



A Brief History of the Universe

The universe teems with life: everywhere, worlds coalesce from gas and stardust; everywhere, life begins; everywhere, life evolves toward intelligence. On some of those worlds, intelligence reaches for the stars, and on some of those worlds, intelligence succeeds.

The history of the universe is the history of the exploits of many different intelligent species and their interactions (a euphemism for expansion, aggression, and conflict) with other intelligent species.

This history is divided broadly into **milieux** (the singular is milieu) or **eras** dominated by a few intelligent species and a few important controlling facts. Each milieu is focused on some specific step in the progress (or sometimes the decline) of interstellar civilization. And each milieu has a long-lasting and profound influence on future generations.

LONG AGO

Intelligence does not guarantee success. For eons, worlds evolved intelligent life, and each of these sophont¹ species lived and died without ever leaving its home system.

Eventually, some sophonts reached beyond their system to the nearest stars. Some established colonies on other worlds; some tried to explore the universe with generation ships. But all were restricted by their NAFAL² technology ships, and even long-lived races found the speed limits of the universe frustrating.

The Grandfather Era (300,000 BC)

The universe as we know it was irrevocably changed by a meek, even dull, pastoral intelligent race (the Droyne) which thrived some 200 parsecs from Earth in the long ago past.

Droyne society prospered at a comfortable, if not very high, technology level. They expanded to settle their homeworld and then achieved a plateau of civilization and of progress. Their society remained static (but reasonably happy) for thousands of years.

Then, some 300,000 years ago, one of the newborn Droyne was different... a mutation, incredibly intelligent, incredibly talented, and incredibly ambitious. In his early adulthood, he realized the full power of his talents and used them to conquer his world and his people (not that either really resisted). This super-genius (called Grandfather by modern anthropologists; they call this genius race the Ancients) then turned his attention to space, inventing powerful space ships and then even more powerful starships with jump drive.

He and his people ventured boldly out into the universe. He raised a family of super-genius children (nearly as smart as he) and they flew in many different directions to settle hundreds, even thousands, of worlds. Each of his children focused his genius on conquering some aspect of the universe.

One discovered a means of controlling stellar evolution; another invented a series of custom crafted elementary particles. Some of their discoveries and inventions had practical uses; others were mere curiosities.

Back on the homeworld, Grandfather invented immortality (for himself only it seems; he shared a lesser form of it with his children). He invented new energy sources, world shattering weapons, mind-boggling transportation systems, and pocket universes. He found an exploited loopholes in the laws governing the universe. Much of what he invented is still unattainable to modern man.

At some point, he and his children had a disagreement. It escalated into a galaxy-wide war that completely destroyed their civilization and their thousands of cities on thousands of worlds. The modern universe can see evidence of this Ancient War: worlds with poison atmospheres, worlds scrubbed clean of life and cratered by asteroid bombardments; worlds with ruined cities littered with high-tech devices that no longer work (that still perform incomprehensible functions).

But there is another, less obvious, far more important reminder of the Ancients. At some time in their travels, the Grandfather's children (or perhaps Grandfather himself) visited Earth and carried away several thousand near-intelligent cavemen. They must have been useful in some obscure way because these humans were transported to hundreds of worlds.

At the end of the Ancient War, their worlds lay in ruins, but their humans lived on. Each of those planets became a new world which humans conquered and on which they created a unique yet human culture. Today, humans inhabit many of the worlds of Charted Space³.

The False Dawn (200,000 BC)

There was a point in time, after the Ancients, before the rise of Humaniti, when at least one other intelligent race rose to technological power, reached the stars, and then faded to obscurity.

From an undetermined homeworld somewhere in or near the Third Imperium, these sophonts reached out and settled approximately five thousand worlds (one world in four sectors over a region more than 3000 parsecs in diameter).⁴

Over the next 200,000 years the many worlds of the

¹ **Sophont.** An intelligent species. The term covers all intelligent species (including Humans). Alien covers all intelligent species except Humans.

² **NAFAL.** Not As Fast As Light. Contrast with FTL Faster Than Light.

³ **Charted Space.** A small part of one spiral arm of the Galaxy inhabited by humans (and others) and dominated by the Third Imperium.

⁴ These distances imply a 10,000 year journey from their homeworld to the farthest settled worlds. The NAFAL drives they used are mentioned (ambiguously) in their myths.

Kursae followed a common path: a downward spiral into a comfortable low tech, where they are today... sharing a common heritage of myths about their past.

The Vilani Era (9200 BC to 2300 AD)

The first of the human races to reach many stars was the Vilani. About 9,200 BC, they invented (discovered? stumbled upon?) the Jump Drive: the key to FTL. They kept their technology secret, and used it to create a star-spanning empire. Its 7000 year reign can be divided into three periods:

The Early Empire (about 9200 BC to about 5400 BC).

With a monopoly on FTL, the Vilani dominated both human and non-human cultures for dozens of light years around. The Early Empire was a time of expansion and easy domination.

Consolidation (about 5400 BC to about 4400 BC). As other cultures achieved higher tech levels they began to compete with the Vilani, and to resist their domination. The Vilani reaction was a series of Consolidation Wars which forcibly absorbed many worlds into the Empire.

Rigid Culture (about 4400 BC to 2300 AD). With Consolidation complete, Vilani society became a rigid, brittle culture dedicated to maintaining the status quo. Laws, politics, social pressure all emphasized conformity and resistance to change. Innovation and technological change were prohibited. Their four thousand year empire was drawing to an end.

First Contact (2000 to 2100)

In the 21st century, Terrans achieved interplanetary travel and by late century they had established bases throughout the solar system. About 2100, Earth invented the jump drive and reached the stars, only to find them already taken.

The Interstellar Wars (2100 to 2300 AD)

Fortunately for tiny Earth, the vast Vilani Empire ignored the Terran upstarts long enough for them to gain a foothold among the stars. Over the course of 200 years, the Vilani and the Terrans fought a dozen interstellar wars, each one seemingly inconclusive, but each one edging the Vilani Empire closer to collapse. In 2299, the Vilani were defeated so soundly that they surrendered.

The Rule of Man (2300 to 2750 AD)

Terra, with perhaps a hundred worlds in its confederation,

now faced the formidable task of ruling, as a conquered territory, the now collapsed Ziru Sirka, with 11,000 worlds. Terra created the Rule of Man: the Second Imperium, to govern the conquered worlds, often assigning mere lieutenants as governors of worlds, and naval captains to rule subsectors of 30-40 worlds.

The valiant effort was doomed from the start. Nothing, not technological innovation, not social change, not new blood, not threat of outside invasion, was sufficient to raise the former Vilani worlds from their cultural lethargy. Over the next 400 years, the worlds of the Rule of Man drifted deeper and deeper into a dark age.

The Long Night (2750 AD to 4550 AD)

When interstellar trade shut down, the Rule of Man collapsed as an interstellar government. Each world found itself on its own, living or dying on its own resources. Outpost worlds dependent on food or supplies simply died. Scattered starship trade kept other worlds alive, but after a few centuries, even the starships stopped running. Each world found itself alone in the sea of space, completely dependent on its own resources.

The Third Imperium (4521 AD to 5637 AD)

One world tenuously held on to its technology, its resources, and its knowledge, remaining a beacon of hope throughout the Long Night. Sylea began its own reconquest of the worlds of the former empire under the Starburst Banner of the Third Imperium. From a base of a dozen worlds, the forces of the Third Imperium began a systematic effort to recontact the 10,000 worlds of the old Ziru Sirka and bring them under one rule. Some accepted immediately; others hesitated, but none could resist the combined military might and economic incentives that the Imperium could offer.

The Imperium grew, and prospered. It expanded to rule thousands of worlds and dominate its neighbors, with trade if possible, with force if necessary. The Imperium's persistent expansion made it the central force to be reckoned with. Over the course of a thousand years, the Imperium grew to include most of the former First Imperium, plus other neighboring regions.

Ultimately, the Third Imperium reached its pinnacle of achievement: the Imperial Golden Age (1000 to 1116) of relative peace and great prosperity.

THE IMPORTANT ERAS IN HISTORY

Era	Important Players	typical date	Note	Notes
Grandfather's Children	Droyne	300,000 BC		
The False Dawn	Kursae	200,000 BC		1. As chronicled in Classic Traveller .
Ziru Sirka	Vilani	1500 AD		2. As chronicled in MegaTraveller .
First Contact	Terrans, Vilani	2100 AD		3. As chronicled in The New Era .
Interstellar Wars	Terrans, Vilani	2200 AD		4. As chronicled in T4 .
The Rule of Man	Terrans, Vilani	2500 AD		
The Long Night	- -	3500 AD		
Early Imperium	Syleans	4500 AD	4	
Aslan Border Wars.	Aslan, Imperial	4800 AD		
Vargr Campaigns	Vargr, Imperial	4850 AD		
The Barracks Emperors	Imperials	5100 AD		Dates shown are Earth-centric; local dates and calendars may vary.
PsonicSuppressions	Imperials, Zhodani	5300 AD		
The Golden Age	Imperial	5600 AD	1	
The Rebellion	Imperials	5636 AD	2	Important players are the major races which participate and shape events in the era.
Virus Era	-	5640 AD	3	
The New Era	-	5700 AD	3	
The Far Far Future	-	7500 AD		

This list is not comprehensive.