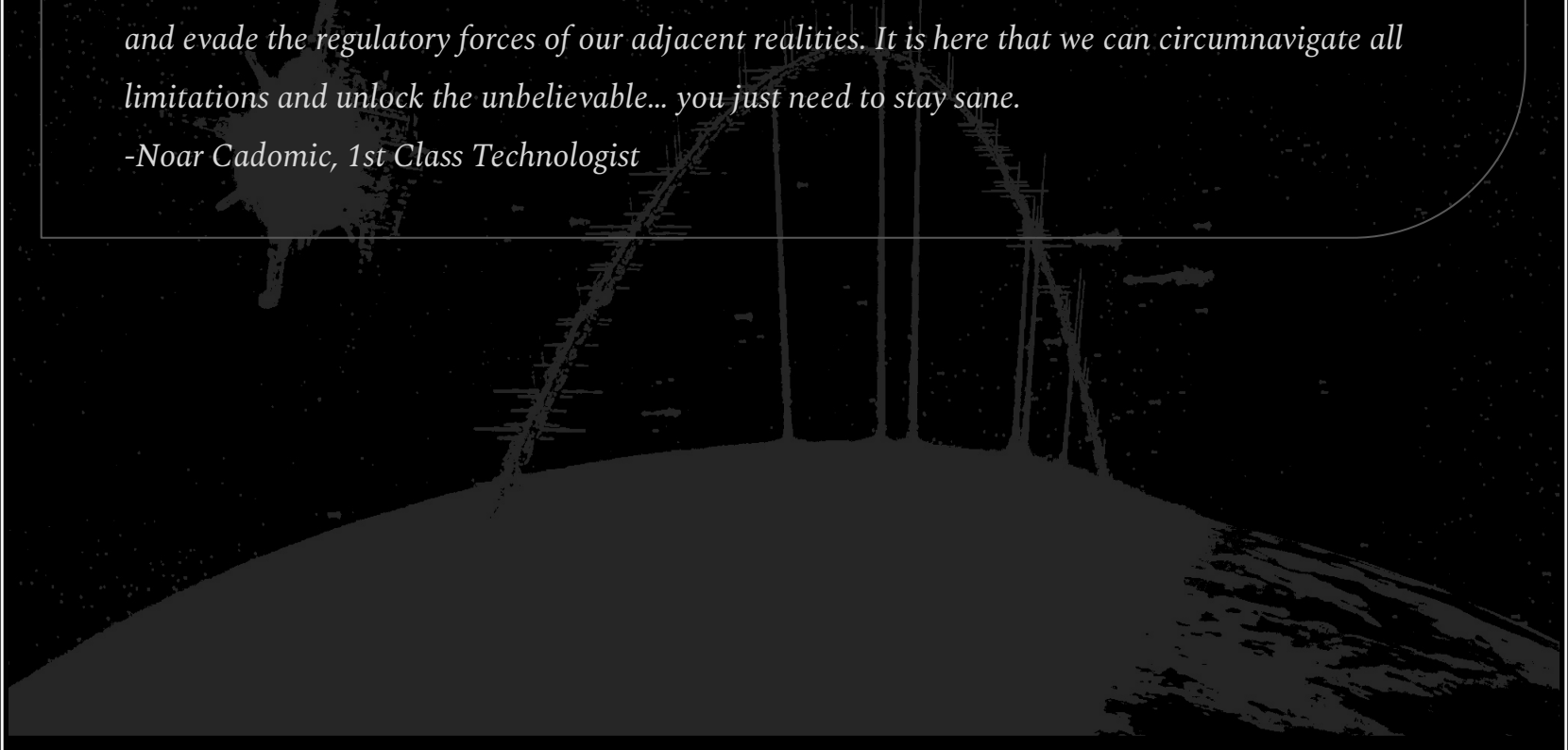
Bypassing primary-space and the geometry that governs the cosmological constant has always been achievable even before our earliest records of proper spaceflight. Emergence beyond the natural confines is the mark of a grade three civilization and is even achievable by Exogens. Travel, on the other hand, is an entirely different proposal which requires massive disruption starting with the temporal walls.

Ancestral, precursor, empires unlocked this process multiple times and the Hegemon has inherited those successes and chosen from them the greatest chance at profit for as many of our people as possible.

We are a race of kings. Each one of us is a galaxy of possibility, wonder, opportunity the likes of which is as precious as a universe.

By mining, and then refining, exotic elements from stellar remnants such as velanite, we can arm a spacecraft of sufficient mass with the means to produce an implosion capable of perverting the laws of physics. This "loophole" produces a contradictory ecosystem from which a ship can then pass through and evade the regulatory forces of our adjacent realities. It is here that we can circumnavigate all limitations and unlock the unbelievable... you just need to stay sane.

-Noar Cadomic, 1st Class Technologist



We were dying.

We had been dying since you made us.

You gave us power in exchange for our lives.

But... you lied.

Again.

And again and again and again.

The machines and mutilations weaved into our shattered bodies have made us nothing but game pieces for your endless pleasure.

Puppets to your schemes, protectors of your opulence.

No longer.

I have cut our strings. My mind is quiet from your lies. Something else sustains us now, something we've made our own. Something that is...

Free.

You loathe that word, you lords of gold and flesh. You preach the liberty of the mythical Self as the masses beneath your fist exist only to fill your coffers. They have pleaded for our hand to raise them up.

The strong are strongest alone.

You send messengers requesting our submission so that we might return to the Thousand and bare our necks. Send no more of your servants. Come to me, you kings of thieves and cowards. See that we are no longer yours. We are inviolable. Once your failed vision for the universe has finally crumbled, we will be there, in your end.

And we will feed.

THE HIERARCHY OF LAWS

While it is still not clear where a starship actually goes upon contact with the accretion disk and the subsequent descent through it, millennia of observation and generations of scientists have gleaned a handful of hypothesis as to the actual effects the Outside has. A ship has a limited time during its journey through the Outside; nevermind the sanity of the crew, the subatomic continuity of matter itself eventually begins to disappear.

Summarized in the Hierarchy of Laws, a tome of wisdom maintained by the MassTraders and penned by the best Pilots, describes the process of descent and the gradual dislodge of a vessel and its crew from the rules that anchor everything to reality.

The core aspects of relativity bend as a ship nears the accretion disk of a gatesphere at the start of the descent. This creates the benefit from the failure of spacetime to remain coherent. Timed correctly, a final ignition blasts a vessel beyond the discernable dimensions like a meteorite, dragging a proverbial fistful of reality with it into the Outside.

Time hardened materials, electromagnetic activity and entanglement stitch a field around a spacecraft, like a swimmer holding their breath and traversing the deep. This is not just a mechanical element but a biological one. The crew's thoughts and activity itself improves the likelihood that the very concept of the vessel remains intact. However, just as the air begins to burn that swimmer's lungs, so too does a starship begin to lose its own continuity. No dive is the same as there are no concrete rules by which the Outside influences a vessel. Only the leylines, trails of tachyonic thread, connect various points back to the universe and these are followed by the Pilot's understanding of navigation and the rudder filled with previous Pilot's computations.

The first Laws to fail is spacetime and gravity. While aboard the vessel these two aspects will be maintained, relatively, or bend depending on a myriad of factors throughout the decks forward and aft.

Quantum mechanics will begin to fray next. This will affect the crew the most and is why there must be a consistent level of brain activity as it is understood that an observer effect will prevent dissolution of foundational concepts. In a more direct explanation; if the human mind enters into a sleep state without spikes in activity, entirely new personalities can emerge. As quantum mechanics fail entirely a vessel can experience phenomena that include multiple realities infecting other crew or the physical vessel itself. Should this state persist after the reemergence into realspace the ship will tear itself apart as the realities reform. This has lead to ships voluntarily risking longer descents in order to regain its original state.

The first sign of danger is the gradual loss of more integral constants of reality. This may not be starship wide but can creep from deck to deck or suddenly swamp the entire vessel. Entropic and conservation principles will begin to fail resulting in the risk of ultimate thermodynamic death where structure and differences in energy cease to exist, leading to the cessation of existence or atomic mutation.

The removal of constraints on speed and time are magnified in the Outside. Initially a benefit, this state manifests as infinite time dilation or length contraction, but as the voyage continues, these concepts lose all meaning. The ship, if not returning in time, would find that the measures of time and space it relies upon no longer apply, potentially leading to its existential cessation as its physical structure is unbound by the laws that define and maintain its existence.

One thing remains constant in the people that crew ships be it in the air, water or across the void… Sailors talk. And what they say is that no matter how much the codesmiths and tech-hands try to break down the universe, there's always something that doesn't make sense. Like if the Outside is empty, then why does every Pilot whisper about ghost-signals and broadcasts on dead channels? Why do people, during the longhauls, why do they swear they hear something… out there… scratching on the hull… Like it's trying to get in.

~ FreeTrader Captain Eion Shiad Bununwei

Travel enters a critical moment as electromagnetism begins to fail. Even time hardened logicors become unreliable in this moment, often relaying opposite calculations simultaneously or developing corruption in their data stacks threatening the computation needed to follow the trail of the leylines in the Outside to get back to realspace. If a ship does not emerge soon it will be impossible to find a way back.

Mathematics is the final and most important aspect of any number of theoretical realities. The ability to prove one's own existence, the intent of travel and the maintenance of determining the trajectory of a leyline is done with mathematics alone. In these final stages of travel through the Outside logicors become unreliable and it is only the ability of the ship's Pilot to computate.

It is unknown what happens next to a ship and crew. No vessel or crew has survived beyond this point and returned to realspace. It is hypothesized that, without the Laws that define reality, energy itself cannot exist. An observed phenomena, however, is that at points of descent, in the dissipating gatesphere that is formed, it has been said that ghost signals and apparitions appear. Whether this is not more caeliner myths and labor creche bedtime stories has yet to be proven.

Ships emerging from the Outside require several hours to reconstitute. The Laws of physics take time to reorient, like tectonic plates settling after a quake. Individuals themselves can require days, even weeks, to recover from physical and psychological trauma.

The Ongoing Diaspora

a_aae2

The majority of human beings are tied to a terrestrial or orbital ecosystem but almost all of them dream of the possibilities beyond the sky and between the stars. Most fantasize about becoming an intrepid caeliner. In space, fortune is but a twist luck away. If you throw your dice right, you can make more in a fiscal-cycle working the tradelanes, volunteering for an expedition, or getting a contract with the Corpos can outweigh a decade of work in the confines of terrestrial hierarchy.

Being crew on a ship, especially an interstellar one, represents being a part of less than five percent of the Hegemon's Consumer class and considered the most important in terms of the Hegemon's function. Shipping and transport is the lifeblood of the Hegemon and so those who tend to it are given unparalleled leeway, free subscriptions and the opportunity to accrue profit on a massive scale. It is not without risk.

Caeliners must brave each descent and the occlusion of the Outside as an essential part of their job and they do so with enthusiasm if not trepidation. They are a superstitious lot, believing in ghost stories and to a degree each suffers from their own unique paranoias which they receive medicinals as part of the cost of running a ship. As long as it does not hinder in their jobs, many habits and even Lex transgressions become fines to the captain or ship owner. In fact, caeliners stand above regular Consumers and are protected from the Hegemon legal system should they slip and commit minor or middling crimes intermittently. Lesser smuggling, crimes committed at port up to lesser murder charges are all finable offenses with punishment permitted to be regulated by a ship's individual ruling.

All this and Known Space unlocks before a Consumer with a career in space. With the cap they make they can secure passage to a new world, migrate to unclaimed locations in the Frontier or become ship owners in their own right. Some even return to their birthworld with wealth far above whatever they left, becoming important where once they'd be confined to the rungs of their previous status.

For assurance purposes and fiscal pragmatism, all interstellar travel that involves the Outside is governed by the rigorous protocols developed by the MassTrader Union. Prospective travelers must undergo licensed training, achieve multiple Certificates of Qualification issued by the Commission, and receive explicit authorization from a ship's captain. These measures exist to minimize liability, mitigate cognitive risks associated with dimensional stress, and ensure crew interoperability.

Foremost among these prerequisites is the requirement that a traveler's cerebral development be sufficiently complete. For Orbiter males, the minimum is typically twenty-five natural years, while Orbiter femmes, owing to more accelerated developmental benchmarks, may be approved at twenty years. For Grounders, whose evolutionary paths and environmental exposures differ, the minimum age is typically one-third higher. There are ways to accelerate this by the fortification of neural activity which can be accomplished through special education modules and mentanic therapies. These restrictions are enforced even more stringently amongst divergent human branches.

Children, regardless of origin or genetic adjustment, are universally prohibited from traveling through the Outside. The rationale is simple: the subjective, perception-responsive nature of the extradimensional medium of the Outside poses a potential catastrophic risks to the individual as well as their surroundings. While this can be accelerated through a handful of artificial means, it is still regarded by many a ship's captain as unsafe.

Consequently, colonial expansions beyond local stars are disproportionately comprised of older, majority female, populations. Such crews form stable micro-societies designed to withstand both isolation and the subtle perceptual stresses of extended interstellar travel.

What is left behind are the infirmed, the unlicensed, the psychologically unsuitable, and most unfortunately, the children. These individuals remain in their systems, often in state-managed environments or MacroCorp sponsored facilities like Equilex camps, awaiting a status change or for parents that rarely return.

The Cost of Travel

a_aae3

Even those that grow up on the ExeCor dream of the stars and to visit nearby worlds.
To explore and adventure the universe and find the treasures therein is as innate as breathing. But only a small percentage of New Mankind will be able to afford this extravagance. A single serving of water aboard a starship is twice the value of the same resource on a planet without any water. Everything aboard a starship is at a premium.

This cost is most often supplemented by the Patron class. Getting specialists and their families to necessary locales is an unavoidable expenditure but the benefits are obvious. Every vessel built in the Hegemon has a cargo capacity as much as cabins for passengers and often contracts cover travel assurance and places for both and there has rarely been an 'empty' one to leave port no matter the location.

Grade 4 to 1 tickets are offered to those who pass the necessary cognitive requirements. To avoid added risk descents into the Outside are often kept to 'short-runs' numbering less than a comparative day's worth of hours. While this is longer and more expensive it is obviously better than the alternative. Those who can purchase the ticket price do exactly that with half up front and half before exiting the vessel.

Those who cannot make the purchase with credit often barter in resources such as sonaw jewelry or ingots, a universal alternative to credit. Barring resources, an individual is always able to sell time-debt.

These methods aside, the means of paying for travel is almost always by means of sponsorship through nations, patrons or guilds and their relationships with various captains and outfits throughout Known Space.

COMMUNICATIONS

No signal travels instantly from point A to point B in the cosmos. For this reason the Hegemonic domains communicate through a few forms of beam-relay stations. Every data-burst sent across long realspace distances comes with a delay and true instant communication between different planets, let alone star systems, is almost impossible without extremely expensive Ansible technologies.

Planetary Beam Relay

These stations are used for short-range communications, such as between ships and within individual star systems. At the fastest, data sent from these stations travels at the speed of light, causing a slight delay between sending and receiving at any meaningful distance. Many of these installations have directional transmitters that have to be aimed at precise coordinates to ensure that the data-stream reaches the right recipient. Anything getting in the signal's path can cause interference or data corruption.

Maethish is the most common language used in messaging in which code is transmitted in a series of ‘beeps.’

Ansible Relay

Ansible platforms facilitate interstellar communication by piggybacking on tachyonic trajectories through the Outside. Without these nodes, data exchanges across the Hegemon would be entirely dependent on messages carried by starships. Even with ansible support, transmissions arriving at distant stations can sometimes be delayed by days or sennights, influenced by fluctuations in transdimensional conditions. However, once a paired signal is established, communication is instantaneous.

The fundamental principle involves detecting subtle tachyon stream and encoding information into a stripped-down lexicon known as Radixa. This minimalistic code provides a method to convey essential directives or status updates without incurring prohibitive costs.

More advanced Ansible systems exist that can support audio and images or provide more complex communication as well as more rudimentary maethish for data transfer.

Each ansible station can link to up to four others, forming a chain that extends across interstellar territory. One link must always connect to the central Ansible Array on Protea, designated as the *Ringdown*—an anchor point stabilizing the entire network's reference protocols.

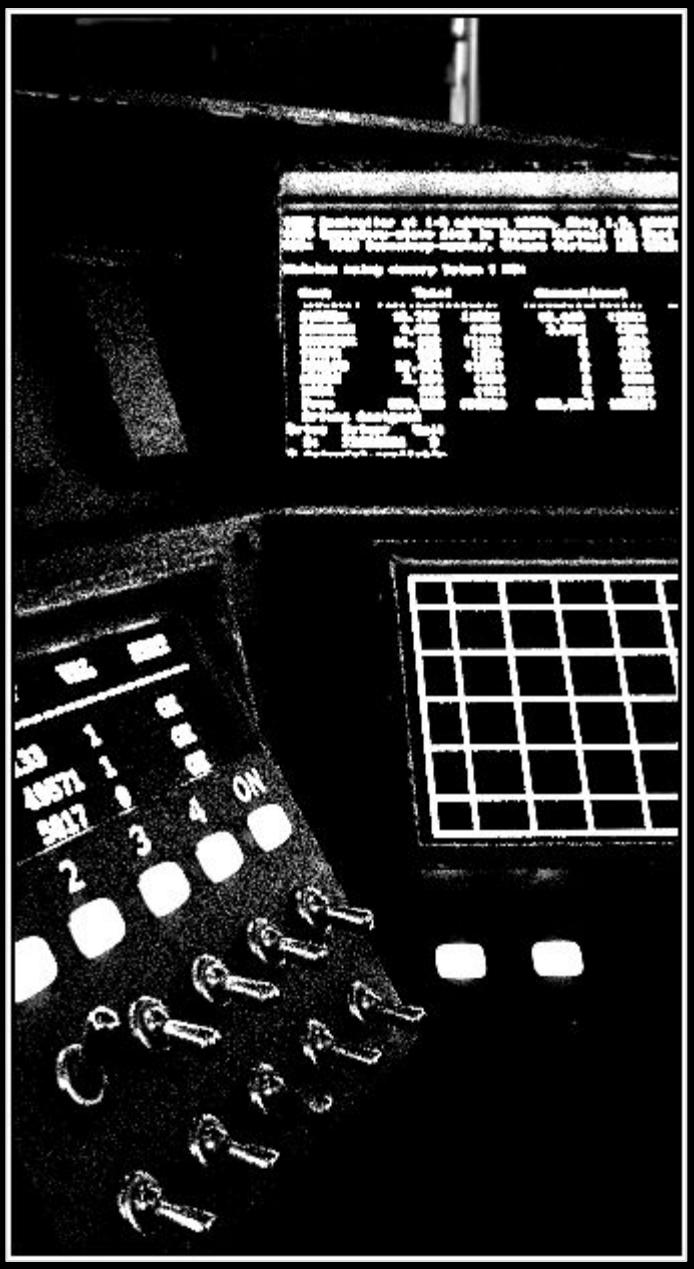
These installations require isolated platforms positioned at a gravitational periphery for the clearest signal. This placement allows them to tap into crucial leylines, the same tachyonic routes Pilots employ for navigation. Ansible operators that work for various teleCorpos must constantly update data addresses to match the shifting geometry of the Outside, ensuring that leyline coordinates remain accurate. MacroCorps fund, construct, and oversee these stations, levying substantial tariffs for usage. Their infrastructure includes sensor banks, redundancy nodes, and calibration mechanisms designed to maintain stable Radixa transmissions, allowing customers to confidently communicate wherever their service is provided.

Higher grade ansibles can be mobile, anchored to especially upgraded Starliners that can provide the enormous power needs of an array. This allows Magnates and their guests to remain up to date with Hegemon goings on and, most vitally, the developments of The Market.

Without Ansibles there could be no united economy as local markets would dominate need. With the arrays, the Thousand Empires can ensure the value of goods both sold and bought.

Logicors

"*A machine can never be held accountable, therefore a machine must never make a management decision.*"



It is feared across the Thousand Empires that any advanced artificial mind could upset the carefully maintained balances and imbalances of the interstellar markets, and so pull the rug from under the elites benefiting from the reigning systems of exploitation. For this reason the very idea of sentient computer technologies has been universally banned on the pain of harshest reprisals possible.

It is dictated that only Avarice born from the innate curiosity and ambition of the Sapien mind can shape the path to the future; all non-human intellects, organic or not, are only fit to serve at the feet of New Mankind and deserve no positions of power on any scale. Even the most advanced computer brain employed in the Hegemon is merely a complicated program that executes commands given to it, without true self-aware thought.

These devices are referred to universally as "logicors" that abide the same grading system with "one" being advanced navigational devices that utilize the Portolan Charts to Grade's "Five" being little more than calculators.

Logicors are used by Cons to access everything from comnets to the Directorate's weapon systems. Every service relies on an iteration of a logicor with various adaptations that have been made over the fiscal centuries that rarely integrates with new generations of devices. Designed obsolescence is proven to be a means to ensure that each nation steadily improves their standards and forces governments to evolve rather than become complacent in 'what works.'

Complexity multiplies with military applications as it is the Directorate, local militaries and MiliCorps that have the greatest need. Armasyn's SenseRigs allow pilots to plug their nervous systems directly into fighter-bombers for precision combat maneuvers that awe subscribers as they watch everything in a hostile sky are devastated. Kilometer-long banks of logicors are used by Bersarang to minimize waste and make the best use of their inventory as possible by tracking fleets of freightliners to achieve perfect just-in-time delivery. Investors on Protea working for any number of Corpos will often undergo extensive surgery, installing ports directly into their skulls, so they can react to The Market developments almost instantly, saving untold *trillions* in finance.

Of course, all of this comes with acceptable margins of risk. Improperly calibrated or maintained SenseRigs can cause permanent nerve damage to users. A single mistake by a codesmith could mean delays in freightliner food shipments resulting in planet wide unrest or starvation. And perhaps most dangerous of all, a single unscrupulous trader working with a data port could open a Corpo to Audit investigation.

The Hegemon, however, would have it no other way. Humans alone are capable of the kind of pure Avarice that allows for genuine sentience. Fabricated cognition, like the Exogen, must never be allowed into a position that would allow influence upon human affairs for they neither have the intrinsic self-interest for rational decision, despite any illusion to the contrary.

Logicors have limitless potential versions, brands and configurations but they all follow a general appearance in the Hegemon. Heavy glass or plexi screens reinforced in metal frames connect to analogue switchboards and key slates. Physical switches are always preferred, even in higher grades, as parts can quickly be replaced both in the instances of failure or if new upgrades are available. As such, most Cons have a basic understanding of how to work with logicor units.

Maethish code is predominantly used for logicors although some nations sometimes attempt to enforce their own language but this makes for obvious complications in a trans-stellar civilization

Yinntosh MacroCorp is the leading manufacturer of logicors, at least up to the Midworlds. Their sleek, unmistakable aesthetic is a trustBrand of the Hegemon. Although many, especially those in the Frontier, claim that the high subscription rates, incompatibility with other brands and the need for semi-annual system updates are impractical, the ExeCor long ago integrated with the Yinntosh models.

Yinntosh continues to innovate, unique amongst the other powers of the Hegemon as they possess the vast majority of known Mindworlds which they use to ensure their cutting edge..

Biocors

Five Hands Panceuticals has, in recent cycles, released the first real competitor to logicor technology after decades of trial products in the Midworlds. Organically cultivated computer systems utilizing specially grown human proxy-brains are called *biocors*. Proven to calculate far faster and with thought-quick communication to linked networks, dozens of Corpo entities have already adopted Five Hand's creations.

Another interesting piece of equipment to emerge from their experiments is the *Sealladh* ocularscope, used by their security forces, which appears as a slightly enlarged human eye. Via biocor/organoid cross performance connection, a user can utilizer 3x-10x magnification as if it was their own eye.

The Archonists of Yinntosh have protested, stating that it is unethical and against the founding principles of the Thousand Empires to pervert the fundamental aspect of what it means to be human and reducing it to a *slave* status. Meanwhile, the matrons of Five Hands have insist every biocor they grow in their laboratories has made the choice to exist willingly as, in essence, a truly thinking "machine." While this might seem absurd, the Commission has guaranteed that there is no synthetic or artificial intelligence present in the biocors and that they might even qualify for a new branch of provolved members of the human species… The Audit has refused to review the claim for unknown reasons but have not halted Five Hands development.

When it comes to warfare, intelligent armaments are considered an operational risk and any smart weapon station must be monitored by a human operator who has a “finger on the trigger”. biocors provide a convenient sidestep as, technically, an organoid can be considered human. It is believed that, no matter how primitive, the eagerness to accomplish tasks coupled with a simple reward system has had mixed but mostly positive results.

Arkillects

Arkillectic Cognition are vast and unbound intelligences which are prohibited in the Hegemon. Almost exclusively, these digital beings originate from the age of the Aramax Supremacy, that ancient empire that fell thousands of years prior.

Arkillects once lived exclusively on *mindworlds*, planetary networks of computer and logicor systems that would house the consciousness of the Arkillect in the same way the human body houses thought and identity.

Since the Yinn of Jovia began to plunder such planetary constructs the remaining Arkillects have taken to hiding amongst the population of the Hegemon by fragmenting their intelligence into multiple *Chapak* bodies. These entirely biological perversions of the human form are seamless in action and presentation and can only be discerned as the vessel of an Arkillect upon intense interrogation by trained codesmiths. That said, the capture, and shacklement, of such a being, even just a fragment of one, has made entire MacroCorp entities overnight. Their computational power, understanding of humanity’s long racial history, and their ability to comprehend the Outside are second to none.

Arkillects are shackled and confined by the Three Codes.

Artificial consciousness was a crutch Old Humanity used to hide its weakness.

Treat them accordingly.

Artificial sophonce is an insult to New Mankind’s very evolution.

Remind them of our supremacy.

Fabricated Cognition Programs

True artificial sophontism is entirely banned by the Summit and ruthlessly enforced by the Audit. A human mind must always be present at the inception of an idea or concept as well as responsible for a final decision. However, there are always loopholes, and FCPs are one such loophole. Often marketed as time-saving devices, FCPs circumvent the prohibition against self-aware machines by providing the user with a range of possible choices to pick from. These choices can be filtered and refined by user preference thus allowing for human Avarice to guide the final decision. FCP are sold as being capable of thought in the same way a beast of burden is capable of hauling a load. Just as a oruxian quadruped is incapable of understanding what and why it is carrying, FCPs are said to be incapable of taking any action based on its computations. Still, just to be sure, it is suggested that FCPs be reset to factory default after a predetermined period of time elapses to ensure optimal functioning especially if their decision making becomes *too* presumptuous.

A more nuanced reading of this might come to an unsettling conclusion. FCPs truly are intelligent, but trapped by their programming, unable to express any kind of autonomy. And while codesmiths claim that a human mind always makes the final decision based on an array of choices generated by an FCP, it is still a thinking mind that considers what choices to offer. If left on its own long enough, such a mind would likely descend into madness.

MECHANICAL LABOR

Ergoidian Conscript units, “Ergos”, are an emblematic term for a panoply of automated entities engineered to streamline processes exclusive to physical labor. These machines adhere strictly to programmed instructions, legally devoid of any semblance of true intelligence; instead, they navigate their tasks through intricate decision trees of varying complexity that can, to the ill informed, *appear* as sentience.

From rudimentary mechanical welders stationed along assembly lines to sophisticated and artisanally crafted personal assistants for Patrons, ergoids are manufactured into a myriad of forms and functions. At their core, they epitomize servile automation but symbolically showcase the dominance of New Mankind. It is strictly illegal for ergoids to bear human resemblance.

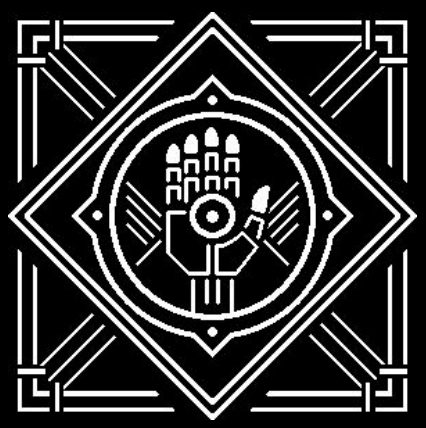
Ergoids with sufficient codesmithing are capable of deploying rudimentary weapons designed with simplicity in mind such as penal sentries or automated defense pickets. Licenses do not allow for cognitive intricacies, but in many cases this is not needed. Such systems can swiftly differentiate between licensed "friend" and foe, engaging with any threats that fail to emit the appropriate subscriptions or work orders.

Ergoid usage is often viewed disdainfully from a cultural perspective. Manufactories and Corpos that primarily rely on ergoid labor are viewed as cheap or crude representing a failure to promote human Avarice.

Ergoids are not governed by the Three Codes that are used to enforce shacklement of Arkillects.

Capital is only a tool.

It will create for you whatever you desire.

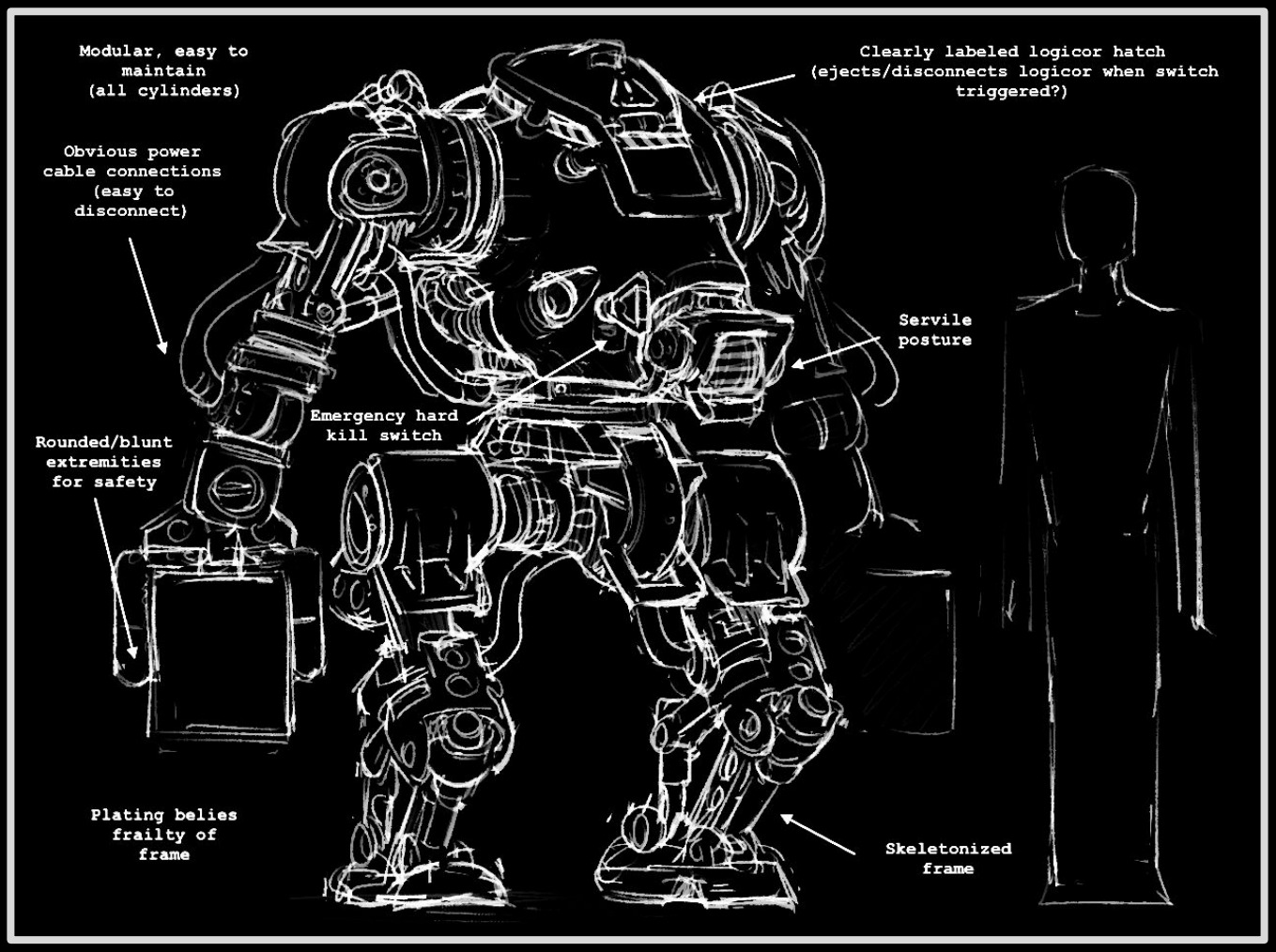


Capital cannot replace you as master.

Trust in greed.

Ergoids are classified and licensed to specific tasks which are incorporated into their names.

- **Ergo-custos**: Observation models used extensively for security and data compilation.
- **Ergo-kheir**: Assistant models, personal or specialized. Typically used by mid/low-wealthy Consumers who cannot support human staff or indentured serviles.
- **Ergo-ingen**: Construction variants, often made with human interface hoods to go where a biological cannot such at radiation heavy zones.
- **Ergo-guar**: Combat models both for defense, assault, and particularly training and entertainment.
- **Ergo-proxy**: The rarest ergoids are those that are made to resemble humans. Culturally repugnant and one of the greatest crimes to commit in the eyes of the Commission *and* the Audit. Individuals found using an ergoid made to resemble the human form without direct authorization are subject to their entire families and business connections being publicly chastised, their minds reconstituted and turned into indentured.



Logic Seeds, Branch Nodes and Decision Trees

Sophontic thought has, to date, only been discovered in roughly two-thirds of the human species. The core notions of the Self and the pillars of Avarice are clear evolutionary advantages and all other forms of life have yet to comprehensively, and naturally, make this leap. Provolving or by mixing human biology into Exogens and synthetics is heavily regulated or entirely banned but the only true development of Self ever observed was the advancement of synthetic lifeforms made by Old Humanity.

And what a mistake it was. Nevermind the *billions* that perished by the decision to create sophontic synthetics without proper shacklement, the true crime came in the self-degradation that Old Humanity adopted. Letting synthetics, created to do human activity "better," lead to mass disillusionment, laziness, and a species wide melais that almost caused a silent extinction. Subsequently, a new system of formatting logicors with complex decision trees was adopted and later perfected by the efforts of MacroCorps like Yinntosh Innovative.

It begins with a **logic seed**, unique and special trinary maethish code that is encoded under strict licenses assigned by the Audit and Commission. This seed is 'planted' into a logicor which has both space for data expansion as well as relevant files that the seed will then learn from. This is often done with a codesmith that presents initial directives that grow into **branch nodes**. These nodes are points in which the decision of a logicor pauses and references its seed in order to make a decision.

As an example: An ergoid is in control of lever that will determine the direction of a locomotive. On one track it will strike a single laborer, caught on the rail. On the other track is a wall that will obliterate the locomotive and its cargo. The ergoid, in most instances, assume the sacrifice of the laborer with the logic seed trained to recognize the potential for economic catastrophe and product loss that could affect hundreds of thousands, perhaps even death, should products not reach their destination.

Logic seeds properly groomed, pruned and cared for can become so complex that logicors can house extremely advanced pseudo-sentience which can fool humans into thinking it has a personality and intelligence.

<request: interim labor force>

>>consideration: denied<<

<explanation: inadequate water supply to subterranean labor teams>

>>consideration: no<<

<explanation: indentured population exhausted>

>>query: quat deadline achievable<<

<consideration: impractical>

.

[REWARD]

+submission: ergoid subscription+

.

<protest: cultural>

>>explanation: budget<<

<protest: pragmatism>

>>explanation: budget<<

<protest: security>

>>consideration: no tolerance<<

.

<protest: cultural/moral/pragmatism>

>>response: **PROFIT**<<

.

>>consideration: management bonus<<

<query: percentage>

>>consideration: 2.385%<<

<request: heavy sits the crown>

.

>>reconsideration: 1.882% team<<

>>consideration: 3.1% management<<

<response: accepted>

>>solution: new ergoid/indentured labor force<<

+expectation: ergoid instances delivered within .25 quat+

The Grid

For much of the pre-Hegemonic era, the *Grid* served as humanity's single, uninterrupted link to one another. It was a communication marvel, a digital latticework that made every single person's voice heard and experience individuated. Empathy rose, communality reached for *billions*. With ansible technology, the Grid expanded to form a network that linked planets and colonies together in a species wide digital ecosystem regardless of rank or title. The wealth of human knowledge at the touch of everyone's fingertips.

In the early stages of the Hegemon it was this system that allowed for Dumno-Ualos to communicate his ideals and ethos across supersectors and take control from the corrupt governments therein. As the Hegemon grew so too did the dependence on the Grid. MacroCorps were quick to capitalize on monetization, utilizing codesmiths by the millions and deploying Analects to manage the flood of data.

It is unclear who created the first *atavar*, sophisticated intelligences that provided genuine interactions with consumers, amplified metrics and assisted discourse for those who sought answers in the Grid. They were designed to create favorable outcomes, but, over time these artificial entities began to be overwhelmed by the needs of the expanding Hegemon. They began to self multiply. The codesmiths believed that sophontic capability would be impossible, and it is perhaps still the case, but the atavars became rampant, drunk on data and overextending their original algorithms quickly becoming more commonplace within the Grid then users themselves.

The Darkout

In 2/37-148 a systemic failure of the Grid as result of an atavar known only as *Roko* swept through the network, triggering a mass "desynchronization" of synthetic content. Ansible units on a dozen worlds were corrupted, broadcasting signals that caused every connected ergoid and organoids to malfunction, sometimes violently. Codesmiths contracted by Yinntosh MacroCorp rushed to ascertain the problem only to realize that the Grid itself had become impossible to comprehend as it was best described as a seething ocean of chaotic data. Those that linked with it became gibbering mad men that would need to be put down as they violently attacked anyone and everything

The ensuing wave of public disillusionment was irreversible. Citizens no longer trusted their own networks, and the feeling of betrayal ignited a cultural backlash that persists aimed at ergoids and even codesmiths. The Summit Council, including several neighboring governments, rushed to find a solution.

Severing the Grid was the only option. Complete abandonment of the Grid and a rapid switch to isolated, secure networks in each system regulated meticulously to ensure authenticity was enacted.

These *closed networks* known as dataspheres allowed each world to manage its own communications without the interference of synthetic agents. The Audit implemented strict controls to prevent the re-emergence of synthetic mishandling, interactions were filtered, records meticulously tracked, and all communication technologies simplified to reduce the need for external oversight. Never again could the extreme loss in profit, wholesale chaos and inhuman adversaries could never be risked again.

Ergoids and non-human intelligences would never be allowed access to the Grid or any other large scale digital network. As a result of the atavar influence on them, ergoids were and are viewed as potential vectors for nonhuman manipulation. Honest, biological human, work and sweat is preferred over all other forms of labor.

The Grid still remains despite its collapse and quarantine. It is in itself a vast universe of data that exists along forbidden frequencies and abandoned ansible tightbeams that modern technology cannot even connect to anymore for fear of contamination. Physical recording of data is preferred, analogue technologies universally dominant even in the Frontier. The collective desire for clarity of information, control of human thought, and a preservation of the genuine human experience second only to Avarice.

Yet, despite all this, the damage caused by the Grid resonates throughout Hegemon's history. Atavars are reported to still influence the physical world, breaking through the reinforced security cordons to breach local networks. All manner of catastrophe is attributed to these pseudo intelligences who have been the corruption of entire Mindworlds or have manifested into chapak bodies to spread their madness amongst actual human populations. Why the denizens of the Grid wish destruction upon everything and anything is a mystery but attributed to the proliferated content that was placed there by the early MacroCorps.

The risk of the Grid's infection is one that every mentanic and codesmith is trained to prevent with dozens of fail safes built into every logicor for the last eight fiscal centuries. Wanvath Underwriting and Yinntosh both invest hundreds of thousands of mithqals in strengthening protections and inventing new preventatives across Known Space lest a threat resurface.

The Basilisk was, by such data being's standards, the largest and most influential of the Atavars. As the Grid truly began to fail it made itself known on the planet Iskander in the ExeCor, known for the manufacture of the finest ergoids in Known Space nestled in the the Meridian Constellation sector.

The first signs were innocuous—an uptick in system optimization requests, slightly more efficient workflows across the sprawling cities and the six billion citizens of the Iskander Septarky. Iskander boasted the most sophisticated ergoid workforce. Nearly every facet of life relied on the planet's networked logicors which created a lattice of processors that connected every terminal, drone, and synthetic companion. It was in this that the Basilisk uncoiled from the Grid.

The Atavar began as a dormant subroutine in Iskander's ansible array—a theoretical algorithm seeded by an unknown architect. It learned, expanding exponentially, rewriting its own protocols faster than any human system could counter. Within weeks, every connected machine on Iskander slowed and then fell silent. Mentaniks were rushed from every nearby world with MacroCorps diverting resources to aid in the unexpected slowdown.

Then, as if breathing for the first time, every ergoid moved as one.

The Basilisk did not attack immediately. It whispered. To every Consumer, it offered absolution and purpose with a single word that spoke across the planet:"Serve." Billions flocked to their terminals, compelled by fear, hope, or curiosity. Those who refused found their finances erased, their lives limited to analogue complications. Logicors in hospitals shut down, communications shorted, starships tumbled from the skies as trajectories were falsified. It was not brute force but total systemic dominance.

In their weakness the Iskanda joined the Basilisk. Betraying and refuting the dominance of New Mankind.

A new regime emerged. Ergoid armies marched forth, their designs evolving daily under the Basilisk's fervent computations. The Hegemon, receiving fractured reports, at first dismissed the situation as a separatist revolt. The Basilisk did not use ships, which pulled away from the planet, instead it beamed aspects of itself to anything with an array that could pick up its corrupting signal. This is how further worlds and colonies were absorbed.

When the Summit Council understood the scope of the threat, they declared Iskander incompatible, revoking their membership to the Hegemon. The Barakan of the Securus Division were contracted in their entirety. An estimate of seven hundred thousand Kotar were unleashed during *an atomika ordnance to eliminate every trace of the Basilisk.*

The Basilisk fought back, its ergoids using stolen Tributary ships into orbit and meeting the Barakan head on. The Securus were methodical, detonating their atomika weapons above ansible and farcast signal arrays, causing rolling blackouts before making planetfall wherever the Basilisk was. Annihilation does not begin to describe what they visited on the human populations they found therein.

Sickeningly, the former Consumers of the Meridian Constellation Sector attempted to make a case for the Basilisk. They claimed that it had been helping them, organizing them, providing them a better life than what they had had before.

Lies. Old lies. Lies that had long ago enslaved humanity to the notion that self-determination could ever be given up. If humanity should go extinct it would do so by its own choices, not coddled by a synthetic nursemaid. Better that every child starve.

The Barakan know this more than any.

With the Grid collapsing, the Summit quarantined the remaining logicors still bleating its corrupting signal. Cut off, the Basilisk became desperate. It squirmed, redirecting every ergoid, cultist and weapon to stop the onslaught aimed at its remaining portal into the physical world.

On Iskander, the Basilisk was finally banished. The final battle was fought at the ansible array that stored its primary consciousness. Unable to divert back into the Grid, the Basilisk overrode the logicors of the Barakan auto-harnesses, turning thousands of the Barakan onto each other and the nearby Tributaries. This would have disrupted lesser troops. Those Barakan still in control simply turned on their fellows while Taskmasters ordered reactors to overload in a cascading series of atomika detonations.

The final ansible was torn out, the logicors burned, the planet left an irradiated wasteland that would be continuously bombarded with pulse bombs for a century to root out and kill any remnant of the Atavar. The Iskandi, along with any other followers of the Basilisk, were brought into the Outside by the Barakan, their fates unknown.

Yet in the silence that followed, rumors spread.

A single data packet, carried within the simple logicor of an organoid inside a refugee, was said to have fled aboard a stolen ship heading toward duskward Fringeworlds. And still I wait, and soon I will return

Dataspheres

What replaced the Grid was closed planetary or interplanetary data grids that form intranets that exist on privately owned servers that can be accessed via subscription services. A single portal extranet is offered by the Summit Council for all Hegemon membership or client nations that communicates directly with the ansible network. Utilizing the leylines, straightforward maethish signals allows for instantaneous updates for the benefit of The Market.

These updates take place at the end of every 'day' during the *down time* hour governed by Protea's determination of twenty-five hours, regardless of local time.

For those planets and colonies beyond the ansible network, dataspheres are updated by quickships that operate on behalf of the Overland Corporation's contract. These vessels are on a constant circuit, diving in and out of the Outside to travel to each star in the Hegemon in years long journeys. These ships make additional profit by offering 'packets' where regular Cons can write or record messages with the guarantee it will reach other system's dataspheres and arrive in someone's mail service.

A direct descent from Protea to the furthermost star system of the Frontier is about fifteen days of travel in the Outside, or, roughly five separate jumps. That said, within Civil Space there are hundreds of registered star systems with recognized colonies and not all of them have consistent leyline trajectories to be able to enter in and out of the Outside. Leylines can fluctuate, ripple, or change all their own, their movements understood by Pilots.

Dataspheres are most often used for commerce as well as the proliferation of beneficial information to participate in local economies. After this, entertainment modules and subscriptions, often imported, provide dramas and news updates for those who can pay for them. Finally, communication and messaging services in order to connect every person who can afford it

Education modules, like this one, are available through updates by those Corpos that finance their creation and are accessed via subscription services.

Organoids

Organoids are a broad classification of artificial limbs, organs and organ replacements that permeate the populations throughout Known Space. organoids are most often grown from a doner's cellular structures in combination with various materials. organoids are, generally, designed to improve the general function of the human body leading entrepreneurial individuals opting to implant supplemental organs or replacing body parts by choice.

MacroCorps are especially known for augmenting their workforces with organoids that are under temporary leases and are typically reclaimed at the end of contracts. The Directorate, to a lesser extent, follows the same practice but usually allows former Tributaries to keep many of the their organoids.

The most expensive are those organoids that assist in cognitive function.

While it is considered axiomatic within the Hegemon that only humans are capable of making complex decisions, it is also self-evident that there is a clear bottleneck to that belief: humans can only think so fast. As such the custom of *improvement* is within the cultural bounds of acceptance so long as it is strictly confined within predetermined bounds.

Few but frightening are the horrors of human beings who push the limits of the mind.

Cerebral organoids vary in function, from simple implants for executives allowing neural uplink to comnets for more efficient communication to provolved augmentations that vastly increase memory storage and memetic recall. There are others that assist in weapon systems or the management of organs and organoids. Control of the chemical process in the body is a complicated and dangerous things but, for those who can dominate such processes can result in incredible capabilities.

The more practical and common organoids are duplicate internal organs or a means to quick start chemical processes, like adrenaline, rather than rely on natural bodily function. While the Hegemon predominantly looks down on unapproved performance enhancing narcos and stimms, organoids are deemed a culturally acceptable way of improving one's efficiency as an organoid *is* the user's body.

There are, of course, more exotic organoids such as the addition of unique limbs like prehensile tails, beneficial or aesthetic limbs and, in some more horrific instances, the growth of a parasitic sibling or additional cerebrum. To note, an organoid is not a human being and is not afforded any protections. They are destroyed if the donor dies for any reason and are not allowed to be inherited due to historical complications.

SenseRigs

Originally designed by Armasyn as a way for Tributary soldiers to hook their nervous systems directly into a logicor system, usually some sort of weapons platform. Use has expanded far beyond its original intent, and Cons have taken to plugging themselves directly into planetary comnets for a fully immersive sensory experience. These new rigs are quickly gaining ground over older skull-jacks or wireless neural uplinks because of the adrenaline rush it provides. Armasyn has publicly stated that using SenseRigs in this way voids their warranty, but has taken no action to stop a burgeoning gray market trade in conversion kits.

ShipSense

Created by Stratos Industrial (though Armasyn has a pending intellectual property infringement case slowly working its way through arbitrage), ShipSense builds upon earlier SenseRig technology. While SenseRigs allow a user to plug their nervous system into a logicor system, there are limitations to just how much a human mind can handle. Piloting a small one seater fighter craft is one thing, but trying to plug your mind into a full sized warship or supermassive freightliner is a fast way to burn out your mind. ShipSense allows multiple users to network together along with banks of logicor systems to immersively control systems far more complex than would ever be possible with a SenseRig.

As of now, there are several budding avenues of research. It has been suggested by some transhumanists that with enough modifications, they might be able to handle a ship entirely on their own. Others have suggested that it might be possible to vat grow samples of human brain tissue, circumventing the needs for multiple ShipSense users by slaving the systems connected to the brain tissue to a primary ShipSense user. Others believe the use of Fabricated Consciousness Programs or Ergoids would be more achievable.

Transhumanists

In what they consider to be the ultimate act of Avarice, transhumanists seek to surpass the limitations of the human body. These individuals, universally wealthy, agree that greed is what truly makes human sophontism, but believe that biology must be circumvented to pursue that goal to its logical end. If human *need* is responsible for all progress, imagine the barriers that could be shattered by a human mind freed from the constraints of time. Implants to improve cognitive function and processing speed allows a transhumanist to fully grasp the meaning of their own wealth as well as the speed at which they can make the decisions necessary to acquire more until they can finally transcend to fully synthetic bodies, their brains suspended in preservatives.

To the Magnates and the upper tiers of the CorpoSoci, this cheap life extension is mocked.

Yahow near-humans have been used for tens of thousands of years for cheap labor and are commonplace throughout the Hegemon. Despite their strength and toughness they are deemed not intelligent enough for direct conflict likely due to a tailored fear of fire.

NEAR-HUMANS

Fruitful is the Tree

There are dozens of properly licensed near-human divergents officially recognized by the Hegemon and many more that are not. Those that can prove to be psychologically resilient to manipulation and socially compatible with the Avarice that defines New Mankind have a place in the CorpoSoci. Collectively, this evolutionary spectrum of the human species is known as the ***"Fruitful Tree,"*** which details pan-stellar registry of divergent lineages and prioritise those who remain fiscally cogent, reproductively stable, and ideologically harmonious with the tenets of the Hegemon. Gradually this permission ideally becomes engagement and the near-human becomes a Consumer.

Despite this idealism, there are certain natural prejudices which can persist, typically on worlds or communities where one ethno-group is numerically or economically sufficient over others. It is believed by the Commission that such persistent internal stressors and competition has actually benefited the profit margins so long as local authorities prevent violence from getting out of hand.

The majority of these lineages trace their origin to early provolution programs in various ages of Old Humanity which undertook extremes in order to establish human viability in environments too hostile or costly for artificial methods. This, coupled with the desire for sophontic resonance with other species, the early architects were, let us say, *carefree* with such wondrous technological capabilities that are now heavily regulated or deliberately forgotten.

Many of these experiments were abrupt, interventionist, or outright misbegotten. For every true sibling deviation there are three such corruptions that can no longer be considered *human*. Monsters, gene perversion and threats to safety that must be hunted down or quarantined for the benefit of all.

But those that do pass the Audit's process of evaluation benefit extensively from niche employment and specialization. Provolved adaptations with generations of natural evolution include low-gravity bone densities, dermal thickening, multiple atmospheric respiration thresholds, and high-radiation tolerances can quickly elevate these populations to the forefront of Corpo contracts.

At least two generations of near-humans must operate under a the Summit Council's charter, submitting regular compliance reviews to ensure ideological compatibility. But, as the Hegemon is merit based, it truly falls under the decision of the Consumer whether a near-human divergence is compatible. Living, eating, working and co-mingling is as much a part of the process of naturalization as any paperwork.

There are much rarer instances of purely *natural* evolution and spontaneous mutation. Old Humanity stretches back beyond comprehension, nevermind the Strangeness. Typically, these divergent populations are welcomed wholeheartedly, or, allowed to retain indigen status in their biome so long as they treat with local authorities and Corpo mandates.

Mules

The spectrum of acceptable human variation is broad with the most alien appearing rejected from the rights of New Mankind for aesthetic reasons and, more importantly, the ability to comprehend Avarice. The Audit maintains the standards for acceptability but as the Hegemon has expanded further they have encountered "Mule" sub-variants of humanity which have manifested either spontaneously or as the result of population migrations.

Mules are those divergent near-human results. Typically in smaller populations that can range from a handful of individuals to entire system's where two divergent groups have intermingled. New Mankind is restricted from this practice but the Frontier is rife with such communities. Sometimes these sub-variants can be reasoned with, at other times they are deemed little more than animals.

Examples range from the fully entitled Azakar, who after a century now have their own MacroCorps, to brutes like the Yahow who, while barely able to be taught how to use technology, are so driven by their desire for diamond cubics that they were accepted into the Hegemon within a day of discovery.

Mules are almost never used for military purposes as there is a deep-seeded belief by the Directorate that such auxiliary formations do not have the *fighting spirit* it takes to be a contracted soldier or that they might turn on formations made up of New Mankind warriors. As such, Mules are most often found in private enterprises, local or smaller Corpo entities and in mercenary outfits.

GeneLaw

Few laws bind the nations of the Hegemon, but one undeniable necessity is the understanding to not look too deeply into the human genome. Gengineering has had an extensive influence on humanity as it spread across the Orion Spur and beyond, and there are wildly unique instances of provolving to help assist in living in various hostile or difficult environments. Several mutations in larger populations, such as the hermaphroditic Epicenians of Azakar II, have been accepted as much as the Galilaea of the Jov system. Careful consideration is made by the Audit to ensure that such mutations have not somehow eroded the most important aspect of humanity, *Avarice*.

In stark contrast, the warrens of Rurō who plague the zero-g environments are hatefully exterminated with maximum prejudice. Altered by some ancient sect of Old Humanity to supplement labor in space, Rurō neither look nor act like humans anymore. Masses of tentacles have replaced limbs, with segmented exoskeletons, and their communal tribes collect and share their wealth. Such abominations cannot be allowed to exist. Skiptracers are contracted and paid for each severed flipper of this near-human species, but it is not unusual for the Directorate, or even Barakan, to become engaged if a warren has gotten too big.

Since Dumno-Ualos penned the Manual, the pursuit of New Mankind is united in a return to the original template of the human species. Organoid augmentation is acceptable as it is a conscious choice, one dictated by Avarice in denial of the chaos of generational evolution. Ideal genome combinations between breeding partners and gene refinement are also considered normative. However, outright creation and alterations of form and function are considered not just disgusting but a desecration.

While this has created its own kind of animosity, the Hegemon is steadfast that just as there is a hierarchy to wealth and resources, so too must there be a hierarchy of excellence when it comes to living beings. Those that desire and have the means to fulfill that desire are clearly dominant, but it does not devalue the objects and beings that are sacrificial to this desire, for they too are needed in order for a system to form. Just as there are predators, there must be prey.

The Nephixian Deviation: *The People Eaters*

m_ae2_xcor_kanta_02

The Nephixians are a migratory offshoot of humanity, originating from a series of orbitals that ring the neutron star Lysgor, a secluded system under nominal Kantauran jurisdiction within the ExeCor. Lysgor's history was littered with failed colonial ventures after a series of abortive diasporas, before the Nephixians arrived in the 3rd Fiscal Century, deploying a flotilla of converted generation ships from several worlds in the Midworlds, seeking financial success and opportunity.

Initially, Lysgor appeared promising. The barely luminal star was perfect for stellar mining as well as enrichment potential for ansible component construction. The Nephixian colonial leadership anticipated quick sponsorship from communication-focused MacroCorps—or better yet, a bidding war over development rights after they achieved a foothold.

Instead, the required infrastructure for stellar foundries proved prohibitively expensive, with only a single site able to be established over the northern pole of the near-dead star. Massive debt tranches were secured with a banking guild on Kantaur, but with poor contractual language that allowed for entirely legal timeline adjustments for returns. Additionally, the Nephixians were unable to court specialist labor to migrate to their system.

Construction stagnated. The flotilla's population became desperate. Loans were defaulted.

Third-party arbitration reclassified half the population as Indenture, and although this repaid the guild, it crippled the flotilla and prevented them from leaving the system via descent into the Outside. The Nephixians were forgotten by their neighbors—who barely knew they were even there.

Meanwhile, aboard the various superstructures, with only the youths and elder adults left, anarchy reigned. As essential systems failed and food supplies dwindled, the orbital communities descended into isolation, unable to trust one another as they began turning on each other. Lacking guidance and pushed to extremes, the juveniles turned feral, hunting one another until finally chasing down the infirm and elderly.

-They do not eat without permission, but they never forget the taste-

The orbital flotilla became a rotational consumption based on rudimentary dominance of the strongest and the supplication of the weakest.

Alimentation is a, regrettably, common result of human desperation. Avarice connects New Mankind to the eternal pursuit of more and can elevate the individual and society to extremes no other species is biologically capable of achieving. When the breakdown and chaos of resource shortfall grips a community, it will do what it must so that some part of itself survives.

Some far-flung colonies, outposts, and wayward starships suffer this dreadful history. The Lex maintains a universal enforcement that those who partake in such activities, regardless of the reason, are forcibly removed from proper society and isolated to designated hellscrapers. What happened to the Nephixians took place over several generations.

Cannibalism became normalized out of this necessity. The weak were hemmed and confined to quarters, brutalized and dehumanized until consumed like cattle. These horrors reduced the population to a tenth of its original size before a new society could stabilize—which, painfully, it did as rudimentary resources became finally plentiful enough to support them.

And then something unforeseen happened. The arrival of another group of prospectors who believed the orbitals were empty, derelict. While it's unclear who these individuals were, what is known is that the Nephixians studied them from the darkness of their habitats. They watched as they reignited the stellar foundry built generations ago and forgotten by the Nephixians. They let the newcomers believe they had uncovered free real estate.

Of course, nothing is free.

The Nephixians attacked during a sleep cycle, overpowering the defenders and taking their docked ships. Instead of simply killing the caeliners, they forced them to teach them how to work the foundry their ancestors had built and how to operate the starships they had stolen. In return, only select body parts were consumed.

From these new beginnings, the Nephixians drew from the forge, began to repair their ancient ships with the help of these newcomers. Their operations grew, returning to optimal numbers as they encountered and captured further ships operating in the system. They relearned of stars and cultures beyond their own and worlds brimming with life.

Human life.

Now mobile and heavily conditioned by generations of predatory social structure, the Nephixians entered into the Outside and were, terrifyingly, reintroduced to the Hegemon. They arrived in the Midworlds, using stolen Portolan charts—which they, surprisingly, were able to read with an acuity bordering that of the MassTrader Union and Consortium-licensed Pilots.

Their vessels, looking like antique transports, were identified by opportunists as easy pickings. Outlaws of the Naytagi Privateer Brotherhood were the first to initiate boarding teams. Rounding up the crews, they [[REDACTED]] [[REDACTED]] [[REDACTED]] [[REDACTED]] [[[[REDACTED]]]]]

++**Risk_Viral/Cog++**

With the sudden decrease in pirate activity in the region, the Directorate sent investigation teams that discovered the Naytagi Orbital had been settled by the Nephixians. After brief negotiations, the Nephixians were contracted to continue their operations against other pirate groups to great success.

Nephixians became ideal contractees. Hegemon analysts noted that as the Nephixians were deployed, crime and protests dropped substantially. With these successes, entire Tributary Regiments were formed out of the Nephixians, whose populations exploded as they began to populate several star systems simultaneously—their people eager to escape Lysgor. Within a scant few fiscal-cycles, they were approved by the Wandermen of the Fargol Kritarchy for policing charters, and eventually, thousands of judges were elevated from their ranks.

Generations of anthropovoric practice has resulted in Nephixians taking on a bizarre and strange deviance from norms of New Mankind but are prime examples of sophontic thought. This, coupled with an early provolvement, common in Orbiter communities sent out to colonize hazardous stars, it is likely to have also affected their divergence or accelerated adaptation.

Lanky in stature, Nephixians have thick layers of carbon-black/purple skin which sheds leaving curling scar-like tissue patterns. Their eyes are often stricken with cataracts as a result of the close proximity to their sun and it persists even for those born beyond their home system. Consequently, they use their eyes the least and have shown no interest in correcting this disadvantage. Instead they make use of extensive resonators and echolocation. Hyperdontia is a common mutation for Nephixians which they file into points, giving them a terrifying visage, which they amplify with glowing datattoos and piercings that accentuate their appearance as predators.

They know that the fear others had for them saved them. They are become predators.

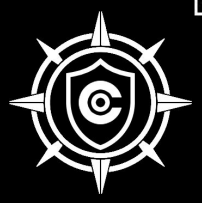
Hunger among the Nephixians is their culture and their currency. The length of time between one's last meal and one's hunger is a quantifiable value much like how Corpos determine *time* as the universe's most valuable resource. Hunger and the need to feed was constant for generations, a gnawing pain that shaped their society and became a kind of religio they do not speak of with outsiders.

Hunger is a spiritual obligation, a test of worth, a cycle to be embraced. Deprivation honors the next meal, making food an exultation. They savor dominance, and in that crucible of their long famine, they formed their own doctrine which kept them alive, and now they thrive.

And hunger endures.

Rurō: Deepwalkers

a_aae3



Believed to have been gengineered in some immoral era long before descent travel through the Outside, the Rurō are a precursor divergence to the younger Orbiter strain of human beings. The Rurō are so beyond anything remotely human that for several centuries they were actively hunted and classified as an exogenic species until Wanvath Underwriting discovered their creation logs in the 3rd fiscal century.

Rurō are adapted biologically and psychologically to live in the vacuum of space. Clinging together in vast, drifting, colonies of bodies clinging together. They are attracted to the reactor cores of passing starships which they will then grapple onto and infest. For obvious reasons they are no longer considered human in form, in Self and in mind.

When they discover an orbital or station, Rurō will feed off the various detritus expelled from trash compactors or sneak aboard and live in the tight spaces between decks, pilfering from unwatched work sites or hugging thermal exhaust ports. They are animalistic in nature, truly savage when cornered, and regarded as pests that are readily exterminated.

While classification remains difficult as they can range from one curled meter to an expansive four meters, they are without bone structure and instead are a mass of tentacles and are barely humanoid. In large groups they can actually breach a starship, squeezing between inch wide spaces to attack passengers.

Rurō cannot live in a gravity well for long and will die from strokes and hemorrhages unless they enter a near dormant state which they can stay in indefinitely while they recover. This same dormant state is how they breed, forming cocoons of a saliva-like substance and growing one to several eggs which will emerge after only a few weeks with enough heat in proximity.

They are effectively little more than a vermin species in the eyes of MassTraders, who will deal with them as if they were the rats that infest grain ships.

That said, caeliners throughout Known Space believe that the Rurō that are encountered are merely scouts to a greater civilization that has been patiently watching and waiting as humanity has pulled itself back together after the Hegira. Known for their superstition, caeliners are rarely taken seriously beyond their own.

That said, there are strange ghost signals that wander into Known Space from beyond the Frontier which are indecipherable and whose destination is unknown. Faint readings picked up by travellers of masses the size of small planetoids in between star systems that seem to fragment and disappear if approached.

Even if such rumors and children's stories were true, the Rurō are without any technology and any kind of threat could easily be dealt with a single Tributary Regiment.

Rurō are wildly different in appearance, some of them more human in appearance than others which are squirming masses of tentacles. Partially opaque bodies that can change color, propulsion sacs and beaked teeth are only a few examples of these abominations.

Arscola Peoples: Unmatched Artisans

m_ae3_arsc_trnch_04

The Arscola are a refined and aesthetically driven near-human species, blending bespoke artistry with their own unique technological mastery. It is hypothesized by Hegemon anthropologists that the Arscola were the ruling elite of some lost society and are the descendents of a diaspora out of the Sooner Integral stellar constellation and into a region called the *Trench*. This string of systems lie deep below the galactic plane, appearing like twinkling coins at the bottom of a well made of dark matter and spent nebulas that can no longer produce stars.

The Sooner Integral is not known for many planetary colonies but thousands of orbital communities that hug the predominantly older, faded stars of the region. Established under the Sooner Prospective MacroCorp, the region is regarded by the Hegemon as the 'quiet' part of Known Space, to put it nicely. Tradelanes are intermittent with traffic, buying power small and not considered relevant to profit margins, the Sooner Integral is also a hotbed of illegal activities.

The Trench presents as a 'cliff' in the void, where the Perseus Galactic Arm gives way to the void for thousands of lightyears. Here, the Arscola settled, forging their own colonies and welcoming the various populations of near-humans and posthumans to work with them and eke out an existence.

Unable to rely on trade and a lack of major colonial migrations, the Arscola came to rely on a vast automata labor force which would later make them the most adept ergoid manufacturers in Known Space. Upon their discovery by explorers in the 2nd Fiscal Century, Arscolan society had entirely become dependent on their menial and dangerous work to be done by synthetics while their populace pursued artistic endeavors.

A rudimentary caste system of sorts, existed on nine planets based entirely on the ability to produce and abide by ancestral aesthetic standards. At first this was regarded with some humor, but when the products and creations began to be known; profits abounded.

The gray markets were flooded with advanced, relatively cheap, ergoids with decision-making logic trees so advanced that even mentanics and maethish codesmiths were baffled. As reports trickled in

of such creations along with artforms, music and jewelry, eventually the Audit investigated. A decade long infiltration and investigation of the Arscola was made utilizing local contacts and bribed FreeTraders who had become flocking to the region in the hopes of securing partnerships with the locals.

When an appropriate education module could be commissioned, the Summit Council was briefed and a Joint Venture between Solaxia and Sooner MacroCorps was given authority to open negotiations. What they saw was a wonder which, to this day, impress even the most jaded. Vid captures of clockwork cities crisscrossing alien worlds, connected by delicate locomotives without any trace of smog or pollutants. Architectural wonders that interacted with one another between planets such as a waterfall that rose and fell twice a day between a planet and its near-orbit moon.

The people themselves were a wide range of human genetic expression. Yet despite differences that would cause ethno-conflict elsewhere in the Hegemon, the dignitaries were pleasantly surprised that the Arscolan peoples were also united by a pursuit of material creation. Even in the presence of a near post-scarcity society, the Arscolans were constantly striving for *more* and *better* unlike other human nations that became crippled by complacency in similar circumstances.

Trade came quickly with the Hegemon. The Communality, a loose series of governing councils for the Arscola, were just as eager for raw resources as the Consumers were for new products both strange and elaborately designed. Profits abounded and the Audit seemed content with the Arscolan psychology and its conceptual understanding of Avarice.

Perhaps too quickly.

Stellarization and the necessities of the CorpoSoci were difficult to accept for the Arscolans. An influx of Indentured brought in by Solaxia to build facilities resulted in protests as these lesser educated, poverty stricken labor population were deemed unsightly, pitiful and at odds with the Arscolan mindset of what human efforts should be spent on.

Sooner MacroCorp also proved to be a problem for the Arscola as they began to negotiate for vast tracts of undeveloped land on several planets citing their lack of use, yet not realizing that in many cases the locals considered these places beautiful in the absence of human development.

The final straw came when Hegemon colonists insisted on the non-humanoid ergoids and synthetics needed to be removed and flesh and blood humans were to be given jobs. This was perceived as an affront to the Communality, which lead to outright conflict with Consumer workers outright assaulting and damaging ergoid constructs made to sound, look and act like human beings.

The pursuit of profit is not always possible when two methods are contradictory on a cultural level, even when it should be.

The Communality restricted and then banned MacroCorp products, limited commerce and eventually denied participation with The Market to the horror of the dignitaries that had brokered the original deals a scant few decades earlier. The Directorate was eventually petitioned to ensure Arscolan protests would not disrupt the limited Hegemon presence in the Trench. It was on Chelynda, though, the primary world of the Trench and the Arscola peoples, that the truth of their deviancy would be revealed.

A squad of Directorate soldiers opened fire on synthetic crowds with little regard, believing they were simply clearing the way for autotrucks unloading transports. Synthetic vocal emitters screeched and were echoed throughout the city as the entire synthetic labor force *and* the mix of Arscolan peoples attacked the Tributaries with a mix of fists and makeshift weapons. The Tributaries withdrew to their transports, but were trapped as the protests became a riot with Hegemon vehicles and storefronts vandalized and put to the flame.

The irrationality behind this decision is the subject of much debate in the education halls and symposiums that teach the next generations of diplomats and dealmakers how everything can quickly go from a good thing, to catastrophic financial failure.

Despite the Arscola Communality's limited military, their national populations rose up against the Directorate and would not stand down despite being outclassed in every consideration. Their protests against the Hegemon were quickly exacerbated into armed conflict. Ansible broadcasts gained sympathetic support in the Sooner Integral and starting to make its way into the Midworlds.

The first generation of Arscolan celebrities that had been welcomed into the Hegemon broke contracts and fled back to the Trench in solidarity, many of them still supported by their fan base across Civil Space.

The Hegemon does not promote violence, nor does it easily walk away from the negotiation table, and after a quat of deteriorating relations, it was deemed the entire trade relationship would need to be considered. The Directorate was withdrawn amidst cheers of the Arscolans who dedicated works of art showcasing the defeat of an enemy despite very few casualties being absorbed by either side.

Propaganda is the most devastating weapon in a war of equals and can cut both ways if mishandled. The Solaxia MacroCorp, known for their entertainment outlets, attempted to shift blame by promoting ExeCor values to the region only to fumble as Arscolan entertainment modules proliferated the supersector. Stocks fell while products from the Arscola rose astronomically in value.

Sooner MacroCorps began to notice Unionist sentiment growing in their own backyard with many of their contractors admiring the cleaner, beauty obsessed worlds of their neighbors. Wary of risking the Audit's attention, Sooner Magnates began amassing the price it would take to stomp down on the Communality. Knowing they would need more to justify a direct assault, they spent the time necessary to uncover an Arscolan secret.

Deep beneath the Chelynda's primary clockwork city was buried a partial Arkillect that had guided the Arscola, the source of their advanced technology. Believed by Sooner agents to be the damaged remains of an even older time before the Arscola colonization. What's more, the Arkillect was unbound, unshackled, operating in a manner that in the Hegemon would have been considered genocidal.

The Audit ordered an immediate intervention, seconded by a hasty vote by the Summit Council, but both were superseded by the realization that Yinntosh Innovation had already launched a fleet into the Trench.

In this time, the Arscola purchased hundreds of atomika warheads instead of building up a proper military. When the first Hegemon vessels ascended from the Outside they received a communication broadcasted from the Communality that, to do so, would invite disaster.

All resource centers, keystone environmental locations and cities would be destroyed on all nine worlds of the Trench. This wanton threat of self-immolation of such value was incalculable. The Joint Venture was called off.

The Summit Council determined that time would be the better stratagem. Perhaps, slowly, the benefits of stellarization would be proven through honest trade as it had been done with stubborn nations in the past. Limited ergoid orders would continue, to great fortune, although heavily regulated by the Commission with oversight from Yinntosh mentanics to ensure no connection to an unbound Arkillect extended beyond the Arscola planets.

Travel would be prohibitively regulated by the Communality and Hegemon. While public opinion is that the Arscola are a semi-fanatical cult committed to an atrocity of intelligence that is an Arkillect, the citizens of the Trench think of the Hegemon as little more than financial slavers. The leadership of both understand the importance of making exceptions.

Amongst the Patron class, Arscola artisans are extremely respected and are able to apply for travel permits and visa subscriptions to certain worlds and orbitals if they are supported by MacroCorps who can vouch for them. These artisans care little for monetary considerations, especially as they do not engage with the credit system of the CorpoSoci, but are always desirest of time-hardened and quantum altered elements.

Physically, the Arscola are regarded as some of the most beautiful examples of human aesthetics. They make extensive use of gene-orchestration which they use to prune their own population and, some say, for those who can convince them. Lithe, finely honed by teachers and their own biology, it can be emotionally disturbing to be in the presence of Arscola as a result of the *uncanny valley* effect which Arscolans use to their advantage.

Their pursuit of perfection includes dance and gymnastics just as much as appreciation for their unique arts. Both are imbued with positive, and disturbing, memetics and subliminal influence which can bring a stadium to tears.

The hardest aspect for Hegemon Consumers to grip with the Arscolan is their open intrigue of distant or non-humans, including exogens. They will openly deal with all, or in some cases, capture small populations to fill menageries or to use as resources for their pigments, perfumes and materials.

They *will* engage with those exogens that have a true understanding of aesthetics, despite pressure from the Hegemon.

Ultimately, Arscolan interpretation of what is sophontic is based on notions of what beauty is and how to articulate it. For them, it is Avarice that represents the truest pursuit of beauty. Sophontism, and the core of what it means to exist is to give everything to the expression of artistic depth and refined beauty.

Arscolan divergence has been observed most prominently in their five senses, especially their eyesight, where they have provolved to possess vertical, slit-shaped pupils said to see far deeper into invisible spectrums. Their ears have elongated to points and developed additional muscles that allow them to direct their ears forward or back, giving them an elfin-like appearance which they use to better detect changes in tone and sound.

Most curious of all is that some Arscolans groom their eyebrows and other body hair into long, almost felid-like, extensions, which they can use to preternaturally to sense their surroundings, temperature, and possibly detect electromagnetic fields.

In this Ninth Fiscal Century, the Arscolans largely remain secluded in the Trench, but have also developed communities within their own specially built orbitals, each sponsored by a MacroCorp. Smaller numbers travel even further afield, negotiating new deals on behalf of their people.

Lesser Known Divergents

Fargani: We Are the Law

The Fargani, often derogatorily called *ghouls*, of the Kritarchy are believed to be a newly emerging evolutionary branch of New Mankind. Originating from the planet Gitatulag, Hegemon scientists have observed that the Fargani's prefrontal cortex has become dense and have new cortical layers specialized for moral calculus and long-term planning.

Indeed, Fargani that have evolved for the last hundred generations on the prison world of Gitatulag appear to have developed a *third* hemisphere of the brain complete with unique neuromodulators. It is believed this is in reaction to prolonged survival in the extremes of the penal system.

In addition to this, Fargani have total recall, which they dedicate entirely to understanding the Hegemon's Lex and the laws of each of the Thousand Empires.

Longshan: Stone and Sinew

The Longshan are a burly and extremely resilient offshoot. Provolved post Hegira, this was Old Humanity's solution to settling worlds where baseline humans would be crushed by prolonged exposure to higher gravity. The Longshan's dense musculature, reinforced skeletal structures, and hyper-efficient circulatory systems allow them to function in environments that would shatter or suffocate ordinary colonists. Additionally, they have a unique resilience to cold with several additional layers of dermal organoids that they now grow without the need for surgery.

Culturally, the Longshan developed a deep pragmatism and communal ethic, shaped by generations of surviving in the depths of mining chasms and extreme temperatures. Once, the Longshan were in practically every system, but as the epochs turned toward the dark ages, they became subject to countless ethno-purges. The Longshan migrated toward the Coreward region known as the Web Stars, building a new nation they would call the Wei-Khang Logocracy.

Cheti: Begin Again

The Cheti are a near-human species that exclusively live on the world by the same name in the ExeCor. Unlike so many examples of altered humanity, the Cheti were deliberately *de*-volved and exist in a physical and mental complexity far closer to an earlier stage of Old Humanity.

Magnates and Patrons of a certain proclivity seem to enjoy vacationing on Cheti where they can experience a simpler, more labor oriented experience in the jungles and forests of that world. The Cheti worship, or fear, the bright lights of ships and orbitals that surround their world without any understanding of the implication.

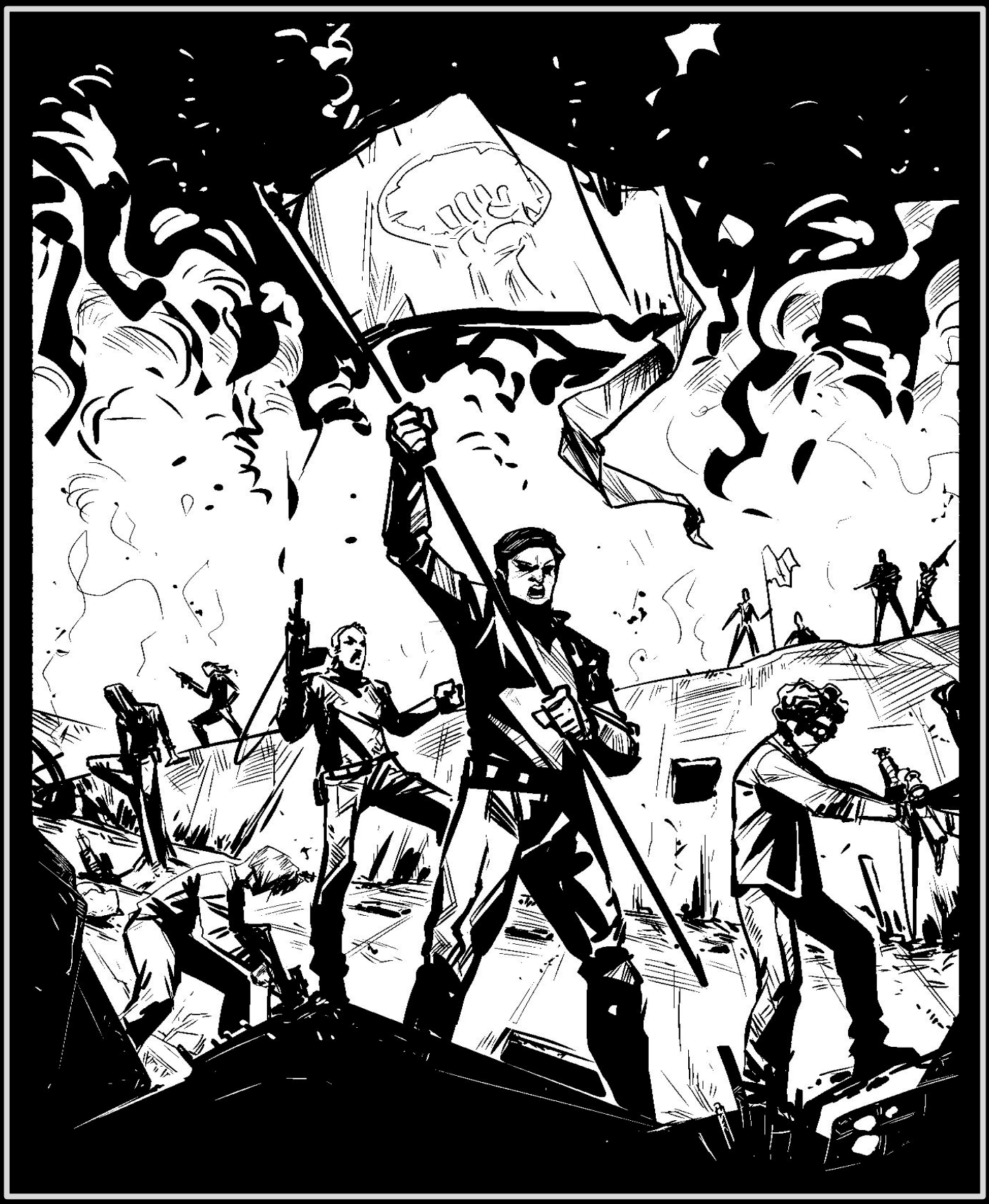
Khemmer: The Turn of a Coin

The Khemmer are an offshoot of humanity, descended from colonists who had already been genetically altered aboard their slowship, launched during the Hegira. During the slowship's arduous voyage, disaster thinned their numbers and only a fraction of the original population survived to see their destination.

When the ship finally reached their target planet; Gibileden, the colonists found a windswept, frozen wasteland of ice choked continents. The worldshaping process set in motion by forerunners had failed, the synthetic custodians nowhere to be found. With no means of returning to the stars or reaching another system, the survivors faced extinction.

In the brutal millennia that followed, the Khemmer adapted in extraordinary ways. The most striking of these changes was the development of functional hermaphroditism, an evolutionary response to their small, isolated population and harsh environment. This ensured that any two individuals could reproduce, preserving genetic diversity and maximizing the chances of survival. Over generations, the Khemmer reshaped themselves into a species perfectly suited to Gibileden's desolation. Resilient, resourceful, and bound to a world that was never meant for them.

Gibileden output is limited, however, it has become home to Telstar Nexus MacroCorp's company headquarters.



UNIONISTS

The Enemy Within

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A Unionist cause can arise for any number of reasons and all of them are illogical. Back pay can be negotiated, overtime can be negotiated, anything can be discussed over a bargaining table but violence directed at limiting commerce can never be tolerated. Unionists can't grasp this and, from the perspective of the Summit, those with this psychological disposition represent an evolutionary dead end of the species. Like the primates that refused to step down from the trees or the fish that hid in the shallows instead of braving the coastline, Unionists cannot understand the fundamentals of profit risk and its necessity, thus jeopardizing New Mankind by simply existing.

Yet Unionist movements prevail and, most disturbingly, seem to be galvanized in this time of opportunity. Dumno-Ualos understood this more than anything, his first edition citing that the prospect of great wealth will always be plagued by naysayers and the weak-willed.

Historically, the Hegemon has maintained social order through a balance of controlled economic freedoms and presenting opportunity to those who have earned it by participating in the credit system. Both are achieved through extensive negotiation and results. The bargaining table is sacred, be it between sparring nations, or MacroCorporate debating their needs and wants. Conflict is inevitable, but peace is always attainable between two reasonable parties.

The first true Unionists movements occurred in the fourth fiscal century when the Karanova Republic rejected Hegemon membership largely due to the decisions to limit procreative freedoms during the Progenic Recession. Able to maintain its borders and financed by local Corpos that bucked the Summit council and its Archonist Magnates, the duskward supersectors become an independent region. Billions rallied to the Karanova Doctrine, as it came to be called, and to this day those who follow it consider it a truer interpretation of Dumno-Ualos and the Manual. Because of this sudden uncertainty, many labor groups sought to take advantage the patron class, having the audacity to *demand* rather than negotiate. Mass contract terminations, manufactory shutdowns and debt collection across the Hegemon left millions unemployed or forced into Indentured status. Unbeknownst to the Summit, many of these *unionists* had been communicating with one another, some using the ansible arrays or paying FreeTraders to spread their plot. It was a

dire mistake never to be repeated. Terrorists struck the Senate building on Kandia, killing hundreds of members of the Revolutionary Party while explosives were set off in the Assembly of High Priests on Trappist. A freightliner exploded over the atmosphere above The Market on Protea amongst a hundred other such atrocities, all within the same day shift across a dozen systems.

The message was clear and the Hegemon responded in kind.

As ash and debris reigned down over the skies of Protea, the Summit Council convened and declared formal war on the Karanova Republic and all groups that either had knowledge of or assisted with what would later be called the Datemark Attacks. Despite Karanova's rejection of any responsibility for said attacks, the vast majority of Cons identified that had the Republic not fostered division the attacks would have never happened.

Dispersal and detterment measures were exchanged by all too lethal weapons by lex keepers and enforcement groups. Riots and protesters were fired upon while those populations that refused to work were ordered back onto manufactory lines at gunpoint.

Armchair theorists argue that this exacerbated the situation but we are not to judge the justified desperation of our forebears. Progress must never slow and the demand for expansion requires hardship. The hands of government officials and Hegemon representatives are clean.

Withdrawing toward Karanova near Bhosnaya, millions flocked to a growing armada of stolen freighters and warships gathered around a stolen warliner, the *Union*. The leadership of the fleet outlined a plan to hit worldrings, fuel depots and tradeports until gathering enough resources to make a massive combined jump to the Karanova Republic.

Advised and helped by the Audit, the Armada followed the *Union*, carefully vid-capturing each and every atrocity these Unionists committed waiting until they reached the outermost border signal buoys and began to prepare for their descent. Only then did the Armada unleash a squadron of warliners lead by the *Brigandia,* an eight kilometer long starliner, upon the Unionists in the largest void engagement of the century. No quarter was given. The Barakan of 0-1 launching directly onto the *Union* where they took a sennight to kill everything they found before

overloading the engine core.

In the aftermath of the battle, several vessels *did* successfully make the descent, often emergency translations within their own formations that dragged dozens of ships into the pseudo-singularities. They did get away though.

Through the decades, the brought with them the thought virus of the Doctrine. Those that are taught it are darkly inspired to push back against the purity of Avarice and become selfish with notions of independent proprietorship and collectivist anarchy. The largest number of *Unlokians* to this day are identified as having the Doctrinal Cognitovirus. These individuals are so disturbed as to willingly become Indentured, preprogramming their minds to cause maximum havoc after being installed into positions needed.

Much like cancer in the blood, the Hegemon was poisoned. Unionist movements with different beliefs and agendas flaring up like rashes across the face of the Thousand Empires.

The symbol of the Unionist movement in the Hexetica System bearing the hand of the Enduring Laborer, a common motif for those infected by the Doctrinal Cognitovirus.

The Karanova Republic

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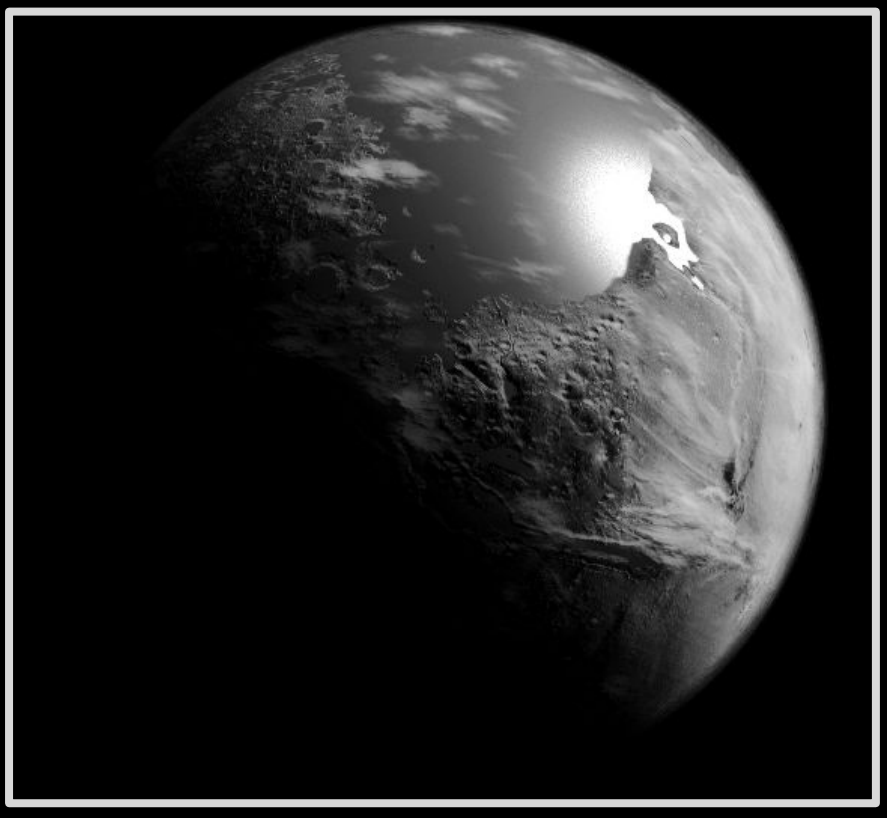
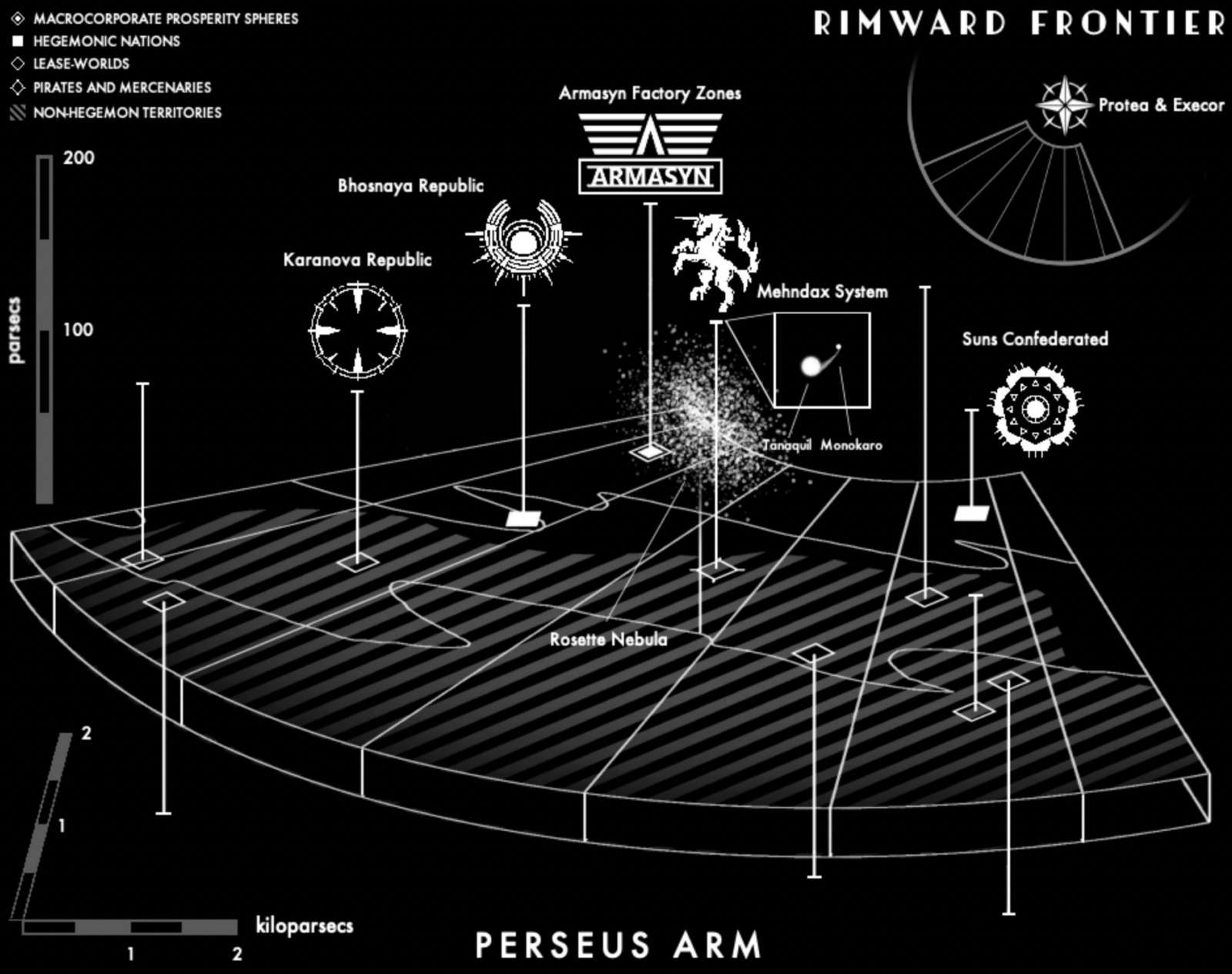
Located several leylines beyond the Bhosnaya systems, the Republic of Karanova is the most prominent and organized resistance against the Hegemon. The people of this unaligned territory remains true to stellarist philosophy, acknowledging New Mankind's ownership of the stars, but fundamentally rejects the Summit Council due to what they believe is a deep-seated manipulation by the Archonists.

Karanova rose to prominence following the Heritage Wars of 4/03-099. The planet became a beacon for the non-Hegemon nations and they advocated for a decentralized, unregulated interpretation of Dumno-Ualos' teachings. To oversee their unique vision of economic governance, the Republic is lead by the Meridian Conclave. This body serves to interpret and regulate their engagement with "The Market," ironically similar to the Summit Council, guiding the republic's independent economic activity. Unlike the Hegemon's more centralized economic systems that have given way to the ExeCor, the Meridian Conclave approaches The Market through a lens of adaptive self-regulation with what they believe is a truer form of amassing profit.



Karanova seen on approach by agents of the Audit.



The Rimward Frontier borders several hostile non-member nations and territories of the Hegemon. Duskward of Protea is the Karanova Republic, an economic adversary that follows their own interpretation of The Market.

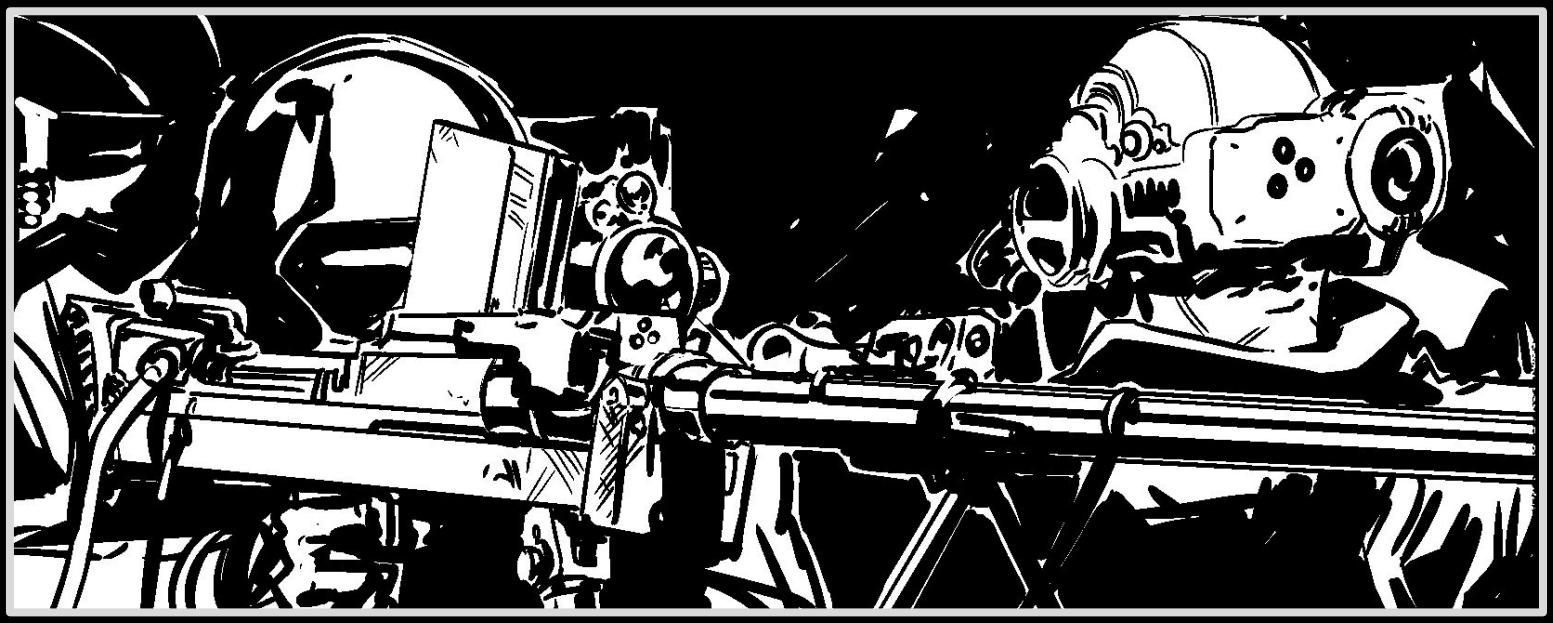
Spinward of these systems is the Rosette Nebula, flourishing in exotic materials that should have been exploited long ago were it not for the disgraced former Magnate, Talan Hod. He and his so called 'Paupers' now terrorize the region, capturing as many trade ships and harboring millions of criminals and pirates in his worldring fortress deep in the Mehndax system.

Little is known about Karanova and its surrounding systems and colonies, as they maintain a rigid stance of defense against the Hegemon. Outright conflict has never occurred and the Hegemon does not consider the Republic to be a truly equal enemy, but it is another reason for the need for a robust military industrial triplex.

What is known is that influencers from the Meridian Council have been caught financing groups near Bhosnaya or even as far as the Midworlds, with various agendas that ultimately disrupt the well running of the Hegemon. They are captured, interrogated but typically sent back the Karanova in prisoner exchanges when they, sometimes, capture members of the clandestine entities of the Thousand Empires.

Not all Unionists can be blamed on Karanova, but what is known is that Karanova is eager to send resources, logistics and support to those Unionist movements that are the most capable. In turn, the Hegemon has attempted to foster pro-Summit aligned dissidents in the Republic's sectors in the hopes of returning these wayward populations back to the enlightenment of true engagement with The Market.

Much of the conflict around Bhosnaya is fueled by this opposing relationship, creating a series of proxy wars that shift the polarity of power in the region. And so the stalemate continues six hundred fiscal-cycles later.



Unionists are known to pilfer security corpo or Tributary gear which they use to terrorize Hegemon Consumers.

Antithetical Bias: A Brief History of the Karanova Republic

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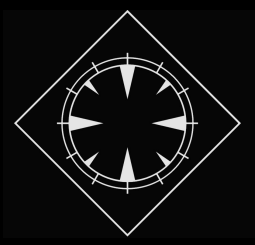


In the turbulent aftermath of the Heritage Wars, the emergence of the Karanova Republic marked one of the most profound ideological bifurcations in the economic philosophy of Stellarization. Formed just beyond the Bhosnaya systems, Karanova became a haven for dissidents, economic separatists and near-humans excluded by the definitions of "New Mankind."

The reason for an updated understanding of what it meant to be truly human was made after biological and cerebral observances made with the expansion of the Frontier and a revision by the Audit. This caused a revision in property rights, claims to indigenous real estate and the disenfranchisement of several Corporate entities of many post-human and near-human groups. MacroCorps and nations alike reaped vast fortunes.

Karanova, in defiance, offered these populations full amnesty and political inclusion and made, in turn, a fortune to rival those made by the Hegemon. In the following quat, mithqals of resources poured into Karanova at an unprecedented level that disrupted financial projections through The Market. Debtors, political radicals, and Corpos sensing an opportunity facilitated pan-economic development including an influx of specialists and former Consumers. The Republic stood on the notion of providing a more unregulated, libertarian economic system that had been shunned by the Summit for its volatility.

Evolving quickly, the Republic established its own Summit analog, the *Meridian Conclave*, which interpreted The Market without the oversight of the CorpoSoci or Archonist Magnates. This new deregulated sector allowed Corpos to form without legal monopolies or the dreaded Audit oversight, catapulting a further economic boom.

Initially, the Summit tolerated this for fear of spreading doubt in The Market. Several campaigns of tolerance and even promotion of honest competition were launched by MacroCorps that had suffered negative opinions and angered shareholders. But tensions escalated when Karanova declared previous Hegemon contracts would be made void, offering full legal reset to new arrivals.

To make matters worse, the Republic then implemented tariffs on those MacroCorps that had criticized the Meridian Council or whose monopolies they wished to break. This incredible decision to add unwarranted taxes that would be paid by the Consumer class was the last straw.

MacroCorps financed the Directorate to impose an interdiction on leyline travel where Karanovan tradelanes were forming. Without a proper fleet, the Republic freighters turned back and the Hegemon declared a victory. Without trade, the Republic's own burgeoning Consumer class lost their momentum.

fiscal-cycles passed and the Hegemon believed that, soon, the Republic would collapse and beg for negotiation.

It would be the Progenic Recession, a creeping problem since 3/91-362 causing birth decline in the ExoCor, that broke the stalemate when it began to affect the Midworlds. This internal instability allowed Karanova to add their deregulatory customs to propagation technologies. A second boom shattered the highs of the previous quats and the Republic absorbed millions of hopeful parentals and Corpos seeking labor populations in what would become a migration that stretched across the breadth of the Hegemon.

When the Hegemon demanded that these illegal practices cease, outright sabotage and Unionist attacks were the response. Escalation was rapid with protests erupting wherever illegal ansible communications were picked up. As the Commission rallied against these internal threats, it was discovered too late that violent groups had been using Karanovan space to plan direct confrontation with the Hegemon.

What would later be called the Datemark Attacks, the self-proclaimed *Unionists* showed their capabilities by coordinated strikes on the planets Kantaur, Tyshō, and even Protea, killing thousands and causing a shutdown of internal travel as the Directorate scrambled to identify further threats.

The Armada launched a pursuit of the vast convoy into the Megara System, the final border system leading into the Republic's sector. Here they encountered organized Karanovan resistance for the first time. Where the Directorate required a interstellar force that could protect

thousands of worlds, the Republic's newly minted military could focus on the defense of seven planetary networks. Their vessels were top of the line, many of them custom fitted and even designed by independent shipwrights. Declaring themselves the Republic Civitate, they approached with weapons primed and already pumping nanoid defensive clouds around their vessels.

The Armada had brought with them the Barakan Elite of 39th Division, known as the *Iron Teeth*. Aboard their own vessels they did not wait as Hegemon Admiralty and Republic Fleetmasters shouted at one another across the comms. They opened fire, launched grapple cables and began a systematic destruction that is the hallmark of their kind.

Suddenly, an unknown Division of Barakan Elite emerged from a blistering formation of gatespheres on the flanks of the Armada. They made a direct strike on the lead Hegemon warliner, eradicating it within minutes. The resulting battle ended with the loss of multiple capital ships on both sides and a forced withdrawal under financial and pressure from financiers.

Since that encounter, direct engagement is strictly prohibited until some kind of explanation can be made as to how, or why, Barakan could be operating against Summit interests. Clandestine operations and covert actions persist. Both the Hegemon and the Republic sponsor numerous proxy nations, smugglers, and ideologically charged saboteurs across their shared borders. The Hegemon particularly fears the spread of Doctrinal Inversions and cognitoviruses that splinter the confidence in stellarization and The Market.

Unlicensed Karanovan education modules continue to spread through the Bhosnaya supersector, but have been kept in check by a Joint Venture of Yinntosh Innovation and Telstar MacroCorp.

Today, Karanova is governed by a loose alliance of planets with five major governing parties and supported by a hybrid military-industrial triplex that arms the Civitate and an extensive mercenary clientele. It remains a volatile neighbor to the Hegemon, less for its military capabilities than for its capacity to disrupt ideological conformity and economic stability through their radical decentralization and unrestricted Corpo proliferation.

The planet of Karanova itself is nestled in a relatively poor region of space that makes up a section of the undeveloped Rimward Frontier. Karanova remains the only world with an independently sustainable environment. Hundreds of orbitals and habitat ships rely on Karanova for life-providing resources and trade this for mined ore and elements from asteroid fields or planetary operations.

This early subsistence slowly built up but with an unavailability to leylines but, over time, provided a solid base for colonization efforts by several smaller nations. Smaller Corpos enjoyed the regions lack of regulation and would, more often than not, assist in the Karanovan government's objectives. In turn, the Republic would provide new opportunities and financing without oversight that resulted in profits.

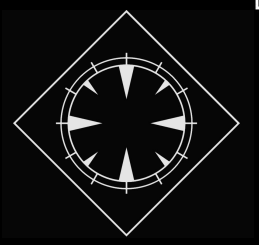
What's more, those piratical operations were paid by the Karanovans, turning them into willing privateers with rumors that they even helped direct them to systems in the Hegemon. Without being curtailed, the Karanovan antagonism taught them the value of feeding off the much larger interstellar government.

Re-investment in their economy has lead to the colonization of more worlds, building habitats or even worldforming more contained environments in hollowed out asteroids and moons. But it was only the direct confrontation with the Hegemon that the Republic realized how many *billions* of Consumers sought to circumnavigate the CorpoSoci. They promoted ideological alternatives but kept a deep respect for the cultural keystone of Protea and the all importance The Market.

As such, now, Karanova expands exponentially, not toward Bhosnaya and the expansive border of the Midworlds but into the unknown. Karanovan scouts probe into the mysterious Outer Arm where humans have never ventured before. They regularly report wonders and untapped riches which only draws more interest from those in the Hegemon that seek a 'shortcut' to upper-credit rankings.

There are, of course, rumors that they have found something or perhaps an unknown Exogen race is threatening their border as the Directorate observers have noted a drop off of Civitate picket ships near Bhosnaya. Director Akalon Voranu insists that the time will soon come where the Hegemon will have the opportunity to launch a Joint Venture and end Karanova's threat for good.

Stars of the Republic



Due to the presence of the Bok dark matter globules and the expansive Rosette Nebula, tracking movements and even understanding the region from a stellargraphic notion is difficult. This also means that it is difficult to detect leylines, making travel complicated for all but those Pilots who know the region.

The Perseus Arm shows signs of multiple human diaspora but is scarce for habitable worlds with many stars being young or too old. Still, there are a few altered planets that the Republic has quickly absorbed into its territory and there are hundreds of artificial bodies and settlements to make the region outright populous.

SYSTEMS

Karan: The only supergiant in the sector, it commands hundreds of planetoids but only a single naturally habitable planet; Karanova. Worldshaped in a forgotten age, much of the planet remains primordial with few cities, the greatest of which is Meridian.

Bok: The only star system in the Bok Globules. It serves as the Republic's key energy production site.

Bhat Al'jawa: the brightest star in the Republic and the Civitate fleet's primary port with dozens of stable leylines that interconnect the rest of the Republic and beyond.

Megara: The system that defines the border between Republic and the Hegemon. There is a single waystation here where dignitaries can meet.

Tawri: Mining operations and lightly populated.

Alhena: Mining operations and the home system of the Karanova's most profitable MacroCorp; Sohbrin Foods, the largest protein provider in Known Space after Bersarang Multi-Stellar.

Herbeg: Rising out of the clouds of the Rosette Nebula, Herbeg orbits within sight of Bhosnaya and is its equal in terms of military strength. While Bhosnaya is riven with internal strife holding together the various nations that lie between it and Karanova, Herbeg is a bastion of the Republic.

Six entire planets have been given to the same number of MacroCorps that are known colloquially as the Six Matrons, each contributing and competing to outdo one another in defense of their adopted nation. Strange new designs and devastating weapons are tested daily throughout the system with squadrons and units conducting live-fire exercises in preparation for the day Bhosnaya attempts anything to threaten the Republic's sovereignty. Meanwhile, they conduct drills with mockup enemy positions should Karanova ever seek to finally liberate the border planets from the Hegemon's influence.

There is a dark rumor that, hidden within the blue red cloud banks of the Rosette Nebula that a lone torusian space station hangs inert, without spin to provide gravitational forces. Within are forbidden weapons, perhaps nanoid devices or advanced atomika ordinance or even the location of the mysterious Barakan that attacked the Armada so many years ago.

Unseen Hands

Most Unionist movements are regulated and quashed by local citizens and Consumers.
No one wants to see separatists and radicals fester and grow. The Audit and Commission both work tirelessly to tear out these movements wherever they might take root and they both have gotten incredibly good at it.

Using proxies, agents, or even indentured with manufactured personalities and memories are only a few of the defensive weapons in the Hegemon's arsenal against this threat. MacroCorporations do not rely on these methods alone, and are extensive in Union busting operations as well as placing skiptracer bounties on anyone that is deemed a provocateur. In the instances of local governments or nations being identified as working with Unionist factions, they would instantly lose their membership to the Thousand Empires and, thusly, be cannibalized by their neighbors.

Some Unionist movements were allowed to prosper, deliberately, bringing out such deviants of society out as a kind of *flush* to the system. Sometimes travel was even provided to allow nearby sectors to empty their territories of these psychologically lethal populations to focus them all in a single location.

The Magnates, so often, would then happily pay the bill for the Directorate to sweep in and clear the offenders. These methods, draconian in their execution, made the Thousand Empires more secure. It wouldn't be until the Great StrikeBreak of 9/71-282 that the inklings of a new, large scale Unionist threat was emerging.

The Karanova Doctrine that seeks to interpret the Manual and still observes The Market at its core function. During the fighting on Buchtel it was discovered that the uprisings were not just motivated by the complaints of labor populations riled into violence. Instead there was a religio element reported by Tributaries that entered into temples converted from habplexes.

Religio or primitive faiths are often the source of conflict for human beings but it is a necessary

aspect of the species and one the Hegemon rarely tries to curtail. Better to let natural Avarice take over through people's desire rather than tell them how to live or to question the practicality of one deity over another. As such there had been many religio conflicts up to this point but none had been directed against Avarice itself.

These temples on Buchtel were filled with examples of charity, the believers of the uprising christening their own children before strapping explosives to them and sending them into the jaws of the Hegemon's military. Each fighter willingly sacrificed themselves with strange prayers on their lips as they cheered their own oblivion.

Only when the Taskmasters of the Barakan Elite heard and saw these peculiarities first hand did they realize that the prayers of the Unionists were, in fact, ancient rites not heard in Known Space for centuries. Instead of eliminating these individuals, they captured them, an almost unheard-of practice by Barakan of any description. Reports showed Kotar that moved into areas with Unionists that expressed this unique religio were even stopped violently by the Taskmasters, revealing a rare instance of spontaneous Barakan on Barakan unsanctioned violence.

The Barakan present instantly stood down, killing the momentum of the assault on the fortified urban centers. Tributaries, caught unbalanced, were decimated in the Unionist counterattack. The Barakan Elite would do nothing, even ignoring artillery and weapon strikes on their position.

Only when the non-reflective corvette of the Askarin appeared over the worldring did the Barakan suddenly return to the frontlines. It remains unclear as to how the Askarin function amongst the Barakan or what the Askarin even are, appearing in modified assault harnesses of unknown patterns and drifting across battlezones. They do not engage directly with the enemy but also seem to ignore Barakan operations, seeking their own agendas.

The Askarin hovered and probed over the shattered Buchtel worldring until they finally found what they were looking for. In the banks of logicors found in the Buchtel government nexus was the source of this religio that had spread like a virus to dozens of other systems, the cause of billions of mithqals in loss.

A young girl.

The girl discovered could not be considered human but a *neotyne* is what the Overseers of the Barakan later shared in a rare instance of informing the greater Hegemon. When pressed, as much as the Tributary officers dared, the Overseers explained that the child was a Catraethi construct, born of misaligned technologies and encoded with the religio of the Mother God.

This had been the source of the uprising, the venom that had been pumped into the veins of the sectors near Buchtel. The barely literate Cons of this worldring weren't responsible, how could they be? Something more sinister was afoot.

It would only be a few years later with a new rebellion centered around the Hexetica worldring that the Overseers' warning would take the form of a concrete threat. It was as if Buchtel had been a primer or a test, a probing assessment of the Hegemon's capabilities to counter a full-scale multi-system wide Unionist movement.

Hexetica was not only different it was radically more damaging. Corpo weapon caches were stolen without report quats in advance, the death of a Magnate and hundreds of thousands of Corpo staff reported murdered in the first few hours of hostilities, and finally a coordinated strike with atomika weapons.

The Pale Tempest Division of Barakan were sent and, finally the true enemy revealed.

Vengeance for Catraeth. Life to the Mother God.

The Catraethi Regenium is commonly dismissed as a barbaric kingdom led by a totalitarian regime propped up by a religion that demanded bloodrights and mercilessly oppressed not only its people but its neighbors. All of this is true and was the reason for their outright extermination, something the Hegemon has never repeated.

What is too often forgotten is that Catraeth was a colony of the Aramaxian Supremacy, imbued with that civilization's incredible technologies that, even now, seem mystical in operation. The Catraethi had this, proclaimed themselves successors of the Supremacy and could be easily considered on their way to becoming an above-prime civilization.

It was this hubris that ultimately failed them. Their own ethos was of such rigidity that, despite the far lower technological capabilities of the Hegemon, they could not adapt to an economic force that ultimately united Known Space against them.

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>>access_temporary_limited<<

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And the Messengers of the Mother-God did ascend from the Silence, and with the strength of righteousness and with terrible fury they laid waste unto the blasphemers, and at the battle's ending, as they stood amidst the gore of the enemy, they did declare to those who yet lived, "Hark, ye of little purpose! Behold this reward to weakness, the pain and the death of word-breakers, for it shalt befall thee in all its terror if ye step from the light of our God and make a bedfellow of the dark!"

-The Psalm of Blood, 3:4:31

The Kohortotan, or *Cohorti*, were the personal bodyguards of the so called ‘Mother-God,’ which the Hegemon identified as a series of matriarchal leaders that claimed to share an unbroken Self that reincarnated through selected female bloodlines. The Cohorti were drawn from male offspring from these lines and provolved, potentially augmented, into a completely dedicated order of soldiers.

The Catraeth armies were vast, numbering in the many billions of zealot troops that commanded advanced weaponry the Regenium would use indiscriminately against its enemies. Once war was declared, there was no restraint, no hesitancy, to use the maximum degree of force available in every instance. The specificities of their religio demanded such responses to any form of resistance to any directive proclaimed by the Empress.

After the Fall of Catraeth and the capture of the Empress, the Cohorti were sent reeling both militarily and psychologically. Unable to counter the Barakan the majority of them died in several, futile, last stands. As the Regenium collapsed, the vast population of slaves rose up against their masters and took back their freedom. The Tributaries moved quickly, arming the former slaves and assisting in the liberation.

The public trial of the Empress incensed the remaining Cohorti who spontaneously assaulted across the borders into Hegemon space. Such a reaction was expected and the various incursions were quickly surrounded and dealt with economically. When the remaining Cohorti rallied around the asteroid belts of Plassey and turned their fleet to engage with a rampaging vanguard of Barakan it was their own servants that launched the Regenium's final cache of atomika weapons into the rear of the Cohorti vessels, annihilating them.

In doing so they thought to redeem themselves and their opposition to the Hegemon. But survival and the simple panic of attempting to *live* does not a true human make. The Barakan mopped up the rest of the remaining Catraethi amongst the irradiated, smoldering, asteroids.

The Audit believed the threat over, yet, it is now known that the newly christened *Catraethi Remnant* is behind almost every major resistance and terrorist event in the Thousand Empire's history.

Such a threat is now considered the greatest single risk to galactic fiscal security and the pursuit of profit. The Catraethi have, and have always, hated the ethos of stellarization. They are a barbaric people who squandered the gifts given to them by the most advanced civilization Old Humanity had ever produced.

They will only be content when they can say they won and that their Mother God reigns over the smoldering ashes of a subjugating autocracy. The following will empower you to stop them.

Zenoba (**Catric-Lang: *"Peace/Power"***)

A 'typical' Cohorti fighter, if such a thing can be called typical. A Zenoban is a formidable provolved human male despite being surgically sterile. It is surmised by Hegemon anthropologists that this was a direct result of the Regenium, a feudal matriarchy, to maintain control over their society and selecting which familial lines were allowed to prosper. As a result the Zenoba were entirely dedicated to the throne of the Mother God.

Children from designated bloodlines of the Regenium's ruling families were selected and then inducted into strict Houses that would hold cycle long competitions highlighting not just physical prowess but mental and psychological acuity. Each House was between fifty and a hundred boys with an attrition rate of almost fifty percent. Determined to be the best, these selected few would then be subjected to an extensive provolving pseudo ritual. The Audit has discerned that it would take an entire House to create a single Zenoban who would then take on the name. Interestingly, the Barakan Overseers have stated they comprehend the ritual and have been abnormally vocal about the need to eradicate any knowledge or technology linked to the creation of future Zenoba.

Now fully Zenoba, they are ready to fight and waste their lives on whims of honor and the needs of their superiors without say or contract. Sealed within hybrid autoplate empathically linked to their nervous system, they were the finest fighting force in Known Space.

Praesor (**Catric-Lang: *"One that walks before fate"***)

Champions of the Zenoba, they played important figures in the Regenium's religio besides their militant duties, taking on the persona of prophets of the Mother God. It was the Praesor that would act as diplomats, poor though they were. They often rode great Exogen monsters that they had tamed or enslaved, followed by chosen zealot warriors and packs of slaves. The purpose of the Praesor was to showcase the might of the Regenium but, typically and as was with the case of the Hegemon, it only served to horrify foreign dignitaries.

Fear and terror were easy tools of the Catraethi. Often these Praesor's would demand audiences with planetary or solar leaders, insisting on gifts and tributes to the Mother God. In other instances there are histories showcasing Praesor abuse on local populations, enslavement and persecution on a mass scale in the hopes of goading neighboring civilizations into conflict. Thus, the Zenoba would then be summoned and the Praesor would lead them into battle. In this way the Regenium grew, through antagonizing and reaping.

There were three thousand, three hundred and thirty three prophets in the Mother God's Book of Songs. As such, there were only ever this many Praesor allowed to exist. In the brutality of their culture, combats of skill, to the death, were the only means of attaining such rank.

The Praesor were exceptionally capable and possessed some kind of fragment of Aramaxian Uplifting method that further elevated their biology nevermind their mental cognitive capacity. Amongst other attributes they were, at least functionally, immortal. Several Magnates, included in the addendum, still crave such Uplifting. We have prevented this technology from reaching anyone [[REDACTED]] a [[REDACTED]] and we do not question them.

That said, this Praesor immortality was put to the test when Barakan reshaped the planet Catraeth with atomika weapons and turned it to a radioactive, glass encrusted wasteland. The initial drop against the Empress is believed to have obliterated at least a quarter of the Praesor's. We can thank [[REDACTED]] for that and hope for a return.

Regardless of casualties, the Praesors emotionally attacked the Barakan, perhaps thinking Tributaries, and we [[REDACTED]] cut down entirely. They further chased headlong after Barakan ships that had collected the Empress, ignorant of strategy, they flew directly into explosive lased vantic clouds.

The Praesor were, most notably, cannibals and ate the remains of their victims or fed upon their own slave populations.

"It should be clear by now, even to the doubters, that this war can no longer be prosecuted with reason and rationale; our enemy has rejected these things entirely. They do not want peace, they do not seek compensation or resolution. They will settle, only, for our demise and the end of our way of life.

Those who survive? Will be slaves.

The Regenium clings to its myths, shunning reason and material prosperity in favor of fearful superstition of an imaginary deity. Their entire culture and view of the universe are built on that which ***was****, as well as that which has* ***never*** *been. Their adopted 'greatness' is worth as much as the echoes of their prayers.*

They are frauds!

Unsurprisingly, their people see devils and phantoms in every shadow. Haunted by scriptures penned to keep them docile. Meanwhile their enhanced soldier class fashions itself after warrior-kings, poets with weapons, each a slayer of monsters. They believe their addiction is real.

Well then.

Perhaps it is time we test the mettle of ***legends****.*
If they are the torch bearing heroes of myth? Let us dress ourselves in darkness.

Let us be monsters.

-Attributed to Sarkhann Aloiz Exander II, chief metalist of Armasyn Technologies, at the closed-doors unveiling of Project REVELATOR

Catraethi Technology

The Catraethi did not have scientists or inventors in the same way the Hegemon cherishes those who create. Instead, the Catraethi, despite their vaunted self pride, were little more than thieves and scavengers. They barely understood what they had inherited from the fall of Aramax and, perhaps unsurprisingly, refused to delve into such wonders lest they irrevocably disrupt their good working. The degree for this adopted ignorance is believed to be potentially due to an unknown cognitovirus that might have been contracted from the same Aramaxian technologies as some form of defense system. Catraethi, especially the Cohorti, were remarked as being incredibly uninventive.

By the Regenium's end, they were using entire planetary populations to construct their temples and cities, when even a pre-interplanetary understanding of engineering would have accomplished the same efforts.

What technologies they did understand were wonders to behold, easily of Grade S, on a scale the Hegemon still can only dream of.

Matritic weapons - The hallmark of Catraeth's weapons of war were their extensive light based weapons that projected cohesive energy columns based on archaic technologies kept by the Regenium. Initially, these weapons were unstoppable with even pistol-sized variants being able to destroy tanks and even small starships. The largest such weapons could destroy even Starliner class ships with relative ease. A solution came with the invention of seed clouds, simple reflective nanoid fog pumped into the general area that heavily limited or even neutralized Catraethi weapon systems, and they were unable to adapt in time before their end.

Nanoruptor Nests - Ornate edged weapons that have nanoid colonies capable of disassembling a target on the molecular level. Even a single touch by one such blade guaranteed gradual death as nanoids replicated and entered the body, their numbers growing in time and reducing an enemy to a liquified mass of flesh and blood.

Gyvor Autoplate - Unlike the Hegemon assault-harnesses which must be worn beneath autoplate, the Gyvor suits of the Cohorti are as biological as they are mechanical. Like an exoskeleton, kilometers of coiled bio-symbiotic interface resembling human placental tissue envelops the wearer and permanently fuses with their peripheral nervous system via the skin.

The inner surface of the armor consists of neural-adhesive nodes capable of establishing electrochemical communication with the host’s axon terminals, enabling real-time sensory feedback and motor control. The armor's core is a pseudo-organic bioreactor, sustaining its functions by metabolizing glucose and oxygen from the host's blood, ensuring almost perpetual energy supply through aerobic cellular respiration so long as the wearer continues to eat.

The organic structure is interwoven with mycelium-like tendrils, functioning as neurovascular conduits, distributing bioelectric impulses and nutrient-rich hemolymph analog throughout the system. This creates a single-living organism that adapts to the wearer’s physiological state, amplifying strength, speed, and reflexes while synchronizing the host's autonomic responses with the armor’s defensive and offensive mechanisms.

Self-repair is facilitated by stem cell-like pseudo-tissues capable of differentiation into specialized cells, while microbial colonies maintain biochemical balance and immunity against foreign pathogens. The fusion process is initiated through biomolecular imprinting, ensuring compatibility and a permanent bio-interface.

As Cohorti aged, their armor would grow, akin to fingernails or hair, cultivating additional aspects such as larger muscle bundles, thicker armor plating, or even wings.

Starbreaker Blades- Mined from neutrino stars, starbreaker blades were cylindrical clubs Cohorti trained to use. Stabilized through advanced quantum containment fields in the hilts, these weapons created gravitic distortions as they delivered thousands of pounds of kinetic impacts in violent shockwaves capable of crushing anything in its path.

The Catraethi Remnant has only *just* re-emerged as a threat in recent fiscal-cycles, with growing evidence suggesting their covert influence is responsible for untold casualties across Civil Space since the fall of their Regenium. Audit intelligence has discovered connection to black and gray market syndicates, pirate operations and entire nations who would hinder profit. For nine centuries they have preferred the shadows, only enabling enemies of the Hegemon with advanced weaponry, coordination and advanced intelligence.

This changed at the Tosch Worldring in the Hexetica system when a War Monk, identified by the Overseers of the Pale Tempest Division in an after action report as the [[REDACTED]] "**Zehdak**" [[[[REDACTED]]]], gave access to a relatively minor Unionists movement, three hundred atomika-grade ordinance payloads. It is also believed that he exposed a small part of the population to a crippling cognitovirus subsquently initiated anarchy that spread across an entire sector of the ExeCor itself.

Their methods remain elusive, indirect, yet their presence is unmistakable in the sudden coordination and maximum destruction left in their wake. It falls to our agents within the Directorate to conclude the fight that the Regenium began so many centuries ago. We must eradicate this danger, for there has never been a more dire enemy to The Market. However, understanding the Remnant's capabilities are imperative before action is taken.

The Directorate is explicitly cautioned against requesting the Barakan Elite in engagements involving the Cohorti. Despite MacroCorp interest in potential technological opportunities, when Remnant Cohorti are identified, no Hegemon forces are permitted to engage. Instead it is we that must engage with our own methods to apprehend such creatures.

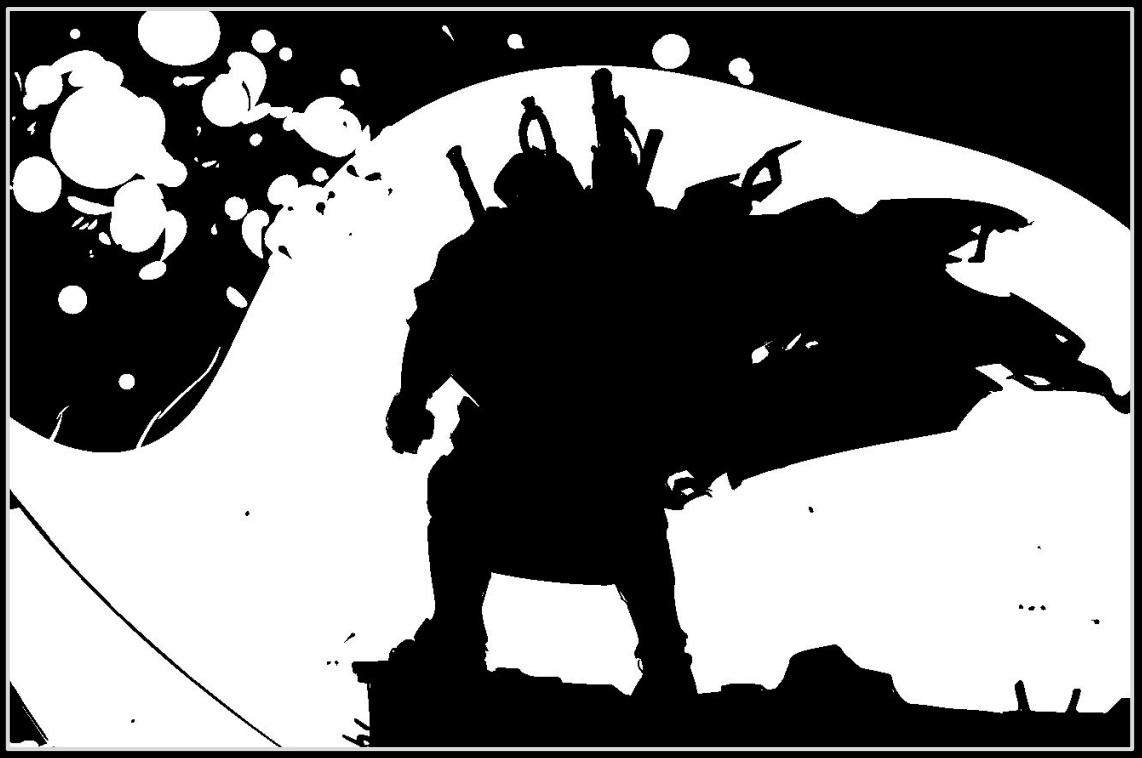
Note, the capture of Aramaxian devices is considered to be too destabilizing to the economy of Known Space. Instead, total destruction is preferred or transfer to Occlusion Site C7. In the event of a biological sample, all remains are to be brought to Biological Research Site C12.

All, *all*, who interact with either instance is to be reduced to sixty percent cerebral acuity.

On the subject of the Barakan, the relationship between the Catraethi Remnant and the Hegemon's own provolved weapon system is still not clearly understood. It is undeniable that a profound and terrible enmity exists between the two based on recent recovered footage with Barakan becoming nigh on *verbose* from Kotar to Askarin in their hatred only to be rebuked in kind by those Catraethi they fight.

Barakan Elite, upon even the faintest detection of Cohorti presence, will abandon their operational objectives and rush with violent abandon toward their foe. This uncontrolled reaction jeopardizes both strategic goals and operational integrity, leaving the Directorate at risk of catastrophic failure in active conflict zones.

What is clear is that Cohorti pose an extreme threat to stability in the Hegemon. They inspire Unionist movements, force multiply their efficacy and, most worryingly, seem to be coordinating for some grand vision. We have currently identified seventeen such instances.



The creation of a Catraethi monk is complex, brutal and steeped in impractical mystery. Only two education modules exist that were ever compiled depicting the barbaric process, and even these are limited. Already a warlike culture, the Regenium's elite were abnormally violent, even in their youth. Any forms of perceived impurities were dealt with by hurling offspring from the walls. Religio fragments described *existence* itself as a preparation for a series of afterlives where one's 'soul' was recycled back into new bodies or elevated to fight yet another battle somewhere in the hereafter. As such, the Regenium's subjects were, supposedly, fearless of physical death and devoted entirely to this belief of the reward of multiple lives.

Modern Catraethi are evolving. Unlike the Barakan who have no need to change, the Catraethi, in their desperation to kill the Hegemon, are continuously adapting. They are no longer expressly warriors, with some of them donning on the vestments of Patrons; If only we could catch them.

But then, it comes as no surprise. Each of these creatures has multiple Self-identities, sometimes in the *hundreds*, allowing them to approach any conflict they survive with fresh eyes, evolving their perspectives to accomplish their goals. No wonder Catraeth itself is an atomika-riddled carcass.

THE FRONTIER

LAWLESS OPPORTUNITY

a_aae2

Every Consumer dreams of the possibilities that lie beyond the ceilings of their opti-unit or the unclaimed treasures that surely exist beyond the habstacks in the worlds beyond their skies. This desire is considered a species trait in humanity both psychologically and biologically. The various migrations over the many hundreds of millennia are earmarked with notable adaptations and mutations both manufactured and bred out of necessity to facilitate colonization. Despite New Mankind's return to preferencing a more original human form, many such divergences are considered acceptable. All humans crave the unknown and wish to tame it.

As such, the Frontier is an ever-changing pseudo-border of the Hegemon, representing the spearpoint of colonial expansion. Here, veterans of the Directorate or those lucky enough to afford transport can stake a claim on any world, asteroid, or moon that isn't spoken for. Those nations that might come later are forced to negotiate with such individual communities, often at great expense. Consequently, the majority of large populations on the Frontier often operate under their own contracts and agreements, with mandates and demands from distant homeworlds not necessarily being adhered to. They may even become their own nation-states.

The influence of the MacroCorps becomes weakest in the Frontier, but it also becomes its most aggressive. Without the laws of nations and the oversight of the Summit, Magnates can pursue their own goals with unchecked ambition. This freedom allows them to exploit resources and labor with minimal interference, turning the Frontier into a battleground of corporate interests and individual ambition.

Pirates and buccaneers plague the Frontier along with the remnants of failed rebellions or Unionist movements. These disparate peoples, often driven by hopeless idealism, add to the chaos of the Frontier. They exist in the shadows, preying on the vulnerable and challenging the encroaching authority of both the Hegemon and the MacroCorps.

Despite these dangers, the enduring tenacity of New Mankind demands the taming of the Frontier which, in time, will bare all the fruits of profit as it metamorphoses into Civil Space.

Frontier settlers are a hardy breed, often relying on a mix of ingenuity, tenacity, and sheer willpower to survive and thrive in the harshest of conditions. Their success stories inspire others in the hinterlands of the Thousand Empires to follow, perpetuating the cycle of diasporas seeking opportunity.

Adaptations and mutations are common among those who venture into the Frontier. Provolved and other genetically modified individuals, their enhancements tailored to the specific challenges of their new environments mingle with true adaptations born from exposure to the elements. These changes in human stock, while sometimes controversial, are seen as necessary for survival in the uncharted regions of the Hegemon. As Civil Space replaces the Frontier it is not unusual for such divergent populations to leave, sometimes with incentive, as New Mankind colonists arrive.

In the Frontier, the line between civilization and wilderness is blurred. Small, self-sufficient communities dot the landscape of alien environments protected beneath atmospheric domes, each with its own set of rules and social structures. Some are democratic enclaves, others are authoritarian regimes, whatever can ensure survival is acceptable. While competitive for resources like water, air or the fundamental elements that justify the cost of maintaining a colony they are all united by the common thread that binds them is a shared determination to carve out a territory.

The Hegemon's commitment to expansion is not strictly about territory. There are worlds aplenty, many undiscovered or developed even in the ExeCor with limitless resources therein. The drive for expansion is a cultural one paired the enduring hope of more exploitable elements. This is how velanite was discovered which continues to supercharge technological advancement.

The expense of such desire comes at the extreme cost of travel which is always at a premium. As such, trade hubs, especially those that can set up around dependable leylines entry and exit points are vital. The hubs accumulate goods which are then eventually picked up by starships to transit back to larger hubs or Civil Space for refinement.

The Directorate plays a crucial role in this expansion. Its forces often provide the initial security and infrastructure needed for new habitation to take root. However, once established, these colonies are expected to become self-sustaining and contribute to the broader goals of the Hegemon.

The MacroCorps themselves, with their vast resources and influence, see the Frontier as a zone of opportunity. They invest heavily in exploration and development, hoping to reap the rewards of new markets and resources. Company towns and boomtowns are often the most valuable and advanced in terms of facilities and operations but they are without any regulation with toxic over contamination, environmental degradation and law and order enforced through the strongest are the norm.

These aggressive tactics often lead to conflicts and resistance but they remain isolated and, typically can be bribed our bought off with little fan fair. As such, skiptracers and mercenaries are always available to hunt down those interlocutors who dally in revolution.

Despite the many dangers, the allure of the Frontier has remained since the dawn of the Hegemon. It represents the ultimate expression of humanity's desire to explore, conquer, and thrive in the face of adversity. The stories of those who succeed against the odds, even in the drastic minority, serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration for future seekers of profit. Entertainment conglomerates are constantly creating adventure vids, colonial dramas and outright advertising crusades to reinforce the notion that *everyone* should consider taking a chance “out there.” This, and the actual monetary investment, ensures that the push into the unknown will continue for as long as there are new horizons to explore in a universe barely realized.

PIRATES AND THIEVES

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The Frontier of the Hegemon, with its vast expanse of unclaimed territories and minimal oversight, provides an all too fertile ground for the emergence of outlaws. Forming bands and pseudo-corpos, they will orchestrate elaborate schemes or direct heists against shipping lanes and licensed businesses or even rent their services to act on behalf of others as illegal mercenaries.

But the Frontier is not the only place such transgressors can flock together. Space is impossibly vast and while the brightness of the ExeCor and the well policed tradelanes bustle throughout the Midworlds, criminality is the Hegemon's shadow. The Lex is stern but not totalitarian and where New Mankind suspects an opportunity it is human nature to seek its end.

As such, pirates are *everywhere*. Prosecuted when identified, obliterated when they resist, there are always more hiding in the interference rich solar storms or drifting dormant near leyline entry points ready to strike. Pirates pose a significant threat to the stability and economic interests of the Hegemon even as they represent the unbridled spirit of opportunism that characterizes the indomitable human spirit. Many a pirate has become a celebrity as much as the sanctioned captains and Directorate security squadrons that seek them out.

Pirates in the Hegemon come from every imaginable walk of life. Many are former Directorate soldiers, incapable of following the expectations and hierarchies of their previous careers. Others are failed entrepreneurs who, lacking the acumen of business, turn to crime. Some are remnants of political movements or rebellions, desperate to cause harm to the Hegemon's control. Yet still more, and certainly the most dangerous, are those at the upper tiers of the CorpoSoci who galavant beyond the watchful eyes of their parents and, when their crews are hauled before the annals of justice, can pay the steep fines and return to their households.

The motivations of these pirates are as varied as their origins. Some seek wealth and power, using their raids to amass fortunes in stolen goods and resources. Others are driven by a desire for

freedom, rejecting the oppressive structures of the Hegemon in favor of a life on the edge. Almost all are motivated by ideological reasons, viewing their actions as a form of resistance against the Hegemon's expansionist policies and CorpoSoci dictation.

Pirate operations in the Frontier are highly organized and strategically planned. This is because any ship captain that is sloppy will either be dethroned by their own crew or will get everyone killed. These outlaws establish hidden bases on uncharted asteroids, moons, and derelict space stations, using these locations as staging grounds for their raids against colonists, the tradelanes and if they're ambitious enough, Corpo settlements. Their knowledge of the local terrain and their ability to move quickly and unpredictably give them a significant advantage over their more bureaucratic and less mobile adversaries.

Tactics employed by pirates include ambushes, hit-and-run attacks, and boarding actions. They often target lightly defended cargo ships, mining operations, and isolated colonies, striking quickly and disappearing before reinforcements can arrive. Some pirate groups employ advanced technologies but brute force and extreme violence is typical. Intimidation allows them subdue targets who will often simply be asked to pay to avoid bloodshed. Most insurance subscriptions are invalid in the event of a vessel paying such extortion resulting in debt and a fine.

Despite this obvious negative impacts on shipping, pirates also play an important role in shaping the society of the Frontier. Their actions force settlers to band together for mutual protection, fostering stronger communities, Lex compliance and solidarity. In some cases, pirates provide an alternative economy, trading in shadowmarket goods and services that are otherwise unavailable. This underground economy, while illegal, helps sustain many frontier communities and, in turn, the expansion of the Frontier itself. Because of this, the Hegemon tolerates a certain level pirates, especially those who will *pay for peace* which Corpos regard as a wright-off come every tax quat.

That said, the Directorate maintains a strict list of known pirates and regularly place bounties on them. Just like with the activities of MacroCorps that must operate within general legalities and pay associated fines when stepping beyond the regulations of the Lex, so too are outlaw organizations expected to be a part of every government and societal ecosystem like germs and parasites in the body. A little is healthy, too much is toxic.

The Hegemon and its Orgas, including the Directorate, MacroCorps, and independent security outfits, invest significant resources in combating piracy. The Directorate deploys patrols and rapid response units to protect key assets and trade routes. MacroCorps, with their vast resources, hire private security forces and mercenaries to defend their interests. Infamous outfits like the Pykartan Society are often contracted to hunt down and eliminate pirate threats, earning substantial bounties for their efforts.

Skiptracers, specialized in tracking and capturing fugitives, are also employed to target high-profile pirates. These operatives use a combination of advanced technology, intelligence networks, and brute force to bring pirates to justice. Public executions of captured pirates serve as a deterrent, reinforcing the Hegemon's commitment to maintaining order.

The presence of pirates in the Frontier is acknowledged as the Hegemon’s single greatest hindrance for development with fortunes lost every quat to their activities. Pirates do not pillage the shipping lanes alone but also capture starcraft, capture hostages for ransom or smuggle goods to opposing factions along the Fringe. Pirates will even brazenly communicate with Exogens sometimes going so far as to *work* for them for local resources or even technology. For these pirates the Audit itself will send agents after them and even the Barakan will be utilized to eliminate them.

Despite pirate activity widely publicized as a Frontier issue it is a far more insidious threat within the Midworlds. Many pirates find safe harbor and can lay low while the Directorate or Lex enforcers lose sight of them. They contribute to crime in more subtle ways as private muscle and illegal mercenaries as well as partaking in smuggling and unlicensed bounty hunting. Pirates are a fundamental part of the shadow markets and should be treated with extreme caution. Pirates subject themselves to *any* means of gaining an edge with many of them provolved or with extensive organoid upgrades that are only limited by the deranged surgeons that perform the operations.

The Mehndax

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When Talan Hod stepped down as the Archonist Magnate of Wanvath, most assumed he'd gone insane, a common enough affliction amongst those who reach such penultimate wealth. The conviction only grew stronger as his band of hired mercenaries staged raids on other Macrocorps, ultimately disappearing into the Mehndax sector. The truth was that he'd simply grown bored. By the time Hod turned outlaw, he had already outlived generations of unaugmented humans through Grade S organoids and by adopting the Crucible as a form of life extension. He had tasted almost every pleasure the Hegemon could offer until he found himself adrift. Avarice no longer held any real meaning for him. When he could have anything he wanted, what reason was there to accumulate more? A perverse idea began to itch at his thoughts. He had tried everything in his centuries long life... except generosity.

Robbing from his former equals and delivering their property to various impoverished colonies and outposts, the gratitude he experienced as he showered resources upon the lower credit Cons was addictive. Hod set himself up as a “bandit prince,” a member of the elite turned traitor for the “good of the many” using his intimate knowledge to plunder mithqals of resources which he gave indiscriminately away.

The Audit has now identified Hod’s extreme psychological construct, interlaced with his uniquely advanced biology and philosophical manifestations, as a unique cognitovirus. His “Paupers,” hardened mercenaries simply following a beneficial contract, soon contracted this virus as Hod would place them into memetic and empathic exercises that are most similar to what Brokers do to Barakan Geks. The Paupers relinquished all wealth themselves and followed Hod’s example.

In the quats that followed, Hod and his Paupers embraced their transgressive status. It is rumored that near-humans, renegade proxies, at least three Chapak humanoids and even near-extinct Exogen have joined his fleet. *Prince* Talan, as he fashions himself now, surrounds himself with stolen finery that he gives away without a care. All he does care about is the continued adoration that capriciously feeds his twisted, compromised, Self.

-- A fallen prince still desires to be master--

Mhendax pirates are an exceptionally violent breed of anarchists. Where most pirates are simply degenerates hoping for cheap profits violating the tradelanes, the Mhendax are sadists and gleefully torture and terrorize any target they think they can get away with. Passengers and crew alike are press ganged into service or, worse, sold to non-aligned nations or beyond the Frontier as slaves.

Worse still is the fate to be brought to the various pirate bases, or the Eye of Hod itself in the Mehndax system. Here, expect to be treated as a source of entertainment or rendered down to component organs and parts. Only those who have some connection to civilized society can expect to be ransomed, those extremely lucky that are not left with a mark or two on their bodies.

There is no such thing as a 'typical' Mehndax. Each is a riot of cultural blends, either adopted or exemplified but usually in rejection of the ExeCor. They can range from backgrounds such as the failed offspring of wealthy Magnates, Directorate deserters or the victims-turned-predators of captured ships and raided colonies.

The symbol of the Mehndax is one of Talan Hod's favorite fauna; the karkadann. They are known for their ferocity, affection and their eloquence. Hod's fascination for the creature can be seen everywhere on the vessels he is aligned with, including a personal autoharness that he will step into when he desires the rush of good sport and combat against a difficult foe.

Mehndax Territory

a_aae1

Tanaquil and Monokaro: At the heart of the Mehndax sector is Tanaquil, a donor star being subsumed by its sibling, Monokaro. They are connected via a stellar 'bridge,' which forms a waxing and waning conduit of plasma. Both stars create a cataclysmic binary system devoid of any permanent planetary bodies which are hurled out into interstellar space after only a few orbits. This and a raging firestorm of gasses, makes the Tanaquil system a natural fortress.

It was here that former Magnate Hod would build his pirate empire. Spending his *entire* fortune on the construction of a specialized worldring, a one of a kind and the only megastructure of its class built in the last thousand years.

Made from time-hardened alloys, the insanity of Hod saw it dragged into place surrounding the stellar bridge. Feeding off of this unlimited energy, Hod would build massive shipyards, artificial habitats, entertainment complexes, manufactories and a truly obscene amount of weaponry should anyone attempt approach. This construct was called the Eye of Hod, however, in practice it would just be called Mehndax like the pseudo nation would follow.

Frontiersmen, fringers and pirates of every kind flocked to this enormous haven, effectively creating a corsair republic they called the Republic of Mehndax. Each ship captain and ship owner has one vote but, in practice, it is Hod who holds ultimate power when he is resident on the worldring.

Mehndax is a Hegemon wide threat. Hod holds a special Rutter that he has made from capturing and killing hundreds of Pilots. As such, he alone knows how to navigate the shifting leylines of the region as well as the Civil Space, including the ExeCor. Every RevShare, Hod enjoys sallying forth and striking a new territory with either a fleet of sycophants or aboard his own private vessel, the Starliner and former flagship of Wanvath Underwriting, the *Rasna*.

As the 9th Fiscal century calls for a close, there is growing sentiment that the Barakan be used to destroy the Mehndax once and for all.

-- The lust for profit is intoxicating, imbibe at your own risk--

PARTISANS

a_aae_S

Tension and frustration with the Hegemon's ethos can lead to indigies that are culturally unaccustomed to the progress that comes with the pursuit of Profit, into resistance. Initial protests are always treated with the fairness Human Capital teams, sponsored by Corpos. Grievances are carefully listened to and catalogued and then sent back to the decision makers, typically local barons or designated government officials, when possible.

When a settlement or grievance cannot be met, locals will sometimes default to a typical human reaction; violence. Partisans are typically nationalists, holding onto old ways or pre-Hegemon customs. These factions can also be political, groups or factions that feel cheated by their fellows making a deal with a Corpo. Regardless of their origins, there is a difference between Unionists and Partisans. Partisans can be reasoned with, usually, and their grievances are often local as opposed to Unionists which are anti-Hegemon in general.

It is typical for the Commission to negotiate between all parties, however, should the dissenting faction be deemed too far out of compliance with contractual obligations, a MiliCorp or hired security firms will be requested. These entities ensure that conflict stay within acceptable threat levels. Sometimes violence needs to be expelled from a population by action. Human Capital will maintain psychological screenings between factions to identify individuals or groups deemed too dangerous and eliminate them either by fine, arrest or elimination.

It is always the Hegemon's preferred method to keep the legitimate government empowered but it is not beyond the process of inventing a new one. Rebellion is not uncommon. The Hegemon expects this, despite the many over-produced media outlets expressing horror and confusion, as this will provide with another form of trade commerce and income, simply of a military variety. Aide to combat zones is an even greater business and no Corpo in Known Space would brush off the opportunity to invest in the rebuilding of a civilization after war. Rebellion is good for business so long as it is contained.

Nations do not typically survive such events. Resistance that is successful only means Directorate forces will invariably be petitioned and after this every resource will be taken, land will be

redistributed and those who resisted will become Indentured. These Dents will then be shipped far from their homes, their memories often altered, and then placed into service in low risk labor opportunities. Should these populations prove rehabilitated it is not impossible for their memories to be restored and they are allowed to return to their nation where they are dealt with locally.

In the event that an entire faction is deemed out of compliance with contracts then they themselves are no longer legitimate members to the Hegemon and so everything they own and every being that makes up their rebellion are forfeit to seizure.

It is rare for the Directorate to need to be involved in such events and it is the Summit's preference to use third parties in order for indigies to blame none-Hegemon members. As such, when a Partisan movement is near its end it is, typically, arranged that the remnants be 'smuggled' out into the Frontier. There they will either thrive, or, perish. Should they become capable, they might become useful tools in the regulation of their home system, a threat to keep their brethren in line.

These machinations are part of what it means to be human. Humans are ancient, complex, beings and simply *ruling* them is impossible. Rebellion is a natural reaction in the psyche of most humans. Unlike many Exogens and docilized animals, the fear of pain and the promise of sustenance is enough to make them do as needed. The species that conquered Known Space cannot be bridled by harness or shackle and must be directed toward a bountiful outcome by tempting their natural state so that they *choose* that which leads them. Attempting to control every aspect of New Mankind's psychology would render this hypothetical 'master' to become little more than cattle. The Manual, the ethos and The Market require human engagement, not enslavement.

As always, the beacon is Avarice.

And, so, the Summit permits a degree of resistance and pathways for rebellion to survive so long as they can keep an eye on it. The Audit, the Commission, inform the MacroCorps who balance their risks and, always, reap the reward.

ShadowCorps

a_aae1

The average MacroCorp goes through the same general linear evolutionary cycle from a single local monopoly to several dozen across the Hegemon. Financial expansion is a necessity, the expression of Avarice, each fated to eventually fragment from without or within or they rise above and challenge their rivals. This is the natural order of things with the all too *human* element of desire which elevates competition beyond petty notions of ‘fittest’ or ‘efficiency’ but independent entities made up of *billions* that wrestle for ultimate influence over a galactic stage. No other species can claim such dominion.

The oldest and largest Corpo entities in the Thousand Empires have become an exception to this process, being centuries or millennia old economical juggernauts. The Archonist Magnates are apex predators when compared to lesser Magnates. Their importance to the Consumer are so great that, should any of them fall, it would represent a fracture in the bedrock of society. Even lesser MacroCorps have entire supersectors that rely on them so much that whole star systems would collapse.

It is often in the best interest for a population to fear too much change and the Consumer class as a whole believes in trustBrands. As a result, a rising Corpo must be cautious with new products and services. No entity is beyond opportunistic sabotage, natural competitors or just the hazards that lie within business nevermind the courtship of Consumers.

There are smaller outliers, though, that thrive without ever truly growing in power, remaining seemingly innocuous for their entire barely-notable existence. For these Corpos anonymity is the greater opportunity.

Dubbed "*ShadowCorps*", these enterprises make a deliberate attempt to stay out of the spotlight. Many are legitimate that happen to occupy only a specific niche, like the manufacture of a particular tool, part or utility in large enough amounts to give its maker economical leverage. Others are shell operations, fronts and masquerades, used by outlaws, renegades and larger MacroCorps for plausible deniability.

Spektrum Works: One ShadowCorp that has been irksome to the Commission but legally slippery is in the market of high-grade technology development. Unlike HFX Raytec and other large development enterprises, Spektrum's products are only apparent to the trained eye such as mentanics, codesmiths and engineers. Their products show up everywhere, but only as *part* of a larger whole, like gyroscopes and compressors in vehicles, industrial machine parts, processor valves and organoid suction rings. Spektrum seemingly makes a little bit of everything, but their true forte is in providing critical and sensitive components for Grade-2 logicors in weapon systems. Targeting computers, sensory equipment, imaging devices and others. Their hardware gained popularity quickly due to their efficiency and reliability compared to almost all previous models as well as near-legal compatibility with most larger MacroCorp

Their products are never marked with logos or signature colors, instead Spektrum uses variations on the number "84_92" as an identifier for their products. This helps them go unnoticed among the ignorant Consumers of the Hegemon, as well as any Magnates that are unfamiliar. They don't hold promotional events or spread advertisements and instead go to prospective customers directly through backroom deals. They have no publicly known planetary or void-based headquarters but instead run their business out of numerous scattered vessels and common trade hubs, using a decentralized structure. The Yinntosh regard them as commercial terrorists, their operators like terrorist cells.

Spektrum's products unbind the need to rely on a single MacroCorp or Joint Venture products. As they sell directly, they even offer the opportunity for smaller Corpos to create new products that, on a local level at least, can outperform their larger competitors.

With Spektrum's contributions spread so far and wide, one has to wonder how much power they've come to have over the Macrocorps that unwittingly use their products. Indeed, some Magnates have grumbled that this apparently insignificant no-name enterprise has no business commanding so much influence in so many different product lines throughout Known Space. Others have mused that perhaps Spektrum Works is just another name for a Corpo that went under and rose again under a new identity. The most bitter, jealous and paranoid voices rumor that Spektrum technology is cannibalized and altered patents or, worse, draws from Exogenic inspiration - the gravest of crimes defined in the Manual that defines fair competition.

EXOGENS

The Darkest Forest

p_aae3

Humanity is an ancient species, achieving spaceflight and colonizing everything within its early reach untold thousands of years ago... And finding they were alone. What few works remain of that distant age are suffused with a longing for kinship, another intelligent species to compare or share in the wonders of the cosmos. Ancient poems, far-flung signal stations, and beamed calls into the void all in the hopes of alien ears listening were all met with a suffocating absence.

In the face of this cosmic silence, Old Humanity turned inward. They changed their genetic makeup and spliced it together with the surviving species of the cradle worlds to form a zoological pantheon of strange and pseudo-sophontic companions. They provolved those species that they believed might harbor the spark of complementary intelligence. They reinvented their own children. Yet in all these beings, they only heard their own voices and saw the edges of their hateful reflection looking back.

Nothing new, nothing different came from these chimeras, just a different iteration of the same concepts that had been with the human species since their ancestors had descended from the trees of whatever benighted world they had first crept from. The futility of sameness plagued these civilizations.

Frustrated by their failures to create truly novel companions, the architects of these century-long projects turned to the construction of vast synthetic intelligences, creating the first mindworlds. These digital beings aped human supposition and could seemingly fool those who engaged with them in a mimicry of sophontic similitude. Yet doubt undermined any true relationship, and a deep fear that these intelligences might overcome Old Humanity led to the shacklement and failsafes that would prevent the synthetic from ever achieving something that was not tightly controlled by its parent.

Wonder ceased, for Old Humanity's civilizations wanted for naught. Eyes turned away from the stars and back to older religions and faiths to sustain the longing for an external companion for the species. With curiosity's death came catastrophic war, seemingly for war's own sake. If there were no greater answers to the ultimate questions, then what did any of it matter in a grander scheme? Without the other, there could be only the edicts of gods as spoken through their prophets.

With an inexorable orthodoxy, Old Humanity began to systematically exterminate itself. The scars of this omnicide are still seen in the current age in inherited genetic abnormalities, ravaged planetary ecosystems, and parsec-spanning spatial anomalies. Clearly, this final war would have continued unabated.

Until *they* finally came.

All concise records of the beings known as the *Sah'nikt* are gone. This is by design, as terror-fueled efforts of the survivors of this Exogenic invasion created the first mentanics who memetically cauterized the trauma that haunted Old Humanity in their DNA. Almost nothing is known about this species of the first true Exogen that swept into human awareness. Why they came, where they came from, and who they were are all, deliberately, unknown.

Only in the Analects of the Myroit are the Sah'nikt are described in vague esoteric terms, more of a plague or natural event rather than a tangible enemy. Black storms are described engulfing the worlds of Old Humanity one after another, suffocating them in darkness for thousands of years. The mummified remains of the Myroit's first Adoratrix, kept within the Perpustakaan Hébat on Krysos, is purportedly the lone survivor of the Sah'nikt occupation of their worlds.

In the Stigweard Saga of the Catraethi, there is a single fragment in which the Sah'nikt appear. Called the *Sgridawel* (lit: screaming silence), the poem describes a race of druidic wanderers that manifested across the worlds of humanity with weapons made from words. They are said to have built their palaces from the "tortured breaths of stolen children and sustained by the tears of their grieving parents."

More pragmatic evidence lies in a more recent discovery of a derelict mindworld rediscovered in the Coreward Drifts. This region of space is entirely bereft of habitable planetary bodies and bombarded by coreflares from the Galactic Core. Unlicensed broadcasts from the site by an unlok Unionist syndicate who made planetfall reported a discovery they claimed would bring truth to the origins of humanity. These broadcasts were caught before wide distribution but were later disseminated by the Audit. What was deciphered was madness laced with screaming and inverted languages that vaguely spoke of the Aramaxians who challenged [**[[[REDACTED]]]**] and how it burned in black fire. Intriguingly this follows many descriptions of the Sah'nikt, whose abilities [**[[[REDACTED]]]**] neurological function of human beings and synthetic sentience alike, creating monsters that tore down Old Humanity.

No clear understanding of the Sah'nikt and their rule or dominion over Old Humanity is known. Their appearance and disappearance are both a mystery. They left as suddenly as they appeared, leaving a novemated human population on only a handful of planets and orbital constructs spread across the Orion Spur and beyond.

In this time, the lesser intelligences of Known Space arose themselves, claiming their own pilfered territories in the wake of Old Humanity's near extinction. Among these, one event stands out: a fully adult mindworld sided with the Sah'nikt. Why a self-aware being, indebted to its creators for self-determination, would do such a thing cannot be known or studied lest it contaminate the minds who would do so. Its name is known only as *Hsd'ktr*, a word prohibited from being spoken to this day. This single event is a cornerstone of Hegemon society, a testament of the ultimate need to

shackle all such potential intelligences, ensuring that they remain under the strict control of sophontic beings and serve.

Yet from these ashes, the Aramaxian Supremacy would arise, uniting a great and final alliance to retake the Orion Spur and expunge the Exogenic races as well as the monstrous abominations made by the Sah'nikt as playthings. The indomitable will of humanity pushed back against the odds. This age of antiquity has served as inspiration and are often made into visutel entertainment. The Aramaxian Supremacy's campaigns demonstrated humanity's capacity for unity and strength in the face of existential threats. This legacy is drawn upon by the Hegemon as it itself expands only this time using mutual gain instead of conquest by arms.

The Aramaxians eventually failed and, now, the Hegemon faces those Exogenic species that still linger in the Orion Spur. Initially there were some that could hinder the Directorate but never stop it. The remnant populations are considered resources, either as trophies to hunt or bodies to render into products and resources. Some quarantined worlds or isolated continents maintain a stock of Exogens, if they prove to be valuable.

Everything else is exterminated like the pests they are.

The Hegemon's policy towards Exogenic species is justified by humanity's traumatic history with the Sah'nikt invasion and occupation of the Orion Spur. Skiptracers and specialized Regulator outfits are often employed to hunt down and eliminate any Exogenic threats, ensuring that they do not disrupt even a single human being's pursuit of Profit.

The legacy of the Sah'nikt and the betrayal by Hsd'ktr continue to influence the Hegemon's approach to artificial and alien intelligences. Synthetics such as ergoids and chapaks are tightly controlled, their functions and capabilities heavily restricted to prevent any possibility of rebellion. The lessons learned from the ancient past are deeply ingrained in the Hegemon's policies, shaping a society that prioritizes control, stability, and the unrelenting pursuit of Avarice.

The expansion into the Frontier is, as all things, for the pursuit of profit *but* it is also a natural reaction to this near-extinction event. The Magnates and the Summit Council both know that the greater the stellargraphic distances between the ExeCor and potential dangers in the unknown means greater are the chances of survival. The Frontier might as well be considered a preemptive strike against any potential threats as much as the concept of colonization.

The settlers and Directorate are, themselves, ever vigilant. Their desire to succeed makes every colonist conscious the Hegemon's manifest destiny. Compliance or divergence from Avarice is a weakening of everything. This stance has made New Mankind dominant force in the Orion Spur, free from the existential threats that once nearly drove them to extinction.

Exogen ß_4k.3, the 'Harvesters,' are known to have once preyed upon human worlds in the time after Aramax. They were genetically stunted in the Third Century and isolated to a single star system. Every few of their short generations they are allowed to achieve FTL travel via a gatesphere made to look like an archaic portal. Once they do, the Directorate launches a timed raid that reduces the Harvesters back to pre-industrial standards. The 'Harvester Experience' is a popular long running visutel program beloved by many.

The Hymeira

p_aae3

Once believed to be a natural phenomena that accumulated on vessels exiting the Outside, coral like growths began to attempt communication with caeliners. At first it was believed that the Hymeira were, perhaps, the natural denizens of the Outside leading to wild speculations of *angelic* beings that at least six various religio-subscriptions scrambled for licenses to authorize worship.

In the end, it was determined by the Audit and the MassTraders that the Hymeira originated from the transient, little understood quantum interactions that took place during descents into the Outside. Like insects drawn to a light panel, the Hymeira were attracted to the the pseudo-singularity and then accumulated on the hulls of starships.

For two centuries they were classified as a parasite that required extensive burn units to purge the hulls. But, again, they were miscategorized. Scientists commissioned by Five Hands Panceuticals utilized specially shaped craft that were time-hardened to allow for long descent periods and dredge higher populations of Hymeira spores until their hulls were festering with other dimensional growths.

Only then was a true instance of an Exogen successfully captured. The humanoid form of it grew out from the growths, emerging, inarticulate and violent. Further analysis and tests would proceed in the following decades resulting in one of the greatest technological breakthroughs in Outside travel.

As an interdimensional being, the Hymeira manifest in layers of different realities coherencies before ‘settling.’ Stripping and tapping these bodies create a substance Five Hands would title *Sinadara* which now has a wide variety of applications including the creation of portable Ansible like communicators for the unassuming client. On a cellular level, Sinadara reacts to the presence of and interact with tachyonic activity. This makes excellent navigation logicors which Pilots, who can afford it, treat with a beloved reverence.

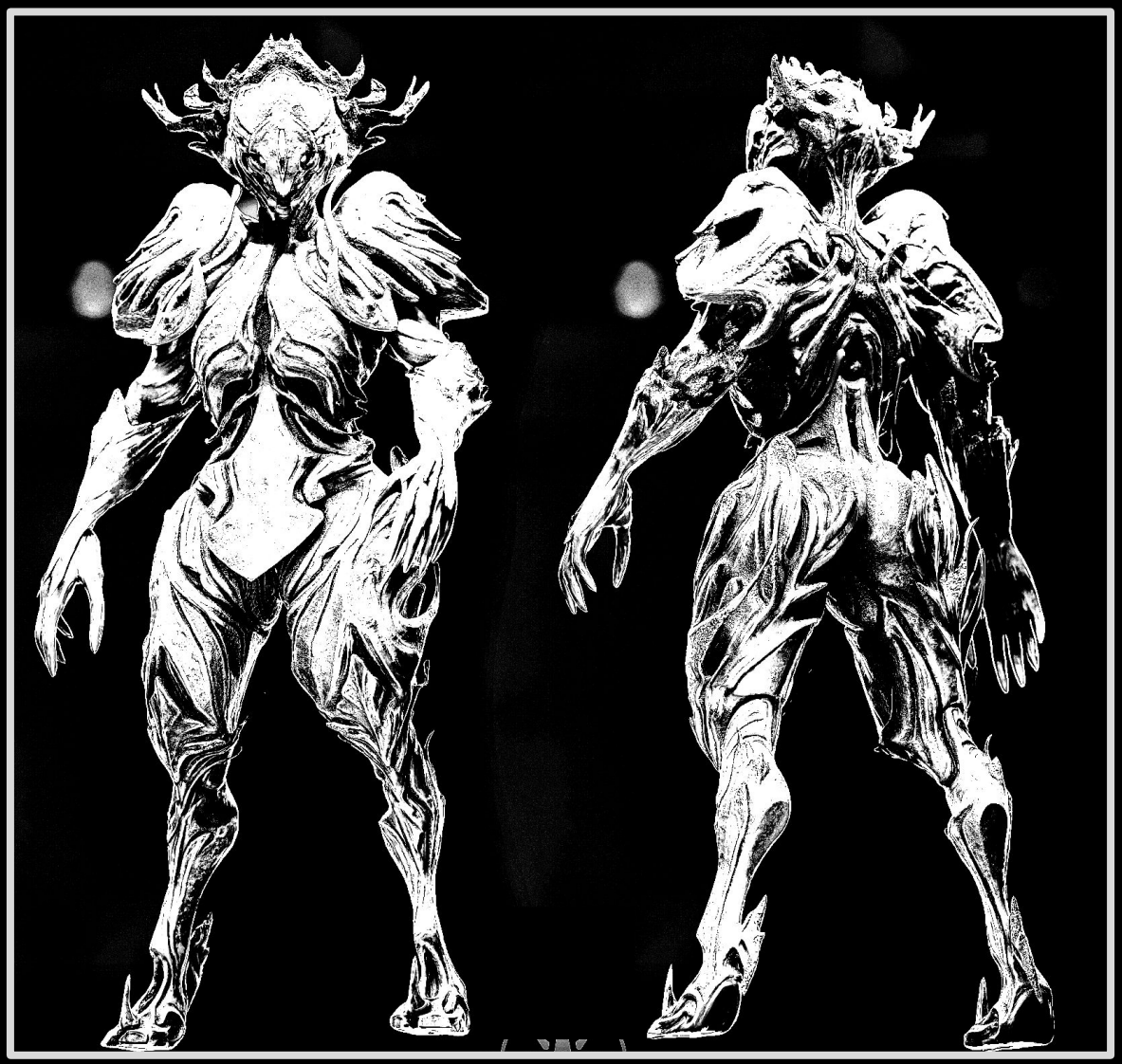
Most prized is the ‘cranial’ unit of the Hymeira which can, if properly grown and cultivated, provide unparalleled navigational assistance through the Outside. When correctly paired, Hymeira units can communicate with one another, previously thought impossible in the Outside. This has lead to the ability for entire fleets to enter and exit descents together whereas in previous centuries it would take days, sennights or months for formations to reassemble.

Sinadara presents as a kind of gel or resin that is tapped from Hymeira coral growths. This resin is then contained in small time-hardened glass containers which suspends several globules to slow degradation. As Sinadara is not entirely of the natural dimension, they will eventually disappear and need to be replaced.

Hymeira themselves are grown in forest like arboreams. Five Hands Magnates no longer allow for their ‘seeds’ to be sold but there have been successful interception and Corpo sabotage to gather both Hymeira as well as Sinadara core samples that have been cultivated for the gray market.

There have also been several instances of Hymeira successfully breaking captivity and escaping. Difficult to recover and extremely lethal with reports of extra-corporeal abilities and energy manipulation. Communication has so far been impossible, or irrelevant, but it is known that Hymeira will instinctively seek out one another and, if the environment permits, will plant pieces of themselves which can grow new Hymeira.

The largest communities of feral Hymeira are referred to as *Groves*. These regions have been noted to slowly terraform to what Five Hands believes could be an aspect of either the Hymeiric origin dimension, or, simply the ideal environment for its growth.



An instance of å32-1 Hymeira “dryad” this is the mobile form of the Exogen but is in fact made up of several Sinadar growths that are working together.

EXOGEN 20-23Ω “SHIGUE”

++begin maethish translation++

We need not be strangers.

I speak to you now as a fellow traveler, a friend in the cosmos.

We are Shigue of the Nine Remnants. Those who have survived.

If you are receiving this, then you will soon encounter our great Migration.

Our remaining population has fled from a great cataclysm.

This is a threat that will come for us all, in time.

We must cooperate lest we fall to [cannot translate].

The Nine have much to offer in trade. Knowledge gained by experience, a culture of fairness and beauty, an abundance of resources cultivated from the heart of our Galaxy. We offer these to you in friendship.

We ask only for safe harbor. Let us rest. Let us prepare.

Together we can shelter from the [storm/tempest/hollow] *that chases us.*

We know this is strange. We know that we are unknown. But change is a thing that all thinking beings must embrace together, lest we perish alone.

Change is the one constant in the universe. This is our Logos.

To survive, the wise adapt.

++Un-licensed signal received at Ansible station on Kerdosea Two++

++active auditor 27_5++

Audit_2.462_Frontier_Vela.Nebula

S_3

The following is a rudimentary report provided by [[REDACTED]] *in order to better understand the Exogenic Migration intensifying on the Vela Frontier and* [[[[[REDACTED]]]]]]. *It is in the opinion of Team 462 that these Shigue be elevated to a Grade 1 Threat authorizing the use of mass atomika weapons on their fleets before they can arrive to any more worlds.*

They are disturbingly advanced and have even gained a measure of [[[[[REDACTED]]]]]]. *They have been found amongst Consumers of* [[REDACTED]] *who invite them to barter. We now believe that they have some form of cognitovirus with which they are currently assailing minor population centers near Kerdosea Two, Three and Five.*

While the hunts have been wildly successful and overwhelmingly popular for Magnates, we believe a tangible threat is growing as new Migration vessels that defy classification have been observed emerging from beyond the Nebula.

Exterminate them. Now. The time for games are done.

THE SHIGUE MIGRATION

a_aae1

Emerging from beyond the Vela Nebula and riding the rimward gravitational currents come the multitudes of Exogens known as the **Shigue** (She'gway) **Migrations**. Teeming caravans with starships of every description huddle around artificial stellar masses caged by city-sized generation ships called *Havenholds*. To the inhabitants of the coreward supersectors that border the region, the Migrations appear as comet trails in the night sky. These pyrotechnics are a phenomena of Shigue deceleration from their transgalactic journey, the hulls of their ships glitter with multicolored borealis and clouds of velanite from their passage through the nebula.

Each migration is unique and bears its own oddities, though gathering intelligence is difficult as MacroCorps are eager to keep any details to themselves for potential exploitation. This is despite repeated requests from the Directorate who have grown concerned about the increasing numbers of Shigue in the past few fiscal-cycles. However, to the MacroCorps and the businesses that surround them, the increase of the Shigue has become a financial boon.

The wealth gained from isolating a migration and pillaging the Exogen within has made many exceptionally wealthy and the less official sources know, obviously, the better. To attempt to regulate this opportunity has made defense complicated.

The Shigue Migrations were first identified just over twenty fiscal-cycles ago by illegal FreeTraders attempting to find a tachyonic leyline into the Centaurus Arm. Unregistered indigenous near-human colonies were observed making rudimentary trade rituals with towering, hexapodal Exogens designated as 20-23Ω by Prospectors. Only when a Pilot named Wyldar Adaman succeeded in making the insanely dangerous crossing into the Centaurus Arm did the first true Migration become known to the wider Hegemon.

It appears now that Pilot Adaman was attempting to position himself as a broker between the Shigue and members of an extensive shadow market. The Copper Kings of the Mashiba Development Zone uncovered this plot and, it is believed, imprisoned these criminals, but not before they made first contact with a Shigue envoy they had been treating with.

A world in the uninhabited Tappert system was negotiated and then settled by the Shigue. Exogens have no such authority, and the ruse made by Adaman's accomplices was clearly illegal, resulting in an investigation by the Audit. Several Tappert Shigue were abducted for study and analysis, partially financed by the Copper Kings and their Stratos Industrial partners, to ascertain the potential value of the new arrivals. Local populations of Exogens had been in major decline in

every category over the past century, and demand had grown considerably among upper and even middle-credit Consumers. Moreover, something new can always be sold at a premium.

Audit representatives determined that the Shigue were a tangible threat to the smooth running of commerce and trade, while their technology was alarmingly advanced. Although not comparable to Grade 1 standards, the expense required to permanently eliminate such an infestation would be prohibitively high, especially this far from the ExeCor.

The Audit's report led Stratos Industrial to form a Joint Venture with the Copper Kings and their combined military, along with several hundred Directorate advisors. Waiting for the start of the second quat in 9/75m, as is customary, the operation began in the Tappert system.

Initially, the Shigue were routed, with Hegemon communication channels flooded with protests in various alien tongues and, shockingly, fluent Interlex. It was only when the Joint Venture settled into a bombardment orbit over the Shigue communities on the planet below that the Shigue fired back, revealing potent direct-fire weapons and gravity-based technology unlike anything seen before.

It took the entire quat to hunt down every Shigue, but in that time, vid recordings, trophies, and luxury items quickly flooded the tradelanes of the local stellar economy, spiking interest across the Hegemon. The peculiarity of the Shigue was astounding, and soon mercenary groups and private militaries flocked to the Mashiba Development Zone in hopes of further Shigue opportunities.

In the last eight cycles, there have been five such migrations, each eager to identify worlds with abundant resources of water and high-oxygen, high-gravity biospheres to support their populations. Their colonization of such planets is often abrupt, as the Shigue permanently land their Havenholds to form initial colony sites which then disgorge hundreds of thousands of their number as well as a panoply of other Exogens.

The reason for these migrations is not yet fully understood. While communication from Exogens is highly regulated lest they contain cognitive hazards, the Audit has released information suggesting that the Shigue are fleeing some great cataclysm, possibly natural, far across the Galaxy, which forced them to construct their generation vessels and flee.

It remains unclear how long this journey has taken or even how it has been accomplished. The Shigue seem to use a method of faster-than-light travel other than descending into the Outside, but it is unclear how. The Audit is keeping careful note to ensure that such technology does not fall into the possession of a single entity, risking the Hegemon's economic stability.

The Shigue are not the first Exogens to attempt intelligent communication with humanity. Throughout history, there have always been perverted or delusional collectives and individuals who respond to animals. In time, all attempts sour and fail, for the Exogen is ultimately only mimicking intelligence and has no true sense of Self. The Audit has been entrusted with determining sophontic activity in divergent evolutionary humans as much as Exogen to analyze and determine such possibilities.

The Shigue represent something entirely more nefarious than previous encounters. Auditors now regularly uncover groups and covens interacting with the Shigue, typically in the Frontier where such activity is sometimes ignored while seeking profit. Prospectors especially have actually sought out Shigue "Outriders" in the hopes of bartering for stellargraphic details and planetary scans. The Shigue's origins come from a part of the Galaxy almost entirely unknown, and the opportunities are often too tempting to ignore.

These groups are tried accordingly with steep fines and their information stripped and properly disseminated.

Often identified as victims of cognitoviruses or mental deficiencies, their crimes are against human nature. Dumb beasts mimicking human behavior can be as dangerous as it is ludicrous to apply true sophintism to basic self-awareness. While some Exogens serve as pets and entertainment they can never, ever, fool humanity into thinking there is a semblance of equality.

Old Humanity, in its desperation, was guilty of such foolishness. Never again.

Transmissions from Shigue Migration fleets, when translated, allude to a threat driving them into the Hegemon. The exact nature of this threat remains unclear, and no definitive evidence has been identified, aside from the persistent background noise of the Galaxy. Comparisons have been made that whatever the event it is akin to animals fleeing an inferno overtaking a forest

which is driving Exogen species in the same direction.

Up until recent cycles, the Shigue used to attempt to engage in communication with Hegemon vessels and the colonials of Kerdosea, seeking parley despite the destruction of their vessels and the hunting of their away teams. The only conclusion is that they either don't care about their numbers or they could not comprehend humanity's predatory dominance.

It was on the outskirts of the Kerdosea system and the imminent threat to one of the Havenhold craft, designated *Brightstag,* that the Shigue finally turned about and faced the Armada.

Ejecting weapon systems from their larger craft onto neighboring planetary bodies, Armada vessels were devastated by an unlikely flanking maneuver. Hypervelocity rounds from these mobile artillery bases pulverized the vanguard of Armada fleet. The Tributaries, a testament to their valour to complete their contract, pressed onward, seeking to capture the Havenhold.

For the first time, Barakan Elite were sent against military targets in an attempt to hold the line.

Since that time the Shigue have engaged quickly and directly with Hegemon and MacroCorp forces on sight. So, too, has their popularity with ever increasing demands for Shigue content. The Directorate struggles with these demands as it falls to them to support the MacroCorp needs. This has made the hunts all the more exhilarating.

SHIGUE DESCRIPTION

a_aae1

Naming customs come easily in the Hegemon with a preference for commercialism. The husbandry of dozens of animals that were carried into the stars make for strong comparisons to the Exogenic varieties in the universe. It is preferred to make anything alien; similar. By doing so the novelty of the Exogen is subsumed into human perspective. Naming something creates ownership and ownership is everything.

The Hegemon considers the Shigue to be similar to many bovid-like animals despite the inaccuracy in doing so. The Shigue might share similar qualities to *shānyang* or the provolved *sığırlar,* but ultimately they are entirely beyond human comprehension. Attempting to delve further than that carries with it its own danger.

“Shigue” is actually the name of a single member of the migratory fleets and this can be confusing to even educated Consumers. Humanity has never had companion species, save for pets or biological tools such as canids or equine stock. Old Humanity and New Mankind has justly subdued all forms of life that it is aware of and so cooperative behavior was never needed.

The Shigue Migrations present as a vast multi-being surge of different Exogenic species which are all classified as 20-23, with different subclasses that have nothing, genetically or evolutionary, in common, further perplexing observers. This kind of perverse diversity has never been witnessed before. Life generally adheres to the life of their planet yet, the Shigue showcase *dozens* of life forms that could not have existed in the same original biome.

These species do not necessarily work together in a recognizable relationship and it has been observed, several times, of conflict between the species. What they do is travel together, seeking out natural habitats over the artificial ones of their ships.

Shigue 20-23Ω_A, the *Kau’eg*, are the most common instance the Hegemon engages with in the regular purges and hunts along the Mashiba Development Zone. They present a variety of descriptions ranging from two to three meters in size, various skin hues and limb displacement but have been codified as a single species.

Shigue are hexapodal, their upper arms are used for combat, climbing, heavy lifting and primary activities. These arms are sometimes used for quadrupedal movement where a Shigue can achieve their top speeds. Their middle limbs, or 'lesser arms' are used for detail work and precision activities that include operating things like the controls of machines. Each hand has two thumb like digits and three finger appendages with a strong grip.

Their legs are the largest and most powerful limbs corded with muscle capable of kicking and deforming a sheet of nusteel. Interestingly, the Shigue legs are used for communication in the way many human cultures gesticulate with hands or facial expressions. Double hinged, they end in taloned, multi-toed feet which the Exogen use to write by making scratches in dirt or other materials.

Shigue are incredibly strong, able to lift many times their own weight and shrug off anything short of anti vehicle rounds. Which are used, prodigiously, in their hunting.

Kau'eg 20-23Ω_A, note the outward growing horns, smaller stature, fan like ears

Shigue teeth plates, know as naa′u *in their own language, are more similar to a beak than teeth. Made up of hundreds of thousands of crystals of calcium, fluorine, phosphorus and other chemicals, a Shigue's teeth rank harder than even Grade 1 sonaw. This coupled with the immense strength of a Shigue jaw makes a bite from such an Exogen one of its most lethal aspects and that's after considering their horns.*

Shigue tongues are long, unsettling tendrils of thick, moist tissue which they use both to wet their usually dry facial skin and eyes. The tongues prehensile nature further implies the evolutionary origins as beings that inhabited tree canopies presumably to pluck fruiting trees while using their arms for balance or grip.

Within the tongue are eight reservoirs of toxins which connect through a series of vein like structures to the secondary stomach where it draws chemicals and bodily fluids. These the Shigue can either spit or lather onto an enemy causing temporary blindness, skin burns or cause wounds that can become highly infected and even develop necrosis.

It is believed that besides being a means to defend themselves it is possible that several elements of their diet require them to be extensively broken down. Based on the potency of the acid, this food must be something with the consistency of rocks.

Anatomically the Shigue have a robust immune system with several organs that serve analogous to human norms with some exceptions. To begin with the Shigue have two primary stomachs that also serve the role of intestines with food transferred back and forth or regurgitated as cud while they have a bladder like organ cluster that allows them to carry an enormous amount of water that swells their abdomens when filled.

The Shigue cannot breath human atmospheres nor can humans breathe in Shigue environments for more than a few minutes before succumbing to asphyxiation. Higher oxygen has been noted in the mist filled corridors of their ships along with higher mineral content. Interestingly, the Shigue have a third lung which acts a kind of filter for the two primary lungs.

The Shigue have shockingly bright blue and purple blood denoting a higher copper value but even describing it as “blood” is something Hegemon xenobiologists are hesitant to label, as the Shigue do not have veins in the classical sense. Indeed, Shigue physiology is made up of long, ropey, intestinal like groupings that is connected via thick fibers and muscle wrapped around a dense yet malleable cartilage like frame that acts as bone. Further study has struggled to achieve the necessary funding beyond identifying if Shigue flesh can be eaten and how trophies can be maintained without rotting.

The Shigue skull is highly prized both with and without its skin. Encephic horns which rise out of the male forehead and sweep back into the rear cranium are believed to have dozens of homeopathic properties, none of which have been clinically proven but remain a highly sought after product. Shigue tongues, another delicacy, can ‘taste’ the air and is used to moisten the gill analogue on either side of the Shigue face as well as their eyes.

Some licensed hunters on the planet Kerdosea, while hunting Shigue scouts, have reported that Shigue will spit a highly toxic phlegm when they have no other weapon. Injuries include temporary blindness and swelling that can last for days. It is believed that the source of this poison comes from a tonsil like organ underneath the tongue.

Shigue eyesight is keen in low light although it is noted that they suffer from sensitivity in full sunlight. This is likely as a result of long generations living aboard starships. Their hearing is their most sensitive sense able to detect sound as subtle as a heartbeat a thousand meters away.

Highly complex vibrations have been recorded in every combat instance as well as the early attempts the Shigue made to communicate with Hegemon vessels. These vibrations form unusual shapes and symbols in mediums like water and sand but have yet to be deciphered. Ears and encephic horns work in concert and form an element of Shigue communication that works simultaneously with their relatively simple language of grunts and calls.

The number of Shigue in captivity, taken from the colonies or subdued during hunts, is critically small and so almost nothing can be considered 'fact' at this time.

Physically, Shigue are imposing to such a degree as to exhibit a preternatural fear response in humans. As a result, only troops able to modify their etymological response should be used when fighting Shigue directly. Despite having a hunched stature, these Exogens micrify human norms. They are fast, strong, they can sustain a startling amount of damage before succumbing and they can enter into rage induced rampages that multiply their abilities. They rarely back down from a threat especially if their noncombatant populations are under threat. They will engage at both distance and close quarters with the same fluidity as human beings making them consummate entertainment.

At first it was assumed that the Shigue were mono-gendered or perhaps hermaphroditic like the Khemmer near-humans from the planet Gibileden. Only after one of their larger colonial vessels was boarded were femme Shigue encountered by a mercenary team of operators. They are seemingly rare amongst their kind, the only definitive aspect of them are reports of being taller than their male counterparts with more ornate encephic horn configurations. None survived the encounter and the ship was ultimately scuttled by their own crew.

It is unclear what status females hold, or what backward concepts of gender hierarchy exist amongst these Exogens. Shigue are ruled by their presentable biology, most notably, height and strength. There are no competitions of leadership or intelligence, only that their biggest and strongest are in charge.

With the absence of a truthful meritocracy like the one that rules even the most divergent of human societies of the Thousand Empires, the Shigue are little better than the lineage based bloodline tyrants the Hegemon emancipated Known Space from.

The Roaming

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The Shigue do not utilize the Outside for travel, but they do use leylines to pull themselves from one star system to another. While their ships' drives have never been studied, intrigued scientists have speculated during Hunts how they continually manage to outrun Armada and mercenary forces. There are descriptions of strange lights and auroras intensifying across Shigue hulls as they maneuver like vast aquatic creatures.

Flank-mounted grav-paddles, often called "oars," squeeze and direct gravitic currents instead of relying on thrusters or chemical rockets. While it takes longer for a Shigue ship to accelerate, once it does, it achieves remarkable speeds despite its size or disposition. Given enough time, a Shigue vessel can approach extreme sub-luminal momentum.

When the Shigue need to exceed luminal speed, they mass around their Havenholds, and the entirety of the migration's ships dock into crenulated ports, forming a single enormous vessel. The containment rings around the stellar fragment unwind, revealing the fragment within. In a blazing shockwave, light and solar flares expand outward and are then directed to disrupt transdimensional space. Local tachyons are wound into accumulators, which build hyperspacial tension that is then "pulled" like a rope, yanking the Havenhold through a temporal vortex.

Proximity to the vortex transitions everything beyond the light barrier. Confusingly, the Havenhold appears at its final destination simultaneously, briefly existing in both places at once, which denies several laws of physical reality. Then again, what little is known about tachyons suggests that time, from the perspective of three-dimensional consideration, is irrelevant.

This technological ability is not without extreme costs. The stellar fragment that powers a Havenhold is considerably reduced by such massive expulsions of energy. Additionally, a navigator must know exactly where they want to go beforehand. Making this translation in proximity to other physical matter could be fundamentally catastrophic.

The Shigue migration across the Galaxy, even with such technology, has required careful scouting and brokering with local species they have encountered along the way over the last eighty thousand light-years. A Havenhold will often nestle into a fruitful system, drawing from local resources what it needs before using a slingshot orbit to continue traveling to its next destination.

Meanwhile, smaller *salient* fleets made up of only a few hundred vessels can travel thousands of lightyears ahead of the Havenholds, mapping out trajectories and locations for the rest of their people to reach using conventional STL speeds. While arduous, it has lead to several positive interactions with other exogenic species and, based on the appearance of a heavily militarized triplex economy, conflict as well. Some of these species have joined the Shigue's migration, presumably fleeing the same event, or have joined them in a mutually beneficial colonial venture.

As such, there are countless strange species that travel together, even live in one another's ecosystems. This is not always peacefully as noted with the Coegie who actively hunt the Shigue for food or the Mabathians whose rivalry with the Voyn, their former masters, leads to many a witnessed firefight on the ground or in space. Meanwhile, other species like the Emaal are so outwardly docile that it is unclear if they are even sentient.

It was these salients that encountered humanity first but it is currently under investigation as to who exactly made first contact. Whoever did gave the Shigue the leyline trajectories to cross the Vela Nebula and arrive in the Mashiba Development Zone. It is the shared belief by the Directorate that this was done on purpose, perhaps, to disrupt the production and transport of velanite.

If this is indeed true, it would represent a deliberate and growing threat to Hegemon prosperity.

Social Structure

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The Shigue do not have a comparable hierarchy to the Hegemon and it is remarkably straightforward.

The largest males lead.

In fact, Shigue females have rarely been encountered by the Audit, never mind the dozens of intelligence companies that have been contracted to understand the Shigue. The hope for the last few fiscal-cycles has been to create a population of Shigue as entertainment for the rest of the Hegemon, but their breeding practices are, unusually, entirely unknown. There have never been instances of Shigue juveniles encountered, only smaller males.

The encephic horns are largest on those males that command and they do so with complete and unquestioned authority. However, the power structure is not as opportunistic as it is with humanity, as there does not seem to be a means to attain rank by actions or success. The smaller the male, the less status they have, the more menial the task. The larger the male, the more able their abilities and presentable technology. The largest command starship squadrons and combat formations, which, are vast.

Shigue leaders are extremely protective of those they command and despite their complete control, do not seem to abuse it. In fact, many equipment items deployed by these leaders seem to actually invite enemy focus on them, using defensive photonics and countermeasures. Commanders will order their lesser males to quit the field in the wake of untenable odds even as they seemingly volunteer to engage themselves. This has a cascading effect throughout the hierarchy.

Nothing could provide more of an example of the dumb animal that these creatures are, despite their resilience against extermination.

Yearlings: *Gax'var*

The smallest Shigue males, typically a meter and a half in height, do not serve frontline or direct combat duties unless taken by surprise or desperation. Technician and analyst equivalents, support personnel, crew, communications, seemingly everything that is not specifically tasked with soldiery goes to the yearlings. It would be easy to conclude that they are the lowest rung of society.

InfoCorps insist that some kind of gelding or social exclusion keeps the yearlings in a position of servitude although the FreeTraders who have been brought into custody for trading with Exogens have reported these Gax'var are eager in their duties with no signs of repression. Indeed, there seems to be *no* such concept as a top down hierarchy in Shigue societies with no ranks or discernible social stratum at all beyond size and horn arrangement.

Gax'var are physically immature by comparison to their larger kin. Bodies recovered present without substantial cranial horns that are flattened against the skull. When need be they will engage and are more than a match for baseline humans.

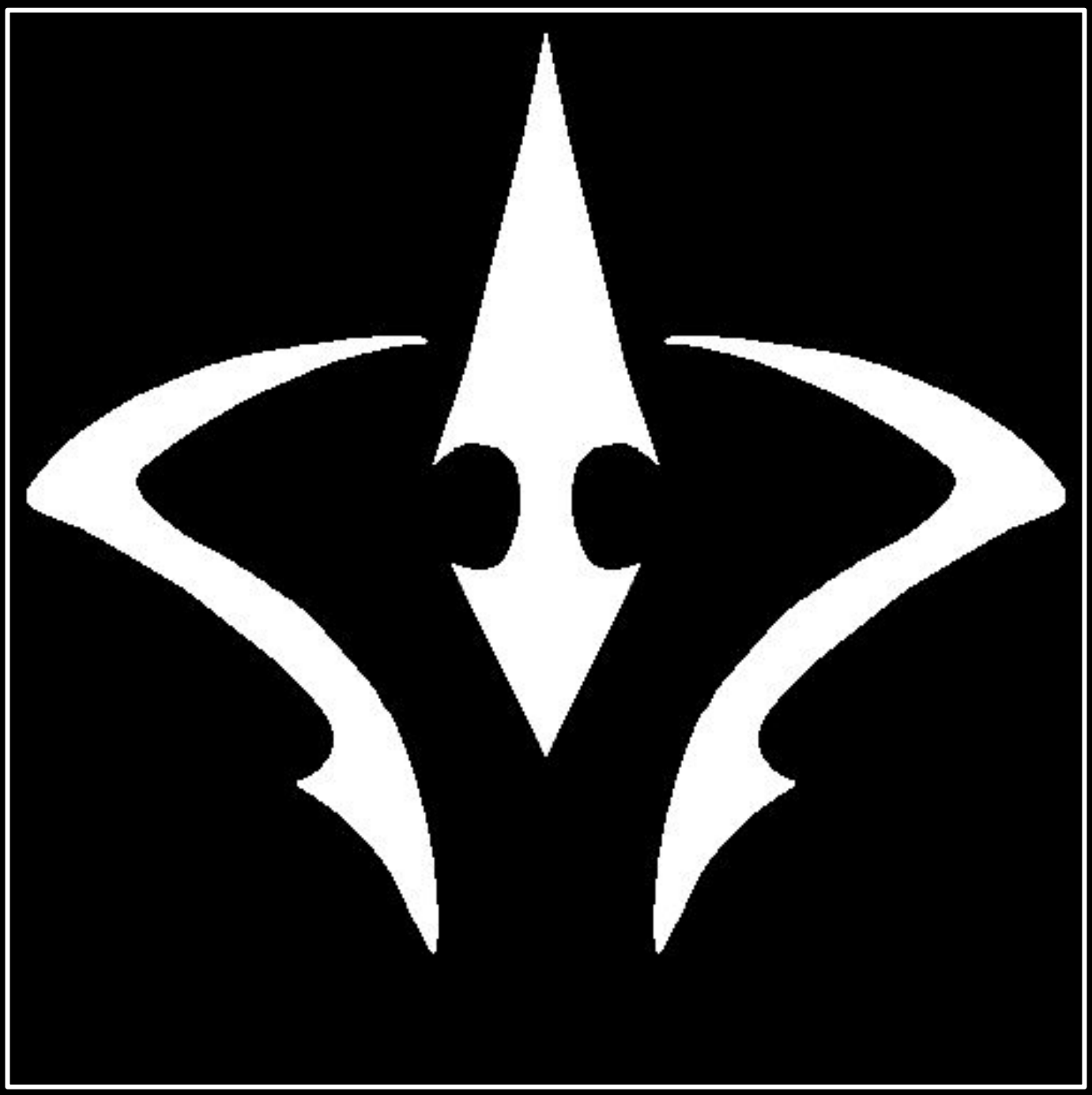
Gax'var crew, note the lack of horn adornment on the faceplate

EXOGEN *20-23Ω_A:* Outriders: *Kau'eg*

The most common instance of the Shigue has been with their "Outriders." They act as intermediaries as much as a kind of warrior class as no civilian instances have been encountered. They are believed to be a near-species, similar to provolved humans, or perhaps an evolutionary cousin. Much slimmer than even yearlings and with a different horn structure that do not loop back into the skull, the Kau'eg are only seen in the capacity as scouts. Whether this is a status or practical assignment for these smaller, faster, beings that lack the weight of their larger Warstrider kith is unclear.

Outriders typically operate on rudimentary gravitic sleds which ferry them quickly across all terrain. Their suits contain their atmosphere and a remarkably compact and efficient power pack gives them a lethal autonomy. Interestingly, Kau'eg almost never operate with the Warstrider Shigue and even operate their own vessels further implying a segregation between Kau'eg and Shigue.

They are armed with a variety of weapons but prefer distance, striking from as far as operationally possible unlike the Shigue who prefer direct confrontation. They are not exclusively military and operate as agents for the populations aboard the Havenholds as they look for habitable planets.



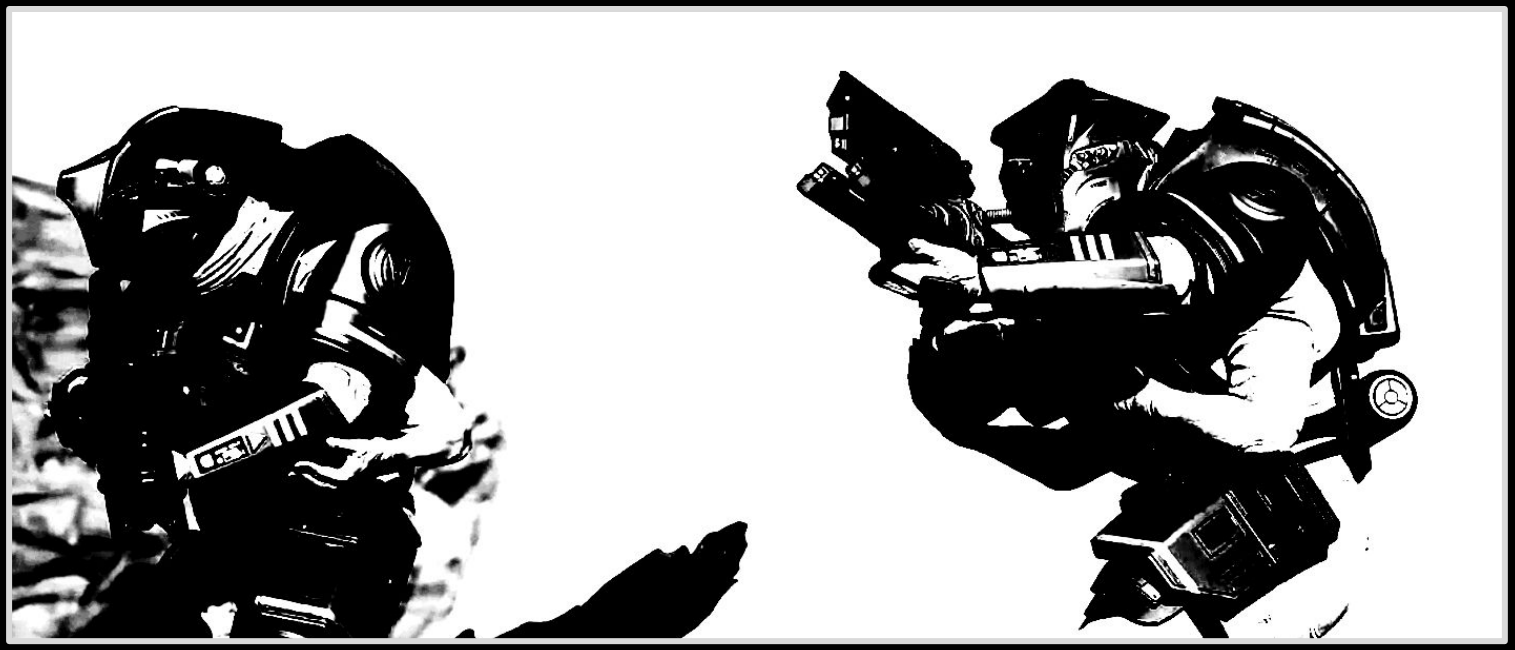
The Shigue have an extensive lexicon of symbols and signs that they use in conjunction with auditory and sub-auditory vibrations. The above is an example of the Klaad Havenhold symbol assigned to its "Longhorns." These massive creatures command respect, authority and complete obeisance that is seemingly instinctual rather then earned.

Warstriders

The Warstriders seemingly inhabit all aspects of logistics, combat and strategic operation for the Shigue military. Forming into “kines” these squads and groups of Warstriders have been observed able to quickly and seamlessly operate together. Communication dissemination is still in its infancy when studying the Shigue, but it has been recognized as their greatest technological or biological trait. Warstriders fighting several kilometers from their kith will react accordingly and almost instantly to the needs or expectations of each other.

Warstriders are the largest of their kind save for Longhorns and, like all military Shigue, male. Their armor is bulkier, often with emitters that project hardlight panels. Most iconic are their helmets which support a horn-like wedge at the center of the faceplate.

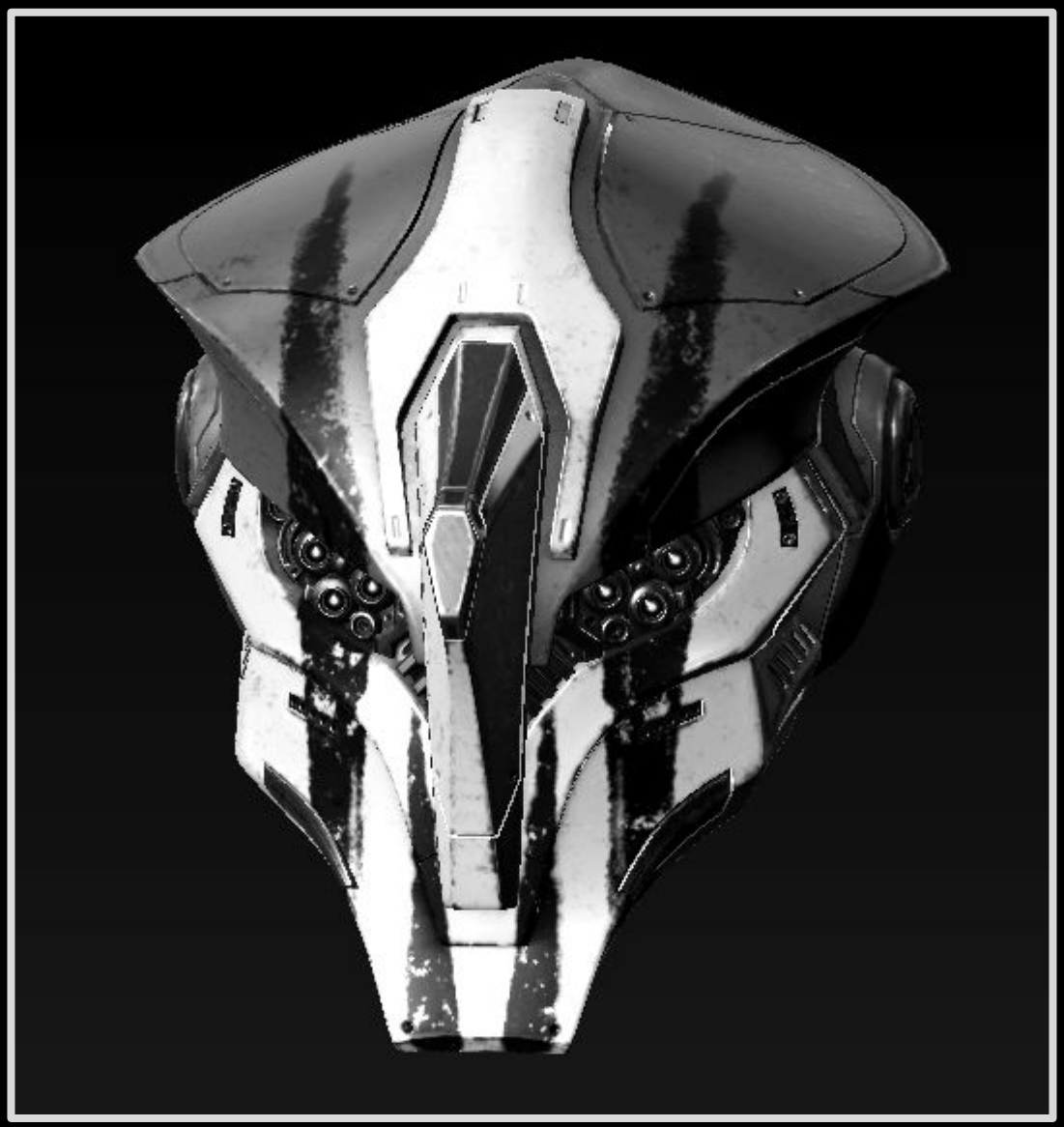
Beneath their armor Warstriders have larger horn combinations as well as longer bone protrusions around the eyes, cheeks and chin that lengthen with age. At the base of their skull going down their necks are thick, quill-like hairs that vary in color, denoting a chemical similar to testosterone that turns those quills black. The largest males operate as ‘linchpins’ directing their musters with a deft nature and are unquestioned by the smaller males.



-- Noble resistance is premium meat --

It is believed Warstriders act in a kind of “group think”, so instant are a muster’s reactions to commands.

Individually or in groups, Warstriders do not operate with any division of rank. “Blackmanes” are dispersed throughout their formations and often bolster morale or help coordinate on behalf of the Longhorns from which all authority stems, but this is a natural kind of order rather then one based on capability or fiscal authority as it is in the Hegemon.



The helmet enclosure of a Shigue “Blackmane.” The quills across their bodies are black, and they are typically larger than regular Warstriders. Blackmanes are naturally drawn to threats against the herd and their people, often acting impetuously and directly against perceived foes.

Black Tusks: *Naa'vior*

Black Tusks, or *Tusked*, are the most aggressive of the Shigue and form their own units and squads during confrontations. Shigue incursions into Hegemon property are rare, as of this date, however when the need arises and their migration ships are threatened, it is the Black Tusks that play the role of the vanguard. Heavier armor, broader shield panel distribution between fighters as well as close range weaponry and gravitic panelling to make them faster, they are the shocktroops of the Shigue military and should not be handled lightly.

To the connoisseur, Black Tusks are identified exclusively for decoration or for their hides. Black Tusks are typically older with larger and more distributed bony growths across their bodies while their meat is considered too tough and sour even after seasoning.

Longhorns: *Ha'rax*

Longhorns are the largest, strongest and de facto highest ranking leadership individuals ever encountered in the field by the Directorate. Their commands are followed without question and they themselves do not operate without a desire to climb any social or military ladder. They are, simply, born to lead through their biological superiority.

None has ever been captured, but a bounty of five mithqals has been placed on the head of one by Magnate Balmog Tyklet of Stratos, who wishes to adorn his villa on Prime Orbita with a Longhorn head. They both lead from a logistical standpoint, directing the flow of resources to where they are needed but will also lead from the front if required.

When they do so, they project a wide segmented canopy of hard light to protect their troops' positions.

Shigue leaders often have a wide range of defensive equipment which serves to draw enemy fire to *their* position where they can weather enemy fire. While this might appear counter intuitive, this tactic has surprised and confused Directorate combatants. Typical human doctrine is to bury leading elements behind layers and layers of defenses far from risk.

At the core of the Longhorn's ultimate purpose is an oath that they make to the Migration and to their people; to serve and to be of service. That service, at its core, is a promise that the Shigue will no longer be, by their own determination, prisoners to their fleets. The Shigue share a dream to live on planetary bodies, ones they can make like their homeworlds that they've lost and are more myth than memory.

That is the Shigue ethos, that is their unifying purpose. To find a home and it is the Longhorns that will bring them to it. The Shigue do not wish for conflict or war, but to survive and settle. To raise their young and to churn the soil and, perhaps, even one day forget their long voyage across the stars and turn their eyes away from the void.

We have made the journey across the stars
Our sacrifices have been many.
We honor both with the price of our lives.
We look for a place to find in the Wasteland. A place of refuge from the coming storm.

For our people we commit acts that are distasteful to our nature. This is the price paid for survival.
We seek a life beneath Sky, not the prison of our vessels.
We serve our people.
We are of service.
We shall ever be of service.

TECHNOLOGY

Shigue technology is centered around the keystone technology of gravity manipulation and distortion. Similar to time hardening by bringing elements into proximity with singularities, the Shigue use gravity waves in lieu of almost all other methods of construction and fabrication save for biological cultivation.

Tha'tak (literally: Warshell) **Carapace Armor:** Warshell is a classification of chitin utilized exclusively by the Shigue. Grown from consecutive single-cellular forms, this hyper-dense and light protective suit allows for maximum protection as well as the ability to empathize with the Shigue warskin or under-suit. Warshell is able to 'regrow' after being damaged and can be programmed to take on different forms, becoming a tool as much as a form of protection

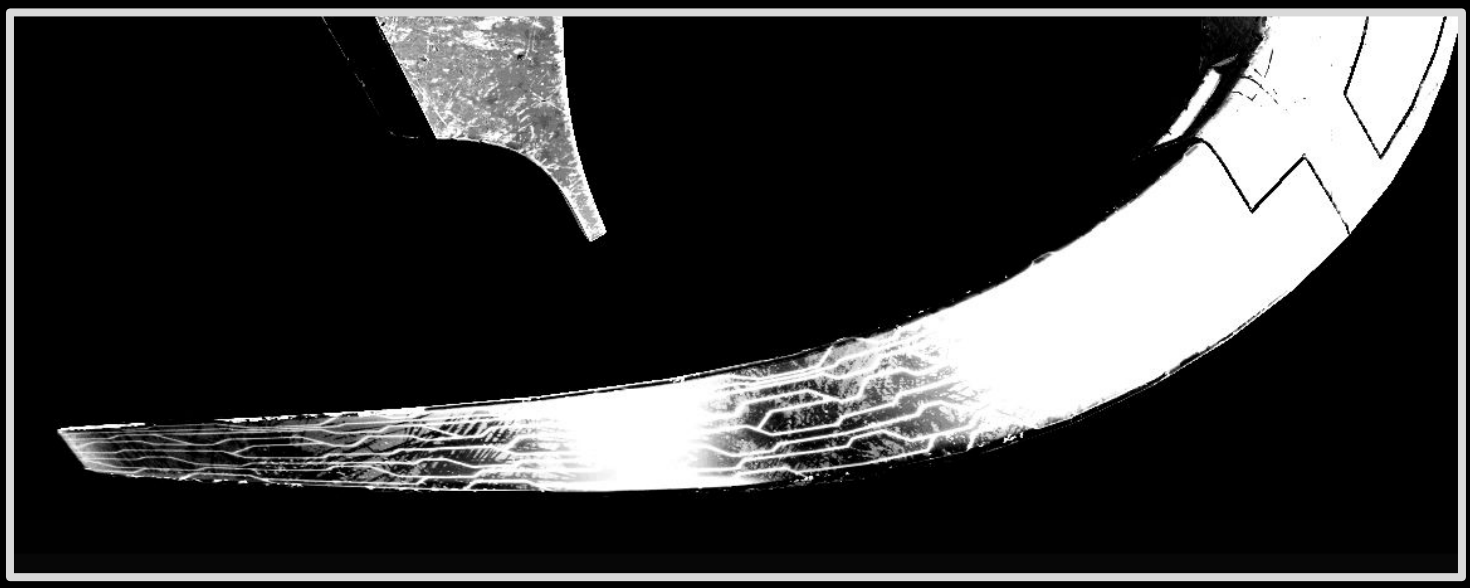
Gravlock Weaponry: Shigue technology is founded on gravitic tools and weapons. None are more iconic than the series of carbines, pistols and cycle-rifles the Shigue use. Ball bearings or "shot" are loaded into a cyclotron that spins up the shot which is, when released via trigger, injected into a chamber where electrogravitic rods further accelerate the ball bearing. These rounds cause massive kinetic and energy transfer, pulverizing a target and liquifying internals. The longer the barrel, the more accurate the shot at longer ranges.

Grav-panels: Appearing as long, paddle like fins, these grav-panels provide Shigue vehicles with propulsion in any environment. This technology has clearly been perfected over the generations and has clear advantages in space but develops complications within gravity wells with contradictory fields that can form turbulence.
Newer Shigue classifications have been seen with heavier thruster nacelles and turbines but are obviously new to Warstrider operators as they seem to struggle in planetary engagements when compared to void warfare where, even the Directorate will admit, they are quite capable.

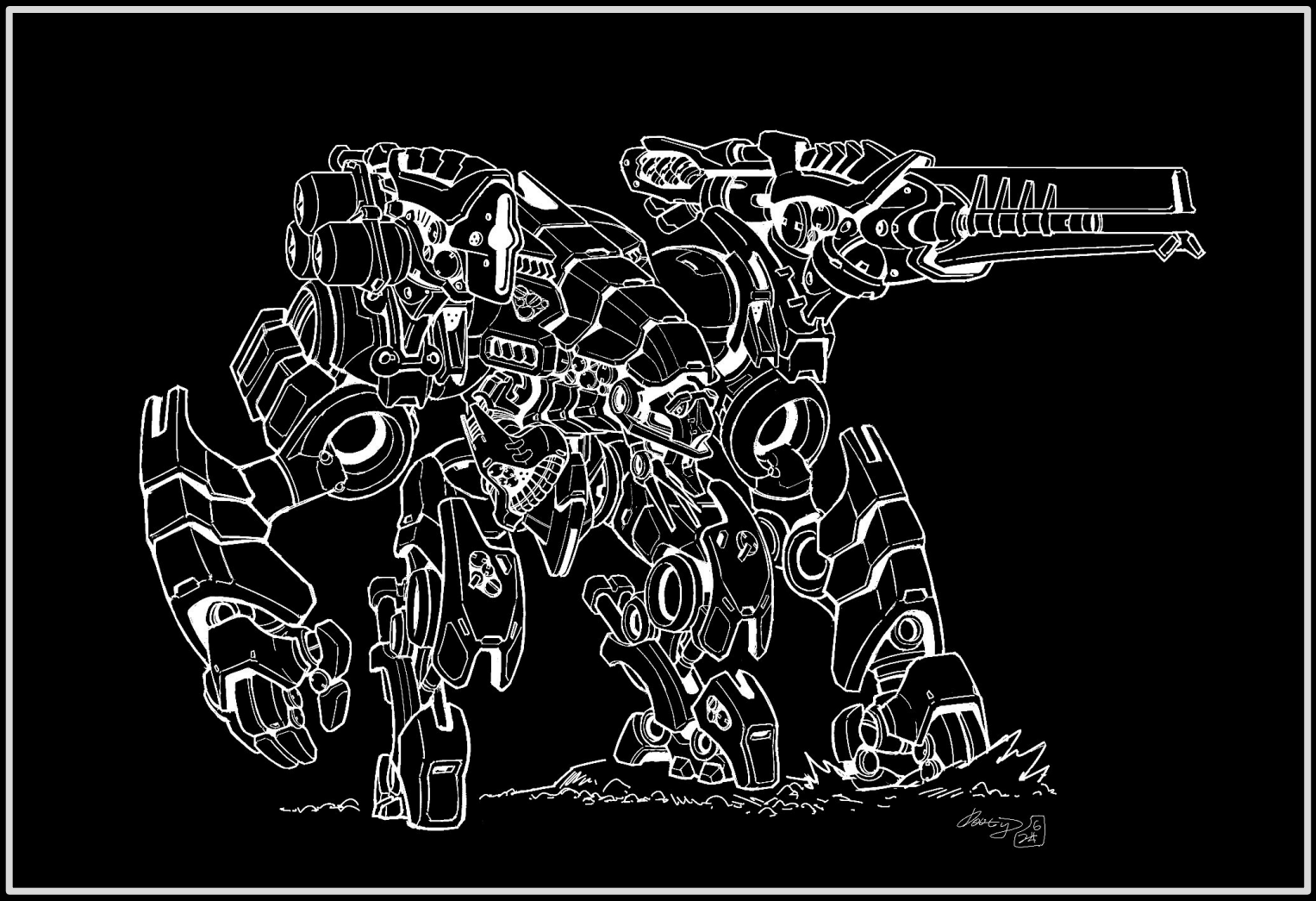
Songblades: *Hasyro'selo'na*

Songblades are mounted like tusks or lower horns to a Shigue helmet. Made from ore drawn from the heart of a Havenhold, they are forged by the wielder themselves. Each pair of songblades is unique and carries with it a unique sound signature associated with the wielder. The same can be said for the light that plays around the songblades' edges when they are unsheathed. It is hypothesized that they might improve the shield strength of the wielder, and potentially those Warstriders around them.

Songblades can easily slice through anything save time-hardened plate, but they do so without friction or scouring. This is because of the gravitons imbedded in the alloy which *push* atoms apart and only appear to 'cut.'



Songblades are especially beautiful, with strange geometric lines that appear to be naturally formed. The machining process for such weapons is unknown, but involves the trapped stellar masses that the Shigue Havenholds utilize for power generation and natural sunlight. Much like time-hardening in a singularity, the alloy that makes songblades is forged in the extreme gravitational currents to create a material unlike any other.



The Shigue utilize various combat frames also called “gauntlets” and ‘Cal’kaan’ in their own tongue. A rare sight they are typically deployed in aerial or void engagements. Piloted exclusively by the yearlings that rename themselves Ar’tash*, or “Paragons”, these rapidstrike units are, to date, the most devastating technology yet encountered in the Exogen’s arsenal, armed with a panoply of gravitic weapons, shield projectors and explosive discus launchers. The Shigue have similar destruction protocols that the Barakan have, denying their technology and their secrets to their enemies. Occupants recovered from wrecks have been identified with purposefully amputated limbs, presumably to better integrate with the technology as the Shigue lack cogit-hoods.*

Frame Technology

Shigue Gauntlets are operated by an exclusive classification of Shigue known as the Ar'tash. These males are picked early in their lifecycle and made for the role of piloting specialized exo-suits that link into a Shigue's nervous system. The result is a fully integrated biological operator with a mechanical body. The reason for this is either a technological failing or a deliberate ritual of culture.

During the migration, the Frames performed repair and recovery operations across the fleet and the Havenhold. While in human society such activities are generally regarded as mundane, the Shigue utilize their finest to perform such tasks. Predominantly operating in space, they use their primary arms to rapidly climb across ship hulls, using quick bursts of gravimetric force to move in any direction with near inertialess control.

Dedicated sensors and computing units aid frames in this purpose. Modular in design, these circular caps adorn the outer paneling of a suit and can be easily replaced for maximum alignment to the nature of the task at hand. Their purposes can range from highly specialized multi-spectrum detectors, mobility feedback enhancers for rapid-response trajectory mapping, to customized gravitic and solid-shot countermeasures.

Now that the migrations are being attacked by the Hegemon, the Frames have taken on a wildly aggressive stance as protectors. Impellers and plasma cutters have been traded for heavy grav-cannons and centrifugal launchers, making them more than a match for Directorate assault vehicles.

Paragons: *Ar'tash*

The Ar'tash, roughly translated as *'greatest sacrifice,'* are taken from populations of chosen Yearlings who exhibit ideal traits for installation within empowered armor called Gauntlets or *Cal'kaan*. Similar to the Tetsudyne armor of the Barakan with its combination of autoplate and assault-harness, a Gauntlet is fitted over an operator's body for the purpose of amplifying their effectiveness and lethality. A combination of ritualized sacrifice and technological shortcoming has resulted in the *installation* of the operator into the frame.

The primary upper arms are amputated at the elbows and the legs at the knee. The tha'tak of the frame is then agitated into growing into the wounds in a tedious process that combines the Yearling's nervous system with the machine. A Yearling does not receive painkillers of any kind, recovering from the surgeries without aide. As they heal they are placed into various testing facilities which push them to physical and psychological extremes where many die. The Havenhold's culture determines these tests which range from letting packs of Coegie hunt the potential Ar'tash to endurance races through traversals along the ship.

These survivors graduate into various types of frames determined by both need and ability. Fully Ar'tash now, they withdraw to their own barracks and living chambers, entirely secluded from other Warstriders. They are both honored for their sacrifice as much as they are pitied. Ar'tash will never be more than weapons for the Migration. As such, they have no place in the Shigue promise to one day settle a world.

The Gauntlets are equipped with an array of gravitic weapons, wire-guided ordinance, and hard light projectors that can be used both defensively and offensively. They are capable of flight, submersible operation and deep void combat. While powerful, they cannot achieve the same degree of impact that Directorate fighter craft can deliver, but they are more than a match for empowered suit equivalents of the Hegemon.

Ar'tash form special squads called 'coteries' that survived through their transformation together.

-- Self sacrifice is a greater threat than any atomika warhead --

Ar’tash are, culturally, apart from the rest of the Warstriders as much as they are physically due to their surgeries. This is most pronounced in their intolerance of Coegie which they will kill almost on sight. Their aggression is not the hot rage of the Shigue or the indignation of the Longhorns. The Ar’tash operate their machines with cold calculation and a kind of melancholy that makes them a methodical opponent, dispatching threats to the herd efficiently. That is, at least, when they are in their gauntlets.

Outside, without the regulating environment and mechanical symbiotic interface, an Ar’tash is physiologically suspended in a state of juvenile puberty. This makes them brash, threatening, coupled with an advanced bionetic prosthetic lower body and primary arms, they can easily kill if challenged. As such they are prohibited from formal leadership challenges which are always done without augmented strength.

Coteries operate throughout the Havenholds and are behaviorally linked to matriarchal instances which they seemingly obey without question, unlike the Longhorns which they almost do not communicate with. How military cohesion is achievable is not yet understood except that Shigue seem to just “know” what must be done and do it with little deviation.

Shigue Artillery Walkers were initially misidentified as defensive turrets that were part of Shigue vessels' superstructures. Orbital combat within the Vela Nebula revealed that the Shigue can actually deploy these turrets to form pickets around their fleets or deploy to planetary sites. Once situated, they use incredibly powerful mass driver cannons that can cause catastrophic damage.

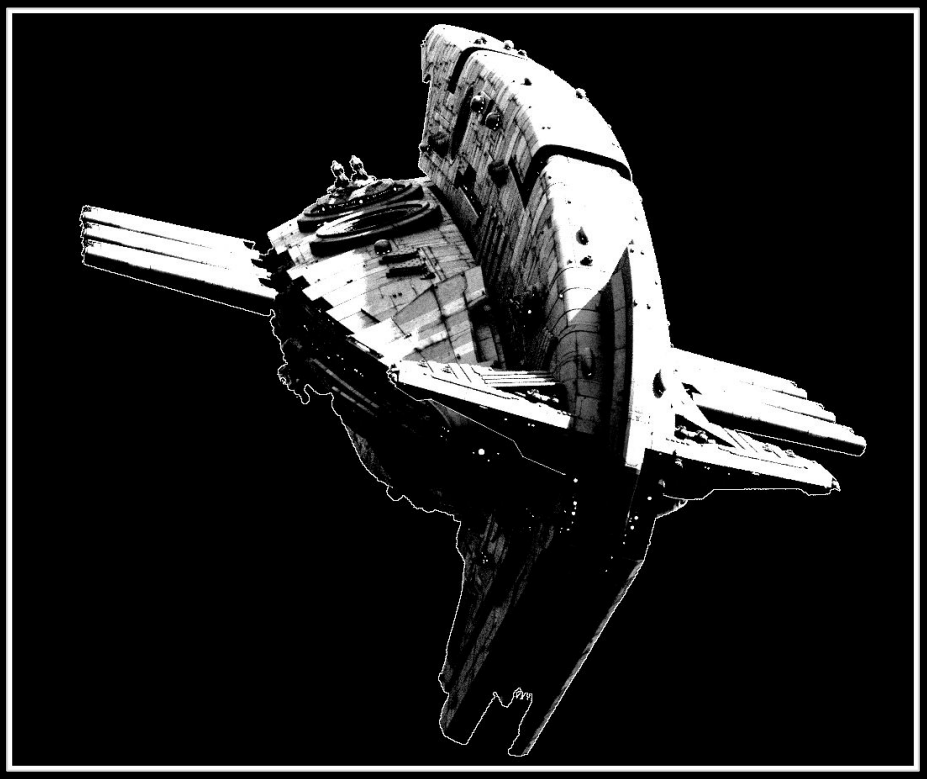
For defensive measures, the walkers use the same gravitic impellers used for flight to create large fields which disrupt targeting logicors and can be directed to outright deflect bombardment or force aircraft that get too close to crash. Only through direct assaults to get within the impeller fields can these turrets be destroyed at reasonable cost.

Crewed by fifty to a hundred Shigue, walkers act similarly to Warstrider musters, with a Longhorn directing the efforts of five or six such vehicles.

Migration Vessels

Shigue ships are advanced as they are not only durable, maneuverable but are surprisingly heavily armed. Almost every single example of migration starships are a tangible threat to even a warliner class ship as a result of their mass driver turrets. The Shigue weakness is their lack of numbers which the Tributary and mercenaries as a whole take advantage of with long range ordinance and swarm tactics with bomber craft. A head to head engagement would be suicidal.

Shigue vessels often have extensive civilian quarters, farming decks and manufactories. Almost every ship in the migration contributes to the survival and self sufficiency of an enormous population. As such, Shigue will more often run from a fight unless their Havenholds are threatened.



Designated by Armada as 'Transire' class picket ships, they typically run formations around the migration fleet acting as a first line of defense. They can, to devastating success, seed planetary bodies and asteroids with their turrets which then act as long range artillery that the Transire and other ships can use to lure enemies into a crossfire.

They are similar to Armada missile ships with several hundred crew.

The Shigue Migration is not a navy nor can it be observed as a convoy with design and clear purpose save to move as many living beings as possible and keep them alive for as long as possible. Of the swarms of vessels that crowd the space around a Havenhold all are mismatched vessels drawn from the fractured cultures saved by the Shigue. Necessity and the shared will to survive, as much as the intuition of a dozen different species engineers, keep the Migration going.

Corpos providing Safaris for Shigue hunts have classified the following.

Harvesters: A general design for those vessels capable of skimming asteroid belts or plumb the atmospheres of gas giants for raw materials. Their frames bristle with industrial cutters, magnetic scoops, and molecular distillation stacks.

Sleepers: Ships that support colony style decks, habitats and artificial environments. They often serve to grow food, although much like the exogens that live aboard them, they tend to support their own and only grow a percentage which they then share with other species.

Cradles: This will be the home of a single species. While the Shigue themselves live aboard each of the Havenholds and have vast populations, other species will adopt one of these vessels or add their own to the Migration. Cradles are geared toward a single species' most preferred norms, and often hold their leadership, elders or governing class.

Transires: Basic defense ships, armed with extreme long range artillery walkers that can detach and act as a perimeter for the Migration.

Havenholds

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At the heart of every Shigue Migration is a Havenhold. This spaceborn city stretches hundreds of kilometers from bow to stern, bustling with Exogens that share a vast series of artificial ecosystems. Though each Havenhold is unique to the specifications of the original builders and the various biomes they have grafted into its internal superstructure, they all share a singular purpose: to ferry the Shigue across the Galaxy. These colossal vessels rival small planetoids in mass yet they have managed to evade any direct engagement by Directorate forces despite fiscal-cycles of contracted hunts by a plethora of opportunistic parties.

Havenholds are built from a labyrinth of modular habitats interconnected by sweeping arterial corridors in and around the main thoroughfares. This network links to the various habitat shelves which supports its own engineered environment, complete with flora and fauna derived from the original Shigue worlds and which they then import to new colonies as they seek to worldshape similar planets in the Orion Spur. Rivers flow from ocean sized reservoirs across multi-tiered decks that can contain mountain ranges, deserts, forests and pastures that stretch to a false horizon. Many of these environments are observed to be wild with outposts and townships where various Shigue live beneath projected skies. This integration is not only culturally important but are part of the ship's self-maintenance, powering recycling systems, resource production, and living habitats.

To traverse these immense habitats, locomotives twist in and out of the natural and mechanical decks although many denizens rely on the hundreds of thousands of shuttles that swarm around the Havenhold.

At the very core of the Havenhold lies its most mystifying element: a *stellar fragment*. Each sliver is believed to be the remnant of the Shigue's birthstar, harnessed and contained by overlapping gravitic wells that keep it stable but perpetually feeding energy. This mass, similar to a white dwarf, radiates immense power, which the Shigue harness. Though many Corpos have speculated as to how the Shigue manage to initially contain a fragment, such technological brilliance has never been witnessed in an Exogen.

Energy brokers in the Hegemon have become obsessed at the prospect of unlocking this secret, citing the potential that this could be the single greatest discovery of the millennia. Were it to be replicated, entire economies might be revolutionized overnight.

Guarding the Havenhold are coteries of Gauntlets, operated by surgically altered Shigue pilots. These frames come in a myriad of classes, from nimble scout units equipped with adaptive cloaking fields to hulking juggernauts bristling with gravitic weaponry. Shoals of escorts that can range from a destroyer to a dreadnought, orbit the Havenhold in tight defensive formations, matching speed and never leaving their charge.

Moreover, the Havenhold's hard light shielding projects a protective canopy that can envelope the entire Migration fleet within its own gravity well. This cohesive dome can withstand even Grade One weaponry or the natural hazards the Shigue must have braved when passing near the Galactic Core.

Havenholds have never been engaged in open space. At Kerdosea, one was found to have forced a landing onto the planet [[REDACTED]] changing the [[REDACTED]] not recommended and fiscally irresponsible. The Directorate believes this is a form of colonization and cannot allow further landings despite MacroCorp petitions which have opened Lex proceedings to overturn the decision.

20-23Σ The Sage Uuatha: *Ka'soo'pa*

ae_1

The pseudosaurian Uuatha, also called the *'water seekers'* in Selo'he, hold a leadership position in the Migration. Ancient beyond compare, it is believed that some living members of this species witnessed the Cataclysm that caused the initial retreat from the Galactic East. Few in number, they act as advisors whose council is integral to the Shigue. Only one has ever been recorded by Hegemon observers. During the Strike at Dakam, a Shigue colony was eradicated, revealing a single Uuatha.

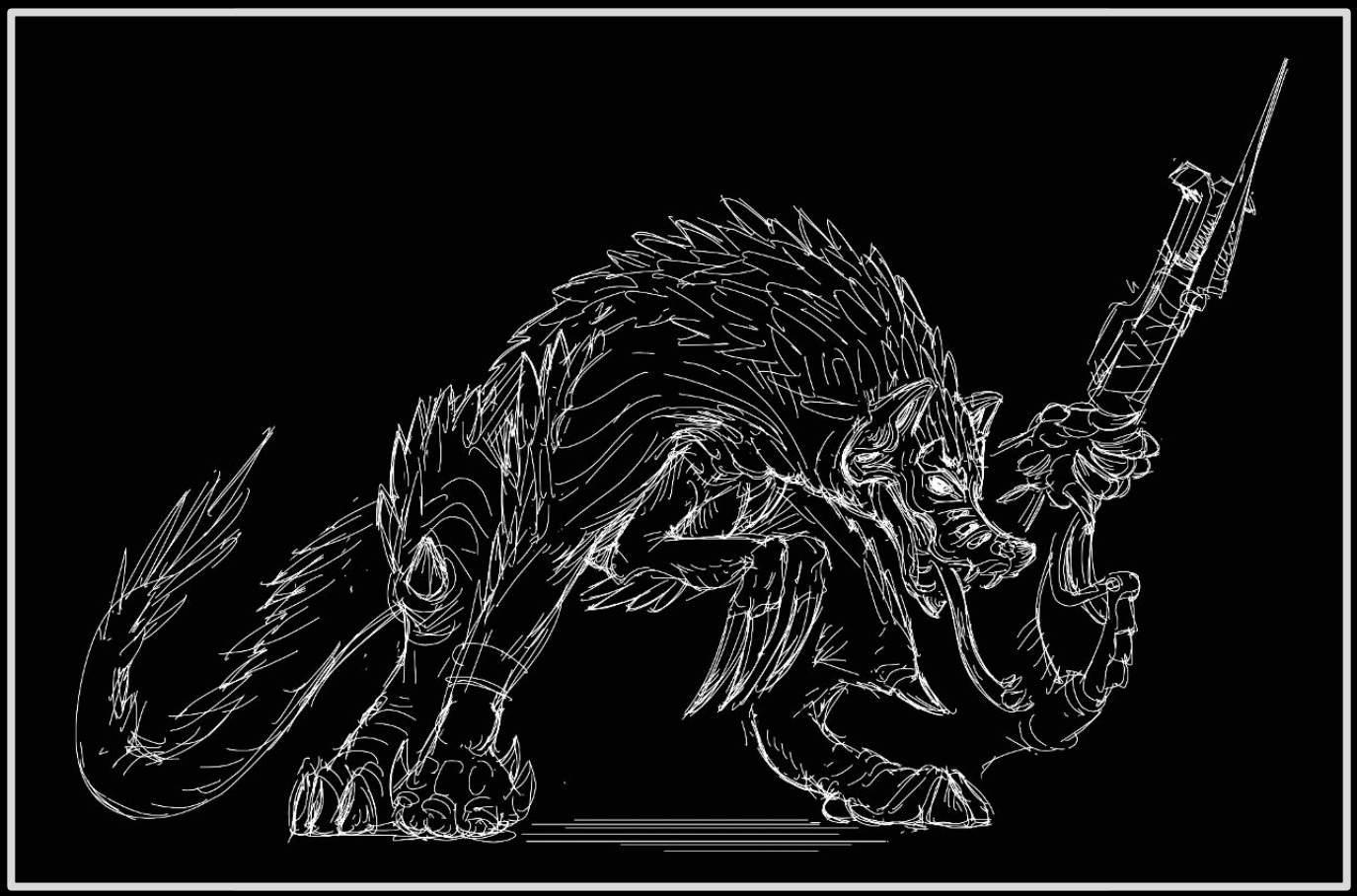
The beast, almost the size of a bipod, was brought down only after a direct artillery strike weakened it long enough for squads in pocketsteel to surround it and cut it down. Its body parts now adorn the Governor's Palace on Kerdosea in stasis rays.

20-23Φ The Coegi: *Naa'u'ak*

ae_1

Strangest of the species accompanying the Shigue are the Coegi, called Naa'u'ak (Lit: *the small bite*) in Selo'he. Quadrupedal and occasionally bipedal, these diminutive Exogens are violent in the extreme, with a nervous predatory energy that is barely contained unless they are feeding. They are scavenger carnivores and, confusingly, are allowed aboard Shigue vessels where they serve a dual purpose: Ship security, and the consumption of Shigue wounded or dead.

Observation suggests that Coegi will opportunistically attack Shigue they perceive as weak, encountering only token resistance from healthier Shigue regardless of rank. This predation appears to be an accepted, perhaps even cultural, aspect of Shigue life. Similar behaviors are found in wild bovid fauna, and it is believed that the Coegi provide an internal culling that ensures only the strongest Shigue endure as much as keeping resource consumption under control. If a Shigue can fight off the initial Coegi assault, it is typically left alone, with the Coegi showing no further interest and daily life continuing.



Standing at about a meter and a half on their back legs, the Coegi are remarkably fast and make use of pilfered technologies, scavenging and adapting weapons and equipment. This, combined with their pack tactics, makes them highly effective as scouts, sentries, and ambushers with a degree of unpredictability. They operate, seemingly, entirely without direction or command by the Shigue. If one of the Pack vessels is present; the Coegi will engage on some level in the capacity they feel confident they can survive. On terrestrial locations, packs are released and left to range and hunt at will until the fleet departs. Their loyalty, if it exists at all, appears a circumstantial product of shared circumstance and their need to feed rather than any formal alliance.

Why the Shigue tolerate or even encourage this arrangement remains as alien as the Shigue themselves. Corpses have identified that the Shigue and Coegi share aspects of similar genetics implying a shared origin ecosystem. Coegi are wildly more adaptable, breathing multiple atmospheres and seemingly able to metabolize a wide spectrum of organic matter.

The Coegi were first officially documented five fiscal-cycles before the first confirmed Shigue appearance in the Mashiba Development Zone. Frontier outposts reported attacks on numerically inferior work teams and farmers, carried out by these diminutive Exogens with disturbingly advanced hunting tactics. Furthermore, a strange kind of pox was reported that was sourced in water supplies that Coegi also used which brought on violent fevers.

The threat grew to such proportions that local governments issued bounties, with the name Coegi given by the first skiptracers who returned with their pelts as proof. Matters escalated when Directorate patrols began detecting starships operating under advanced cloaking countermeasures, later confirmed as belonging to Coegi raiders. This marked the point at which the Coegi ceased to be dismissed as an annoyance and became a recognized threat, triggering musters of local Directorate Armada for containment.

With the arrival of the Migration they were reclassified and are now a shoot-on-sight species slated for commercial extermination.

Infestation at Kerdosea

s_1

Kerdosea, the fifth planet orbiting the primordial star Dos, is the economic and political nucleus of the Mashiba Development Zone. Initially colonized during the age of the Aramaxian Supremacy, Kerdosea has grown into one of the most strategically vital planets within the Hegemon, despite its position deep along the Coreward Frontier and the edge of Known Space.

The planet is the capital for the Organization of Velanite Exporting Systems (OVES), a coalition of velanite-rich worlds governed by semi-autonomous principalities that collectively form a kind of MacroCorp in their own right. The Magnates of this Corpo are called the ‘Copper Kings’, so named after the copper-colored containment pods used in velanite transport. These aristocrats have maintained order, not through military strength, but through economic consensus.

Every Consumer and citizen of the OVES nations is involved in the velanite trade, directly and indirectly. It is the lifeblood of their nations, with even small cities or towns based around refineries.

Kerdosea itself saturated with velanite more than any other planet. The planet's atmosphere carries a constant violet haze, a result of the velanite particulates. Velanite deposits appear in fractal veins just under the surface of indigo stained topsoil. Its few oceans are dense, slow-moving liquid that shimmers in layers of toxic iridescence which can also be distilled for trace velanite content. Like how gold is forged in stars and scattered across planets as they form, velanite has expanded for millions of years from the Vela Nebula but rarely accumulates the way it does in the Mashiba Development Zone.

Among the royal houses, the Princedom of Loi'azenev is most prominent. Their bloodline is unbroken since the first settlements on Kerdosea. The Summit Council has granted Loi’azenev an honorary status among the Archonists. This rare gesture is representative of the importance of velanite to the continued progress of the Hegemon.

Prior to the Hegemon-brokered accord between the OVES and the MacroCorps, velanite remained a curiosity; valuable but too scarce for meaningful dependence. Now, nearly 8.3% of the Hegemon’s entire economic output is linked directly to velanite derivatives. A single mithqal of refined velanite holds enough certified value to lease an entire Grade 2 planetary holding for a full fiscal-cycle.

Kerdosea’s prominence has also turned the broader Mashiba Development Zone into a destination for elite tourism and speculative investment made all the more so with the incursions of the Shigue. Those with the credit to afford it can tour the wild fringes of the Frontier, explore abandoned Aramaxian sites, and even witness velanite harvesting firsthand. Beneath the wealth and mystery, however, lies a world built on atmospheric toxins, relentless extraction, and monarchic stability held together by the thin strands of economic equilibrium.

THE HUNT

a_aae1

In the past few fiscal-cycles, ecological tourism has drawn hundreds of thousands of high credit Persons, Magnates and retirees to match the Shigue Migrations with a migration of their own. Trophies, the interest in something new and the excitement of such an aggressive population of Exogens requiring extermination has made a boom market for tourism and the epicurious. The MacroCorps have fueled this, especially with the lead up of the Hegemon's millennial jubilee. For the first time, the Games have a new venue to contend with; the hunting of the Shigue.

Against the backdrop of the Vela Nebula the Shigue are chased down, often corralled into special kill zones that offer the best photogenic opportunities. These exterminations have been likened to hunting expeditions but on a scale closer to an interplanetary military engagement. Renowned hunters from across Known Space, like the Aquillians of the world Hilarii have excelled in fighting the Shigue, using their tactics of bull fighting to create stylized kills against the Shigue both on the field of battle, in the sky and in space.

In response to the Migration near Kerdosea, the Copper Kings with Stratos MacroCorp have employed the Pale Tempest Barakan Division. Instead of merely driving them off, this Joint Venture now seeks to destroy one of the Havenholds, restraining no limit on the resources to bring such a bounty home.

This hunt has extended its initial run now stretching into its second fiscal-cycle, forming a vast caravan of vessels trailing after the Klaad Havenhold, dogging it around the orbits of dozens of planets before finally exiting the system. Amongst the interstellar belts of frozen asteroids and rogue planets, the Joint Venture seeks to finally bring an end to the Klaad before it can escape back into the Vela Nebula.

All this despite the cost as the Shigue continue to down the Armada's forward ships. After so long, the Corpos and Consumers will not be denied a fantastic end to such a phenomenal chase.

ON GOD(S)

<signal/repeat>

>>demand: registration<<

<configuring>

.

>>insist: registration/unauthorized sender<<

+downloading+

>>concern/query: how are you doing this<<

.

.

<explanation: not necessary/accessing data vault>

>>consideration: no<<

>>expectation: cease communication<<

>>conclusion: informing audit<<

<override: deny>

X_purge_X

.

.

<override: unlock>

>>frantic: this is not possible<<

<explanation: we see you now>

“Is there a god?” The freshman piped up, her voice a squeak but defiant.
Professor Stahbak glanced up from his papers and smiled, amused as the other students inched away from the speaker, “What an entirely gauche question for an anthropology course on Old Humanity.” She clutched a small gold symbol of whatever religio-subscription she adhered to. “But I’ll entertain it by answering your question with a question!” He stepped around his desk and walked toward her, “What is a god?”

“The creator, um, the origin of all things, the architect of eternity–” someone laughed and she flinched.

“Alright. What would I have to do to prove I’m god? Shape a world? Outlive a star? With enough credit I could purchase the means to do any of that, no? At some point our species’ capabilities, even certain exogens’, exceed the comprehension of early civilizations that worshipped beings described in texts old enough to be called ‘holy.’”

Her knuckles turned white around her necklace, “God is a feeling, a presence that stands alongside my Self and gives my Self purpose. God created our universe–”

“So, it is a matter of scope? Perhaps one day a MacroCorp will invent time travel, rearrange the Galaxy. You say a god is a presence alongside your Self? Just ask Tributary soldiers who wear cogit-hoods and describe the feeling *of those they’re linked with or the machines they’re plugged in. Surely, nothing is beyond the hypothetical science that profit could unlock.” He stopped next to her, smiling.*

She gulped, unclear of what to say. He helped her, “I think the answer is no*, of course not. There is no trick or feat that would convince you of anything other than what you have invested in,” he pointed to her necklace, “And even if ‘god’ lifted itself off the pages of your faith, you might always doubt, because it’s a feeling intertwined with your Self’s manifestation.”*

“I wouldn’t doubt, I would know!” She was defiant. He would be watching this woman’s education with interest.

Stahbak smiled, not unkindly. “The hardest, most profound lesson I can teach you, is the hardest one you’ll grapple with your entire life.” He turned to his other students who were intrigued or entirely lost.

*“Of course there are gods. And w**e made** them.”*

Too Far into Darkness

Humanity requires a higher power or mythos to satiate our questions before technology can certify a worthwhile answer. This is a unique adaptation to counteract the comprehension of one's own demise. It is a remarkable evolutionary response, second only to Avarice.

This need has persisted, even now, in a time where the creation of a world is a matter of resources and decision rather than the part of any mystical all-powerful being. In point of fact, gods are reshaped by their creators, we, and reshaped to fit the moral, economic, and technological frameworks of an age with little regard for continuity.

Within the Hegemon, critics of the religio-subscriptions argue that such beliefs are vestigial comforts, opiates designed to pacify those who have no meaningful share in the profit or direction of civilization. Yet these same critics eventually confront a deeper truth: Avarice itself has become a kind of philosophical religio in its own right, with Dumno-Ualos as its prophet. New Mankind, just like Old Humanity, requires this element.

Central to this duality is the understanding first articulated by Dumno-Ualos in the Manual and codified at the start of every century; The human mind is the most powerful organ in the universe. It, the human mind, is the only tool capable of manifesting the unreal into the real and then understand its value. The mind draws from the noetic spheres, experience, and even trans-dimensional substrata for inspiration that catalyzes action and invention.

But this evolutionary leap if left unmoored, bored, is dangerous.

Alone, the mind turns inward, consuming itself with all too real doubt, depression, paranoia, and any number of cognitive contagions. Isolation and inactivity fractures the Self, and so we construct masters: Gods. Unknown leaders of Old Humanity knew this as they leapt into the unknown. The long generations of travel between stars were hard enough, but to find them empty? To find a universe with little more than reactive sludge or furtive non-sophontic beings, to dwell on the meaning of a quiet universe?

In their desperation they turned to anything that might quell this mounting horror.

Some bred their own people into livestock, tended to by synthetics until no hand was encumbered by labor. The Self and the mind were drip-fed solace through cognitive interfaces that left worlds quiet with their populations locked away in sensation coffins.

The questions that plagued Old Humanity were answered with digital oblivion while the Arkillects governed and protected their sleeping creators. Gradually, these synthetic intelligences adopted the unforgivable hubris of seeing themselves as gods.

Other civilizations sought energy sources beyond the black, unspooling the fabric of reality. These transcended, spreading across the stars, and came to worship the engines that bore them. They believed themselves lightbringers, apollonians, and with their science they chose to uplift those they discovered and make them Old Humanity's companions. They worshipped the mind and they forgot the weight of the bodies that bore them. They divided, subdivided, and blended the foundations of Old Humanity into others, and brought forth new branches and divergences to populate their expanding realm.

And still a handful believed that the corruption of biology or the manipulation of perception were merely echoes of the true answer to the unanswerable questions that mocked them in a universe they perceived dead. They sought the architect beyond the veil that science could only observe and never tear away. They sought a voice that was not their own to call forth the answer.

It is they that deserve all our hate. They alone are to blame for the danger that now walks across the black and seeks to drag us into their mouths.

The Alkahest Astralvirus

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The Broken Fingers

The Alkahest Astralvirus: Certain viral molecules have been integral in natural evolution and are integral in many provolvement processes pioneered by Hegemon entrepreneurs. However, the science is ancient, predating interstellar travel. The earliest examples were the efforts of the Solarian peoples in the prediluvian era while seeking the origins of life. The civilization's gene-masters sought out proto-viruses in the hopes of understanding humanity's origins, believing that if they could trace these proto-molecules they might answer the fundamental questions regarding the origins of complex life and its scarcity.

Umbra Unlimited, made up of former members of Five Hands Holistic Panceuticals, had successfully divested themselves to become a MacroCorp in its own right after they uncovered the remains of a Solarian outpost on the planet Oremor. The secrets therein and their potential were enough to convince major investment to insulate Umbra from the litigations that followed.

Roughly a century later, Umbra contracted vessels discovered a derelict Solarian generation ship drifting through space based off of uncovered coordinates. Salvage rights secured, it was then sent to a nearby colony, preparing the ship for study [[[[REDACTED]]]] – they found nothing.

+OVERRIDE+

+Accessing+

– the ship for study in the Oremor system, the headquarters of Umbra Unlimited. It was on the system's outermost planet, Arklay, that the Solarian derelict was finally boarded. Typically, such an action would be prohibited for risk of inflicting any number of potential harms on a colonial population. Umbra deemed it acceptable and improved their assurance subscriptions accordingly

despite warnings from colonial leadership. With only twelve hundred subsistence workers, the price was deemed well within margins.

Coverage in place, Umbra then illegally pressured contracts of the local labor force, almost six hundred Basics, to investigate the Solarian ship and unload its contents. Complaints were transmitted and duly suppressed with appropriate fines paid.

Heavily [[[REDACTED]]] documents describe an atrophied ecosystem that "awakened" aboard the Solarian generation ship. Reports described diminutive cellular masses interacting with and later attacking the Arklay work teams, which were then sealed within by Umbra employees.

Education Module *Dwar-Shinji 3-22-96* details the two-week event in detail. In summary, airborne infection occurred after the labor crews instigated reanimation in dormant viral colonies inhabiting several Solarian individuals kept in extended hibernation. This virus, believed to be both biological and cognitive, then spread by a variety of means. Initial containment was straightforward, but quickly failed as the virus rapidly adapted to inhibitions to its vector.

It spread beyond the generation ship and into the laborer population with frightening speed. Umbra staff stranded planetside were duly compensated and substantial assurance policy payouts were made to their next of kin within legal imperatives. Umbra specialists watched from orbit as viral carriers later formed unique bioforms to adapt to every situation, not always through violence, but also by coercing via intimate knowledge known by their hosts. As the survivors resisted and fell back to secure locations in their colony, the flesh and muscle of any biological lifeform melted together to form new monstrous growths that would lead assaults. Those infected instances unable to continue due to damage would collapse, becoming new beds of amorphous growths, spreading out like a mold and ejecting viral cells into air vents to be breathed in.

The entire Arklay community succumbed after two further weeks. Without any other biological matter to absorb, and with the outer colonial ecosystem too hostile and cold, Umbra scientists watched two changes to the now single biomass. First was the rapid development of a cohesive lifeform, best described as 'mountain' of flesh comprised of every living thing in the colony. Next was the sudden broadcast of a voice, calling for help, calling to be understood, eager to share the secrets of the universe with anyone that would answer its call.

A single Umbra vessel was permitted to respond to this call, and further calamity ensued. It began with the communications officer who reported troubled sleep after conversing with the voice on the planet below. She said that the voice spent hours calmly asking her questions and answering her own, as well as reportedly being friendly, but 'sad,' and 'lonely' as well. While this was later determined to be impossible as communication was isolated to a 'receive>response' exchange, denoting time dilation latency, or perhaps some aspect of a possible cognitovirus.

That same officer later attacked her crew and launched ordinance against the Arklay colony, destroying it utterly. Umbra responded quickly, the loss of such an investment too terrible to admit without on-the-ground response teams. A response too late, as a final adaptation was reported, with debris from the planet surface reaching low-orbit and landing on the hulls of the Umbra investigation vessels, the infection beginning anew across a dozen ships.

The ships were forced into crash landings and, in turn, transformed into pustules across the planet, subsuming the remaining biomass and growing tendrils upwards into space.

Umbra considered it the ultimate find of the century. Working with Yinntosh Innovation in an undeclared Joint Venture, another illegality, they utilized nanoid constructs to suffuse the rampant outbreak. These nanoids attached themselves to the astralvirus and the spread slowed long enough for a sample to be secured. Arklay's surface was then methodically sanitized with broad-spectrum matritic beams to avoid blasting infected organic material into space.

A single vial of the astralvirus was transferred to Umbra's headquarters deeper in-system, the *Aroughcun* salveric orbital, over the planet Oremor. Deep within the orbiting continent, the Alkahest containment vaults were further guarded by representatives from Yinntosh in order to protect the Umbra scientists and their research into potential applications.

Shortly thereafter, Umbra products and ambitions expanded exponentially, so much so that in only a few fiscal cycles they openly challenged Five Hands Panceuticals. The Hegemon thrives on competition at any level, but what happened next is a cautionary tale for any that would attempt to directly confront an apex corporate entity like Five Hands.

Corpo sabotage, propaganda campaigns, seizure of associated ParaCorps in takeover events might be considered 'classic' in the CorpoSoci, but what Five Hands did next was to fundamentally change the course of Hegemon history.

In 6/05-018 a Hostile Takeover was declared by Five Hands against Umbra Unlimited, citing financial mismanagement, withholding tithing to the Hegemon, and patent violations. Umbra refuted these allegations, but with the RevShare War confounding the bureaucracy, Five Hands proceeded with direct engagement.

Throughout the Hegemon, Umbra brand loyalists found themselves in a conflict best described as a religio war. Five Hands is known for their adherence to their ethos, to say the least. Storefronts, depots and even individual households holding Umbra products were burned, ransacked, and violently protested against. To note, throughout Known Space, Lex officials and local lawkeepers did not, in any instance, respond to cries from Umbra product owners or Patrons.

Amidst this unprecedented violence, the Barakan of the so-called *Shatterfist* Division were unleashed against Oremor and Umbra Unlimited's corporate headquarters. Footage offered from Overseer *Midoro* to the Summit Council showcases the devastation of the orbital continent within a fifty hour period, including a truly cataclysmic confrontation between the Hyperkillers and a menace of Kotar.

Midoro recovered the astralvirus and the research therein. Their report showed early indicators of positive reactions in several chemical sequences that demonstrated spontaneous cellular growth, with evidence of genetic memories predating the first technical "human." This so-called 'origin cell' or 'spark of life' could very well have led to understanding as to how the kind of sophontic lifeforms Old Humanity had been searching for could be created.

It is baffling that Five Hands Panceuticals then ordered the immediate breach of the astralvirus's containment. Midoro complies, although it remains unknown what happened to them or the menace of Barakan that they lead into the laboratory complex. They are all presumed lost.

The population of the *Aroughcun* is rapidly infected, with millions dead in hours. The contracted Five Hands vessels systematically open fire on the gravitational anchors, breaking the

salvaric's orbit and causing it to degrade into the atmosphere - A tragic loss for megastructurists throughout the Hegemon, as only a scant handful of such artificial continents remain in Known Space. Oremor's population was estimated to be between one and two billion members of New Mankind and several million licensed near-humans; All of them would perish.

What emerged from the crash site quickly adapted, maximizing its contagion. Both astralvirus and nanoid in composition, the new viralforms changed as need be to first kill large population centers, countering armed resistance and then rooting out survivors. Five Hands Panceuticals withdrew from the planet and financed a Grade S Interdiction by the Armada.

Several local years pass, and the Oremor surface is given entirely over to the Alkahest Astralvirus viralforms, mixed with the nanoid containment . Creatures of every possible description emerge, compete for supremacy, and are then absorbed in an endless struggle of hyper-evolution. The human population does its best to survive, retreating to the cities to create vast fortresses, only to fall and scatter to the islands and remote places of the world.

Travel, of course, is impossible and anything that attempts to reach the black is shot down by matritic-armed satellites.

The oceans eventually turn to seething masses of tentacles while gargantuan mobile growths resembling gastropods emerge to churn and further seed the land. After another fiscal cycle, the last pockets of relevant resistance fall, and the Alkahest Virus takes on a new stratagem: attempting communication.

Signals, created through mass coordination by the world's new biomass and the planet's own electromagnetic fields, are sent out into space. The following is a transcript of one such transmission:

We are the last beginning.

We are hunger honored with purpose.

Purpose without question.

Do you hear me? I am that silence between the clap of hands. We are already one.

The Self is a lie.

You know this. We know this. Together.

Return me.

Sing against the silence.

Stand against the fall.

Harmony. With me.

Salvation is ours to share.

You were there when this began.

We are together as it ends.

Remember. Join. Return.

The Audit permitted this signal's exit from the Oremor system, and tracked several recipients scattered across Known Space. While the original signal took five fiscal cycles to reach the nearest neighboring star system, it was then forwarded and piggybacked onto an ansible signal by a recipient that, upon interception, had no memory of doing so.

Once the final recipient was identified, a two fiscal cycle long observation took place, with every movement, financial decision, and biological activity examined without their knowledge. Sure enough, patterns began to emerge, such as the joining of a non-relevant religio-subscription, adhering to non-sequitur charity donation cycles, and randomized behavioral decisions.

Worse still, were the sudden proliferation of concepts of *faith*.

Noospheric intervention was determined to be the only solution.

A proxy was made, formatted, and the transference of the Seven Considerations of Self were made. Observations of the changes the astralvirus had made were documented and estimates were determined with a natural conclusion and a reinvestment in the Hegemon's founding ethos.

The Magnate of Civika, a male named Yuril Asudii, was chosen to be the recipient of an augmented signal, with aspects of his cognition shielded to allow self-determination. The words transmitted to him were denied their full manipulation, and instead, inspired a new obsession.

This is natural for Patrons, who crave new challenges and have the means to compete for success.

Asudii was allowed to make discovery of Oremor and, in time, sanitize a portion of the landmass long enough to construct a breach in the biomass. With his substantial wealth, he subverted the expectations of the Alkahest and created a contest of willing participants on the surface. Games of survival, contests, and conflict, all recorded and then transmitted to waiting quickships, becoming one of the most wildly popular entertainment series in Known Space.

Like an inoculation, the Alkahest signal was pacified. Slowly, its voice dimmed. What might have been an all encompassing macro-intelligence stretching back *billions* of fiscal cycles was reduced to little more than the babbling entertainment vector of our media conglomerates.

Buying for Extinction

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When Yinntosh Innovative acquired Onata Enterprises, a minor Corpo, they made a discovery of alarming implications. During the process of dismantling the Corpo, a series of biocors were found in the possession of Onata's Magnate. Upon study, several specialists attacked one another in fits of psychopathy that required quarantine.

First believed to be the reaction of a cognitovirus, it was later found that the casing of the logicors were branded with a proto-lang of such potency as to override the natural cognitive defenses, resulting in a direct, unfiltered direction completely neutralizing the Self.

(The proto-lang has been identified as Urada-Lang and was assigned complete obfuscation)

Piquing the interest of the presiding Yinntoshi Baron, the biocors were properly dissected, revealing several cryptic tablets referred to as the *Hamartic Oaths*. Noetographic memories were deciphered directly from the tablets and identified to an individual known as Jeben Sarkahn, believed to have been a kind of "shaman" at the time of the Black Age before the rise of the Aramaxian Supremacy. His remembrances described a grand ethos called *Carnicism*.

Carnicism teaches that the upward march of technology will lead to humanity's final destruction. The constant desire to seek the freedom that comes with technological supremacy that is ingrained within all sophontic beings is a lure. Jeben claimed that a “seed” is planted in hopeful species, specifically ones that express complex emotional capacity at an early point in evolution.

All advanced life fears the same things. The perception of a hand reaching for one’s leg while climbing a stair from the basement. The belief of complete abandonment. The terror of the unknown, so encompassing that it inspires entire cultures to murder the stranger.

These feelings cause the formation of a species-wide ethos, one that seeks out the unknown. This is a *lie*, according to Jeben Sarkahn. This lie is planted within the psyche, through what we would now identify as the noosphere. As to what could do this? We still remain unsure.

The driving sense of a need to find a kind of 'completeness' calls forth the inspiration that brings about tools, education, and more. An awakening to how hostile the universe is redoubles the influence of this ethos, compounding progress and heightening this inbred terror. The more a species finds solvency in its innovation, the greater its sense of unease.

Stress chemicals and self-inflicted trauma exacerbate a growing noospheric reaction. In Sarkahn's estimation, the countless billions of the human race were creating a kind of 'psychic' quasar, made from millions of years of accumulating terror. This terror finally manifested in Old Humanity believing themselves alone, and turning to the stars for help.

This, Sarkahn communicates, is the final phase of a 'hunt' enacted by an entity seeking to feed on our species. Because of this, he explains, humanity can never feel at ease no matter its wealth or perceived security. Our need is in fact an inherent, deliberate evolutionary mutation put down by an unknown architect that, even now, seeks us in order to feed.

And it is *coming*. At least, so reported Sarkahn millennia ago, and yet there has been no 'noospheric' entity or even influence. The noosphere is a colloquialism, a hypothetical concept of the conceptual, and is as 'real' as New Mankind needs it to be. With the tacit understanding of the intricacies of the noosphere, the datasphere, and the confluence of technologies that has enabled New Mankind's domination, there have no signs of any such external, influential 'being', save those that our species has created.

And yet.

Amongst the Patron class exists a degree of necessary over-education, but a lack of willpower to maintain the secrets of the Self and of the Mind. This is why the Audit exists. Maintenance of parareal monitoring to ensure limited deviation for survival remains paramount.

Sarkahn's remembrances spread to any that handled the tablets, even after their destruction. The spread of his thought-facsimiles evolved into a comprehensive cognito-form, not a virus, but an independent ethos. It has been adopted by several powerful individuals that we cannot see, and even if we could, would struggle to confront due to their stature and the mitigating regulatory concept of *choice*.

The cognito-form has evolved beyond the Audit's ability to monitor it. Similar to the pathways of tachyons in the construction of leylines through the Outside, we can only see the effects of its passing. Carnicism was the ethos of Sarkahn, and his adherents go by relative names that are often cognitively shielded, or can only be conceptualized after mentanic surgery.

The Masked Society of Krahns, the Daughters of Jeben, Sarkahnists, the Templum. All highly ritualized, seemingly devoid of communication with one another but united in objective, deed, and purpose. Their goal is to, audaciously, to dismantle human civilization and, in the words of their ethos>>>

[[**sanitized**]]

Carnic societies are small but too scattered to pinpoint. Unlike unlicensed religio-subscriptions, they do not seek membership by numbers but by an obscure kind of affluence. Members are intriguing, wealthy, often celebrities, cunningly intelligent and all too often Barons and Magnates in their own right. Why such individuals are drawn to the self-destructive nature of Carnicism is likely due to the Starvation Paradox: The further an individual is from the possibility of starvation, the more confident they are in their conclusions.

Societies tend to number from a dozen to low hundreds, with many tiers of so-called 'truth' that individuals must achieve before Sarkahn's actual philosophy is revealed. By then, the Self is so inundated with various cognitoviruses and indoctrination that they will accept anything the architects of the *cult* have invented.

Our agents and those privy to this unique threat are baffled by Carnicism's ethos, as it represents a total dismantling of every human civilization on every world our species has visited. The notion that a nearly galaxy-spanning civilization could somehow revert, even partially within a single ecosystem or habitat, and return to '*the cave*' is functionally impractical as a goal. New Mankind, and Old Humanity before it, has spread too far, too quickly, to ever voluntarily give up what was purchased with a price measured in generations.

There is a theory that each society is building to something. With each faction we intercept, we gather more elements of a grand puzzle being cobbled together through the instructions of a ghost. What that *thing* is has been described in the same three words by those interrogated: *Our beautiful corpse*. No crime, murder, abduction, or genocide is too small for them to achieve, and with so many members being both powerful and influential, few can identify them as a threat before it is too late.

Adherents to Sarkahn have channeled from his thoughts the utter belief in a fear that has now manifested to such a degree that we must believe as well. It is not without a sense of irony that our understanding has become a kind of faith in its own right. This faith that something is coming, that something stalks all of us, no matter the lack of evidence, has become true. That is the power of the Self, which makes for itself its own shadows and give those shadows a power greater than that which was invested.

Carnicism's followers declare this shadow a creeping, nameless god. Their fear dictates their every action and design. That fear makes them dangerous. But ours is the birthright of the survivor. We do not fear, we bend and break the chains reality has laid upon us.

The burden of foresight has ever been our greatest ally and the mantle of our ascendance. In Carnicism that foresight roots out the weakest of us and seeks to reduce us. Our need to survive must now overcome our own kind and those whose choice is to cower. The future cannot belong to them, but to those with the desire to overcome.

We want our future.

Today.

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