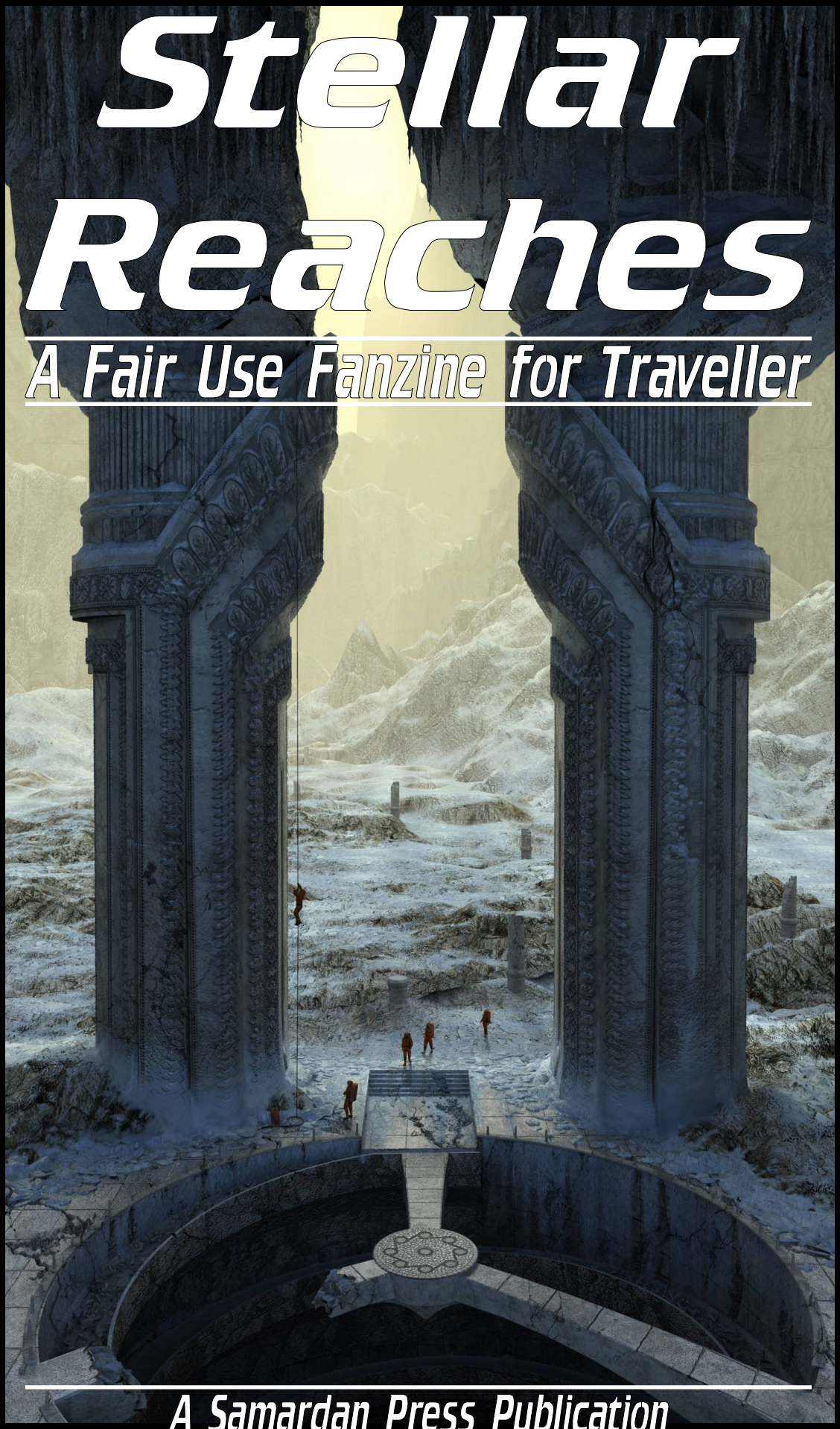
Stellar Reaches

A Fair Use Fanzine for Traveller



A Samardan Press Publication

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Issue #15, Summer 2011. Version 8.

Founder: Jason "Flynn" Kemp. Editor: 2005-2010

Our website: www.stellarreaches.com

Credits:

Cover Art: Protectorate Scouts explore the mysterious ruins on Righteousness, Sorrow subsector, Starbreak sector. The graphic is titled "Gate in an empire Aid. Expedition."© Alexandr Melentiev.

Visit his gallery at http://alexandr-m.cgsociety.org/gallery/590489/

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The Stellar Reaches fanzine's website can currently be found at **http://stellarreaches.nwgamers.org**. Please feel free to browse the site for more information, as well as back issues and other downloads as they become available.

The **BITS Task System**, although modified to include Traveller T20 difficulty classes, has been provided with permission by **British Isles Traveller Support (BITS)**. Its presence here does not constitute any challenge to the rights for this system, and we gratefully acknowledge Dominic Mooney and Andy Lilly for their generosity in allowing our use of this system to allow future adventures to be written in such a manner as to be more useful to all published Traveller rules sets.

For more information on BITS, check out their website at http://www.bits.org.uk/

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Letter From The Editor

Greetings, Fellow Sophonts:

In this issue of **Stellar Reaches**, we will be taking a break from the Empty Quarter. Instead, we will focus on a hand-made sector of my own design, 'Starbreak Sector', where a scenario regarding lost Imperial colonies with a deep anti-alien fixation is discussed.

Quite a number of details have been rewritten, to suit this particular scenario. The meaning behind the UWP codes has been changed, and instead of Classic Traveller, GURPS Traveller rules (Third Edition) has been used instead. I feel that GURPS Traveller (Third Edition) gives you more tools for detailed work, which is good for gearheads and exact Referee control over his universe. (But not so good at fast & fun roleplay, alas.)

The detailed descriptions that follow naturally reflect this writer's religious and political pre-occupations. If you aren't interested in Even More Background Material, do yourself a favour, and place this issue in the tl;dr – "too long, didn't read" – bit bucket.. If it's a good read for you, read it twice – and keep notes of every time I mention a secret, point out something that is hidden, imply that the full story hasn't been told, or make a gesture to some mystery. Modify this player bait for your own campaign!

While it can be read straight through, most people would benefit more by using the text as a source for idea-mining. Pick and choose from the various ideals discussed, shape the idea in a way pleasing to you, and stick it in your own world. This saves you time, and provides benefits to your Traveller campaign quickly.

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But perhaps you like the material, but you'd like to shift to focus, to the clash of individualism vs. collectivism, materialism vs. spirituality, Nordic vs. Slavic cultures, or unified monocultures vs. multicultural societies (and the various gradients of unity within any given multicultural society).

Please note that, while the fluff can be cheerfully rewritten to suit your needs, the astrography of the starmaps is going to make itself felt. It is specifically geared to

1) provide a range of mid-power systems to coreward, which a starship can easily circulate among,
2) provide a choke-point, which helps to guard the high-power system (Cianji),
3) provide a thinly populated region of systems, where two powerful but isolated systems reside,
4) provide a region of virgin stars to rimward, where new colonies can be planted.

The Referee should make the stellar astrography serve the story he wants to tell. The Classic Traveller universe certainly does so, with the Spinward Marches being isolated from the rest of the Imperium, providing story potential that other parts of the Imperium didn't have. It's why I preferred to develop the Empty Quarter rather than other sectors – and probably why the inner Imperial Core sectors are largely undeveloped, as of 2011.

Despite their immense wealth and importance, there isn't much to distinguish them from each other, so it's hard to dream up a particular 'character' for Gushemege, Dagudashaag, Fornast, Zarushagar, and Massila. There are exceptions: Ilelish and Core have some solid political characteristics – the 'Rebel' and the 'Ruling Centre', respectively – and so are not as generic as the others. Zarushagar is a "Referee preserve": GDW explicitly refused to develop this sector officially, leaving it to the individual gamers. Massila had some development in the MegaTraveller module Knightfall, but not much, frankly.

OK, enough obscure canon chatter from the 80s. Let's see something new!
Alvin W. Plummer
Editor, **Stellar Reaches** fanzine

BITS Task System

From pg. 8, BITS Writers' Guidelines June 1999. Copyright ©1999, BITS. All Rights Reserved.
T20 Open Game Content from the article "Extending the Task Resolution System to T20" Copyright 2003, Jason Kemp.

MegaTraveller (MT), Traveller: The New Era (TNE) and Marc Miller's Traveller (T4) all use a graduated system of task difficulty ratings – Average, Difficult, Formidable, etc. 'Classic' Traveller (CT) and GURPS Traveller (GT) use modifiers to the task rolls instead. Traveller T20 (T20) uses difficulty classes (DCs) to define target numbers for skill checks. The BITS Task System provides a simplified common ground for all these rule sets, using difficulty ratings with corresponding task modifiers for CT and GT and DCs for T20 as shown in Table 1. The means by which spectacular (GT: critical) success or failure are achieved are defined by the rule set used. Similarly, the GM should apply the rules for special tasks – opposed, co-operative, hasty, cautious, etc. – according to the rule set used. As always, these are only guidelines – the GM may alter any task roll as appropriate to enhance the game.

TABLE 1: TASK DIFFICULTIES

BITS Task Difficulty	T4 Difficulty	T4.1 Difficulty	GT Target Modifier	TNE Difficulty	MT Difficulty	CT Target Modifier	T20 DC
Easy	Easy (Auto)	Easy (1D)	+6	Easy	Simple	-4	10
Average	Average (2D)	Average (2D)	+3	Average	Routine	-2	15
Difficult	Difficult (2.5D)	Difficult (2.5D)	0	Difficult	Difficult	0	20
Formidable	Formidable (3D)	Formidable (3D)	-3	Formidable	Difficult	+2	25
Staggering	Impossible (4D)	Staggering (4D)	-6	Impossible	Formidable	+4	30
Impossible	(5D)	Hopeless (5D)	-9	Impossible	Impossible	+6	35
Hopeless	(6D)	Impossible (6D)	-12	Impossible	Impossible	+8	40

Ex. Maria Charles is forging a complex document, which the GM rules is a Staggering task. Maria has Forgery-4 (GT: Forgery-16, T20: Forgery +18) and the relevant attribute (MT, T4) is INT 10 (TNE: INT 9, T20: 15).
CT: Task success is normally 2D + Skill >= 8. Maria requires 2D + Forgery >= 12 (8 + 4 for Staggering difficulty). Alternatively, the GM may prefer to apply the target modifier as a negative modifier on the dice roll, i.e. 2D + 4 – 4 >= 8.
MT: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to MT's Formidable (15+), thus the task is 2D + Skill + (Stat / 5) >= 15. For Maria this is: 2D + 4 + 2 >= 15.
TNE: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to TNE's Impossible, thus the task is d20 <= (Skill + Stat) X ¼. For Maria this is d20 <= 3, i.e. (9 + 4) / 4 rounded down.
T4: Maria requires 4D <= INT + Forgery. (Note that T4's Staggering rating of 3.5D is ignored.)
GT: Maria requires 3D <= Forgery + Target Modifier, i.e. 3D <= 16 – 6.
T20: Maria requires d20 + 18 >= 30. (Note that the INT modifier is already factored into the skill check.)

Task definitions should always be used sparingly – the GM should be able to define the difficulty and required skills and equipment for most tasks using common sense. Where strange skills or equipment are needed, these can usually be listed, without requiring a full task definition. Where a full task definition is required, use the following format (you don't need to use the bold or italics formatting; plain text is fine):

To find a boar:
Difficult Recon (GT: Tracking), or
Difficult Hunting (T20: P/Hunting), or
Formidable Survival
+1 Difficulty if riding at full gallop.
+1 Difficulty if lost.
-1 Difficulty if moving slowly.
Spectacular Success: They have surprised a boar and have one round to act before it reacts.
Success: They have found boar tracks and can begin following them.
Failure: No tracks found.
Spectacular Failure: They have become lost.

+1 Difficulty indicates a harder task (e.g. an Average task becomes Difficult) whereas –1 Difficulty is an easier task (e.g. Difficult would become Average).

NOTE: This system has been extensively play-tested but suggestions for refinements are always welcome.

Starbreak Sector: A History

By Alvin W. Plummer

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The Imperial Winter Palace, on the Cianji moon of Xanadu, 1438 Imperial.
The graphic is titled "Caves of Tau Ceti"©Artur Rosa.
Visit his gallery at http://arthurblue.deviantart.com/gallery/#/d3ay1ah

For the Referee

Starbreak is an isolated, sector-sized sandbox set within the Traveller Universe, created to permit a tight focus on certain themes that interests this writer. I wanted a smaller universe, with just a few pocket empires, to increase Referee control (both large-scale and granular) of the setting, and boost the impact of PC actions. I maintain a link with the Official Traveller Universe, as I wanted to flesh out certain roads not taken in that universe. And I always wanted to list every ship in a sector, at least once. (But I heavily cheated here: there are only two billion inhabitants, so it can hardly be considered "a real Traveller sector".)

Generated with Joshua Bell's sector generator – found at http://travellermap.com/post.htm – a series of maps depicting six eras of the sector's development is included. It is designed to permit certain 'break points', so the Traveller group can roleplay a within particular astro-political scenario. The Referee is invited to rewrite the fluff to better fit his story – or, even better, use Bell's generator to build a future playground to his own specifications.

Outside of stellar generation, the Traveller ruleset of GURPS Third Edition is used. A fair amount of material – mainly Excel spreadsheets and GTS files (for use with the GRUPS Traveller Ship program, by Thomas L Bont) – is downloadable from the Stellar Reaches website: www.stellarreaches.com.

Starbreak Themes

- How empires live, and die, and the legacy they leave to build on.
- Is our common humanity sufficient to unite us? At what level?
- "The past is never dead. It's not even past." – William Faulkner

- Taming new worlds, and expanding the human cosmos.
    - Despite self-inflicted setbacks, progress continues.
- The Christian Commonwealth – two views
- "The team that makes the fewest mistakes is going to win nine times out of 10." – Jack Touhey
- How you think a war is going to end, and how it actually ends, are two very different things.
- Aristocratic authority – two views
- Expanding numbers and development has a price tag.
    - Smaller than the rewards, yes, but a price exists nevertheless.

A team of Cianji Scouts explore the hostile yet beautiful world of Lorem Ipsum, in the Vintage system, 1205 Imperial. **The graphic is titled "Between Clouds 8 and 9" ©Artur Rosa. Visit his gallery at http://arthurblue.deviantart.com/gallery/?offset=72#/d2ufv62**

Starbreak Astrography

This sector is of fairly low stellar density, with a very low density/rift running through the middle of the sector, referred to as The Starbreak. In the coreward and rimward regions of the sector, there are several mains: of course, the more heavily populated coreward regions are far more important for the sector.

Starbreak sector is located within the Milky Way galaxy, but roughly 170 parsecs from the planetary nebula NGC 6884: the nebula itself is about 4,000 parsecs from Sol System. (Astronomers differ on the exact distance: I'm using Wincell Chung's Galactic Map 2.0 as a rough guide, available here: http://www.projectrho.com/smap12.html#map04.)

As of 1500 Imperial, there are 291 starsystems (of which 192 are inhabited) within the sector, with a total population of two billion. Cianji and Sylea are the most populous worlds, with about 600 million each.

The mains are, in order of the number of stars:

- The Ball & Chain - 30 systems, in Mu and Wsi subsectors.
- The Artemsus Group – 27+? starsystems, in Yelloworld subsector.

- The Cianji Circle - 22 systems, in Nosso Nosso and Mu subsectors.
- The Wsiiers - 9 systems, in Wsi and Yelloworld subsectors.
- The Acroupa Sprawl – 7+? systems, in Nosso Nosso subsector.
- The Amber Chain - 11 systems, in Chamber subsector.
- The Liquid Stream – 11+? systems, in Chamber subsector.
- The Pollock Splash - 10 systems, in Glossalalia subsector.
- The Avalon Starstring - 7 systems, in Sorrow subsector.
- The Divine String - 7 systems, in Painted subsector.
- The Speckled Eggs – 5 systems, largely in Nosso Nosso subsector.
- The Trailing Filament – 5+? systems, largely in Yelloworld subsector.
- The Enya – 5+? Systems, largely in Chamber subsector.

A small cluster of systems within LightWaves subsector - Fenmou, Tanatelul, Tariri – are referred to as the Tri-Worlds. These systems are of major historical importance.

The Crooked Finger is not a true astrographic designation: in 1500, it refers to the chain of independent and unclaimed systems stretching from Stake/Spirare to Tikal/Dreamsong. The New Stars is the unofficial name for the systems rimward of the Starbreak, where the Protectorates are located.

It is important to note that one star is missing. Historians agree that one starsystem, Azumanga, existed in hex 1135, located in Sorrow subsector. While apparently sterilized in ancient times, the mainworld bore water and breathable air, and the Human Council hoped that it would be colonized eventually.

But it was not to be. In the 1340s, Human Council research vessels determined increasingly serious abnormalities, as normal space interacted with locally damaged jumpspace. It eventually proved impossible to jump into the system: the final research projects in Azumanga were executed by starships entering and exiting the system using specially constructed reactionless STL drives. When the Human Council publically predicted that the entire system would disappear in 1385 Imperial, they were widely ridiculed, and became a laughingstock when the year passed and nothing happened. The laughter stopped in 1392 Imperial, when the entire starsystem quietly disappeared without a trace.

In this region of space, there were a good number of worlds with breathable atmospheres, a strong sign of life. Yet, only a handful of these worlds actually hold life today. Disturbingly, the sparse fossil records available point to a simultaneous mass extinction event across the entire region of space rather recently, as little as 400,000 years ago according to most researchers. It seems that gamma-rays practically flooded the area at that point in time, but there are no pulsars within the sector that could have generated even a portion of the amount of energy needed.

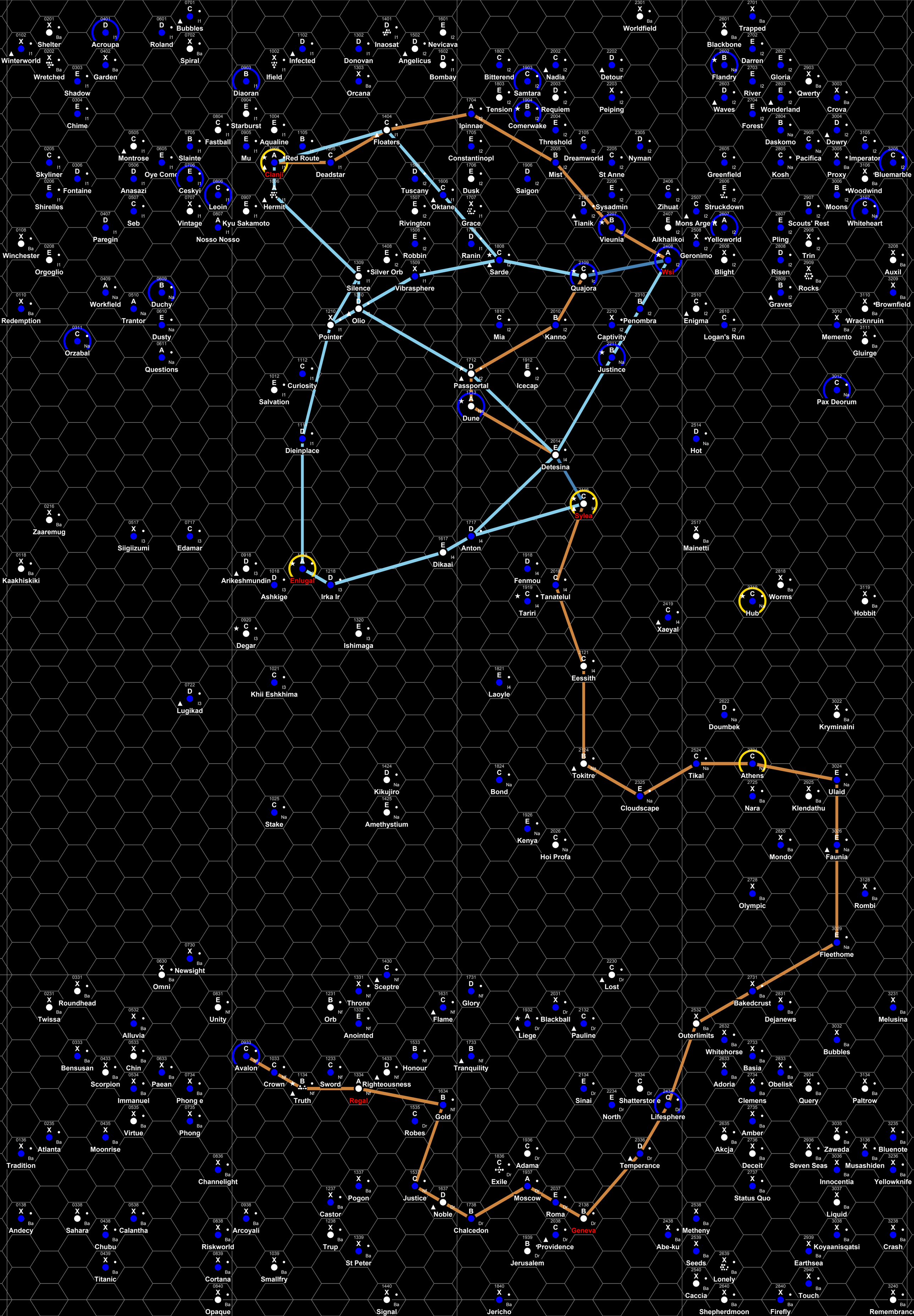
There are also an abnormal number of shattered world and gas giants – possibly, the manufacturing centres of the Tanatelul culture – with truly abnormal characteristics. Chemical traces in the examined sedimentary layers on certain worlds within Fenmou, Tanatelul, and Tariri systems – a.k.a. “the Tri-worlds” – suggests extensive biospheres and a high level of technology at about the 500,000-year mark (for about five centuries’ duration), and again at the 400,000 year-mark (enduring for about a thousand years), if the geological record is being read correctly.

Terminology:

Gravitationally locked jumpspace – a universal condition within Starbreak subsector, this makes jumping in hexes without a sufficiently large star impossible. Practically, this means that all jumps must start and end from a starsystem – no jumps to or from a void is possible. This deviancy in the texture of jumpspace is felt to be tied to the activities of the Tanatelul. They are known to have never gained jump travel, but they may have developed a different form of FTL travel that warped local jumpspace. Exactly how this was done is a matter of great controversy.

Starbreak – note that the sector shares the same name as the astrographic rift. Usually, the article prefaces the name of the rift. Some men, notably the Vilani, prefer to use the term “Starbreak Sector” instead of just “Starbreak” when referring to the sector.

Oikouménē – the local term for ‘known human-occupied space’: derived from the ancient Greek term, it was an important part of the ideology of Imperial Rome. It is similar to ‘Charted Space’ in Third Imperial terminology, but not the same: Charted Space includes *all* sophont territory, not just that of humaniti.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0201 X Ba Shelter
0202 X Ba Wretched
0303 E I1 Shadow
0304 E I1 Chime
0401 D I1 Acroupa
0402 X Ba Garden
0601 D I1 Roland
0701 C I1 Bubbles
0702 X Ba Spiral
0205 C I1 Skyliner
0206 E I1 Shirelles
0306 D I1 Fontaine
0505 C I1 Montrose
0506 D I1 Anasazi
0507 C I1 Seb
0605 E I1 Oye Como
0705 B I1 Slainte
0706 E I1 Ceskyi
0707 X I1 Vintage
0804 C I1 Fastball
0806 C I1 Leoin
0807 A I1 Kyu Sakamoto
0407 D I1 Paregin
0108 X Ba Winchester
0208 E I1 Orgoglio
0409 A Na Workfield
0510 A Na Trantor
0609 B Na Duchy
0610 E Na Dusty
0611 A Na Questions
0110 X Ba Redemption
0311 C Na Orzabal
0216 X Ba Zaaremug
0517 X I3 Siigiizumi
0717 C I3 Edamar
0118 X Ba Kaakhiskiki
0722 D I3 Lugikad
0231 X Ba Twissa
0331 X Ba Roundhead
0333 X Ba Bensusan
0433 X Ba Scorpion
0532 X Ba Alluvia
0533 X Ba Chin
0534 X Ba Immanuel
0535 X Ba Virtue
0630 X Ba Omni
0633 X Ba Paean
0730 X Ba Newsight
0734 X Ba Phong e
0735 X Ba Phong
0831 E Nf Unity
0235 X Ba Atlanta
0435 X Ba Moonrise
0136 X Ba Tradition
0836 X Ba Channelight
0138 X Ba Andecy
0338 X Ba Sahara
0438 X Ba Chubu
0538 X Ba Calantha
0439 X Ba Titanic
0838 X Ba Riskworld
0839 X Ba Cortana
0840 X Ba Opaque
0933 C Nf Avalon
1021 C I3 Khii Eshkhima
1025 C Na Stake
1033 C Nf Crown
1134 B Nf Truth
1233 C Nf Sword
1334 A Nf Regal
1424 D Na Kikujiro
1425 E Na Amethystium
1433 D Nf Righteousness
1533 B Nf Honour
1634 B Nf Gold
1535 C Dr Robes
1537 C Nf Justice
1637 D Dr Noble
1738 B Dr Chalcedon
1836 C Dr Exile
1936 C Dr Adama
1937 A Dr Moscow
2037 E Dr Roma
2138 B Dr Geneva
2038 C Dr Providence
1939 B Dr Jerusalem
1840 X Ba Jericho
1440 X Ba Signal
1337 X Ba Pogon
1237 X Ba Castor
1238 X Ba Trup
1339 X Ba St Peter
1331 X Nf Throne
1430 C Nf Sceptre
1231 B Nf Orb
1332 E Nf Anointed
1631 C Nf Flame
1731 D Nf Glory
1733 B Nf Tranquility
1932 A Dr Liege
2031 X Dr Blackball
2132 C Dr Pauline
2230 C Dr Lost
2334 C Dr Shatterstorm
2234 E Dr North
2434 C Dr Lifesphere
2336 D Dr Temperance
2134 E Dr Sinai
2438 X Ba Abe-ku
2538 X Ba Metheny
2539 X Ba Seeds
2540 X Ba Caccia
2532 X Ba Outerlimits
2731 X Ba Bakedcrust
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1821 E I4 Laoyle
1824 C Na Bond
1926 E Na Kenya
2026 C Na Hoi Profa
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2124 B Na Tokitre
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2524 C Na Tikal
2724 C Na Athens
2622 D Na Doumbek
2514 D Na Hot
2725 X Ba Nara
2925 X Ba Klendathu
3022 X Ba Kryminalni
3024 E Na Ulaid
2826 X Ba Mondo
3026 E Na Faunia
2728 X Ba Olympic
3128 X Ba Rombi
3029 E Na Fleethome
0918 D I3 Arikeshmundin
1018 D I3 Ashkige
1118 A I3 Enlugal
1218 D I3 Irka Ir
0920 C I3 Degar
1320 E I3 Ishimaga
1617 E I4 Dikaai
1717 D I4 Anton
1918 D I4 Fenmou
1919 C I4 Tariri
2018 C I4 Tanatelul
2419 C I4 Xaeyal
2519 C I4 Sylea
2719 C Na Hub
2818 X Ba Worms
3119 X Ba Hobbit
3012 C Na Pax Deorum
0201 X Ba Shelter
0401 D I1 Acroupa
0601 D I1 Roland
0701 C I1 Bubbles
0702 X Ba Spiral
1401 D I1 Inaosat
1601 E I2 Nevicava
1102 D I1 Infected
1302 D I1 Donovan
1502 D I2 Angelicus
1602 D I1 Bombay
1002 X I1 Ifield
0903 B I1 Diaoran
1303 X Ba Orcana
0904 E I1 Starburst
1004 E I1 Aqualine
1105 B I1 Red Route
1205 C I1 Deadstar
1404 C I1 Floaters
0905 E I1 Mu
1005 A I1 Cianji
1006 I1 Hermit
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1507 E I2 Rivington
1606 C I1 Oktane
0907 E I1
1408 E I2 Robbin
1508 E I2
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1509 X I1 Vibrasphere
1310 D I1 Olio
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1112 C I1 Curiosity
1012 E I1 Salvation
111 D I1 Dieinplace
1802 C I2 Bitterend
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2002 C I2 Nadia
2202 D I2 Detour
1803 E I2 Tension
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1704 A I2 Ipinnae
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2105 C I2 Dreamworld
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1906 D I2 Saigon
2205 C I2 St Anne
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2107 D I2 Tianik
2207 B I2 Vieunia
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1713 A Na Dune
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1002 X I1 X000000-B Ifield
1004 E I1 E9A6002-A Aqualine
1005 A I1 A66687B-A Cianji
1006 A I1 A000469-A Hermit
1102 D I1 D7294AA-9 Infected
1105 B I1 B595455-9 Red Route
1205 C I1 C796221-9 Deadstar
1302 D I1 D66336A-7 Donovan
1303 X Ba X64A000-0 Orcana
1401 D I1 DS00055-B Inaosat
1404 C I1 C240334-A Floaters
1502 D I2 D404142-7 Angelicus
1506 D I2 D452124-8 Tuscany
1507 E I2 E210122-8 Rivington
1508 E I2 E797321-B Robbin
1509 X I1 X271330-0 Vibrasphere
1601 E I2 E8B5000-8 Nevicava
1602 D I1 D7B0012-4 Bombay
1606 C I1 C437376-8 Oktane
1707 X I1 X000265-A Grace
1708 D I1 D755477-4 Ranin
1309 E I1 E6A1221-8 Silence
1310 D I1 D511333-A Olio
1408 E I2 E100378-8 Silver Orb
1210 X I1 X200346-B Pointer
1112 C I1 C57738A-5 Curiosity
1012 E I1 E110233-A Salvation
1114 D I1 D445346-A Dieinplace
1802 C I2 C423335-6 Bitterend
1803 E I2 EAAA225-B Tension
1903 C I2 C565647-A Samtara
1904 B I2 B265669-A Comerwake
1704 A I2 A73A587-A Ipinnae
1705 E I2 E361000-7 Constantinopl
1706 E I2 E210379-6 Dusk
1906 D I2 D663102-B Saigon
1808 C I2 C555366-6 Sarde
2109 C Ic C8A5645-B Quajora
1810 C I2 C728310-7 Mia
1712 D I2 DAA2265-8 Passportal
1713 A Na A260777-A Dune
1912 E I2 E201466-4 Icecap
2014 E I4 E5A0041-4 Detesina
2116 C I4 C1608EC-B Sylea
1717 D I4 D648312-2 Anton
1617 E I4 E440232-8 Dikaai
1918 D I4 D565220-7 Fenmou
1919 C I4 CA5A457-B Tariri
2018 C I4 C584311-4 Tanatelul
2121 C I4 C7C4252-B Eessith
1821 E I4 E665531-4 Laoyle
2124 B Na B15058A-A Tokitre
1824 C Na C32549B-A Bond
1926 E Na E779310-7 Kenya
2026 C Na C8B5010-B Hoi Profa
2325 E Na E888452-3 Cloudscape
0216 X Ba X200000-0 Zaaremug
0517 X I3 X534124-2 Siigiizumi
0717 C I3 C66A499-A Edamar
0118 X Ba X230000-0 Kaakhiskiki
0918 D I3 D5A4263-6 Arikeshmundin
1018 D I3 D433213-6 Ashkige
1118 A I3 A48687B-B Enlugal
1218 D I3 D573345-4 Irka Ir
0920 C I3 CAF3136-B Degar
1320 E I3 E7A7000-2 Ishimaga
0722 D I3 D553362-7 Lugikad
1021 C I3 C524345-5 Khii Eshkhima
1424 D Na D8A2100-B Kikujiro
1425 E Na ER044BC-8 Amethystium
1025 C Na C48545A-9 Stake
0730 X Ba X343000-0 Newsight
0630 X Ba X8A4000-0 Omni
0331 X Ba X8B5000-0 Roundhead
0231 X Ba XAD9000-0 Twissa
0831 E Nf E210212-5 Unity
1231 B Nf B350455-8 Orb
1331 X Nf X583113-2 Throne
1430 C Nf C251412-5 Sceptre
1332 E Nf E76A012-5 Anointed
1631 C Nf C442478-5 Flame
1731 D Nf D966200-3 Glory
0532 X Ba X674000-0 Alluvia
0333 X Ba X323000-0 Bensusan
0433 X Ba X5A0000-0 Scorpion
0533 X Ba X200000-0 Chin
0534 X Ba X353000-0 Immanuel
0633 X Ba X572000-0 Paean
0734 X Ba X577000-0 Phong e
0933 C Nf C886674-8 Avalon
1033 C Nf C422101-8 Crown
1134 B Nf B500345-A Truth
1233 C Nf C699371-9 Sword
1334 A Nf A6A6010-A Regal
1433 D Nf D7A1321-3 Righteousness
1533 B Nf B541331-A Honour
1733 B Nf B534333-A Tranquility
1634 B Nf B427374-A Gold
0535 X Ba X310000-0 Virtue
0735 X Ba X894000-0 Phong
0235 X Ba X64A000-0 Atlanta
0435 X Ba X527000-0 Moonrise
0136 X Ba X524000-0 Tradition
1633 C Dr C224131-6 Robes
0836 X Ba X637000-0 Channelight
1337 X Ba X523000-0 Pogon
1537 C Nf C535474-6 Justice
1237 X Ba X595000-0 Castor
1637 D Dr D510334-5 Noble
0138 X Ba X74A000-0 Andecy
0338 X Ba X240000-0 Sahara
0538 X Ba X252000-0 Calantha
0438 X Ba X341000-0 Chubu
0938 X Ba X548000-0 Arcoyali
0838 X Ba X593000-0 Riskworld
1238 X Ba X100000-0 Trup
1339 X Ba X455000-0 St Peter
1738 B Dr B437487-9 Chalcedon
0439 X Ba X88A000-0 Titanic
0839 X Ba X222000-0 Cortana
1039 X Ba X100000-0 Smallfry
0840 X Ba X7C1000-0 Opaque
1440 X Ba X302000-0 Signal
1840 X Ba X525000-0 Jericho
2301 X Ba X5A0000-0 Worldfield
1802 C I2 C423335-6 Bitterend
2002 C I2 C463230-9 Nadia
2202 D I2 D235357-B Detour
1803 E I2 EAAA225-B Tension
2003 D I2 D310146-6 Requiem
2203 X I2 X74A000-0 Peiping
2004 E I2 E371324-8 Threshold
2105 C I2 C665346-5 Dreamworld
2305 D I2 D538202-A Nyman
2005 B I2 B795551-7 Mist
2205 C I2 C566362-4 St Anne
2206 E I2 E44338A-8 Sysadmin
2107 D I2 D578567-3 Tianik
2207 B I2 BA8A678-A Vieunia
2406 C I2 C774354-A Zihuat
2407 E I2 E200246-5 Alkhalikoi
2408 A I2 A383777-A Wsi
2507 C I2 C254486-9 Mons Arge
2607 A I2 A856676-A Yelloworld
2508 X I2 X52A015-A Geronimo
2608 X I2 X1101111-9 Blight
2310 B I2 B545311-7 Penombra
2210 X I2 X767444-2 Captivity
2211 B Na B99A65C-A Justince
2510 C I2 C31037A-9 Enigma
2610 C I2 C744322-4 Logan's Run
2514 D Na D449275-6 Hot
2517 X Ba X8C3000-0 Mainetti
2419 C I4 C638465-9 Xaeyal
2622 D Na D769007-7 Doumbek
2524 C Na C461478-9 Tikal
2724 C Na C5848B9-8 Athens
2725 X Ba X474000-0 Nara
2826 X Ba X525000-0 Mondo
2728 X Ba X525000-0 Olympic
2729 C Na C8848A6-B Hub
2818 X Ba X200000-0 Worms
2419 C I4 C638465-9 Xaeyal
2701 X Ba X322000-0 Trapped
2601 X Ba X9A6000-0 Blackbone
2702 E I2 E476379-4 Darren
2602 B Na B69A796-A Flandry
2703 E I2 E324368-9 River
2603 D I2 DA7A420-7 Waves
2704 E I2 E646110-4 Forest
2802 E I2 E537265-3 Gloria
2803 E I2 E89A379-8 Wonderland
2804 B Na B53755A-A Daskomo
2805 C Na C531553-7 Kosh
2605 C I2 C777464-7 Greenfield
2606 E I2 ES00020-9 Struckdown
2807 E I2 E999302-7 Pling
2808 D I2 D574441-4 Risen
2809 B I2 B442348-A Graves
2903 X Ba X300000-0 Qwerty
2905 C Na C98A554-9 Pacifica
2907 D I2 D236335-9 Scouts' Rest
2908 X I2 X512202-9 Trin
2909 X Ba X000000-0 Rocks
3003 X Ba X645000-0 Crova
3004 D I2 D453258-0 Dowry
3005 X Ba X798000-0 Proxy
3006 B I2 B445475-A Moons
3105 C I2 C659554-2 Imperator
3106 X Ba X8A4000-0 Woodwind
3107 C Na C8867D9-8 Whiteheart
3205 C I2 C75A655-A Bluemarble
3208 X Ba X220000-0 Auxil
3209 X Ba X646000-0 Brownfield
3110 X Ba X9A8000-0 Wracknruin
3010 X Ba X341000-0 Memento
3111 X Ba X400000-0 Gluirge
3012 C Na C563653-7 Pax Deorum
3022 X Ba X100000-0 Kryminalni
3024 E Na E678100-3 Ulaid
2925 X Ba X8C3000-0 Klendathu
3026 E Na E639343-9 Faunia
3128 X Ba X79A000-0 Rombi
3029 E Na E535335-8 Fleethome
2731 X Ba X558000-0 Bakedcrust
2831 X Ba X553000-0 Dejanews
2532 X Ba X400000-0 Outerlimits
2632 X Ba X425000-0 Whitehorse
2733 X Ba X642000-0 Basia
2833 X Ba X765000-0 Obelisk
2934 X Ba X110000-0 Query
3032 X Ba XA7A000-0 Bubbles
3134 X Ba X340000-0 Paltrow
2633 X Ba X657000-0 Adoria
2734 X Ba X324000-0 Clemens
2635 X Ba X401000-0 Akcja
2735 X Ba X767000-0 Amber
2736 X Ba X200000-0 Deceit
2737 X Ba X453000-0 Status Quo
3035 X Ba X202000-0 Zawada
2936 X Ba X9A7000-0 Seven Seas
3136 X Ba X759000-0 Musashiden
3235 X Ba X428000-0 Bluenote
3236 X Ba X635000-0 Yellowknife
3037 X Ba XAE8000-0 Liquid
3038 X Ba X331000-0 Koyaanisqatsi
2939 X Ba X54A000-0 Earthsea
3238 X Ba X794000-0 Crash
2731 X Ba X558000-0 Bakedcrust
2831 X Ba X553000-0 Dejanews
2532 X Ba X400000-0 Outerlimits
2632 X Ba X425000-0 Whitehorse
2733 X Ba X642000-0 Basia
2833 X Ba X765000-0 Obelisk
2934 X Ba X110000-0 Query
3032 X Ba XA7A000-0 Bubbles
3134 X Ba X340000-0 Paltrow
2635 X Ba X401000-0 Akcja
2735 X Ba X767000-0 Amber
2736 X Ba X200000-0 Deceit
2737 X Ba X453000-0 Status Quo
3035 X Ba X202000-0 Zawada
2936 X Ba X9A7000-0 Seven Seas
3136 X Ba X759000-0 Musashiden
3235 X Ba X428000-0 Bluenote
3236 X Ba X635000-0 Yellowknife
3037 X Ba XAE8000-0 Liquid
3038 X Ba X331000-0 Koyaanisqatsi
2939 X Ba X54A000-0 Earthsea
3238 X Ba X794000-0 Crash
2538 X Ba X333000-0 Metheny
2539 X Ba X373000-0 Seeds
2639 X Ba XS01000-0 Lonely
2540 X Ba X400000-0 Caccia
2640 X Ba X8A6000-0 Shepherdmoon
2840 X Ba X757000-0 Firefly
2940 X Ba X642000-0 Touch
3240 X Ba X200000-0 Remembrance
2438 X Ba X668000-0 Abe-ku
2138 B Dr B240523-A Geneva
2038 C Dr C95A000-A Providence
1939 B Dr B200001-A Jerusalem
2037 E Dr E656543-4 Roma
1937 A Dr A254575-A Moscow
2336 D Dr D838386-9 Temperance
2234 E Dr E442468-8 North
2334 C Dr CAB7043-A Shatterstone
2434 C Dr C466678-7 Lifesphere
2134 E Dr E659121-7 Sinai
2132 C Dr C654475-8 Pauline
2031 X Dr X241584-2 Blackball
1932 A Dr A593451-A Liege
1831 C Dr C8A3332-A Adama
1830 C Dr C000231-A Exile
1738 B Dr B437487-9 Chalcedon

Watching the worldset of Teru from her sisterworld of Fenmou. Unlike Teru, ancient life continues to keep her grip on Fenmou. Fenmou system, 1406 Imperial. **This graphic is titled "If You See the Five Stones" ©Artur Rosa. Visit his gallery at http://arthurblue.deviantart.com/gallery/?offset=0#/d34gwdr**

The Tanatelul

If all life on Earth was rendered extinct, the last artefacts of our existence would be certain space probes, and some equipment & footprints on the Moon. No space probes of the extinct Tanatelul civilization have been discovered, but simple mechanical equipment, isolated structures, and 'markers' – footprints, depressions, indecipherable stone scratching, etc. – have been revealed.

Scientists guess that the Tanatelul were radically symmetrical twelve-legged beings, about three meters tall and very lightly built, massing no more than 200 kg. Most researchers believe that they manipulated light objects with thin tentacles ending with a mass of suckers, and heavier objects with a type of 'bellows' directing compressed air as needed. Communication (and, possibly, warfare) among the Tanatelul was via electrical charges of various strengths. The use of psionics by these aliens is a subject of intense controversy, and precisely no evidence one way or the other.

No remains of the Tanatelul themselves have been discovered: but an extremely serendipitous discovery made at an immense 400,000-year-old crater serves as the basis of most verifiable knowledge of Tanatelul biology. The uncovered relic is of a set of mummified organisms, which is thought to bear as much a relationship to the Tanatelul as a dried flower would to a man. (And yes, dandelions share 25% of their DNA with humans. Discovering the analogous building-blocks for the Tanatelul is useful to hypothetical reconstruction efforts, but far less than you'd think.)

The extreme lack of evidence has not stopped various artists from creating rather preposterous 'scientific reconstructions', much as scientists today claim to reconstruct animals from a single fossilized tooth. Both in the present and in the far future, prideful geeks simply refuse to say 'Sorry, I Just Don't Know.'

Basic mechanical tools of Tanatelul construction have been discovered, but nothing more sophisticated in principle than of a pair of glasses, or a refrigeration machine of the mid-19th century A.D. Despite extensive searches of known Tanatelul sites, not even the simplest electrical motor or a basic electric circuit has been uncovered. This is frankly astonishing, considering the demonstrated power of the Tanatelul. On the other hand, there has been at least eleven instances where disturbing an apparently low-tech/no-tech Tanatelul site has led to a massive catastrophe, from half a planet simply exploding for no apparent reason, to a moon abruptly shifting orbit and crashing into the planet it was orbiting.

Truly massive ruins and abandoned sites have been occasionally uncovered: while of generally low-tech materials, the *methods* implicitly needed to build them were very sophisticated, sometimes going beyond known GTL 12 levels.

Conjectures of a pure psionic civilization, or a mysterious 'zero-point energy' or 'force field' based culture are tossed around, but there's nothing supporting such theories but a lot of hot air. One line of inquiry pursues the hypothesis that the Tanatelul are only partly of this universe, and somehow folded space-time as the prime driver of their civilization. Another fanciful claim is that networks of 'woven hard light' was naturally generated by the Tanatelul, serving the same position as electricity and mechanic design does in all known sophont races, including the Ancients of Charted Space. Finally, the 'third sight' group insists that the Tanatelul discovered an even more profound way to understand and manipulate reality than that provided by the unreasonably useful tools of mathematics & physics.

('Unreasonably useful', that is, if you insist on a random, meaningless universe.)

Historical Background, Summary

This summary is for the Referee who just needs a basic grasp of the setting – and is perfectly capable of fleshing out his own detailed background. "Give me a skeleton, a framework to understand the maps, and I can make my own future history!"

1) The Tanatelul aliens used to rule this region of space hundreds of thousands of years ago. Now, they are gone. They left behind several mysteries, and lots of inhabitable but sterilized worlds. They may have disappeared entire starsystems. One system vanished only a century or two ago.
2) Centuries ago, the Third Imperium used a new method of FTL travel to instantly transport ships thousands of light years away.
3) In Starbreak, humanist Imperial colonies were established. The aliens of Traveller were never invited, or were killed off, or went into hiding. A particular act of blasphemy or abomination, akin to the Genesis events of "Babel" or "Sodom & Gomorrah", was involved. The intense local hostility to this event has become the bedrock of Starbreak identity, and the consequences are still unfolding centuries later.
4) The locals have been isolated for centuries, due to problems in the Imperium, problems with the colonies of Starbreak, problems with the transport method, or some other disruptive effect.
5) An international organization, the Human Council, was established to expand human power and to decrease human infighting, was established. It is an outgrowth of the Bond of Man, a sacred oath shared by all existing interstellar powers, and all the known worlds.
6) A vast, distant, slower-than-light alien civilization has been discovered by their radio signals. No contact has been made.
7) Local humanity has extended their rule to cover some of the nearby stars. Some fighting has occurred among themselves.
8) A separate Solomani-based culture has been discovered. They behave in a friendly matter, supporting the Bond of Man and the Human Council, but refuse to divulge the location of their homeworld. Great speculation on their origins and goals exists among the Imperium-descended population of Starbreak.
9) Most of the powerful worlds have preferred to create compact pocket empires. One, Imperial Cianji, preferred to expand territorially and demographically rather than deepen their hold on technology. As of 1500 Imperial, this civilization has had a substantially broader impact on the Oikouménē than the other Old Colonies, for both good and ill.

Historical Background, Detailed – to 1500 Imperial

This exhaustive history was made primarily for my own enjoyment. I have always felt that history should not be a dreary list of dates and isolated events: instead, it should be an exciting and daring tale, grabbing the attention of the reader. If you find it entertaining, go right ahead and read it all. If it bores you, toss it – no harm done.

This chronicle stops at 1500 Imperial. The time period between 1500 and 1580 is NOT discussed here: instead, starmaps are provided, for 1540, 1580, and (if you prefer to roleplay a large civil war) 1400 Imperial.

Et Alibi Imperial Scout Station on the world of Valiant, today's Dikaai, 723 Imperial. **This graphic is titled "The Last Sunset" ©Artur Rosa. Visit his gallery at http://arthurblue.deviantart.com/gallery/?offset=72#/d2t4lsh**

The Old Imperial Era

Initial Settlement

According to local histories, the first human incursion into Starbreak sector was in 012-421, when the government of the Third Imperium – a major interstellar, human-dominated government thousands of light years away – opened an experimental stargate over Durgaarur (Sapphyre/Dagudashaag 1735) – into what was last known as Dikaai system, located ~3,400 parsecs from the capital of the Imperium. Settlement of what was (in 523) christened 'Starbreak' was steady, but, due to the sheer expense of transport via stargates compared to regular jump-drives, these distant Imperial colonies were seen as far-flung scientific research posts, not the seeds of a new civilization.

As the technology of the stargate was refined, and as the Imperial economy grew in wealth and technological sophistication, what was once impossible became merely very expensive. However, the Imperial Civil War and the aftermath placed plans for large-scale settlement on the back-burner. As the Imperium regained and surpassed her antebellum prosperity, new techniques allowed the stargate to draw power directly from the primary star of Durgaarur System, making the use of the stargate by large starships possible. The maximum range of the stargate was stretched from ~5,000 parsecs to an amazing ~30,000 parsecs, making the stargate a vital tool for the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service. Unfortunately, the 'minimum range' of the stargate remained stuck at the ~3,000 parsec range, rendering it worthless for trade and transport within Charted Space.

From the mid 600's to the 800's, the Imperial Nobility shifted from a Solomani-dominated government to a more broadly-based, multi-species Noble power elite. While the Solomani-driven groups built up their strength in the Solomani Sphere allotted to them, Vilani and Sylean racial/cultural purists could not retreat anywhere, and instead focused their efforts on undermining the Imperial government from within. This threat was neutralized by various stick-and-carrot techniques. A major carrot was the transfer of large

numbers of the more aggressive and sophisticated groups across the stargate, at Imperial expense. Roughly two million active dissidents and their families were transferred to Starbreak.

The first official settlement was on what is now known as Enlugal – named after the Vilani capital of the Ziru Sirka – in 126-712. Sylea, Dune, the Tri-World cluster (in today's LightWaves subsector, consisting of Fenmou, Tariri, and Tanatelul), Hub, Doumbek, Athens, and Cianji were all settled in the following century, with the world of Pax Deorum being the last of the eleven worlds colonized directly by Third Imperium settlers, in 834.

The original founding cultures

The founding cultures trace their homeworlds back several important regions of the Third Imperium.

Enlugal – settled 712 Imperial. Demonym: Enlugali. The first true colony world was settled by a Vilani purist organization, with the backing of the Archduke of Vland. Several radical minor Vilani nobles settled on the world, bringing their wealth, servants, and long heritage of rule with them. The Enlugal consider themselves to be the heart of human society in Starbreak, and are quite proud of their position and their history.

Initial racial composition: 100% pure Vilani.

Sylea – settled 736 Imperial. Demonym: Sylean. Various Sylean radicals, focused on racial purity and a heterodox interpretation of the Sylean faith, were persuaded to settle a new world in Starbreak, with Imperial financing for the initial century. Sylea is generally considered to be the most spiritual and mystical of the original cultures of Starbreak, with a communitarian and environmentalist view on many issues. They are often at loggerheads with the Vilani, due to an old history of conflict between them. However, it hasn't broken out to open war, due to distance as much as the needs of the present outweighing the grudges of the past.

Initial racial composition: 100% pure Sylean.

Mu – settled 740 Imperial. Demonym: Muese. Several small, wealthy groups of Asian Solomani sensualists gathered their resources, and placed a large colony of ten thousand souls on the world of Mu. For over a century, the population grew in wealth, sophistication, and numbers. Mu was seen as the centre of Starbreak civilization until the Purification. Afterwards, the world went into an elegant decline, increasingly over-shadowed by the neighbouring world of Cianji. This world was successfully depopulated by terrorists during the local Imperial Civil War, making it the first of the Founding Worlds to die. Resettlement plans are being laid down, to be put into play after the poisons have been removed.

Initial racial composition: 100% Ye Tag, from the Imperial desertworld of Huon (Ten Sisters/Masillia). Their heritage has been verified as pure Solomani, traceable to about 40% Japanese, 20% Korean, 20% Chinese, 10% Pilipino, 10% Vietnamese.

Hub – settled in 753 Imperial. Demonym: Hubber, Hubbie. Hub was claimed by a wealthy, technophilic, pro-cybernetic group of Imperial-race humans, from the important Imperial world of Kaggushus. Kaggushus was the capital of the Second Imperium thousands of years ago, and was referred to as Hub/Ershur, at the time. Unlike the Tri-Worlds, most of the wealth brought to Hub was in the form of heavy construction and terraforming equipment. Hub's cybernetic society has a different flavour than the equivalent on the younger world of Quajora, the Hubbies focus on implants and prosthetics, while the Quajorai placed most of their efforts on cyberspace and networking.

Initial racial composition: 10% Pure Solomani (various Solomani races), 10% Pure Vilani, 80% Mixed Vilani.

Doumbek – settled in 761 Imperial. Demonym: Doumbeker. A host of minor Solomani, mixed Vilani, and minor human purist cultures from the Third Imperium's Delphi sector pooled their resources for the joint colonization of this world. This world was the most poorly-funded and –equipped Imperial settlement during the initial colonization wave. The planetary population never recovered from a series of plagues and natural disasters in the 1000-1060 period. Most of the remaining population eventually located to Athens. The last major clan actually left the world in the 1440's, after the Athenian Republic was no more.

Initial racial composition: over 75 discreet purist human races. Particular mixes are defended with as much pride, ferocity, and sheer tribal arrogance as any True Korean, Pure Laine Quebecois, Authentic Parsee, or Real Arab could muster.

Pax Deorum – settled in 834 Imperial. Demomyn: Paxer. Pax Deorum was settled after Starbreak was officially closed to new settlement, as a special favour to the Imperial Catholic Church. The hierarchy wanted a very distant world to relocate an aggressively anti-

alien lay order within the church, and Empress Paula II was glad to oblige.

Initial racial composition: 100% Solomani (30% Old French, 30% Old Spanish, 30% Old Italian, 10% Old German).

Athens – settled in 786 Imperial. Demonym: Athenian. As part of the suppression of People Power – a major pro-democratic, Solomani-grounded interstellar revolutionary group within Imperial Space – notable leaders, financiers, sympathizers, numerous local bosses, and allied intellectuals (and their families) were exiled to Athens. [A later attempt to gut the Solomani Party itself in a similar way was an abject failure.] This settlement was fairly well funded by the Imperium, to quiet the remaining People Power supporters back in Imperial Space proper.

Initial racial composition: 25% Solomani (various flavours), 75% Mixed Vilani.

While most of the difficult terraforming – including the generation of a worldwide floatbot-based artificial magnetic field, necessary to screen solar radiation – was accomplished on Cianji by ~800, "touch-up" terraforming continues, more for prestige and comfort than survival requirements. Here, we see the Imperial Cianji Atmospheric Generator Farm being restarted, to further increase the density of the atmosphere as required by the Imperial Cianji Terraforming Board. Increasing the gravity field worldwide above the natural level of 0.759 G (at an affordable cost) is still beyond the Board's technical reach, despite numerous pilot projects. Seen as of 1500 Imperial.
This graphic is titled "Atmosphere Emitters" © Brajan Martinovic. Visit his gallery at http://sittingducky.deviantart.com/art/Atmosphere-Emitters-83266584

Cianji – settled in 791 Imperial. Demonym: Cianji. Cianji was settled by House Kovačević, a highly aristocratic, Imperial-race family, and their large number of allies and servants. The descendants of Emperor Usuti (Emperor of the Flag, ruled 619-620), House Kovačević never renounced their claim to the Iridium Throne. The clan was proscribed by the Imperium, but was not successfully exterminated thanks to their many mercantile allies, and network of friends in the Imperial Navy and various Imperial intelligence services.

As a conciliatory gesture on her birthday, Empress Paula II proclaimed the end of all Imperial Proscriptions in 770, and promised no new proscriptions would be issued during her reign. Her agents managed to draw the Kovačević family out of hiding a few years later. The Empress called the Archon of the Kovačević to stand

before the Iridium Throne, and – after a rather provocative discussion – agreed to grant the Kovačević a world in Starbreak Sector, their re-ennoblement as Barons, and the provision of a large sum for the initial settlement of the world: in return, the Kovačević finally renounced all claims to the Iridium Throne, swore fealty to Paula II, and commanded their allies to recognize Paula II as the sole rightful ruler of the Third Imperium. The world and system is named after Cianji Penoraja, a legendary household servant.

Initial racial composition: 100% Mixed Vilani (actually, 75% Solomani by genetic heritage, but with no 'purebloods').

[Referee: this is the 'viewpoint culture' for my writing on Starbreak. You are welcome to choose a different perspective, depending on the story you want to tell.]

Dune – settled in 746 Imperial. Demonyn: Dunemen. Solomani desert-dwellers govern this world. This society is derived from an Imperial desert world, Huon (Ten Sisters/Masillia), dominated by Arabic European and Northern Chinese/Old Manchu cultures. This was the first settlement which avoided the use of Imperial aid for taming their chosen world. The Dunemen continue to keep their distance from the major powers; but as interstellar civilization expands, different attitudes are getting a hearing. Dune has a strong artistic tradition, especially in the visual arts – from clothing to sculpture – which influences the entire sector.

Initial racial composition: 30% Arabic European/Hispanic, 30% Mongolian/Manchu, 30% Dongbei Han Chinese. Genetic testing verified that 10% of this group's genetic heritage was actually Vilani: this was deemed acceptable by the Imperial Solomani Colonization Board, with reservations.

The Tri-Worlds – settled in 750 Imperial. Demonyn: Tri-worlder. This cluster was under the rule of wealthy rationalist European Solomani cultures, with uplifted Terran species (dogs [not Vargr, uplifted by the Ancients, but a new species uplifted by men], apes, dolphins, & whales) as servants and underlings (but not as true chattel slaves, as slavery was forbidden by Imperial Law.) Much of their transported wealth was in the form of genetic engineering tools and technologies.

Initial racial composition: 100% Mixed Vilani, 'the official race of the Third Imperium'. Looking deeper, the mix varied from 30/70 to 80/20 European Solomani/Vilani, with the majority around the 50/50 mark.

The Decline of Stargate Settlements

Soon after Cianji was settled, it was decided by the Imperial Council of Finance – a financial oversight committee within the Imperial Government – that the stargate remained a useful tool for exploration, and should continue to be utilized by the IISS. However, continuing large-scale settlement via the stargate was a waste of the Emperor's Coin. Even in the case of a major re-settlement like the Cianji Project, it was clearly more efficient to settle via jumpships to places like the Vanguard Reaches, instead of using the power-hungry, difficult-to-maintain stargate.

Finally, even though the use of Durgaarur's primary as the power source of the gate only took off a year of the star's lifetime per use of the gate by a 10,000+ ton colony ship, the citizens of Durgaaarur System became increasingly uncomfortable with that level of damage. Reassuring them that their star still had an estimated three billion years of life left in her did not decrease their anxiety. Dismantling the stargate and relocating it would be quite costly: other low-power solutions would continue to permit Scout usage of the gate, but, again, it would cut off settlement projects until a new stargate, built in a low-or-no population system, could be afforded.

Following the recommendation of the Council, Empress Paula II closed the stargate to new emigration in 802, after the last Cianji colonization fleet exited the gate. As a special favour to the Imperial Catholic Church, however, the stargate was briefly reopened to large-scale emigration during the 834-838 period. After 838, the stargate was closed for retooling: when reopened in 901, the stargate used far less power, needing only a battery of massive fusion generators. On the other hand, only ships of 500 tons or less could utilize her: moreover, these ships required a stargate drive if they planned to return home. (The older stargate configuration could transport ships at the proper co-ordinates back home, without the need for special equipment on the ship herself.)

The Duchy of Starbreak

At the time Sylea was settled, there was some debate on how Imperial authority would be held in Starbreak. From 421 to the mid-700s, Imperial assets and personnel within the sector was under the authority of a Sector Scout, based on Valiant (today's Dikaai): he himself was under the IISS Exploration Branch head, back on Capital. The Vilani nobles of Enlugal insisted that one of their number be given authority over the entire sector, under the aegis of the Archduke of Vland.

However, the Syleans of Starbreak, long distrustful of the Vilani, reacted violently to this proposal, making it clear that they would secede from the Imperium before submitting to Vilani authority. In 742, Empress Margaret I decided to place the entire region under a single non-Vilani, non-Solomani, human Duke of her choosing: as the population of the area was so small, no subsector Dukes would be needed. The position of Duke of Starbreak would be a Rank Noble position, and not inheritable for the time being.

The first Duke, Duke Cid, was from one of the few Noble houses based on service in the Scouts. He was a fairly competent negotiator, able to work with some very closed-minded local inhabitants without blowing his cool or angering the locals. His staff was incapable of handling the bureaucratic requirements of his rank, and he secretly brought into the sector a few Bwap families to help with the paper-shuffling. Duke Cid's great love was exploration and First Contact: he continually sent his Scouts to the beyond, hoping to talk with a new race, a new civilization, a new thread in the fabric of Creation. The Duke cared little about money or trade, and had great pleasure in stifling the many megacorporate attempts to break into the region.

After Duke Cid's death in 780 – at the reasonable age of 74 – Empress Paula II chose Dr. John Tobold, a noted astrophysicist, to be the next Duke of Starbreak. This was quite a surprise: it's been over two centuries since a scientist was placed in a Ducal position, but of course Starbreak wasn't an ordinary sector (for one thing, it was practically uninhabited compared to other Imperial sectors: for another, there were no overwhelming trade or military concerns involving the sector.) Unlike Duke Cid, Duke John spent half his reign in Capital instead of his demesne, insisting on the establishment of proper starports in his sector. After getting sufficient funding, he established two A-class ports, one at Enlugal, and one at Sylea. Two B-class starports were established at Dune and Hub, respectively. C-class starports were set up at Tariri, Doumbek: of course, the Imperial sector Capital at Valiant had had a C-class starport since 543, before human settlement began in earnest. Fenmou, Tanatelul, Athens, and Cianji were provided with D-class starports. By c. 800 all the starports were up and running, with an E-class starport established on the newly-settled Pax Deorum by c. 840 – two years after the stargate was closed to all traffic.

In order to pump more Imperial credits into the local economy, Duke John pulled a major sales pitch, getting the IISS to fund the construction of an immense, 100 million-ton asteroid starship to conduct exploration, mapping, and research across the sector.

Unfortunately, he was unable to transport any personnel or material to Starbreak before the stargate was closed in 838, and the planned ship was shelved for decades. Before the sector was sealed off, Duke John decided to remain at Capital to continue to argue for the development of his demesne, leaving the administration of the sector to be shared between his son Rodney and the Sector Scout, Sir Van'dele.

Before the stargate closed, the sector Scout permitted any scout who desired to return to the main body of the Imperium, before being cut off for who-knows-how-long: anyone with major family obligations – especially young children – back on Durgaaarur was ordered to return home. Most Scouts did return home, but about 40 – mainly young men, and those who married locally – remained in the sector.

Assault on Valiant, 894 Imperial. **This graphic is titled "Mars Assault Drop" © Richard Jeferies. Visit his gallery at http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=1870012**

The Starbreaker Era

The Purification

The new starports made possible the construction and use of starships of up to 500 tons, but almost all of the actual ships were built in the 100 – 200 ton range. As communication between the various Starbreak worlds opened up, it became obvious that the mores of the Tri-Worlds strongly deviated from the conservative views of their neighbours in matters of pleasure and proper limits on scientific research.

The various worlds surrounding the Tri-Worlds, especially the crucial worlds of nearby Sylea, Dune, and Hub increasingly viewed Tri-World activities with disgust. The citizens of the Tri-Worlds were largely unconcerned with the attitudes of their neighbours. It was felt that over time, disgust would fade to acceptance, and then eventually embracement of the more sophisticated tastes of the Tri-Worlds. In any case, the human hybrids were sterile, which the Tri-Worlds leadership felt was a sufficient concession to their less urbane neighbours.

This attitude among the Tri-Worlders endured even as they were increasingly isolated from trade, and gained fewer and fewer visitors. Research was expanded to uncover more of the mysteries of the vanished Tanatelul, especially in relation to genetics or lost technology. The single Tri-Worlder starship, a Free Trader, was destroyed in an ambush over Fenmou at 346-872: the resulting objections of the Duke Rodney were met with rejection and mockery.

The Duke decided to mobilize his available forces – three Patrol Ships, and a Far Trader bearing his 40 Marines. One Patrol Ship was detailed to protect each Tri-World, and the Far Trader deposited her platoon to defend WJ City, the largest Tri-World city, located on Fenmou. The Senior Scout was granted use of the Duke's powerful GURPS TL B, 200 ton armed yacht to attempt to negotiate an end to hostilities. (The closed stargate made Imperial reinforcement impossible.) Finally, the two remaining 100 ton Scout Ships were re-tasked to defend Valiant, the seat of the Sector government (such as it was) and the location of the sole scout/naval base in the sector.

The Cold War lasted over 20 years: after it became obvious that no immediate attack was forthcoming, the Far Trader was used as a trade ship between the Tri-Worlds. Local jumpspace did not permit jumps from void hexes, so the Jump2 engines of the Far Trader could only connect the Tri-Worlds and Valiant. Still, there were no raiding parties from the other systems, and the Senior Scout was not attacked on his futile journeys for peace. However, the Class A Imperial starports were all successfully seized from Imperial control, and brought under local authority: the lesser starports were also taken, but over a longer period of time.

As so often happens, the end came suddenly. Sylea and Enlugal spent the time building a small group of sub-500 ton GTL 10, Jump3 & Jump4 warships and

transports, with the lesser worlds providing some financing as they were able. The Senior Scout could observe their construction over time, and he was able to warn Duke Rodney, but was unable to hinder their production with the limited assets at his disposal. Sector Scout Sir Van'dele died of a chronic illness while on Cianji on 41-893, trying to drum up support for the Duke. The yacht took his body home to Valiant for burial, and Senior Scout Saroth was chosen to take his place. Unfortunately, he did not have Van'dele's tact or persuasive abilities; his open disrespect of local mores led directly to unifying his opponents, and their commitment to a violent resolution of the conflict.

On 001-894, Enlugal's small flotilla left her system, arriving over Sylea in 31-894. While Sector Scout Saroth was arguing with his hosts on Dune, the combined Jump4 Enlugal and Jump3 Sylean ships entered Fenmou System on 42-894. They quickly overwhelmed the local patrol ship and Far Trader, and used two nuclear missiles to destroy the primary and secondary settlement on Fenmou. This was repeated at Tariri (day 55) and Tanatelul (day 63). The flotilla then moved on to Mostie (today's Anton): finding no Imperial ships or men, they finally arrived over Valiant to invade the Imperial government's offices and bases. Due to the side of the primary, they were unable to just jump over the world, but had to exit jump some distance from Valiant, and make the rest of the journey in N-space – permitting the Imperial forces to observe their arrival, and prepare a suitable welcome.

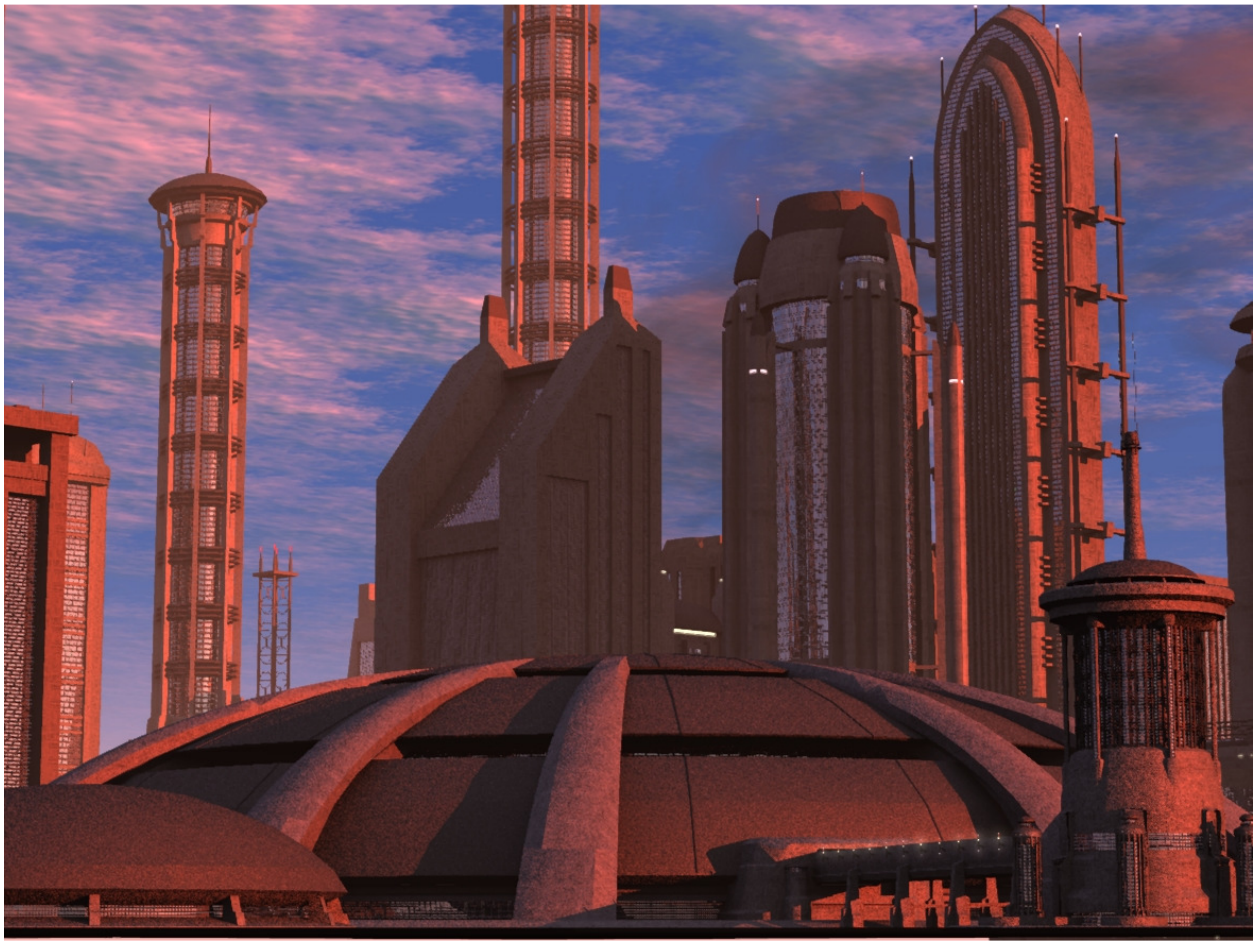
Launched from the available defense outposts – jury-rigged from modified cutter modules – an Imperial alpha strike crippled several ships of the local flotilla, but only destroyed two vessels outright. After a brief battle, the small outposts were destroyed. As the transport vessels neared the naval/scout Imperial base, the base commander feigned surrender – and then, as the transports approached, detonated a jury-rig setup of mines, destroying a transport and crippling another. Naturally, the invaders reacted by pouring fire into the base, destroying it (a far better result than a capture would have been, in the eyes of the Imperium.) The invaders were able to capture the high port of Valiant, but only after a bloody boarding action.

Planetside anti-starship defences were neutralized, but the two Imperial Scout Ships were nowhere to be found. An attempt to invade the world by using modified and reprogrammed labour androids was attempted: the invasion had some success, until the Imperial Marines made the shift to basic anti-droid tactics. (If the programmers were experienced warbot programmers, the poorly-prepared Marines would have suffered a lot more.) Half the wounded ships could not be repaired, but the other half were able to have hull integrity, life support, and jump systems partially restored. The unsalvageable ships were scuttled by explosive charges, and the remaining ships made the journey back to Sylea rather than risk their destruction to complete the Purge.

The two remaining Imperial scout ships – and the Ducal yacht, after it finally made it home – scoured the stricken Tri-Worlds for survivors, transporting any found to the Valiant. The whales could not be transported until the stargate was re-opened, but the surviving sophonts (uplifted apes, dogs, and dolphins; as well as Bwap & Solomani) were brought to the Ducal residence.

When the central Imperial government re-established contact with Starbreak sector in 901, they found only Valiant still in Imperial hands. All the other worlds in the sector had broken fealty with the new Duke Saroth (Duke Rodney died in the attack on Fenmou.) An Imperial investigation lasted for two years, resulting in the absolving of Duke Saroth of all blame, and advised the Empress to withdraw all Imperial assets and assistance from the sector. By 120-904, Valiant was completely abandoned, all captured Imperial personnel was released into Imperial custody, and the last Imperial asset in theatre, a Jump3, 400-ton transport, left via the retrofitted stargate. The Imperium never renounced her claim to the region, but never re-asserted her right to rule the area, either.

Before they left, Duke Saroth had three granite pillars engraved with the history of Imperial involvement up to the day the pillars were finished, in 10-904. One of the duplicate pillars was erected before the abandoned Ducal Residence, a second buried where the first human footfall occurred, and the third placed near the remains of the Imperial base over Valiant. The two pillars discovered by the Starbreakers – the name they have chosen for themselves – were left unmolested. The third pillar has yet to be uncovered: indeed, its very existence is unknown to the Starbreakers, as of 1500 Imperial.



The research complex of the Human Council; in Questions System, 1500 Imperial. Dominating this scene is the Hall of Humaniti, where delegates of the Four Emperors attempt to reconcile their competing visions, for the greater good of all men in the sector.
This graphic is titled "Dusk 3000" © Antony Ward. Visit his gallery at http://stonedhendge.deviantart.com/

The Bond of Man

In 910, the governments of the surviving Starbreak systems drew up and signed the Bond of Man on Valiant: sworn before their respective gods and to each other, all the local nations agreed to promote human rule, human supremacy, and human integrity over any and all opposition. The Human Council was formed, with the sole mandate to insure the integrity and survival of humaniti, currently defined to include the Solomani, the Vilani, the Syleans, and mixtures of these groups. (The possibility of including other known Minor Human Races exists.)

After extensive discussion, a selection of ideals and action were listed in the Forbidden List, and banned by all signatory governments as an abomination to the Sacred Race of Man. Those worlds and governments that didn't sign were persuaded to do so, or were exterminated by their neighbours. In 940, the Bond of Man was expanded to encourage the extermination of non-human organic sophonts as unclean monsters – machine intelligence and non-physical sophonts was left unaddressed.

This oath is renewed every 25 years, on Dikaai (formerly Valiant) whenever politically possible. It is considered the most holy and sacred promise among the Starbreak cultures. The Bond serves as the fundamental 'constitution' for Starbreak cultures: those who don't subscribe to the Bond are exterminated. As there are no non-human sophonts to exterminate in Starbreak, the Human Council works to encourage peace and unity among the local governments, and to discourage the democide/genocide of fellow men:

The Human Council works to counterbalance the tendency among the local cultures to consider only their own race/culture/language/religion matrix to be of any value. If the worlds share the same interstellar government, the suspicion of the outsider is weakened, but not eliminated. If there is a shared history of

mutual hostility, suspicion gives way to thinly-veiled or crystal clear hatred.

> Every man is valuable, every man is needed
> Together we must survive, together we shall rule.
> The Oath of Unity,
> one of the Five Oaths of the Bond of Man

In many cases, it is the agents, officers, and diplomats of the Human Council that pours oil on the waters, soothing over tensions and resolving misunderstandings among men. They speak of the need to remain unified against the Alien Outsider, and of the importance of the shared humaniti of the Starbreakers. The upper classes across the sector are in broad support of this ideology, as is – on the more wealthy worlds – the middle class masses. The lower classes tend to see this as a rather abstract justification for peace: fear of retaliation, a desire for profit, and – in devout societies – a shared religion are more sturdy reasons why they shouldn't kill the stranger.

However, everyone in the entire sector agrees with the need to eradicate all nonhumans. Very few have even considered an alternative way of seeing things: those who do are treated as perverts, mentally ill, demon-possessed, enemies of the race, a threat to the state, or all of the above at the same time.

Note that this is currently a hypothetical concern: perhaps between one-twentieth and one-tenth of the sector population believes that non-humans are just a religious allegory, or a boogeyman dreamed up by some fast-talking eggheads and mystics to insure a steady income stream. The most widespread discussion of non-human sophonts is within the realm of historical fiction, especially in the horror genre, which focuses on life in the ancient Third Imperium: most people take their image of the alien from this framework. Serious discussions of non-humans are restricted to academia, the Human Council, and a few hobbyists who avoid publishing their activities.

Expansion, and the Great Star War

From the end of the Duchy to the distant War of the Rebellion, the various cultures of Starbreak laboured to tame their respective worlds and, if possible, expand to other nearby systems that can support human life. Without Imperial support, there was a sharp loss of technology on many worlds. Only three of the oldest worlds, Enlugal, Sylea, and Athens, retained their GTL B status – primarily to permit the construction of Jump4 engines, desperately needed to escape their near-rift conditions.

Cianji, nestled in a region with a better density of stars and worlds, had the luxury of choosing a different road. Instead of pouring resources to maintain her tech base, Cianji's government chose to tolerate a technological decline to GTL A, in order to free up resources to power her expansion across the coreward systems. From the late 900s, she began to clearly overtake her elder neighbouring world of Mu. In 1039, the formal acceptance by Mu of Cianji suzerainty marked the birth of Cianji's interstellar empire. A major conflict with Enlugal – the Three-World War, 1073 to 1075 – demonstrated the need for centralized control of the Imperial Cianji navy. As it was, only desperate action by a reinforced Cianji fleet kept Horeste, Stallion and Webtle under the rule of Imperial Cianji. After the war, the systems were renamed Curiosity, Salvation, and Dieinplace.

Athens, unlike the other three major worlds, decided to wage war to conquer her weaker neighbours. Again, unlike the other major worlds, she chose a republican system of government for her interstellar polity, instead of cloning the Imperial government structure. Doumbek was her first notable conquest, in 1053: but it was her move to conquer Hub in 1071 that drew in the Sylean-ruled Holy Imperium. The Great Star War (1071 – 1075) ended in a decisive Athenian victory, making her the leading power in Starbreak. Following strong Human Council pressure, NBC weaponry was not used, and the use of orbital bombardments was restricted to primarily military targets.

The Magyar Wanderer, a SolSec Scout, exploring Starbreak sector in 1043 Imperial.
This graphic is titled "Second Chance" © Anthony Scroggins.
Visit his gallery at http://shimmering-sword.deviantart.com/gallery/?offset=0#/d39uoes

SolSec, Stargates, and Starbreak Sector

As an indirect result of the Solomani Rim war (A.D. 5510 – 5522, 990 – 1002 Imperial), agents of the Solomani Confederation uncovered fragmentary information on the Imperial stargate over Durgaarur, and were able to construct a more efficient version deep in Solomani space. They decided to duplicate the earlier Imperial stargate design, as it didn't limit the size of ships using the gate, and did not require any expensive modification of regular jumpships. The need for a star for power was satisfied by using the secondary star of the uninhabited system of Bellanca (Lares/Canopus 2924): the enormous cost of creating the infrastructure to build a stargate in the middle of nowhere was seen merely as 'the price of doing business' in the eyes of SolSec.

The secret Solomani stargate was used to send out Confederation colony ships, to insure not only the survival of the Race, but also to promote its spread throughout the cosmos. Generally, one to two colony ships (of 10,000 to 50,000 tons), would be sent to a location between 3,500 and 20,000 parsecs away, and escorted by one to four military escorts of 1,000 to 5,000 tons each. Such a fleet would be sent about once every three or four months.

The Imperial use of their stargate was a public affair. The exact technological details and hands-on know-how behind the stargate was classified, but the basic theoretical foundation of stargates is public knowledge.

Although the Solomani knew only a little more than the general public did about Starbreak, the Solomani did not actively search for information on Starbreak's location. However, an unrelated Solsec blackmail operation provided a disorganized mess of classified information as a payoff: analysis of this information led to the inferred location of Starbreak, to a high degree of accuracy.

Deciding that the Starbreak cultures could make useful allies of the Race, the Solomani Confederation planned to build an impressive asteroid ship – or, alternatively, a fleet of large baseships – to spread the glory of the Race in Starbreak. Such a display of wealth and power was felt to easily sway the weak colonial worlds to the Solomani way of thinking, overshadowing their Imperial origins, and open the door to future Solomani settlement. However, the sheer expense of building these vessels weakened the project's popularity in the various committees of the Solomani Secretariat.

One of the project's major backers managed to catch the interest of the Generalate of the Trita Brotherhood, a deeply pro-Solomani Imperial Catholic (Latin Rite) polity/religious order based on Trita (Trita/Canopus). They were willing to provide a previously-settled moonlet named *Var Kirat* to be retro-fitted as a starship, to spread the Race and the Word to new frontiers. Moreover, in return for a transfer of Confederation technology and expertise, the

Brotherhood would pick up part of the tab for staffing & retrofitting the asteroid settlement themselves.

This support was not able to save the project in the Secretariat, where on September 23, 5546 (266-1026 Imperial), it was decisively voted down. However, the now-manageable costs of the project swayed the Secretary-General and the Secretary for Solomani Security to take advantage of the offer: the Solomani financial contribution would be provided out of the budgets of pro-expansion systems and various Christian societies, especially the major Catholic theocracies. Certain favours owed to the Confederation government by the major pro-Solomani criminal organizations in Charted Space would also provide a chunk of the funding.

[**Referee**: Back in Imperial Space, a surprisingly large minority of the senior criminal leadership have ties to Solomani Security. The Confederation tolerates such entrepreneurship – indeed, encourages it within the Imperial-occupied Solomani Sphere – so long as they retain a fundamental loyalty to the Race. The Referee is directed to post-1989 activities of ex-KGB personnel and various Chinese secret societies for further investigation.]

As the million-ton vessel was retrofitted, preparations for crew recruitment begun. Over half of the crew was composed of the original inhabitants of the asteroid, retrained to their new duties: tens of thousands of additional colonists, technicians, and staff (and their families) were covertly recruited one by one by Solsec from worlds that supported the project, transported to Trita, thawed out and processed by the Trita Brotherhood, and indoctrinated by both SolSec and the Brotherhood for the mission throughout the 1040's. Of special note are the Semmecce, a small but famously devout Catholic clan of Chadwick (Archer/Aldebaran, D3509BE-A in 1050), whose wisemen not only provide significant navigation assistance for the stargate, but convinced the Solomani Confederation to permit the entire 609-strong clan to volunteer as colonists.

On A.D. 5570 (1050 Imperial), the *Var Kirat*, with a crew of 3835 and bearing 70,000 colonists, was ready to meet her destiny. She was escorted from Trita to Bellanca by a small SolSec naval squadron. As planned, the ship was turned over to Confederation ownership here, and the crew – Trita and otherwise, Catholic or not – swore allegiance to the Solomani Cause, thus becoming Confederation citizens. Once at Bellanca, the ship and compliment was briefed with the latest info, gathered by SolSec exploration ships. The asteroid ship finally crossed the stargate on August 20, 5571 (232-1151 Imperial).

Intrusion

Across thousands of parsecs, the *Var Kirat* came out of the 'instant long jump' almost at the right spot. The stargate control programs were slightly thrown off due to very minor errors regarding the mass of the asteroid ship. Thanks to various failsafes, the one-million-ton asteroid ship was not dumped into a void hex, and the strong auto-correction measures worked like a charm. But the fact remained that, instead of exiting a bit coreward of Imperial Cianji (with a rich network of systems), the *Var Kirat* exited in Athenian Republic space within Klendathu system, with only a small number of systems where the giant ship could operate or hide.

The secondary starships attached to *Var Kirat* surveyed over 3,000 starsystems, but, were often harassed by local navies suspicious of their behaviour and their refusal to acknowledge hails. The few ships that could not avoid capture self-destructed. Athenian naval vessels were able to identify and attack the *Var Kirat* mothership in today's Rombi systems in 90-1057, but could not get past her armour, sustaining heavy losses before retreating. The Athenians Red Zoned the Rombi system soon thereafter. During the Great Star War, the Athenians initially reserved between 20% and 33% of their fleet to shadow the Var Kirat, but this task force was never called into action: eventually, it became a strategic reserve for other fronts, and was disbanded in mid-1073 to free up hulls for the central conflict with the Syleans.

In 1080, a Var Kirat ship was able to make a scheduled rendezvous with a SolSec scout in Klendathu, and provide SolSec with their new 'home base' in Rombi. Before the War of the Rebellion drew away Solsec resources, the Solomani stargate was successfully re-calibrated, and a large transfer of supplies and secondary vessels was made to Rombi in 1099.

Silence

Between the early 900s and 1116, the Third Imperium would send a small flotilla to 'keep tabs' on the sector: a typical group would consist of four 100 ton Scout/Survey vessels, one or two 400 ton Survey ships, a squadron of 400 ton naval patrol ships, and two 200 ton merchantmen (typically sponsored by a megacorp). All these vessels would be capable of jump3 performance. Relations between the Imperium and the local states were cooly cordial: the Imperium never renounced her claim to the region, but never pressed

her authority, and was careful to avoid directly threatening the independence of the local Starbearkers.

Trade between the Imperium and Starbreaker was carefully governed: the Imperium never permitted the locals to gain access to GTL C technology or their theoretical background. No Starbreaker was permitted to re-enter the Imperium, and only a handful of exiles ever gained Starbreaker permission to settle among them.

The last Imperial contact with Starbreaker was in 1093. After the year 1150 passed without any news from the Imperium, the idea that the Imperium had decided to cut them off – due to a political shift, or the loss of the stargate – took hold. (The possibility of the Third Imperium destroying itself in a massive civil war, and then devastating Charted Space with the accidental release of the A.I. Virus, did not exist outside of lurid pot-boilers.) Feeling themselves truly alone, the various governments and societies turned away from intramural competition, and to internal economic development, building up their population base, and various terraforming initiatives.

The member of the *Var Kirat* task force went through a similar process, with the last contact with the central Solomani Government in A.D. 5620 (1100 Imperial). Plans to contact the Imperial colonies were delayed for centuries, as emergency procedures to insure the survival of the Race should contact with Home was lost was acted upon. (Home/Aldebaran has been capital of the Solomani Confederation since Terra was lost in 1002.)

By the early 5700s, these isolated patriots self-identified as the Var Kirat people, loyal children of lost Terra, who hope to find their homeworld again someday. The world of Trita has morphed in memory into a semi-mystical paradise, the doorway to heaven. The interplay of the material, earthy love of Terra and the mystical, transcendent love of Trita is a major factor in the local version of Catholicism. The Solomani Party, Solomani Security, and the Church hierarchy had fused into one organization by about 5870 (c. 1350 Imperial).

The New Imperial Era

Political Development – Overview

As the Imperial Silence grew into the 1200s, the aristocratic governments of Enlugal, Sylea and Cianji declared themselves the legitimate, purified successor to the Imperium. Enlugal referred to her interstellar government as the Ziru Sirkaa – the Restored Vilani Empire. Cianji easily morphed into Imperial Cianji. The Sylean elite disliked the term 'empire', feeling it to be at once too grand and too pompous for their small holding: instead, they called themselves the Noble Sylean Alliance, and their executive was called Litagu ('Chancellor') not Enteleaa ('emperor'). Athens chose to hew closer to an idealized version of the government of ancient Athens, pursuing her vision of democratic rule.

Throughout the 1300s, various new laws and edicts across the sector restricted interstellar trade between the star empires, cutting it down to a trickle. Only the sacred ships of the Human Council were still permitted to freely leap from world to world, ignoring borders. Their work mainly focused on stressing the Starbreakers shared human identity. Certain scientific investigations were conducted 'for the benefit of all humaniti': despite the prickly diplomatic relations, enough support was secured from the local polities to permit important breakthroughs and discoveries to be made and transmitted to all interested worlds.

Political Development – Athens

As noted, Athens retained and expanded her republican traditions. She neatly divided her population as citizens, subjects, and serfs, depending on their net wealth. A fixed ratio of 1 citizen : 1 subject : 3 serfs was set by the Forum of the Citizens. Only citizens could vote and stand for office, but both citizens and subjects were able to bear arms, serve on a jury, hold government jobs, and enjoy free (citizen) or reduced-cost (subject) schooling. Both citizens and subjects had the freedom of conscience and beliefs, but only citizens could publicly express their beliefs.

The conditions of the serfs varied wildly, depending on their master: some were kind, others cruel. Most of them were owned by the government and the larger corporations: these serfs were provided free medical care, food, housing, and education in return for a lifetime of work for their owners and managers. Actual chattel slavery was forbidden, as per the old Third Imperial traditions: serfs were officially people, not property, and had limited rights of life and property. Moreover, children were not born into a condition of serfdom: if they could pass a battery of tests regarding their knowledge, character, and patriotism before the age of twelve, they could rise up to the status of subjects. (In contrast, the only way to become a citizen was adoption into a citizen-class family.)

During the 1300s, two colonized worlds, Tokitre and Bond, were founded as 'idealized republican colonies':

laws here were much stricter than elsewhere, and the local Athenian ethos much less tolerant of dissent. On Athens herself, the three classes – citizen, subject, serf – made up 10%, 30%, and 60% of the population: but on the two colonies (eventually followed by others) the breakdown was closer to 70%, 25%, and 5%.

The Vilani world of Enlugal, as of 1500 Imperial. To increase planetary gravity and create a 'natural' magnetic field, two immense world-girding magnetized pumps have been constructed, encircling the planet on the local 40°N and 40°S latitudes. The planetary core is slowly pulverised with immense meson cannons, the mass evacuated with artificial gravitational fields, and gradually replaced with a molten nickel-iron mix, its electrons aligned to permit a sustainable magnetic field.
The entire megaproject is expected to be completed four centuries from now, at about 1900 Imperial.
This graphic is titled "The Colony" ©Artur Rosa. Visit his gallery at
http://arthurblue.deviantart.com/gallery/#/d2sa0a5

Political Development – Enlugal

The Vilani of Enlugal initially formed itself as a traditional tri-bureaux impersonal bureaucracy. However, this soon proved unwieldy, so the number of bureaux grew to four, and then again to eight.

Moreover, the various nobles were able to strongly assert their authority to their land: even a small group of them, working together, could successfully challenge the will of the Shadow Emperor. Much of the 1400s were given over to creating various committees, institutions and bureaucracies to govern Noble-Noble and Noble-Emperor relations.

The commoners of Enlugal successfully pressured the aristocrats into creating a corporate-based welfare state: relatively few benefits are directly available for young children and working-age adults – even schools and health care for the young remains the responsibility of their parents and their clans. But married adults with young children are given a large range of subsidies, and those too old for work – over 150 years of age – are granted a pension live on and a

small apartment, to live in or rent out as they please. A 'living wage' is available for undesirable workers, but they must live in regimented conditions similar to a relaxed minimum-security prison, and must purchase their freedom if they desire it. Having the proles buy their own freedom is actually encouraged by the corporations, as slaves are a net drain on income, but a surprisingly large minority never do so.

Political Development – Cianji

Between 900 and 1300, Imperial Cianji – the homeworld, not the interstellar state – grew more intensely fractionalized along racial, geographic, and cultural/linguistic lines. The Prince of Cianji, the senior Noble, was able to keep his own clan above the fray, focusing on interstellar relations and strengthening his control of the Imperial Navy. However, he was unable to do more than maintain peacekeeping efforts on his homeworld as noble-led wars, fuelled by racial and cultural conflicts, periodically flared up across the globe. As the violence deepened and became routine, the leaders of Cianji – the nobles, the wealthy, and the upper middle classes – grew more savage, treating their underlings with cruelty and viciousness. The victims of this aggression could only cower and attempt not to be noticed: the route to approval was strict obedient to their leaders, while being domineering and viscous to those under their authority.

While the senior Cianji nobility found the situation much to their liking, a large minority of petty nobles desired a better way to live. They launched several reform movements, winning only small successes. A better record was wrought within their own houses: mild and just rulers tended to attract the better sort of servants, while the talent they had were markedly less likely to leave or betray their masters. This virtuous circle strengthened the reformer's position, but it was a slow process, with some notable setbacks.

As the homeworld was wracked with strife and violence, more and more people sought to flee the world. The majority of nobles, regardless of their camp, supported this as a way to either establish off-world bases of support, or ways to force your enemies out of the fight – sometimes, both at once. The Cianji Expansion was also backed by the Human Council, which secured additional funding (rarely), technology (occasionally) and diplomatic support (usually) from other worlds to help plant CIanji colonies.

Question: Why would foreign interstellar polities assist Imperial Cianji to plant new colonies?

Answer: so Cianji can spread itself thin, having several low- or mid-pop worlds of middling technology, while the other starnations expanded their lead in development and a centralized, highly trained population.

Of course, all the major worlds expanded somewhat into nearby space, with the Athenian Republic stretching from one end of the sector to the other. But the Athenians didn't have nearly the number of colonies that Cianji had, and so her budget wasn't as heavily weighed down.

The War of the Worlds

From the late 1300s, there was an increasing level of distrust between the merit-oriented Sylean middle class and the more technocratic/aristocratic ethos of the Sylean nobility. Things came to a point after the Arpano Assassinations, when several notable aristocrats were killed at close range, usually by a pistol. The Arpano Circle was broken up after a five-month investigation, but the focus of attention then shifted to taxation rates, especially in regard to obsolete 'terraform taxes'. A minor Baron, Lord Thezera, adroitly positioned himself as The People's Champion on the matter. After successfully negotiating the phasing out of the terraform taxes, he moved quickly to forge his own power-block in the Sylean House of Lords. With the assistance of some powerful allies, he was declared Duke of Sylea, the highest title in the Sylean Peerage, on 1396. While the title granted Thezera great authority and influence, the apex of power of the Noble Sylean Alliance, the Chancellery, still eluded him.

On 1311 Imperial, Duke Thezera of Sylea finally won the gold ring of the Chancery. Looking for a way to increase his glory and renown – and, thus, vault to greater fame and authority – he increased hostilities with the Athenian Republic. By the 1320s, skirmishes between their warships had become a commonplace. There was no firm date where it could be said "The War of the Worlds started on...", but by 1330 both governments were effectively at war with each other, with planetary raids, light and fast strike/ counterstrike missions, and semi-routine commerce raiding.

The first major action was launched by the Athenians, with an invasion of Laoyle, Eessith, and Xaeyal in 1333. Laoyle, with her fine environment and large population, was never properly pacified by Athenian ground forces, but the other two worlds surrendered as soon as local Sylean naval forces were defeated. The Syleans made daring raids on Laoyle forces, occasionally dispersing

the naval blockade squadron and dropping off supplies to anti-Athenian insurgents – which, due to their many military successes and the support of the population, grew to become anti-Athenian armies.

After stopping cold an Athenian attempt to take Tanatelul in the first quarter of 1334, the Syleans decided to move against Hub. The fighting was quite fierce: the residents of the world were unwilling to fight for their overlords, but were also unwilling to fight against them. By the end of 1334, the Hub front had become a stalemate, with naval control of the system badly fragmented and the ground situation a complete, convoluted mess.

It was here, at the start of 1335, when Chancellor Duke Thezera decided to gamble everything on a direct strike against Athens. Knowing that he was politically finished if the attack failed, the Duke chose to lead the assault fleet personally. Fortunately, he left actual military command and control in the hands of the admirals, who came up with a double-pronged, slow/fast strategy to wipe off the homeworld's defending ships and battlestations. The Athenians were completely unprepared for the strike force's arrival on 127-1335, which gave a pointed demonstration on why mobile military assets are preferable to static ones. While the system defense boats and Athenian starships in-system were gone, the world itself was quite well-equipped with anti-ship weaponry, forcing the Syleans to retreat after an ill-advised attempt to invade Athens ended in disaster.

Within a month, the Athenians requested terms to end the conflict. In the Peace Treaty of Paseo, the Athenians were forced to release Hub and Worms systems from their rule: moreover, naval restrictions in number and ability of warships were placed on the Athenians 'in perpetuity', with the Human Council acting to verify Athenian compliance by regular and surprise inspections.

Apotheosis

To understand the Apotheosis of Thezera, a brief survey of ancient history is necessary.

Mainstream Sylean culture of the Classic Traveller era is described in **GURPS Traveller Humaniti**, available here: http://www.warehouse23.com/item.html?id=SJG6623. The dominant religion among the monotheistic Syleans is Maar Zon, and their leading prophet is nameless. The Ogaspisiti sect that relocated to Starbreak insists that this prophet reincarnates every generation, and – in the 400s, during the height of the early Third Imperium – they believed that this prophet ('sinrend') was Cathodi, the head of a mid-scale stoneworking firm on Sylea.

While not a very charismatic figure, Cathodi was able to parley the religious devotion to lucrative construction contracts; his daughter Me outlined various mystical expansions to Maar Zon doctrine, grounding it in a deep devotion to herself and her lineage. Until the rise of the Prophet-Emperor, the office of Prophet alternated between a man (who built up wealth of his followers) and a woman (who strengthened the mystical, familial and cultural nature of the Ogaspisiti).

Note that no one handled military or legal affairs: this was left to outside authorities. When the sect gained their own world, they followed tradition and appointed those families with a heritage of military success as their rulers, with the senior family as planetary baron. After the Imperium abandoned Starbreak, these families proclaimed themselves the Guardians of Sylea, electing a leader – the Chancellor – from amongst themselves, to rule for a ten year term (re-election is possible once). The interstellar polity was referred to as the Sylean Protectorate (later, the Noble Sylean Alliance), and was mainly a security zone around Sylea.

On 113-1337, the returning Chancellor Thezera, riding high with the fervent joy of his citizens, took the opportunity to declare himself Prophet-Emperor ('Sinrendnoin' in Sylean) of the Holy Imperium ('Wooeresa Weas': but only in the Sylean language. Foreigners must refer to it as "the Holy Imperium" in their own language). Many old Guardian families was eased out of politically important positions, as various friends and allies, now anointed as priests, took their place. The new sacred monarchy spent much time creating new religious orders to enforce his rule and encourage reverence for the Holy Imperium, obedience to the Sacred Officers of the Sinrendnoin, and hymns of praise and adoration to the Prophet-Emperor himself. The local Imperial Cult/National Religion is referred to as Rohisa ("The True Way") with the old Ogaspisiti ("Prophet's Return") religion seen as only an important stepping stone to Rohisa.

When Chancellor Thezera proclaimed himself Sinrednoin (Prophet-Emperor) in 1337, the hereditary Prophetess at the time naturally took offense. However, her authority had already been eroded by her distinct 'lack of holiness', as she refused to have sex with anyone other than her husband. After he died, it was rumoured – to the outrage of the population – that she had him killed for adultery.

The Chancellor did not attack her directly, but his agents and supporters steadily drew away public support, a rather easy exercise, considering her unnatural sexual mores. After she died, her more pragmatic son humbled himself before the Sinrednoin, renouncing his own prophethood. In return, he was granted permission to begin a small priestly order, to join in proper reverence of the Sinrednoin. A reasonable sum was given for initial construction, and a stipend provided directly to the son, but henceforth they would have to fund themselves from public gifts.

While the majority of the Sylean population became Rohisai, a few heretics remain, generally die-hard supporters of Ogaspisiti. These individuals and families received harshly discriminatory treatment, but were generally suffered to live: the door to conversion and a much easier life was always left open for them. However, the few Vilani who lived within the Holy Imperium, dwindled into extinction: as they were always isolated and difficult to trace in the historical records, it has become impossible to conclusively prove that this particular genocide was ordered and organized from on high. The Ziru Sirkaa has some fragmentary evidence provided by Vilani exiles, but has kept what they know under wraps, as of 1500 Imperial.

The atheists among the Syleans – few in number, but prominent in the intelligentsia – simply redefined 'deity' as extreme power and might. The dominant atheistic framework was perfectly comfortable with the idea of a very successful man gaining paranormal power, even if such power was just a manifestation of group psychology. A pagan definition of deity could comfortably fit into the atheist framework as merely another step in the evolutionary process – and indeed, atheistic intellectuals were soon found in the service of the Emperor, hoping to curry favour and perhaps take part in the Emperor's climb to true godhood. The minority atheistic position took the point of view that the source of law in a culture was, naturally, the god of said culture. As the Sinrendnoin is the source of Law – as opposed to the People, the Party, the Clergy, the Courts, or the Ancestors – that made the Sinrendnoin, by definition, the god of the Sylean worlds.

The central concept of Rohisa revolves around the differences between Apoptosis (programmed cell death) and Autophagic (traumatic cell death). Dozens of billions of cells die every day in every human, but only some forms of death are healthy to the body. The beneficial form of cell death – Apoptosis – is use as an analogy for the proper life and death cycle for citizens of the Holy Imperium, with the Imperium itself seen as a single unitary being. Necrosis – the destructive and evil form of death – does include the murder of registered Imperial citizens, but the concept also includes a wasted life, or an attack on the authority of the Prophet-Emperor.

The Rohisai are encouraged to prune and shape their desires, so they can act as unique, specialized contributors to the Holy Imperium as a whole. Citizens – believers or not – are euthanized when they can no longer serve their function, and are unable to meet some different need. The peaceful killing of 'good/useful citizens' is kept distinct from the violent killing of 'bad/useless citizens'.

This basic intellectual framework extends to censorship, law, and public works within the Holy Imperium: many citizens even work to extend it to mowing the lawn, work habits, and sports. The economic system is based on small freeholders/small businesses, corporatist/fascist ('state-business partnership') organizations, and the Divine (read: 'state-owned') Monopolies that completely control interstellar trade within the Holy Imperium.

Permanent, exclusive male-female relations are strongly discouraged, culturally and legally: non-reproductive relationships, in contrast, are viewed as truly spiritual and noble, and strongly encouraged by the Sinrendnoin. This extends to carefully monitored and controlled temple prostitution and religious orgies. The government would prefer to have all reproduction to be via “Sacred and Safe” artificial wombs, but this has proven too expensive to run on a large scale, outside of certain priesthoods.

Imperial Cianji warships patrol the remains of a world in Nadia system, 1399 Imperial. Humaniti still finds the time to kill each other for all the usual reasons, fighting among the ignored ruins of an earlier cataclysm.
This graphic is titled "Openhearted" © Igor Vitkovskiy. Visit his gallery at
http://browse.deviantart.com/?qh=&section=&global=1&q=openhearted#/d3es23b

Zandism, Wzi, and the Imperial Civil War

Wsi system was one of the most successful colonies of Cianji: but it was precisely this success that let her local elites to believe that they would be even more successful, if they were free of Imperial Cianji's fetters. From roughly 1320 to 1370, various anti-Cianji and Imperial reform movements grew out of Wsi soil, spreading to nearby systems.

The Zanist Faith was founded by Jack Zandilate: raised in a Christian household, he disliked the idea of an active God, but strongly endorsed sexual restrictions, unbiased judgements in the courts, national socialist economics, aristocratic rule, and patriarchal authority, with society strongly grounded in familial networks organized into clans. A gifted writer and orator, his conservative, deistic beliefs and statist philosophy were expounded in a series of writings called the Thoughtful Texts. Published between 1225 and 1242, they serve as the foundation of the Zanist Faith.

Zanism originated in the Cianji city of Saragi, where Zandilate lived out his adult life. By the time he died in 1242 at the age of 84, it had become quite popular among the younger leaders of Cianji society, subverting the old libertarian/libertine attitudes of the ruling nobles. It has a strong effect in reducing the wanton cruelty and high-handedness of the nobility, and many young nobles and a vast section of the middle and working classes became adherants within a century of Zandilate's death. However, even as it surged in popularity on Cianji, the Zanist Faith clashed with the traditional Imperial polytheism of Wsi and Yelloworld subsectors.

Despite the increasing cultural distance between them, Cianji's elites strove to accommodate the colonial polytheists by making Wsi a secondary capital, and granting her government standing above her fellow colonial systems. None of this satisfied the Wsi for long: every concession led to increased demands within a few years, a decade at most. From roughly 1350 onwards, the Wsi were encouraged to assert their political and cultural independence by Athenian interests. Material support, while limited, was crucial to the early growth of the Wsi Way, but it was the political indoctrination and organizational acumen that proved to have the biggest impact.

Things slowly were brought to a head between 1370 and 1390, as a series of terrorist incidents began cropping up in the Cianji colonies. The Imperial government, used to formal, organized warfare, was caught flat-footed by these acts of violence. Imperial military and law enforcement organizations never caught up to the curve, as the number and scale of the long planned-for attacks were carried out. More importantly, the revolutionaries constantly caught the Imperium off-balance, shifting from car bombings & power outages, to city riots & strikes, to database & telecom hacking faster than the highly hierarchal and rule-bound Imperial Cianji could react.

When large-scale atrocities were committed by the revolutionaries, the Imperial authorities reacted with great violence throughout the colonies, but especially at Samtara, where a majority of the rebellious population died under orbital bombardment. The revolutionaries reacted by successfully poisoning the population of Mu, a long-settled neighbour of Cianji herself. With the homeworld population terrified that they will be next, the Imperium abruptly withdrew from the rebelling systems in 1401. Pro-Cianji populations on the abandoned worlds fought, hoping and praying for the Cianji return that never happened. These loyalist were killed off, made to submit to the Wsi Way, or permitted some autonomy in return for tribute and recognition of Wsi supremacy: by 1412, violent resistance had come to an end.

Severe internal purges of 'disruptive and criminal element's – on both Cianji and her remaining colonies – led to the creation of massive internment camps on Cianji. As part of the 1415 Human Council-brokered peace agreement between the Imperium and the revolutionaries – now styled 'the Honourbound of the Reborn Imperium' – these dissidents were transported to Comerwake, and handed over to the Reborn Imperials to rule. Sporadic purges, decreasing in strength, area, and destructiveness over time, continued to surge thru Imperial Cianji space until the present day (1500 Imperial).

Surprisingly, these malcontents transported to Comerwake proved to be as hostile to Wsi authority as they were to the Cianji: the world was eventually placed under military rule, with most of the population oscillating between sullen obedience and violent insurrection. The Reborn Imperial garrison has managed to crush off-world smuggling and piracy for now, but any weakening of their resolve or ability leads to the rapid re-establishment of illicit interstellar activity.

One of the more notable consequences of the Imperial Civil War was a large-scale reform movement, originating from among the pro-Zanist nobles of Cianji. Between 1410 and 1440, they grew into the dominant force among the nobles, eventually turning Imperial Cianji into an officially Zanist government. Non-Zanist nobles were aggressively squeezed out of the Imperial nobility. Many of these families eventually fled to the Reborn Imperium, often taking hundreds, even thousands of their retainers and servants with them. There was no organized resistance to the Zanist Revolution: the individual nobles who fought to keep their titles were progressively stripped of their wealth, their freedom, and their lives.

The aristocrats that didn't resist the Zanists were permitted to live out their lives in peace. Many of these former nobles eventually took sanctuary on the world of Imperial Cianji world of Diaoran, which made a special effort to welcome them (and their wealth, expertise and connections.) The Diaoran planetary government incorporated the exiles into the local government, and even established a local peerage with legal authority for their sake. In time, the Golden Hills, a precinct of the Diaoran capital city of Harpke became the high-tech centre of the Old Aristocracy.

The End of the Athenian Republic

As the Holy Imperium grew more comprehensive in its claims of religious authority – implicitly claiming leadership of all humans of Starbreak in 1408, for example – the culture of Athens grew more ideological hostile. Revenge for losing the last war wasn't the only thing on the Athenian mind: with its deeply Messianic-Progressive vision of political salvation via Direct Democracy, Athenian elites simply could not tolerate the existence of a divinely chosen Prophet-Emperor as a neighbour. Various political programs and ideologically-driven movements were launched to reshape Sylean culture into a form more pleasing to the Athenian mind. Naturally, the Sylean Sinrendnoin reacted by funding and launching his own pro-Divine Right movements, supported by his priesthood-intelligentsia, the nobility/corporate families, and his academia-media complex.

The most striking move was the unilateral abrogation of the Treaty of Paseo in 5-1411, with the Republic kicking out Human Council inspectors. Cries of sacrileges were heard across the sector: these complaints were ignored or mocked by the Athenians. The Human Council suspended Athenian membership as a reprisal, an act that only spurred the Athenians to dig in their heels. The Syleans began to prepare for a

war against the Athenian Republic, with the broad support of non-Athenian public opinion.

The ever-deepening hostility finally exploded into open warfare when traders from the two starnations attacked at each other in Nara system, in 121-1413. The Republic, believing that their youthful ideology and revolutionary zeal would carry the day, launched several deep strikes into the Holy Imperium. Despite successfully occupying several minor systems and wining a number of space battles, they were unable to conclusively destroy the enemy fleet, break their will to resist, or seriously cripple the industrial infrastructure of Sylea.

In the latter half of 1413, the momentum of the conflict shifted to favour the Syleans. The Athenians simply didn't have the time to forge either the ships or the men needed to fight a sustained war against the Holy Imperium. Finally, a major Sylean task force arrived in the Athenian system on 270-1413. It found most of the jump-capable starships absent, as the Athenians continued to attack not only Sylean combatants, but all non-Athenian shipping.

Despite the lack of jump-capable ships, in-system system defence boats and the planetary meson grid were able to smash most of the invading fleet, but not before the Sylean task force, using EMP nuclear weapons, destroyed numerous Athenian communication centres – including the starports, and all of their satellites and spaceborne communication stations – and a good chunk of the system defenders, both planetside and in space. The attacks on Athens worked to sharply discredit the Republic's leadership, leading to the government's overthrow in 317-1413. An armistice was soon signed, with the Athenians again accepting the authority of the Human Council and the Treaty of Paseo.

A peace settlement was hastily signed by the Republic on 245-1417, promising to pay extensive restitution for the war. These monies were never paid: the interstellar Athenian polity disintegrated soon after the signing ceremony, as long-repressed divisions and a bitter inflationary depression led to open warfare. The Athenian Civil War, lasting from 1417 to 1422, sent Athens down a steep population and technological spiral that took a generation to level out. New attempts to reunify the world are restarted – and burn out – with monotonous, destructive regularity. Despite the pleas of the Human Council, various vigilante groups worked to assault the weaker ex-Athenian worlds, and many Athenian communities outside of the Republic's borders were exiled, exterminated, or plundered by their fellow Athenians.

The Expansion of the Bond of Man

The primary result of the war was the destruction of the Athenian Republic; but there were other consequences of note. One of them was the agreement to ban outright nuclear weapons (and weapons derived from nuclear weapons, including X-ray laser weapons.) The Human Council argued strongly that the continued development and use of such weapons would put at risk human civilization in the sector. It must be assumed that the Starbreak cultures are the only survivors of whatever fate befell the Imperium, and these cultures must not be destroyed.

The Emperors were swayed by these arguments – as well as by the force of public opinion. They agreed to a temporary ban on nuclear weapon creation and usage, to be reviewed in a century. In the meantime, at the urging of the Council, they would encourage colonization efforts of the rimward regions of the sector, and eventually expand the presence of humaniti beyond the borders of the sector.

The second major consequence was the public recognition of the existence of the Var Kirat people. The major governments – especially the Athenian Republic and the Holy Imperium – knew of the secretive Var Kirat, and their preference to lurk around in the Athenian systems of Faunia, Rombi and Fleethome systems. However, so long as they didn't challenge Republican rule over those systems or interfere with commerce, they were left alone by the Athenians (who didn't care for a two-front war, and doubted their ability to take on the giant asteroid ship.)

However, with the destruction of Athenian rule over these systems, the Var Kirat publicly revealed themselves, with a jump4 scout tender arriving in the Sylean capital world at 90-1446. They contact both the Sylean Emperor and the Human Council, and soon went on a tour of the coreward reaches of the sector, meeting with various heads of government and societal leaders. After swearing an oath of non-aggression vis-à-vis non-Solomani nations and peoples, they were permitted to join the Human Council as a signatory: but on issues of military defence and high finance, the Var Kirat were restricted to non-voting observer status.

The Var Kirat downplays their Solomani supremacist attitude in public, valuing peace and comity with the other humans over demonstrating the power and glory of the Race. Even in private, few Var Kirati Solomani

refer to themselves as the Master Race, preferring to call themselves the Firstborn or the Children of God. Their preference is to be the firstborn of the many Children, the strongest and the smartest, protecting the lesser Races of Man, much as a big brother looks out for the smaller ones.

Relations with the Holy Imperium are surprisingly good, despite the major differences between the Sylean Rohisa religion and Solomani Catholic Christianity. Even more remarkably, as of 1500 there is a major Var Kirat construction yard over the Ziru Sirkaa capital world, with pureblood Solomani and Vilani men working hard for mutual profit. Var Kirat-Reborn Imperium relations are cordial but distant, while Var Kirat-Imperial Cianji relations are a good deal cooler, if still respectful. The Athenians are the closest in culture to the Var Kirat, but their irreverent attitude grates on the pious Var Kirat. Finally, the Var Kirat do all they can to ingrate themselves with the Human Council, but the Council leaders prefer to keep a fair amount of space between themselves and the Var Kirat.

A locally built Free Trader, the Deo Confidimus, makes her first journey to near orbit. Moscow System, 1492 Imperial. **This graphic is titled "Home Coming" © Puredigital101. Visit his gallery at http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=1975984**

The Protectorates, and the Diltov War

The Human Council, concerned with the destruction involved in the Cianji Imperial Civil War, launched several studies focused on reviewing the chronicles of the Imperial Civil War. Initially, this was restricted to the Starbreak conflict, but later expanded to include available records on the Third Imperium's Civil War of the 600s.

This decade-long series of studies was concluded in 1431, with the results presented before the Four Emperors on Dikaai on 1435, during the first post-Civil War Renewal of the Bond of Man. The Four Emperors agreed to create the Human Colony Commission (HCC), to spread human settlements across the Starbreak – the largely-empty void that divides Starbreak sector – to the rimward regions of the sector, the New Stars.

Imperial Cianji and the newly-formed Reborn Imperium took the lead in colonizing the region. Both governments selected politically inconvenient populations and troublesome intellectuals to the new systems: for Imperial Cianji, radical Christian groups challenging Zanist authority; for the Reborn Imperium, ideologically demanding Honourbound houses. Neither the Ziru Sirkaa nor the Holy Imperium took advantage of offers to plant their own colonies, preferring to supply starships and logistical support which could be

quickly retooled to directly strengthen the power of their governments.

On 1451, the colonies were reorganized into sovereign governments, the Noble Federation and the Diltov Republic. Soon afterwards, on 1453, the Diltov Republic declared war on the Noble Federation and used her two Broadsword ships and handful of Empress Marava Far Traders to invade the trailing worlds of the Noble Federation. The Federation quickly determined that the Republic was being used as a proxy for Cianji interests, and implored the Human Council, the Reborn Imperium and the HCC to put a stop to the attacks and force the Diltovich into an armistice.

Various diplomatic initiatives and public pressure within Imperial Cianji proved impotent to stop the war, but did persuade Cianji to satisfy herself with the complete conquest of only three worlds – Liege, Robes, and Noble – by her proxy before forcing the Republic into a ceasefire on 1455. Republican forces were withdrawn from the Glory, Tranquility, Gold, and Justice systems, and both Republican and Federation warships were impounded by the Human Council, to be eventually demilitarized or transported back to the coreward reaches of the sector for resale, via long-legged Var Kirat starships.

On 1457, the Four Emperors dissolved the ineffective HCC, and in its place created the Protectorate Commission, to continue to oversee the armistice and to promote new settlement into the Noble Federation and the Diltov Republic. Both interstellar governments were downgraded from independent polities to protectorates under the oversight of the Commission. Efforts to forge a proper peace treaty between the Federation and the Republic continue, with limited progress to date. Open hostilities between the two groups are firmly suppressed by the Commission. Cianji and Wsi, as backers of their respective clients, have continued to support the armistice, encouraging internal development over military readiness.

Interstellar military forces within the Protectorates are provided by the Four Emperors: starships incapable of making the long journey (which requires at least Jump3 capacity) are brought to the area of operations courtesy of the Var Kirat. During the later Quajorai War, relations between Imperial Cianji and Reborn Imperium forces within the Protectorates were tense, but both obeyed their standing orders and declined conflict. Planet-bound riots and violence, however, forced the comprehensive evacuation of all Republicans on Federation worlds (and vice-versa.) Various other mutually hostile policies and regulations were put in place at this time, including trade restrictions. As of 1500, trade between the Diltov Republic and the Noble Federation is still handled by neutral third parties (Var Kirat and Ziru Sirkaa traders.)

The Trailward Rot

As the Reborn Imperium reorganized their military from free-wheeling insurgents, terrorists, moles, and guerrillas to a more-or-less formal military force, they found the need to increase military expenditures to create a sufficient deterrent to any Cianji force seeing vengeance for their loss. This high taxation level generated some level of hostility on many world, but especially in the distant worlds of the Artemsus Group to trailing.

From c.1440 to 1465 Imperial, several systems were in sporadic rebellion or unrest, but outright secession only begun with a serious assault on Imperial military installations on Daskomo. Violent resistance followed on Flandry and Bluemarble, then quickly spread to the entire Artemsus Group. Reborn Imperial were hard-put to stifle the rebellion and keep a big enough force to face the Cianji across the Ball-and-Chain systems.

The Daskomi revolutionaries were sufficiently cunning, vicious, and disciplined to intimidate even hardened troopers, while their leadership played the political game superbly, making bombarding the system politically impossible. The Reborn chose to abandon Flandry first in 1470, and managed to defeat the rebellion soundly on Bluemarble, but word that the Daskomi attempted to corrupt the financial payment settlement system on Wsi sparked a major public financial panic in 1472. Daskomo was quickly evacuated in 1473, as were several other systems in the Group. This allowed the Imperial Dynasty to focus on retaining control on their central worlds, stomp out the fiery riots in the major Wsitype cities, and fend off a full-scale economic collapse.

Note that all of the abandoned worlds are still claimed by the Reborn Imperium. However, attempts to regain control have been limited to minor skirmishes between patrol ships. No attempt to regain control is foreseen in the near future, outside of school textbooks, and political verbage.

NOTE: The maps included in this issue of Stellar Reaches only recognise de facto rule, and ignores unenforced Reborn Imperium territorial claims.

The Quajorai War

Among the senior Cianji colonies that supported the revolution, Quajora was among the more wealthy, and influential. After 1403, when the Reborn Imperium government was founded, the Quajori was quite willing to help build up the new polity, and willing to take second place behind Wsi in leading the nation. However, from c. 1465 to the 1490s, an ever increasing number of fiscal burdens was placed on her 'for the sake of the weaker worlds', without a commensurate rise in political power and respect.

Quajori elites increasingly gave voice to their discontent, receiving only casual dismissals for their efforts. Certain Imperial Cianji observers sent feelers to the Quajori, probing the possibility of reuniting with the old government. After Cianji agents determined that a solid majority of the local elite can be relied on to work with the Prince of Cianji, their sponsors moved swiftly to gain the aging Prince's approval for a military incursion into Reborn space.

The Quajora War (1493 – 1495) can be divided into three stages. In the first stage, major Imperial combatants and troopships moved with haste across the border, making a beeline to Quajora. Once there, they swiftly smashed hostile warships and the orbital starport, while informing the local elites that they were now reincorporated into the Imperium. The majority of local Nobility quickly recognized Cianji authority. Those few local Nobles that didn't rise up to expel Reborn forces were overwhelmed by invading neighbours (beefed up by the Imperial Army).

In the second stage, various Cianji and Reborn Imperial small combatants and armed clawed at each other and at the isolated settlements up and down the Mu main. This chaotic combat was the background of the third major stage: a two pronged affair, the Honourbound launched a hopeless attack against the Cianji warships over Quajora as a feint, while a larger fleet moved stealthily across Wsi and Mu subsectors, to strike at Cianji herself. The second fleet – Taskforce Nightwail – decided that it would be suicidal to approach Cianji directly, but they could rattle Cianji's cage by destroying shipping and weak anti-pirate/anti-raider patrols.

While this was a good plan, it was unfortunately expected by the Cianji Admiralty, who held back a majority of her major squadrons to protect the central systems of Imperial Cianji. The strike fleet was never successfully isolated and destroyed, but she was constantly under threat by powerful patrols. While there were a few smaller singleton ships that could be destroyed, the merchants and patrollers quickly got wise. Soon, the free traders were travelling in convoys protected by tough Cianji cruisers and corvettes, while the patrol ships all banded together, depending on their large numbers to deter attack.

Taskforce Nightwail was badly mauled in a battle over Ifield, three parsecs from Cianji. As the surviving taskforce elements fled, the Cianji pressed for an immediate armistice. The Reborn Emperor and his privy council, deciding that there was nothing more to be gained by war, agreed. The war was formally ended on 243-1495, with the rule of any given system given to what forces dominated it at the end of the war.

The Reborn Imperium won several minor systems in the Mu chain, but had failed in her primary goal of retaking Quajora. Moreover, several large, irreplaceable warships were lost in the battles tied to the Cianji cluster: while Imperial Cianji could replace the large starships with new ships of higher technology, Wsi just didn't have the industrial or technological muscle to do the same.

The Emperor's List

The Third Imperium

Usually the firstborn child, confirmed by the Imperial Moot.

Margaret I, ruled 688-736. ♀

> She established the Solomani Autonomous Region in 704, based on a similar idea to that of the Starbreak settlements of the same time period. The first settlement was established in 712.

Paulo I, 736-767. ♂

Tomutov I, 767-768 (abdicated). ♂

Paula II, 768-836. ♀

Tomutova II, 836-908. ♀

> Starbreak sector rebelled against the Iridium Throne during her rule, with the sector abandoned by the Imperium in 908.

Imperial Cianji

The most promising son, as selected by family council. Family rule over Cianji dates from the initial settlement, but interstellar rule only begun in 1210 Imperial.

Baldo, ruled 1210-1260. ♂

Drazdan, 1260-1282. ♂

Pavao, 1282-1288. ♂

Vanja, 1288-1241. ♂

Niko I, 1241-1253. ♂

Andrej, 1253-1254. ♂

Niko II, 1254- 1292. ♂
Zoran, 1292-1318. ♂
Demetrjusz, 1318-1355. ♂
Isaïr, 1355-1389. ♂
Petar I, 1389-1438. ♂
Petar II, 1438-1480. ♂
Grgur, 1480- present ♂

Reborn Imperium
Elected by the Reborn Archonate for life. No Honourbound house is permitted to rule twice in succession.
Huan Lee, ruled 1422-1431. ♂
Lien Ting, 1431-1480.♀
Gerald Martínez Escudero, 1480- present . ♂

Ziru Sirkaa
As is traditional, the Igsiirid - a corporate board of the major bureaux-castes (corporate-governments, numbering eight in the Restored Vilani Empire) - decide on their chairman. This corporate-nobleman is referred to as the Ishimkarun, the Shadow-Emperor: neither his face nor his image ever appears in public.

(Note: castes are not hereditary, but instead are chosen by the proper council based on the individual's aptitudes.)

Shannash, ruled 1257- 1304. ♂
Gishbada, 1304-1342. ♂
Nigii, 1342-1421. ♂
Khugi, 1421-1466. ♂
Enli, 1466- present. ♂

Holy Imperium
The Sinrendnoin ('Prophet-Emperor', but usually just Emperor in Anglic) of the Holy Imperium ('Wooeresa Weas': only used by Syleans) is always hand-picked by the previous Emperor. The new Prophet-Emperor is always a member of the priestly bureaucracy.

Rule alternates between a man and a woman. Powerful court eunuchs do exist, but – despite repeated attempts at engineering public opinion – the general population still strongly prefers a father or mother archetype for their masters.

Thezera, ruled 1337 -1374. ♂
Dipinem, 1374-1395. ♀
Cut, 1395-1420. ♂
Eventhfe, 1420-1421. ♀
Erotale, 1421-1462. ♂
Se, 1462-present. ♀

And yes. that's *Empress* Se whose on the throne 'today', in 1500 Imperial.

Athenian Republic
Throughout its existence, the Athenian Republic was consistently a democracy with a limited franchise – a male property owner, aged 20 or more, born within the Republic, debt free, with one wife and one or more children. Terms varied over the centuries, but were usually capped at five or seven years. While the Republican government dates directly from the initial settlement at 786, the chronology starts from 1001, when the first interstellar colony was planted, to 1422, when the Republic was finally dissolved.

As I have no interest in generating the ~70 names that would make up the list, only the first and last of the interstellar Presidents are noted. Note that the interstellar polity effectively disintegrated in 1417.

Doros 1001-1008. ♂
…
Nikias 1417-1422. ♂

Notable Worlds of Starbreak

By Alvin Plummer

A Protectorate Researcher scans the ancient ruins that surround him. Providence/Painted, Starbreak sector. 1500 Imperial. **This graphic is titled "A Planetary Survey" © Mark Daniel Goecke. Visit his gallery at http://marcgoecke.cgsociety.org/gallery/609192/**

Introduction

The history of Starbreak is tied to a particular idea: take the more radical racial separatists and idealists of the Third Imperium, and give them their own starpatch to play with. As such, Starbreak is not easily transportable to the typical Classic Traveller campaign.

However, the individual worlds are far more portable, and can be used profitably by most Referees.

Fifty-two systems are briefly described below. All worlds are described as of 1500 Imperial.

Acroupa/Nosso Nosso, Imperial Cianji

This world has become a dumping ground for the undesirables of Cianji that the aristocracy want off-world. Vast numbers of lower-class criminals of all sorts, both violent and non-violent, are transported here to fend for themselves.

The walled starport is the primary centre of civilization. A majority of the exiles prefer to reside as close to it as possible, especially those who dream of returning home someday. The more enterprising of the political and religious exiles, however, have gathered themselves into groups and wandered elsewhere, to establish independent, low-tech civilizations of like-minded individuals.

Right now the mainworld population is two million, with 10,000 – 50,000 being brought in every year. The Imperial penal administration rules 80% of the population, most of the rest being free towns. The name for the locals is Acroupan.

Planetary theme song: "Still Alive" by Lisa Miskovsky. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TERyxFfMqDk

Ceskyi/Nosso Nosso, Imperial Cianji

Ceskyi is a large world, covered by a worldwide ocean of shallow depth, averaging less than 10 meters. Despite the shallow ocean, there is very little natural land available. The human settlements are built on artificial concrete islands. The economy, grounded in aquaculture, is doing very well, and a spirit of optimism pervades the population.

While there is sufficient housing for 15 million people, far fewer currently live on the world. Due to a relentless stream of terrorist incidents, the planetary population was reduced to only 500,000 by the end of

the Imperial Civil War (1370 – 1415 Imperial), with the GTL at 0.

As of 1500 Imperial, the mainworld population was one million, and the GTL has risen to five over the last century. The Imperial planetary government, led by a baron, rules 70% of the population: the rest are divided between various squires and baronnets. The demonym is Ceskyi, pronounced slightly differently from the world's name.

Planetary theme song: "Dream Scape" by Yuki Kajiura. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9d4AHGvsec

Duchy/Nosso Nosso, Independent

Like the other free worlds of Nosso Nosso subsector, Duchy won her independence the smart way, by letting others pay the butcher's bill, then quickly jumping on the bandwagon after Imperial power was largely broken.

The leading power among the five-system Speckled Eggs star formation, Duchy has long focused on economic growth, rather than environmental or cultural development. The industrial and financial communities, dominated by competing branches of the Gettel family, are quite influential in local space.

As of 1500 Imperial, the Ducher number three million. The Ducal Court – currently run as an aristocratic republic – rules most of the population.

Planetary theme song: "Wheels of Progress" by Andy Brick. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sX4HqntdXtE

Trantor/Nosso Nosso, Independent

Trantor suffered during the Civil War: tens of thousands fled in fear as a result of incidents that killed ~2,000 people. Even after the war ended, the population continued to decline for a generation, if at a slower rate.

Investors from Imperial Cianji increased the technological level during the 1450-1470s, capping their success with a small starport, able to build small starships at the rate of one every three to five years. While slow, it is a profitable enterprise for the Tranters (informally, the Trannie).

As of 1500 Imperial, the mainworld population was five hundred thousand. The President of the local Corporate Relations Board rules 40% of the population directly, with various aristocrats, executives, and political revolutionaries ruling the remaining population as they see fit.

Because of certain taxation deals made with Imperial Cianji, free traders within this subsector prefer to use Trantor as their base of operations. Many retired spacemen set down roots here, establishing families and small, specialized businesses that support the interstellar community. Due to the familial nature of the residents, the local startown is at once more busy and more family friendly than most.

Planetary theme song: "EpiCenter" by The Humble Brothers. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8HW5agFwUY

Leoin/Nosso Nosso, Imperial Cianji

Leoin is an increasingly comfortable world, currently engaged in labour-intensive forms of terraforming, with a focus on building up the biosphere. Agriculture is coming to its own as well, with widespread usage of GTL 9 machinery and geneered crops and livestock for land- and ocean-based farming.

The Zanist faith is especially strong among the Leoni, with the inhabitants holding strongly to the concept of a well-ordered, naturally beneficent universe, laid down by a kindly Supreme Being who no longer interferes with this universe. As families must be protected, sexual expression is strictly controlled; as authority must be respected, the Emperor must be obeyed; as the future must be built, hard work is exalted.

Perhaps 70% of the population obeys the ruling Imperial Baron because they feel that he is the legitimate authority of the world. The rest of the Leoini lives outside of his grasp, living quiet lives, tending their children, and shooting at tax collectors.

Planetary theme song: "Morning Commute" by Jerry Martin. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BBEZ_T_3OY

Nosso Nosso/Nosso Nosso, Imperial Cianji

Nosso Nosso was uninhabited by men for a long time, as the local lifeforms were incompatible to human genetics. However, it remains a beautiful world and a tropical paradise, with small or tiny islands set in a placid, warm ocean. A favourite of senior nobles and

executives, it is now home to the heavily automated Nosso Starport, which specialized in the production and maintenance of luxury yachts. On average, two such yachts are being produced, taking three years each due to the care, expense, and hand craftsmanship required. The Orenda Auction House is based here: an important middleman in Cianji trade, it buys and sells exotic and rare items for its select clientele.

As of 1500 Imperial, the mainworld population was six hundred. House Kovačević, the masters of Imperial Cianji, usually assign planetary rule to an aged member of their house as a retirement station. While he rules the entire planet in name, his commands are usually respected by only 40% of the population. Sixty percent of the Nossi pay little or no attention to what he says. So long as they pay lip service to his authority, though, they are left alone.

Planetary theme song: "Deserted" by Andy Brick.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vnk4aMYpCPM

Cianji/Mu, Imperial Cianji

Cianji is the most important world within Starbreak, as of 1500 Imperial. It is the centre of extensive population growth and the most populous world in the sector, the origin of numerous settlement projects, the capital of the most powerful interstellar government, the focus of all commerce within their empire, the master of the largest military in the sector, and the heath of a vibrant religion, vigorously backed by the Imperial family.

Like two other capital worlds, it also works hard at controlling the population, shaping attitudes and actions that supports the goals of the ruling aristocracy first and foremost. Certain quiet but real divisions within the elite preserves a measure of freedom for the noble, upper, and parts of the upper-middle classes, but life below them is aggressively regimented and structured, with the punishment for violating the rules being quite severe. Conservative morality is extolled, military service exalted, and community standards enforced with rigor. The Cianji who comply with the Imperial Command are rewarded, usually by receiving support from like-minded fellows, and occasionally by Imperial or Noble leniency in non-criminal matters, especially regarding debt forgiveness.

The more politically dangerous criminals, which are unwise to kill and unwise to leave running about, are usually expelled to Acroupa system. Many other criminals are enslaved, and other killed outright or maimed 'to educate the others'. Due to the Zanist religion, personally adjustments, long-term imprisonment, and sexual abuse are forbidden.

While the Emperor controls the Imperial forces, there are substantial noble forces on CIanji that remain outside of his direct authority. For now, the cost to bring them to heel outweighs the political and financial benefits of letting them be. Token, nominal obedience is acceptable at this time.

Planetary theme song: "Maestro" by Kenji Kawai. From the great kung-fu movie Ip Man.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AO1sioPlu6A

Collectors: please note that this CD is nearly impossible to find.

Hermit/Mu, Imperial Cianji

Most of the inhabitants of this system reside in the Hermit band of asteroids. The various asteroids, home to clans of 10 to 500 souls, focus on mining and initial processing of certain valuable isotopes, before being shipped for further processing and use in the neighbouring CIanji system.

The starport was class B for a long time, and was perfectly sufficient for the needs of the local spacefarers. Recently, however, the Imperial government has the starport upgraded to A-class 'at no charge'. Soon afterwards, quite a number of semi-classified and classified Navy and Scout ship building programs were started. Why the Imperium felt the need to build ships in this public port, when both the Navy and the Scouts have their own private construction yards, remains a mystery to the Hermits.

What is definitely known is that the largest Hermit settlement, the Sky Canopy Dominion, has benefited the most from the various Navy and Scout contracts. They also assisted in the construction of a reclusive Scout base, in the Yama Asteroid Belt. What they plan to do with their money and their powerful new friends is unknown at this time.

Asteroid belt theme song: "Oasis" by The Humble Brothers.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I86TfGM2OIA

Diaoran/Mu, Imperial Cianji

Despite her natural beauty and natural wealth, Diaoran is a system best-known for the capricious nature of her government. Routine abuse of visitors is a commonplace, as are arbitrary laws, casually reinterpreted, ignored, or enforced to an unreasonable extent. The ruling self-serving nobility/bureaucracy is utterly certain of their righteousness – as defined by themselves and their bought-and-paid-for bureaucracy, media outlets, and intelligentsia – and simply uncaring of anything except gaining more power to themselves.

Despite all this, open, public killing or physical abuse is frowned upon, and the forms (but not the substance) of the old culture of freemen are carefully kept up. The majority of the rulers are from old houses that accepted internal exile here as their punishment for resisting the Imperial house. Having surrendered their dreams of interstellar power, they have no interest of ever giving up control in their last redoubt.

Vast seas of libertine entertainment, distracting pseudo-scandals, and sensual amusements helps keep the populace uninterested in focusing on and challenging the second-most-oppressive government in Starbreak sector. Obedience is universal among the Diaoran-nim people, as the population is only interested in being fed, housed in comfort, and entertained.

Planetary theme song: "Metropolis" by The Humble Brothers.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97N1MyuOyiA

Floaters/Mu, Imperial Cianji

On this waterless, frozen world, various forms of silicon-based life dominate two worlds in the system. The very thin, poisonous atmosphere works to enhance communication between these crystalline organisms. Most species are rooted to the ground, but some airborne species exist, and at least two of them are known to hug the edge of the atmosphere.

An Imperial Cianji Scout base is located here, as are several industrial concerns, developing ways to farm the lifeforms, especially the floaters. This is a boundary world, with the Reborn Imperium two parsecs away, so Imperial Cianji warships are regular visitors.

A small group of researchers, traders, and base personnel have made the place their permanent home. Only a minority of Floaters (informally, Fatboys) are under the authority of the Imperial Scout Base commander.

Planetary theme song: "Terrain" by The Humble Brothers.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCfimZEArAQ

Tuscany/Mu, Reborn Imperium

A flashpoint of contention between Imperial Cianji and the Reborn Imperium, Tuscany is considered to be a prime world for colonization. The limited amount of open water is centred on the South Pole, where high mountain chains – rich in mineral wealth – insure a cooler climate than average, permitting a comfortable lifestyle for shirt-sleeve humans. A better-than-average terraforming program has given the world a solid, human-compatible ecosystem that is naturally expanding into the nearby desert regions.

The small number of pre-Civil War Tuscans abandoned the world on Cianji transports, after the starport was destroyed in a terrorist suicide run. The Reborn have erected a new, smaller starport: other than that, new development and settlement has stalled.

Planetary theme song: "As Stars Fell" by William Ackerman.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIgpNDTplSQ

…but the planet is actually named after the song "Tuscany" by Suzanne Ciani.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFHHEEi1T9U

Mist/Wsi, Reborn Imperium

After numerous difficulties with the dangerous wildlife and the hostile atmosphere, the Mist settlement is growing more stable, and may actually prosper if it stays on the current growth curve. The Reborn government has recently decided to shift the atmosphere to a human-breathable one, an act that will kill off most of the biosphere – to the delight of many. The process is expected to take a century, after the necessary equipment has been installed in the world's oceans. Even after the changes have been made, much of the world will be still covered in a cold mist, but this is seen as desirable by the inhabitants; the mist has become a symbol of who they are.

In the meantime, the human settlement must fend off the violent and numerous fauna, and regularly burn down the flora with their corrosive and insidious pollen. Despite the heavy volcanic activity in the human

settlement zone, only a small portion of the mineral wealth can be processed on a cost-efficient basis. Fortunately, the thermal heat available on tap satisfies the energy needs of the Misters – and more.

Referee: The native horrors of the world should be based on those seen in the movie The Mist (2007). Krakens and other unpleasant creatures haunt the oceans the cover 53% of the world's surface: many are likely to survive the extinction-level event eagerly planned for the air-breathing biosphere.

The Referee should not insert any Deep Ones, unless he wants to see an overreaction of Biblical proportions as the Four Empires join to boil the oceans dry…

Planetary theme song: "The Host of Seraphim" by Dead Can Dance.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJhVM930YXY

Some of the local fauna:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTIQH48ynmA
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOU-J7ZATMI

Samtara/Wsi, Reborn Imperium

A major centre of terrorist and insurgent activity during the Imperial Civil War, Cianji naval forces bombarded the world on 149-1388 Imperial, killing over 80% of the inhabitants. Ground forces were deployed to kill any survivors, but had to be recalled within a month to shore up the Imperial position elsewhere.

After the conclusion of the Civil War, Samtara was repopulated by the Reborn Imperium, with roughly 20,000 settlers arriving every year for 50 years or so, 1429-1481 Imperial. Samtara is among the most patriotic worlds of Reborn space, and one of the most hostile to the Cianji.

The tech level has recently risen to A, due to an upgraded computer industry and minor technological uplift projects, funded by the central government at Wsi. While previously unified under a single Honourbound noble, the recent death of the Earl has led to a division of his fief among his sons. Other men have successfully gained minor fiefs through war, marriage, or purchase.

Inhabitants of the world are referred to as New Samtaran (the previous inhabitants are the Old Samtarans: the last survivor of the Cianji bombardment died over ten years ago).

Planetary theme song: "October Sky – Theme" by Mark Isham. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ru-ho1ZZj-4

Quajora/Wsi, Imperial Cianji

Quajora is a difficult world to live in. Local resources are limited, the atmosphere is deeply hostile to life, and the temperature varies between 800 and 1000 Celsius. However, the central treasure of the world is her inhabitants. The population has long been among the most imaginative, mutually supportive, hard-working, and self-disciplined in the sector. This 'invisible capital', coupled with strong property rights, low taxation, stringent moral standards, and an explicit abolition of copyright law (trade secrets are still permitted) has brought the population a lot of wealth.

The shift of allegiance of this system, from the Reborn Imperium to Imperial Cianji, instigated the latest war between these two powers. After the war, a major naval base and a permanent flotilla has been established. To insure that the golden goose keeps on laying her eggs, Imperial Cianji has given the system a great deal of latitude in self-government, so long as the agreed-upon tribute (mainly first exposure to technological advancements and applied scientific developments) is provided.

Heavy use of neural networking and robotics are a feature of the local society, which strikes most travellers as odd given the devout nature of the society. Quajorans don't welcome visitors on their world, preferring to contact most of them via radio. Before the orbital port was destroyed during the Quajora War, trade was conducted there: currently, it is held in far orbit, aboard various spaceships and small space stations owned by the various city-states of the world. Despite the inescapable Imperial Cianji bureaucracy and heavy-handed customs officials, business is steadily growing in scope and volume, as Quajora is the only legal entry point for all trade into and out of Imperial Cianji space.

As all the shattered fragments of the old high port have been mopped up, the skeleton of a new and larger civilian high port is being laid down. It is expected to take five years to complete.

Referee: I draw the visual representation of the Quajorans from the cover of the book Venus of Shadows, seen here:
http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1103901.Venus_of_Shadows It's not the best art, but it gets the

point across – and a cheer for old school visible computer chips on the forehead!

Planetary theme song: "Saved" by Steve Wiebe.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wl0_CwJUiJs

Vieunia/Wsi, Reborn Imperium

Vieunia is an important world within the Reborn Imperium, culturally and economically. Large amounts of consumer products are produced here, in the physically spotless, environmentally pristine orbital and undersea automated factories. They have achieved an approximation of the Visionary Future of ancient times, with robots doing most of the drudge work and hard labour, and the people working in creative endeavours and solving interesting problems.

To keep society in the productive (rather than consumptive) mode, pleasure is discouraged, and building a legacy that will outlast your life is strongly encouraged. Love and loyalty to the Reborn Imperium is promoted; contributing to the survival of the interstellar government is seen as every citizen's duty.

Notwithstanding deeply anti-alien attitudes, the noble aristocracy that rules Vieunia has preserved the closest links with the traditional forms and culture of the presumed-extinct Third Imperium, especially of the dominant Solomani noble culture before 600 Imperial. Vieunian intellectuals are important opinion shapers in the halls of power, and Vieunian culture is more influential than their percentage of the Reborn population would suggest.

Planetary theme song: I'd prefer "Opening Titles, Darlington Hall" from the movie The Remains of the Day by Richard Robbins, but "The Keyhole and the Chinaman" is the one available on YouTube.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zek8drV4InM

Wsi/Wsi, Reborn Imperium

A small world not much larger than Mercury (with about seven times the surface area of the United States of America), her dense atmosphere is a work of marvellous human engineering, with different layers of self-repairing 'clouds' working to both retain the atmosphere and filter out harmful solar radiation. Her ecosystem is highly developed, and is being constantly enhanced and strengthened according to Sir Kang Xize's artistic/scientific plans, as laid down six centuries ago (with later revisions).

Wsi is the capital of the Reborn Imperium, housing the chapterhouses or embassies of all the Honourbound, the ruling clans of this interstellar polity. If Vieunia is the traditionalist/sentimentalist soul of the Reborn, Wsi is the revolutionary/innovative mind of the starnation.

A constant mix of new thought, daring ideals, and provocative Wsitype personalities are always striving to overturn The Established Order (whatever that is deemed to be): sometimes for good, sometimes for ill. Young men, violent action, and fervent beliefs dominate the planetary scene, with many eager to establish their own Honourbound houses and create a great name for themselves. The old revolutionaries are pushed out to pasture as quickly as possible, as their New Freedom ossifies into yet another flavour of the Old Oppression.

Following the lead of local businesses, an ever-expanding percentage of the Wsitypes are leaving the riot-wracked cities, and forming small, like-minded communities in the countryside. Economic growth is on the rebound, as the last of the tottering aristo-socialist governments has collapsed in a bloody disintegration led by a left-anarchical front, but heavy taxation by the interstellar government continues to stifle long-term prospects.

Planetary theme song: "Fargo, North Dakota" by Cartel Burwell.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4NCC0dUXks

Bluemarble/Yelloworld, Reborn Imperium

This aquatic world is unique in having five major architectures in use by the local lifeforms, two of which has strong indications of artificial tampering by two separate non-human intelligences, and one of which was introduced by modern humaniti for their consumption (see the note below for more information). The interaction between these biolayers has led to some interesting results, some of which are very profitable indeed.

Like Flandry and Daskmoto, Bluemarble agitated to gain her independence from the Reborn Imperium. While Bluemarble was successfully occupied by Reborn forces, military attacks on the first two worlds were repulsed, and the Reborn was forced to concede 'increase autonomy' – which functionally means complete independence, to everyone but Reborn mapmakers.

Empress Lien of the Reborn Imperium decided that she could not afford to maintain a garrison indefinitely at Bluemarble, with Imperial Cianji openly rearming for a new war. Her emissaries negotiated a withdrawal from the system, with economic ties and subsidies put in place to retain the allegiance of the new ruling Honourbound that the Emperor established. To avoid direct challenges to their limited military & financial power, the rulers choose to retain control only over the central cities and the starport, letting the rest of the planet go where they please – so long as they did not attack clearly Honourbound territory.

So long as the money flows in from Wsi, the general population remains bought off. However, the new Honourbound houses have extensively intermarried with both the survivors of the old rebellious houses, and the up-and-coming wealthy bourgeoisie. The older nobles still feel the need for Wsitype approval, but the young consider themselves as much a Blueman as any poor-but-honest farmer/colonist/small-scale terraformer, and loves the Reborn Imperium only for the money they send.

NOTE: Biological taxonomy has received increased development since the discovery of extra-terrestrial life in the 21 century, with the European Union settlement of the living world of Prometheus, and even more as the vast scope of Imperial Space was understood and digested. There are several empires, including Carbon-, Silicon-, Chlorine-, Nitrogen-, Methane-, and Ammonia-based life; numerous architectures, linked to various molecular-level pattern differences; and multiple domains, including cellular, multiform, and two-flow. This is in addition to the vast increase in kingdoms, phyla, etc. – some divine, others artificial, including the many, many species created by the Solomani.

(See the Wikipedia articles http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypothetical_types_of_biochemistry and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domain_%28biology%29 for more information.)

Note that the ancient Third Imperium conceded that robots may be sentient, but are not lifeforms, and therefore have no standing in Imperial law (MegaTraveller, World Builder's Handbook, page 13). While Starbreaker culture has a deep hatred of non-human sophonts, sentient robots, being non-existent at 1500 Imperial, are of no concern. Human Council theorists believe that they can be successfully made subservient to humaniti, with careful restraints similar to Azimov's Three Laws of Robotics.

Planetary theme song: "Once Upon a Time" by Yanni. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AW38afCZjcU

Daskomo/Yelloworld, Independent

Daskomo is a mid-sized world, the sole heavenly body orbiting the primary, With her very thin but breathable atmosphere, she was an early colony of Imperial Cianji, and an early exile point for assorted anti-aristocratic revolutionaries. The sheer number of exiled made this a fairly populous world, numbering about a million. Imperial Cianji assaults drove much of population offworld, when it didn't kill them outright. The numerous, technologically adept, conspiratorially-minded survivors linked up with each other in various covert ways, and made up much of the backbone of terrorists which inflicted heavy losses on Imperial Cianji. After the collapse of local Cianji rule, Daskomo made a strong case to become the capital of the new People's Democratic Republic of Humaniti, but lost to various rebellious noble houses – a snub that was never forgiven.

While the Flandry Revolution makes the history books as the first breakaway from the Reborn Imperium, it is Daskomo that taught the Reborn Armed Forces how nasty an insurgency could be. Starting with a typically Marxist disposal of morality and restraint, a truly viscous and ugly war was fought, perfecting the interstellar terrorism the Reborn Honourbound used against their target for revolutionary violence.
After driving out the Honourbound and declaring independence, the Daskomi leaders of the revolution did the usual mass-murder thing, for all the right reasons. http://www.sovietstory.com/ provides a good visual analogue.

However, unlike the Soviet Union of our era, the People's Leadership was replaced by less destructive democratic socialists in less than ten years, as – unlike Stalin's Russia – there were no outside capitalists propping up their rule. (See Ford for Soviet Russia, IBM for Nazi Germany, etc.) Moreover, as killing technology has improved markedly over the centuries, the population collapsed a good deal faster than in Stalin's time, encouraging a faster change in leadership.

The world's current rulers are elected egalitarian elitists. They insist on the equality of all, but only those who have a True Understanding of the real Needs of the People, gained by receiving the Correct Certifications and verified by being a Responsible

Alternative in a Free and Equal Vote, should control the legal system, the military, the media, yada yada yada. As always, family, religion, and local authority are despised as enemies of the State, 'the only True Face of the United People'.

> Marx and Engels never tried to refute their opponents with argument. They insulted, ridiculed, derided, slandered, and traduced them, and in the use of these methods their followers are not less expert. Their polemic is directed never against the argument of the opponent, but always against his person.
>
> Ludwig von Mises, Socialism
> From The Quotable Mises,
> http://mises.org/quotes.aspx

However, while these non-state social structures are continually smeared and driven from public view, money-making businesses have been increasingly legitimized and rehabilitated, if only to refresh the state coffers. Free speech, as a form of 'counter-revolutionary hate' remains banned – except when it comes to economic affairs, where even outright mockery of the financial ministry is permitted. This has opened the door to a strong revival in the local economy – especially after unions were banned, and the welfare state dismantled.

Off-worlders with their fat wallets are permitted greater liberties denied to the People, including association (the right to reject from home & work whoever you don't like, for whatever reason you choose, even – gasp! – religious, racial, or moral reasons), and sovereignty (off-worlders are permitted to complain about police abuse – if done in a specific timeframe, according to the right forms.) Money talks quite loudly in atheistic-materialist socialist cultures, far more than abstractions like truth, justice, honour, or compassion ever will.

Actually *resisting* police brutality, home invasion, enhanced interrogations, etc. remain completely verboten, and is subject to any punishment the Public Servants choose to inflict as a response. This is applied to off-worlders as well as to Daskomi.

Referee worldbuilder commentary:
1) Visionary, progressive tyrannies don't work in real life. Communist and Fascist states pour money into internal oppression, build up epic levels of corruption, and last less than a century. Western soft-socialist states can spend less money on internal oppression, and funnel corruption into legalized forms of theft, a.k.a. 'redistribution'. The lack of violence and the increase of pleasure-seeking means that Loyal Citizens enjoy a more pleasant experience, but the System itself doesn't last much longer ("The Western Welfare State, AD 1950 – 2030").

2) I am assuming that the law code is the *actual* code, regardless of the proclamations of the local government. The Referee may instead to treat the starmaps as in-universe, politically correct paperwork, and simply make the laws of a planet as he sees fit. Do whatever is more entertaining, and more enjoyable to the gaming group.

Planetary theme song: I suspect they would prefer something sophisticated, atonal, and ugly – the better to disgust the bourgeois.

Flandry/Yelloworld, Independent

Flandry is currently undergoing terraforming, not only in regard to the sulphur-tainted atmosphere, but also the heavy volcanic activity caused by Flandry's orbit of the gas giant Anderson. Some of the most heavy-duty terraforming possible at a GTL A is being executed here, with truly fierce use of experimental nanotechnology (resulting in at least two 'grey goo' incidents) and the earlier swamping of the moon with a mile-deep ocean, completely covering the world.
As of 1500, things have settled down sufficiently for the orbiting population to establish numerous artigrav and floating settlements down the gravity well, and the majority of the remaining population is expected to settle on the world when the atmosphere has been completely purified, and most of the remaining energy generated from tidal heating redirected to useful production power. (If you passed your Basic MegaEngineering classes – now mandatory at the demanding University of Sylea – you will recognize just how ridiculously awesome this is.)

The heavy use of low-tech robots – including Von Neumann-style robotic factories that build more robots – for the rough'n'ready terraforming procedures will be slowly upgraded and redirected to 'detail worldbuilding work', from cooling down hot-spots under the world ocean, to building up artificial mountains that rise up from the mile-deep ocean to the surface, creating islands for human habitation when it breaks the surface.

This world was an early supporter of the Reborn Imperium, sparing it the vast amount of terrorist mischief the Honourbound could have caused against their operations. Imperial Cianji reprisals tended to be

blunt and blind, killing both friend and foe, thus destroying any support they had. Eventually, the Flanders lent their technical expertise to the terrorists, causing Cianji losses to eventually go up by magnitudes. A 1400 Cianji attempt to inflict genocide on the entire system failed due to the sheer number of powerful gamma-ray and laser mines pumped out, working to both neutralize bombardments and destroy starship crewmen.

In the aftermath of the founding of the Reborn Imperium, the Flanders found the high tax levels needed to secure distant borders an increasingly intolerable burden. A second rebellion began, and the Flanders found the Reborn less able to keep up the fight than the Cianji were. The Reborn eventually abandoned the system in 1470 Imperial.

Now an independent system, Flandry can focus on the serious business of building a liveable world. Heavy atmospheric modification is being engaged in as of 1500, and the entire atmosphere should be fit for human usage by 1550, if the (ever optimistic) worldbuilder planners can be trusted.

As reflected in its history, Flanders have a strongly independent, technophilic streak. They are not nearly as religious as their 'distant technophilic cousins', the heavily Christianized and community-oriented Quajorans. On the other hand, they simply lack the malice towards the religious that the run-of-the-mill materialists have. Nor are they interested in ever-expanding government power, from speech & thought controls to environmental regulation to arbitrary laws to warrantless surveillance that the secularistic, regulatory Omnipotent/Omniscient State – the socialist alternative to the Omnipotent/Omniscient God – always and everywhere demands.

Instead, they prefer to follow pro-liberty atheists in the style of Ludwig von Mises, Murray Rothbard, and (to a lesser extent) George Orwell and Ayn Rand. They maintain interesting political conversations with the Quajorans ("Is liberty an irrevocable gift of God, or the consequence of our natural self-ownership?"). In contrast, there is only mutual loathing between the Flanders and the mainstream collectivistic drones of Daskomo. The lack of copyright on inventive Flandry is appreciated by the Daskomo copycat businesses, but their pro-life stance is viewed as distasteful and repugnant by those self-righteous individuals.

Somewhat surprising for such an independently-minded people, the – admittedly light-handed – central government actually does rule most of the population, with certain survivalist-oriented exceptions. It is postulated that the sheer expense and effort of terraforming their world had forced a certain level of unity and co-operation among these freedom-loving people. What happens after the world is completely terraformed will determine how long this experiment in liberty endures.

Planetary theme song: "Enemy of the State – Theme Song" by Trevor Rabin & Harry Gregson-Williams. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqfBApQ1NHk

Pacifica/Yelloworld, Independent

Like her sisters Daskomo and Flandry, Pacifica suffered greatly during the Imperial Civil War, but less so during the recent secession from the Reborn Imperium. Heavily influenced by southern Taiwanese cultures, it is ruled as a matriarchy by the "Svaf hun laang chid hun zngf" ("Three parts nature, seven parts makeup"), a minor group of low-level baronesses and dames allied with House Kovačević. As their long-delayed reward, they were granted rule of the pleasant but distant world of Pacifica in 1211 Imperial.

They tried to avoid the rather unpleasant Imperial Civil War, but were hit by three major incidents, wiping out 80% of their population by 1400. The Cianji proved unable to protect this system from unconventional warfare, so the Svaf hun laang… err, the local aristocracy, decided to throw in its lot with the Reborn terrorists. This proved to be the right choice, as the attacks promptly ceased, while Imperial Clanji was unable to either reward her friends locally, or punish her enemies.

However, the locals still seethed over the unprovoked attacks, especially when it became obvious that the Reborn themselves were behind the deaths of so many of their families. During the Trailward Rot, there were increasing work stoppages and non-violent resistance, which only grew under Reborn reprisals. Faced with the choice of either exterminating the population and planting new colonies, or simply abandoning it, the Reborn decided on abandoning it – while claiming the right to return to rule as before, someday.

Currently, the aquatic world is at peace. While an ice age grips much of the world, there are several small, Taiwan-sized islands near the equator that enjoy a warm climate, similar to that of northern Italy or southern France. Plans to artificially reduce the ice sheets and gain more land for settlement have been in various feminine committees for a long time. In the

meantime, patriarchal families are again growing in popularity – but even here, Mom still holds the purse strings, controls what happens in the house, and has the legal right to use up to 10% of the family income on beauty products and cosmetic treatments.

Planetary theme song: "Kami-sama no Utagoe", (The singing voice of God) by Capsule.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MxduSdX_Cno

Whiteheart/Yelloworld, Independent

Whiteheart is a beautiful, populous world ruled by a technologically elevated theocracy. The dominant cult, the Maandian religion, is grounded in a rather exotic mix of Hinduism, the Divine Principle (as described by the Unification Church, a.k.a. the Moonies) and hard-core vegan ideology. Despite the relentlessly Smiling Happy People, the society is actually pleasant to live in, and – despite the low-tech culture – wealthy enough to maintain several small colonies in the system as well.

(**Referee:** As an analogy, envision the United Kingdom of the 1980s not only at a wealthy and prosperous place, but able to comfortably maintain two O'Neill stations in orbit (with 20,000 people each), and settlements on the Moon (3,000), Mars (1,000), and a distant station on one of Jupiter's moons as well (100). Space colonization is *really* expensive, and just how the GTL 8 government is financing all this is a fascinating question…)

This world was rather uninterested in the ideologies behind the Imperial Civil war of a century ago, but unlike other planets, suffered only light battering rather than widespread devastation, with 5% of the population dying from an artificial plague. It was a Reborn system until a mere ten years ago, when the Honourbound house (and senior Maandia clerics) requested permission to leave the Imperium. To everyone's surprise, the Reborn Imperium's Emperor Gerald simply said 'go'.

(**Referee:** Many people think that the Emperor was simply sick to his stomach with dealing with the sociopathic Daskomoi, and didn't realise that the Maandia simply wasn't capable – physically or culturally – of waging a similar nihilistic campaign of violence.)

The Whitehearted are interested in spreading their religion and culture across the stars, as well as their home system. However, all they can do right now is rent the occasional starfarers for transport, as they have no indigenous starship construction capacity.

Politically, they do have one distinct benefit. Unlike the other trailing worlds that left the Reborn Imperium, Whiteheart is acknowledged as being a sovereign, independent system by the Reborn Imperium. This grants the Whitehearted a certain level of diplomatic pull and legal cachet unavailable to other de facto ex-Reborn systems.

Planetary theme song: "Shiny Happy People", REM
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCQ0vDAbF7s

Yelloworld/Yelloworld, Reborn Imperium

Yelloworld is somewhat different than most worlds. While the air is breathable, the seas and oceans are largely unusable, as the wastes of the aquatic alien ecosystem render it unusable for any organism compatible with the genetic structure of mankind. It also taints the water itself yellow, ergo the name of the world, system, and subsector. Fortunately, it is possible to cleanse the smaller underground aquifers, and artificial lakes, carefully maintained to insure purity, have been successfully established. The land fauna is not as poisonous, and some human-compatible livestock, grains, and vegetables have been successfully transplanted onto the alien soil. On the mountains, certain biogeneered fruit trees have even muscled out the local flora.

The Yellows are also a bit different than other systems. The majority of humaniti reside in cheap-but-serviceable grav mobile homes, which in festivals and great meets are linked into ramshackle grav cities. The closest thing to a real city is the starport, a pyramidal structure that permits grav homes to dock and undock at will.

Yelloworld's significance in the Imperial Civil War was rather simple. The residents never directly opposed Clanji troopers, but they continually worked to leak information and equipment to anyone who needed it. Various massacres were unable to dissuade the Yellows – especially when Cianji forces were fed false information that led them to kill neutrals and their own supporters as well. The first great massacre of Cianji military forces occurred here as well, when the starport moles were able to detect a system flaw in Imperial data integrity. Cianji personnel did not detect the flaw until one fine day – 11-1385 Imperial – every jump program that was vulnerable was poisoned, and when

the fleet made a simultaneous jump, the fleet exited over Wsi as torn and shattered fragments of metal. Most historians pinpoint this date as the moment when the Cianji anti-insurgency effort passed the event horizon into inevitable defeat.

Of course, the Yellow starport data security personnel were promptly executed, but that didn't bring back the multi-trillion-credit strike force, or make good the critical loss of personnel and experience.

Now, after the war, Yelloworld remains largely under the rule of the more pacific Honourbound houses, with some minor republics, racial states, theocracies, and developing ex-bandit baronies in the outback. They generally work together well, and may form a unified world state in the new century, linked by a revival of Rashakhi, a Vilani religion with an easy-going 1970s Rastafarian vibe.

Planetary theme song: "Deacon Blues", Steely Dan
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2A0wGO3c2T8

Edamar/Silent Shore, Ziru Sirkaa

Edamar is a small scientific colony world of the Vilani. Most of the 10,000 men on the world are working as high-tech labourers. Expert systems and detailed, heavily tested procedures provide guidance on what to do and when, while carefully avoiding any opportunity for innovation or uncontrolled change. The Vilani remain masters of heavy industry and highly competent terraformers when it comes to the non-organic side of things…

…but unfortunately, the Solomani have them beat in biosphere construction and management. They could really use their help, as the main problems of Edamar revolve around certain prevalent food chain anomalies and slight DNA incompatibilities. Looked at individually, none of them would cause greater food supply problems than the Vilani solved on their adopted homeworld of Vland a very long time ago, back when they were at GTL 0. But when they operate simultaneously, they invariably render all human-compatible organisms – including the humans themselves – sterile.

The local Vilani – they don't use demonyms for residence on a world, as they take pride in their culture, community, and stability, not their territory – are having a difficult time solving a problem that's not in the library. Still, the Vilani have colonized many worlds in their history; surely, there's *something* in the data banks…

Planetary theme song: "Out to Space" by Ryuichi Sakamoto.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQBs5G-oq3g

Orzabel/Silent Shore, Independent

Orzabel was never a part of Imperial Cianji. Colonized by the losing side of an internal Cianji political conflict, the Orzabelio repelled all diplomatic feelers from their more powerful cousins on Cianji, and Imperial Cianji never felt the need for a military solution.

By the time of the Imperial Civil War of the second half of the 14th Imperial century, Orzabelio technology has slowly but surely drifted to GTL 4 (Renaissance & Colonial America). Now, in 1500 Imperial, it is at GTL 3 (Medieval), with guns, several important intellectual concepts (from mathematics to agriculture), and flight (gliders and hot air balloons) now part of legend and folklore. Fortunately, the world is gentle enough to permit life to go on, if with greater difficulty.

After some devastating local wars, most of the remaining population resides on one large island, under a PriestKing. The starport remains in operation thanks to hired off-worlders, if in a degraded condition.

Planetary theme song: "Guitar Flute & String" by Moby.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0I0bgDzQbqc

Questions/Silent Shore, Independent

The world of Vapor Trails was never inhabited until the Human Council chose it for its obscurity and isolation. Renamed Questions, it now acts as the private preserve of the organization; much like the independent nature of the Vatican, it also permits the Human Council certain diplomatic privileges as well. Still, extensive Council assets on the capital worlds of the Four Empires (a.k.a. the Four Imperia, or the Four Powers) are worth a good deal more financially than this entire system.

Because of the astrographic placement of the system, the Human Council relies on the good graces of Imperial Cianji for secure access. While this has been provided, disputes among the Empires have prevented the establishment of a permanent headquarter complex on this world. Instead, the delicate initial negotiations are handled on this world, with the high-profile meetings between Emperors, Dukes, and

Admirals on the neutral territory of their choice – often, the system of Dune.

Questioners tend to be highly educated, formal, and reserved, especially before non-Council personnel. Like the rest of the Human Council, they are chosen from suitable prospects from across Starbreak for their upper-class connections & pedigree; loyalty to humaniti as a whole; personal intellectual, economic, and/or political accomplishments; and adroit interpersonal skills. Unlike most other Human Council personnel, those assigned to Questions have great scientific research skill: loyalty to human supremacy and scientific reputation bear greater weight than social moxie and wealth (although these attributes are also of high value).

The Two Men that govern the system are as difficult to find as a Vilani Shadow-Emperor, and have a good deal more autocratic authority than the bureaucracy-bound Ishimkarum does. Sometimes, interested observers and agents are able to determine their identities before their ten-year term ends, but sometimes not. The planetary economy is certainly not able to pay for the military force that guards the world, or the maintenance of the settlement. Resolving this mystery is a more urgent, and more difficult matter, than the Two Man question.

Because of these differences, other Council personnel tend to view Questioners as back-room gnomes and mysterious, secluded priests: Questioners view other Council personnel as well-bred, well-meaning, but somewhat dim-witted allies in the holy march of human supremacy.

Planetary theme song: "In the Blue Distance" by Mark Isham.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5Fo7pmU6w0

Degar/NightVision, Ziru Sirkaa

The massive world of Degar is the only world in Starbreak that has a class-F atmosphere. There is a thin atmosphere, breathable in the depressions and canyons of the world; the rest of the world is functionally airless. Each inhabitable depression is under the authority of a separate Vilani clan back on Enlugal: most have sent one to three representatives, usually older clanswomen past their child raising years, to manage their local affairs.

There is one notable industry here. Gakarirlarsha Valley, in the territory of the Darzimakam clan, has the unusual property of being rather well-irrigated in this generally dry world. Certain transplanted flora have been planted that permit the blending of a weak anagathic: not as potent as the anagathics from the legendary Third Imperium, but not as risky either.

Planetary theme song: "Tree of Life" by Clint Mansell.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3z_4bka2fc

Dieinplace/NightVision, Imperial Cianji

This lightly-inhabited system is the rimward tip of Imperial Cianji territory. In the Three-World War (1073-1075 Imperial), this was the location of the conclusive battles between Imperial Cianji and the Ziru Sirkaa. Despite inferior technology, the Cianji emerged victorious due to innovative tactics, superior aggression, and pure daring.

Excluding strategic considerations, the system isn't worth much. The small community of exiled families work at producing minor equipment to maintain their domed city. For enemies of the Emperor, their lifestyles are rather comfortable, but they are unable to strengthen their political following, and are uncertain if they may ever leave. While warships do visit from time to time, they don't contact the locals unless it's an emergency. A resupply ship docks at the port once a year.

Planetary theme song: "Abraham's Theme" by Vangelis.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8phMhrwWVo

Dikaai/NightVision, Holy Imperium

Known as Valiant in ancient times (about eight centuries ago), Dikaai is the most sacred world in Starbreak. The central administration point of the old Imperial Starbreak Duchy, it was where the first starships entered, and where the last starship from the Third Imperium was seen, about five centuries ago.

Orbiting the most massive star in the sector, Dikaai is where the Bond of Man, the single most important agreement in Starbreak, is renewed by the major powers every 25 years. The Human Council maintains the old Imperial Ducal Hall for this purpose, with the oath itself sworn before the empty sector throne.

The Holy Imperium (a.k.a. 'Wooeresa Weas' in Sylean) maintains a small patrol/security force in-system, specifically to protect this site. A few Sylean contemplative monks also live in a monastery among

the ruins of the Third Imperium settlement: as they have taken a vow of silence, they generally don't interact with outsiders.

Planetary theme song: "0815" by Se-Hyeon Im
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EusFUnrhrcM

Enlugal/NightVision, Ziru Sirkaa

Enlugal is named after the capital city of the original Ziru Sirka, the first major interstellar human empire. This world is currently the heart of the Restored Vilani Empire, or the Ziru Sirkaa. (Not to be confused by the empire of the same name, established during the locally-unknown War of the Rebellion.)

Enlugal has had a boring history of steady, progressive, uninterrupted growth, just the way the Vilani like it. Over time, this has turned Enlugal into a beautiful world, albeit with several massive world re-engineering projects at the same time, a Vilani specialty. When the projects have been completed, the world would have become remarkably earth-like – well, Vland-like – for its size. In the meantime, the entire solar system has been turned into a raw materials extraction, processing, and refinery centre, with the material *carefully* placed in position.

Three hundred and eleven million people now *live* on the world, and just dumping kilometer-wide chunks of ice into the desert, for example, is no longer a viable solution. To assist with this endeavour, the radically over-muscled chain of orbiting spaceports is home to twenty-eight million Vilani, who assist in detailing their world, according to plans laid down before the long-absent Ducal house, centuries ago.

The initially barren world was provided by a biosphere, which after 700 years is now largely in place. (Touch-up and maintenance work will be done for as long as humans inhabit the world). The Vilani approach to life is far different from the virtuoso performances of the Solomani. (A very select number of these men actually outlined, interlinked, and geneered all the key species and energy flows of an entire biome *in their head*: even with banks of TL D+ computers providing cybernetic assistance, this is an incredible feat! No other sophont species has even come close to doing the same.)

Enlugal: Biosphere creation

Instead of building a distinct, human-compatible biosphere right from the core DNA sequence onwards, the Vilani prefer a far more cost-effective (and, frankly, far more sane) method. They focus on the relationships between promising species, both running current experiments and going over the historical records they dearly love.

[As the Vilani aren't actually creating new species, but just using careful observation (which they are good at), the activity is just a little bit shady in their eyes. On the other hand, Solomani activity in this field simply cries out for nuclear strikes, but there's so many of them (and even more Mixed Vilani) that it's hard to defend the Natural Order in a cost-effective manner...]

After determining which species works best with each other, in a given environment, the Vilani lay down the food chains in a careful and systematic fashion. Thanks to millennia of practice, they are usually able to get some rather divergent species to hold together as a single ecosystem, and stitch these systems into a single "Frankenstein biosphere" in a century. Of course, careful observation and occasional intervention is needed for the biosphere to gel into a true functioning, closed ecosystem that can heal its own wounds and fix its own problems. Usually, the Vilani need 5 to 20 centuries to really get a system running nicely.

As the Vilani of Enlugal poured their efforts in domesticating their system, they avoided interstellar expansion as a distraction. Their leadership decided that Vilani greatness was better won by building up a few worlds intensely, rather than spread themselves too thin over many worlds.

Planetary theme song: "Youfu no Se" by Kenji Kawai.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApHEWOhfHI0

Dune/LightWaves, Independent

Dune was settled during the primary wave of colonists from Imperial Space, in 746 Imperial. It was never part of Imperial Cianji, and so escaped the grief and pain of their Civil War. On the other hand, the people of this world had more than enough pain on their plate during that era, with the expensive and wasteful attempts in terraforming their desert world, ending in failure, broken lives, and lost opportunities.

Fortunately, Solomani memories tend to emphasise the positive and downplay the negative, and the lesser trauma of various skirmishes and political controversies served as a distraction for the masses. Eventually, a new worldwide government (controlling 66% of the world's population) was established, including both Arab Europeans and Desert Chinese (Mongol and Han)

in the halls of power. The Dunemen finally got their economy under control, and built up their military strong enough to fight a short but serious war against the new Reborn Imperium for the neighbouring Passportal system. Even though they lost, their good showing has further revived planetary self-confidence, and established a solid reputation for the system's men as hard, smart fighters.

While being important style-setters across the sector, Dune artistic accomplishments have the greatest interstellar influence in the neighbouring Reborn Imperium. Their rather pacifistic and gentle versions of Islam and Buddhism also shape religious values in Reborn space (Note that this has not hindered their military proficiency at all).

Planetary theme song: "Prophecy theme" by Brian Eno. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4SwFhfNh1w

Justince/LightWaves, Independent

The Just, an outside-the-mainstream allied network of large commoner clans and morally stringent, largely Zanist noble houses, struggled to free their world from Imperial Cianji during the Imperial Civil War. However, they chose not to throw in their lot with the new Reborn Imperium, remaining an independent state – despite several non-military inducements by the Reborn.

The system culture remains highly regimented and moralistic, in public and in private. However, internal divisions among the Judicate led to a harsh civil war, resulting in two competing federations of highly legalistic, ethically demanding baronies and micro-states. Over the last two decades, the cold war has settled down to a cold peace, permitting the two superpower alliances to work together for system defense while restraining military adventures. Trade, border crossings, and communication between these federations remain almost non-existent – outside of the shared Starcity, home of the starport as well as the Space Patrol academy and base.

Planetary theme song: "Truth of Loyalty" by Taro Iwasiro.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CY80x_7ckK0

Sylea/LightWaves, Holy Imperium

Sylea/Core/Core, better known as Capital, was known as the home of the Sylean minor race, and the capital of the Third Imperium, home of the Imperial family, the Imperial Moot, and the various Imperial ministries. When last heard of five centuries ago, it was still the wealthiest and most powerful world in Charted Space.

It was not, however, the sole property of the Syleans: the original inhabitants have had to share their rich world first with the Vilani, then their servants the Bwaps, the new Terrans overlords (now the Solomani), and now most of the known universe. Of the remaining one to two billion pureblooded Syleans, a small and exceedingly well-connected minority were instrumental in opening up Starbreak for colonization.

But for themselves, they chose a world of clearly artificial origin. From afar, the world looks like a silver ball with a massive, symmetrical Spike going thru the world, precisely on the axis. This planet, smaller than Luna, is without any water to speak of, but is teeming with silicon-based life forms. As is common for such worlds, the silicates live in the lower atmospheric layers of the small world: but, surrounding the metallic spike, there is a great reduction in temperature, permitting human settlement directly on the soil on the planet's poles. The artificial Spike has been proven to both

- …extract heat (thus keeping the polar regions cooler than Nature intended). The resulting temperature differential makes for truly amazing windstorms of hundreds of km in velocity. Top-shelf Imperial technology of the 700s Imperial (TL 14, GTL 11) is used to shape these winds into two spherical WindWalls: the human settlements within these WindWall bubbles have continuous winds of 5 – 20 km, well within the margins needed for human activity. Transport in and out of the gravity well is handled by starships hugging the Spikes in 'the eye of the storm'.
- …and act as a kind of governor on the primary star's behaviour. *HOW* it affects a huge hydrogen ball magnitudes larger than itself is a subject of a raging controversy, but numerous very expensive experiments have proven that it does.

The Spike does not shield solar radiation, requiring human inhabitants to live underground upon the perihelion of the planet's orbit. Nor does it hold in the planet's atmosphere: like many Traveller worlds (small world, big air), the atmosphere would escape the world in 100,000 to one million years.

The Sylean gravitational field is derived from an ordinary metallic mass, not alien artigrav, a fragment from a quasar, or a micro-black hole. The total mass of

the planet is 0.002832 ⊕. (⊕ = Terra). Surface gravity is thus 0.18125 g, a bit more than the Luna's 0.16154 g. The two polar settlements of humaniti are connected by chains of caverns, going right through the centre of the world. Only some light meson work was necessary to link the massive caverns running parallel with the Spike, which was then hooked up for the maglev networks. As of 1500 Imperial, approximately 22% of the planetary population, or ~130 million sophonts, live underground: 30% in the north polar region; 41% on the south polar region; 5% in the hot silicate region that covers the rest of the bone-dry planet; and 2% live in Sylean orbital and geosynchronous orbit.

The planetary population is tightly regulated by the theocracy, but there is little hostility to the power of the government. Justice is seen to be done in the eyes of the locals, the poor are given welcome subsidies in return for simple obedience, and there is little violence or crime to fear. As of 1500, the vast majority are content to be the well-cared for property of their Prophetess-Empress, blessed with their fission-powered vehicles. (See the Ford Nucleon, http://davidszondy.com/future/atomic/ford.htm)

Planetary theme song: "Tempus Vernum" by Enya. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6omGtXBfA-o

Fenmou, Tariri, & Tanatelul/LightWaves, Holy Imperium

The Tri-worlds are a tight group of rich, fertile, and comfortable worlds that made up the heart of the long-dead EuroVilani settlements. They are seen as cursed and unclean across Starbreak, and – outside of researchers and relic hunters – have no permanent residents. They do have active starports, as unique artefacts and lifeforms continue to be discovered, carefully studied, and either destroyed or put to work for the living by the Human Council.

While the inhabitants are generally attached to the Council, the worlds and systems themselves remain Holy Imperium property. A Sylean naval base at Tariri insures that they stay that way, while also ready to act as the nerve centre in any future conflict with the Vilani to spinward.

Cluster theme song: "How would I Die" by Carter Burwell. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rP8GhUIRogs

Hub/Chanter, Independent

Hub remains a centre of cybernetic activity and culture (as opposed to neural networking that dominates Quajora's techne). However, there is an ongoing shift among the younger members of the population, as being 'metal free' grows in popularity. This remains a minority taste, however, as the more common route is to shift to equipment based on synthetic flesh or the more subtle plastics.

While the planetary government installed by the vanished Athenian Republic remains in place, its rule is less comprehensive than before, with the independence of various system colonies and orbital stations. Even on the planet itself, politically independent flotillas continue to grow and multiply on Hub's vast seas. However, on the mainland and even the island chains, the authority of the HubGov remains intact, excluding certain inner city and mountainous districts. Hub also remains the unchallenged military power of the system: the independent colonies in-system remain so out of political expediency, not because Hub's spaceborne forces couldn't easily smash them flat, if so inclined.

After gaining independence in 1335, Hubber culture remains influenced by Athenian democratic & republican ideas. Unlike Athens herself, Hub's culture has remained largely free for the following 165 years, mainly by avoiding wars, concentrations of financial power-centres and centralized banking, and foreign entanglements. "Revolutionary leaders" are mocked, "morality policemen" derided, "noble aristocrats" ridiculed, and "scientific wise men" relentlessly undercut. On the other hand, local rule is exalted, familial rule is honoured, strict self-control respected, capitalism blessed, and the individual responsibility for his actions pointedly enforced – and not necessarily by the court system, either. "Master yourself, and give no space to those who would master you."

Instead of war – the usual destroyer of freedom - the society has focused on developing their own domestic economy, as external trade remains weak. This has proven to be a successful strategy, with the system rising to GTL B by 1500. Cybernetic development is looking for new avenues to explore, while work has started on massive robotic factories on worlds within the inner system, to feed the escalating demand for non-networked, non-cybernetic gizmos and devices, as well as more robots and waldos. (See the *Patlabor* anime for a reasonable description of these small mecha.)

Planetary theme song: "Halcyon on and on" by Orbital.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bV-hSgL1R74

Pax Deorum/Chanter, Independent

While a dry world, there are several seas that have been turned into freshwater bodies of water, thanks to tailored lifeforms both large and very small. The world could hold far more than the million souls it currently bears, but the low population growth rate (thanks to the very popular celibate religious orders) has kept the world lightly inhabited for a long time. Almost the entire population lives along the Mariana Seas and the Lakes of the Angels (on the elevated Plateau of God); only hermits and devoted wanderers roam the immense deserts of the world.

This Catholic-dominated system is among the most intensely religious worlds in Starbreak. It is also among the most free, even compared to Hub System, even after the Imperial Cianji colonial occupation. There is a bishop that claims religious dominion over all believers in Starbreak (this is hotly contested by the equally Solomani, if not as intensely Catholic, Var Kirat), and temporal dominion over the Pax Deorum system (this is acknowledged by all – as nobody important wants it right now). However, as a practical matter he leaves all actual administration to the various abbots & abbesses, monks, chaplains, friars, and priests on the scene. If pressed, he could get about 60% of the Paxi to pay taxes to his office – mainly, the more wealthy monastic orders – with the other 40% finding some reason or other to ignore his requests (usually, the ordinary parishioner, but also the tens of thousands who have taken vows of poverty). The bishop simply can't afford the kind of military or police force needed to compel taxation, and so the world remains free.

Planetary theme song: "Paul Meets Chani" by Toto
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gFN6LD_WMI

Lugikad/Outback, Ziru Sirkaa

As a place to live, Lugikad is a good choice. Perhaps 1/3 of the local biosphere is more-or-less compatible with human life, and the rest is not actively poisonous, just not digestible. (Yes, it is possible to starve to death here while eating three square meals a day.) Vilani researchers are already seeding the desert with life that will increase human compatibility: the more dense ecosystems hugging the small ocean is being left undisturbed for now.

[**Referee:** The system holds a secret. In the outer system, the Ziru Sirkaa is putting in place a new stargate, to permit a return home. The Human Council is aware of this, and has chosen not to notify the other Imperia. Imperial Cianji is aware that roughly 0.5% of Enlugal's budget is 'unaccounted for': they believe that internal corruption within the Ziru Sirkaa is what stands behind this.

[And yes, the Cianji spy network on Enlugal has been successfully infiltrated and subtly perverted by Ziru Sirkaa internal security forces. The Vilani have no plans to vigorously exploit this weakness, preferring to just let the rot deepen and grow quietly in the dark.]

Lugikad is a restricted system: entering the outer system, especially a certain gas giant, warrants immediate execution.

As this stargate has standing behind it the economy of a single mid-population world – rather than the 11,000 worlds of the Third Imperium – quite a lot of redesigning is being conducted. If the Referee is playing a realistic game, the Vilani are slowly constructing the basic framework, and are still working out the designs needed to build the tools needed to build the tools required to build the stargate. If the Referee wants more movie-style melodrama, then the stargate is almost complete, needing only one final touch to become fully operational.]

Planetary theme song: "Creatures of Levania" by Mannheim Steamroller
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23-qVOmVMbY

Stargate theme song: "Soukoku" by Kenji Kawai.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGJrw1-UZpA

Amethystium/Spirare, Independent

It is the world of Stake that marks the farthest limits of the old Athenian Republic, but Amethystium has a more unusual culture, history, and astrography, so we will focus our limited attention here.

During the era of the Republic, the population resided on the world of Botrytis in the same system. However, it seems that during the preliminary world surveys, a major Tanatelul site was overlooked by both the Imperial Scouts of ancient times, and the Republican Scouts of more recent vintage. (Had it been discovered, no settlement would have been permitted without the site either found to be harmless or effectively neutralized in some way).

In any case, the site was disturbed, and the world began to be eaten. (For the vusial, see: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppdIxui21Cw) Unlike the Stephen King miniseries, it took two years for the meal to be complete. This gave the colonists time (with the help of a visiting trader) to reconfigure their modular residences into closed-cycle habitats, and relocate to a small gas giant ring system. As for the 'eaters'? After they ate their fill, they died (…or went into hibernation…) and took Botrytis' place in orbit .

The current settlement over the Amethystium gas giant, now with 30, 000 inhabitants and capable of sustaining itself, is strictly run. Even though the margin of survival has increased over time, the long, hard days of survival-or-death has made the people as harsh, demanding, and pitiless as the cold vacuum that surround them. Maintaining GTL 9-A equipment with GTL 8 tools and workshops is not easy, and it would still be very easy for the settlement to die. The Amethy refuse to leave, though, as stubborn as mules.

Ring system theme song: "Terminator 2 – Main Theme" by Brad Fiedel
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCZ6h28mixI

Sceptre/Spirare, Noble Federation

This is one several uninhabited, but practically colony-ready, worlds within the Noble Federation. It boasts of both a C-class starport, and a Protectorate Scout base. The fact that this small world has a breathable atmosphere that is sure to escape into space within 100,000 years is not the issue: many Traveller worlds have 'impossible atmospheres', given official cosmology. What's really interesting is that the latest research indicates that this world was airless until 20,000 years ago: the scouts are studying just how it was generated in the first place. There may well be no answer to be uncovered, so late in the day.

Most researchers suspect that the Tanatelul generated it, but failed to create atmosphere containment procedures before Going Away (temporarily?) However, this clashed strongly with the mass of evidence, which points to the Tanatelul civilization ending 400,000 years ago: current evidence points to this atmosphere appearing only 20,000 years ago, hundreds of thousands of years after the Tanatelul vanished. Did the Tanatelul return briefly? Or did a new, unknown sophont species bring it to pass?

Planetary theme song: "Re-Entry" by Philip Sheppard
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lijVSwFuxDs

Tokitre/Floe, Independent

Just like Sceptre (and many other worlds in the Traveller universe), Tokitre is a small world with a surprisingly thick, breathable atmosphere. There are several conflicting theories why there are so many small worlds with atmospheres that would dissipate over a million years or less. Like many others, the Tokitres generally share a simple solution: the universe is a good deal less than 100,000 years old. Not all are religious creationists in the 20th century style: a large minority follow non-monotheistic religions. Most local atheists have abandoned millennia-old Darwinism, and follow other, more modern forms of unbelief.

In the Traveller universe, all these intellectual clashes go on in the background, as people focus on other things. But on Tokitre, governments, cultures, and friendships are heavily determined by your response to this issue. The dominant government, The Creation Coalition, consists of eight different monotheistic religions (and two sympathetic agnostic/atheistic ~~ideologies~~ ~~schools of thought~~ religions) which insists on a single, logical, reasonable, humanist Creator/First Mover/Energizing Force as the maker of the worlds and the universe. While clearly supreme over the world, internal dissension and a lack of external threats have made fragmentation far more likely than complete world conquest.

Notable among the other factions are the Uncaring ("Why worry about the unknowable past?") and the Rohisa (followers of the dominant religion of the Holy Imperium). The pantheistic/panentheistic Fir Que Federation is the most important opponent to the Creation Coalition. The two rigidly Darwinist groups failed within the last 50 years: the Ronop was absorbed into Fir Que after a combination of economic failure and a socialist/Darwinist internal conflict. ("Enforced equality for all" and "morality-free universe" types are not going to get along well, once their mutual enemy has been dealt with.) The Hangish, after enforcing racial Darwinist policies on the 'subhumans' within their borders, were wiped out after declaring genocidal war on all inferior races.

Note: the singular demonym is Tokitrei, the plural & collective, Tokitres.

Planetary theme song: "Journey to the Line" by Hanz Zimmer.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TG9-j3eevL4

Athens/Dreamsong, Independent

At one time, Athens was a great, technologically advanced, and as powerful as the other Senior Worlds – Cianji, Enlugal, and Sylea. However, Athens' lost to Sylea in the War of the Worlds (~1330 – 1335 Imperial) and the following consequences have had a crushing effect on her hopes and dreams.

Now, 165 years later, the planet is once again close to being unified, this time under the rule of Dictator Cleisthenes. "Close to being unified" generally means "months from catastrophic subversion, internal coup and civil war, or financial disintegration" on Athens. Dictator Cleisthenes is actually spending more energy trying to forestall his conquests from 'inevitably falling short', like his eight almost-victorious predecessors, than on front-line management. This has significantly slowed the pace of battle, and given his enemies breathing room, but the Dictator feels that it can't be helped - the trade-off must come from somewhere.

In the meantime, due to massive conscription and the fervent production of military goods, the planetary economy continues to stagnate in times of peace, and shrink in times of war. Lost population is made up, but lost economic wealth is never fully recovered before the next Unity War. (See Chalmers Johnson, "How to Sink America" for details on the process – in peacetime. http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/174884 In wartime, when the homeland is directly involved – i.e. Nazi Germany, Stalin's Russia, even Churchill's England, – the process is far more obvious.)

Planetary theme song: "Inama Nushif" by Brian Tyler. The song was used during the depiction of Imperial anti-subversion work in the "Children of Dune" miniseries, depicted here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHy-OxoT7zU

Faunia/Dreamsong, Independent

Faunia is an ordinary world, significant for the Protectorate base that resides over it. Faunia Base is the staging area for new colonial settlements in the two Protectorates among the New Stars: the Noble Federation and the Diltov Republic. It also serves as the main communication node between the Protectorates and the Four Empires. Finally, it is the administrative centre of the Protectorate Commission itself.

The small, permanent world population consists largely of Protectorate personnel who decide to make this place their new home. The Fauniaye are tied to the management of the starport and its support network (there is no 'startown' as such: everything is modularized and organized for maximum efficiency).

Note that the starport is primarily an orbital installation: the ground portion exists only as an appendix, to insure a steady supply of hydrogen from the ground-based purification plants.

Planetary theme song: "Creating Governing Dynamics" by James Horner. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gykEPqT83rg

Fleethome/Dreamsong, Independent

Unlike the 'independent' colony at Faunia, the small group of pioneers at Fleethome are independent of the Protectorate Commission in fact as well as in theory. While the colony was a tight unit initially, personally clashes led to the fragmentation into small settlements of ~10 to 50 people, hugging the shores of the Sea of Warriors. The largest settlement by far, Zoom, consists of ~3000 inhabitants and the class-E starport. It is also home to a small network of high-tech autofacts and fusion plants, which keeps the colony running until the population can maintain a projected GTL 5 civilization on its own.

There is quite a lot of internal discussion on whether the planet should push for a stronger agricultural base, or for more light manufacturing (and the mining needed to feed the energy requirements.) There aren't enough men or remaining funds in the settlement budget to fund both approaches. Disagreements remain civil, but argumentative.

Note: while the world is called Fleethome, the inhabitants call themselves by the name of their settlement, i.e. Zoomers. There is no collective name that is recognised by all, as of 1500 – "Fleetmen", "Homebodies", "the Free", and "Zoomers" are the most common.

Planetary theme song: "Budget Meeting" by Hans Zimmer. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsRgOS1K--c

Avalon/Sorrow, Noble Federation

Avalon was originally settled as a place for the more dogmatic of the Honourbound houses to expand on their ideals and political visions, without leading the Reborn Imperium into a violent civil war.

As a way to ease political stress, exile – especially a distant exile, with great initial logistical support – is far more expensive than just killing the troublemakers. But, such a murderous response would have merely made the fire next time more difficult to control. Moreover, endorsing the greatest expansion into new worlds since the Clanji Expansion won the blessing of the prestigious Human Council, and roped Imperial Cianji into spending serious coin into her own settlements, 'to keep up with the Jonses'.

The Human Council, sworn to expand humaniti wherever possible, was not unaware that money spent on colonization could not also be spent on military arms.

When the settlers first stepped foot on Avalon on 36-1440, they had already allotted the land according to House, tribe, clan, and family. Despite the still low population, Avalon was chosen as the capital of the (largely theoretical) Noble Federation in 1451. While interstellar fighting between the Reborn and Cianji settlers kicked in the Diltov War (1453-55), Avalon had to hustle to ready her defenses, but it was the Imperial Cianji that forced her proxy to heel in the end. Immigration continued soon afterwards, but the capital was shifted to Regal to secure the Federation's claim to the entire Avalon Starstring.

Various pro-aristocratic ideologies struggled to dominate the government of the Noble Federation, most notably Aristotelian, Confucian, Genetic, and Vilani. But in the end, the Insider clans that arose to dominate the government were psionic-based. A brief psion vs. psion civil war/coup in 1488 secured the supremacy of the psionic New Sight clans in the interstellar government. They have been careful not to intrude into planetary affairs, and have managed to successfully reconcile with their surviving Strong Thought opponents.

As of 1500, Avalon is the most populous world of the New Stars at three million, and remains wealthier than her nearest competitor, Lifesphere, with two million people. The society is largely at peace, with the hostilities of the psionic civil war already half-forgotten.

Note: Despite the GTL 8 production levels available on the world, the Avalonian Honourbound nobility themselves live at GTL A. See Regal, following, for details.

Psionic coup: the particular style of this takedown is up to the Referee. My favourite flavour is below:

Zuko vs Azula
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHPOnWczkXc
This clash has a strong emphasis on electrokinesis, thermokinesis, and heavy-duty pyrokinesis…

…but tastes differ…

Scanners Duel
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QD1NeuADd-s
Scanners Boom
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HY-03vYYAjA
Ye old-school, CGI-free special effects for the win. The first uses metabolic control, telekinesis, thermokinesis, and influence mind. The second uses only transferred metabolic control and psychic defense.

Planetary theme song: "First Coronation" by Ryuichi Sakamoto.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LoDhg5OT7sI

Regal/Sorrow, Noble Federation

The centre of wealth, power, and culture in the Noble Federation remains Avalon – but the capital of the interstellar government is the uninhabited planet of Regal. Renamed by the Federation from Tinuviel, Regal is home to a vast number of self-building, self-repairing, and largely self-governing robots. Running a series of automated mines, foundries, and manufacturing centres, they supply the tools and equipment needed for Honourbound nobles to enjoy a GTL A lifestyle, while the commoners continue to live at GTL 8.

This restriction is in place for cultural reasons in part, but also to keep the commoners in their place. Robots don't strike, and they consistently do as they're told. The commoners are also expected to obey, but as humans, their relations with their lords are rather more complicated than that. Understand, the Honourbound that settled Avalon are pursuing various *idealized* relationships with the men under their authority, and those parts of the master-servant relationship that leaves the aristos uneasy are relegated to the robots.

Most of the robots are property of the various Honourbound houses, rather than the property of the interstellar polity. However, the armed security robots are property of the Federation, as are the SDBs (which are *not* automated, but crewed by men.) The more high-value robots of Regal are capable of producing

starships, at the rate of one 200-ton starship every two years, or one 50-ton modular cutter every six months.

Most of the 400 technicians that live on the world are rotated out every four years. The Hall of Nobility, the central legislature of the Federation, is also located here. Meetings are held twice a year, for a week of time each session.

The artificial, environmental habitats of Regal allows the Honourbound to live a more elevated lifestyle than is possible on a living world like Avalon. Not only can their compounds be tailored with exotic mixes of gravity, gases, and lighting, but even simple things like walking can be loaded with ceremony, protocol, and expensive modifications.

[Referee: use the i-Real, Winglet, and Segway as inspiration, viewable here: http://www.toyota-global.com/innovation/personal_mobility/ , http://www.segway.com/ . The very fact that these are impractical vehicles whose usefulness has tight limitations makes them great class symbols for the Honourbound of the Federation…)

Planetary theme song: WXIII, by Kenji Kawai.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrQ6YjRnvjU

Note: One parsec rimward from Regal was where the system of Azumanga used to be, before it vanished without a trace in 1392 Imperial. One possibility: http://yohkai.deviantart.com/gallery/#/d2ek2p2

Righteousness/Sorrow, Noble Federation

The atmosphere of Righteousness lacks sufficient oxygen for human use, and was only superficially surveyed until 1457, in the aftermath of the Diltov War. The Protectorate Commission wanted to insure that there were no hidden Diltovich bases within the Protectorate, especially near the Noble Federation capital of Regal. The fears proved unfounded – but the Protectorate did uncover something very unexpected.

Hidden among the heights of an unnamed mountain chain was a massive series of stoneworked architectural vaults and caverns. Most of the investigation was targeted to determine if the place was still inhabited; but no sign of electrical usage, leaked oxygen, or purposeful activity (organic or mechanical) was detected.

Other more pressing matters came to the forefront, and the matter was shelved. The distant past must make way for the needs of today, and only now, 43 years later, are the resources available to continue the investigation. This time, the goal is to date the ruins and establish some first-order boundaries on who or what made them. The recordings made by the survey team don't point to Tanatelul manufacture, nor of the long-lost Ancients of Charted Space, ~13,000 light years away. They might be related to the anthromorphic beings depicted on Providence, but that will take a proper comparative investigation – and there are certain political difficulties involved, as well.

There is a small group of low-tech permanent residents on the world, the nomadic descendants of a failed colony. Most of the survivors of that colony have been transported off-world: only those who refuse to evacuate remain. The four tribes, totalling about 1000 people or so, are projected to become extinct in fifty years as their remaining food production and life support equipment gives out, year by year. Their languages have no name for all the tribes of the world, only their own (which translates to various forms of 'The People', of course).

Planetary theme song: "Sekihi wa Kataru" by Kenji Kawai
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-kNAD3fNVU

Justice/Sorrow, Noble Federation

While there are only 40,000 souls on this difficult world, it remains an aggravation to the Protectorate, and a point of contention between the Noble Federation and the Diltov Republic. Before the Diltov War, the inhabitants of Justice were ruled by the Federation, but were sympathetic to the Diltovich and their beliefs. Obtaining this system was a key spark for the war, a goad Imperial Cianji used to prod the Republic to warfare. However, resistance to the invaders was strong among the local aristocracy and their supporters, and the world never truly fell into Diltovich hands.

The inhabitants remain in underground residences, factories, and life support systems, which remain intertwined among the factions. Local hostilities remain high, and the Federation never regained about 30% of their lost caverns and population.

The Protectorate continues to press for a solution, but neither side is willing to renounce their claims to the world. De facto, the Federation retains control of the

starport, but are forced by the Protectorate to allow needed supplies, technical support, and limited trade to the rebels.

Planetary theme song: "Fire in a Brooklyn Theatre" by Randy Edelman. A partial version is here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9GNeTUzQis
Grognards may recall the "A Few Good Men" trailer: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePo91pMcu94

Chalcedon/Painted, Diltov Republic

This is a small world with a large influence, thanks to its manufacture of cheap but reliable consumer goods, transported across the Republic. Most of the residents are scholar-factory hands, "Making smartphones by day, and religious commentaries by night." Currently, they have found an increasing desire for practical advice for second-generation colonists and small businesses. After more than a few false starts, some of the better worker-thinkers have found their voice and sharpened their thoughts, and are earning good coin.

Unfortunately, their increasing prosperity has not bought peace and serenity. Some of the leading personalities want power over others, as well as prosperity for themselves. When possible, they are instituting new rules which seem deliberately designed to incite resistance – so they can crush it, and gather even more power to themselves.

And their plans do not stop at the atmosphere's edge. In other societies, they may babble on and on about the Civilizational Mission, Worldwide Revolution, Protecting Nature, or Human Rights. Here, the most powerful ideals are tied to religion, so they use that language instead. But behind the pious chatter lies the same old lust and corruption.

Most of the population are willing to 'go along to get along', just like always. But many are also tired of being pushed around – and a few who are just waiting for the right spark to take action.

Problem: Increasing fascism
http://www.foxbusiness.com/on-air/freedom-watch/index.html#/v/962095726001/the-plain-truth-on-american-fascism/?playlist_id=163776

…as measured from 2001…
The Last Nail - Floor Speech May 25 2011 by Ron Paul - now, with hyperlinks with all the ugly details.
http://www.thenewamerican.com/usnews/politics/7672-the-last-nail-by-ron-paul-with-documented-hyperlinks

Solution: decentralizing power – "Forget the States, bring it down to the County level!"
http://americanvision.org/4314/restoring-america-one-county-at-a-time/

Planetary theme song: "Silent Night" by Mannheim Steamroller
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTSkS0Abas4

Moscow/Painted, Diltov Republic

Moscow is a small but extraordinarily wealthy world. Heavy initial investment has permitted the construction of a Class A starport, and a very pleasant startown called Novo Oryol. Moreover, the destruction of the hostile megafauna surrounding the Moscovite Sea has allowed human settlement to gain a strong grip on the world, greatly multiplied by robotics and automation – and a high birthrate.

This system was the initial capital of the Diltov Republic, and the Moscovites still retain a lot of influence at the upper reaches of Republican power. However, their willingness to follow the lead of their Imperial Clanji sponsors and start the Diltov War cost their position as the seat of the Republican government.

Note: Moscow has another advantage as the projected homeport of two jump-3, GTL B, 200-ton merchantmen (and sufficient spare parts to maintain them for two decades) on order from the Ziru Sirkaa via the Protectorate. Until then, the Republic depends on Protectorate starships to communicate across all of their stars. Native-built vessels are stuck at the jump-2 level: without the ability to make void jumps, the Geneva-Temperance Gap cannot be crossed, and the Republic must break up into two segments.

Planetary theme song: "Daphne" by Yuki Kajiura
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ioiRLLNcOBQ

Providence/Painted

The system of Satori was renamed Providence by the Diltov Republic, soon after the lifeforms of the hydrosphere were found to be 1) of great diversity and 2) completely compatible with human biochemistry, providing a food source beyond compare. Under Republican supervision, various companies work to

harvest the most desirable lifeforms, while insuring long-term sustainability.

The Protectorate Research department tells the various interested corporations what to harvest and when, while monitoring the various interlocking ecosystems for stress. The entire population of the eighteen-system Diltov Republic about two million, so the impact of various forms of high-tech fishing is effectively nil, but the Researchers insist that they need to protect the environment. The Diltovich believe that the Protectorate Research bureaucrats are merely looking for another excuse to feather their nests and expand their power. The corporations dislike colonial control, and have their own long-term plans that will permit human exploitation while protecting the most valuable parts of the environment. However, the dominionist/ cultivationist views of the locals clash with the pantheistic/panentheist religious understanding of the Protectorate colonial masters.

Referee: While the Protectorate – and the Human Council that stands behind it - is quick to protect human-compatible life, no such consideration is given to hostile lifeforms – or hostile biospheres, for that matter. If it isn't useful in some way, and it's a pest that is inhibiting human expansion on a useful world, it's going to get eradicated.

Even so, the Protectorate is encouraging the development of Sinai and Moscow as aquaculture/ agricultural worlds, with Providence reclassified as a biodiversity reserve. (Lifesphere is already under a carefully planned cultivation scheme.) In principle, this has been agreed to by the Republic, but putting the plans into reality is a good deal more difficult – especially as the money largely isn't there yet, and probably won't be for this generation.

Very recently, in 1498, a seafisher – a kind of specialized, submersible air/raft, built for attracting and hauling in certain abundant species of 'fish' – happened to spot some odd structures on the few specks of land existing on the world. As permanent settlement is forbidden, a small Protectorate Guard response team was sent – but determined that these structures were far older than the arrival of the Third Imperium.

Data from the Guard has sparked immense speculation on the origin of these artefacts. A small security team, based on an ever-airborne air/raft, has been tasked to prevent their theft. A few Protectorate Research teams have taken some detailed readings, but a specialized team is being shipped in from the Four Empires, and is due to arrive within the year.

Planetary theme song: "Millennium", by Hans Zimmer. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0hIwxhc_i8

Geneva/Painted, Diltov Republic

Men, it has been well said, think in herds; it will be seen that they go mad in herds, while they only recover their senses slowly, and one by one.
Charles Mackay

Geneva is currently the capital of the Diltov Republic, having gained the position after the expensive failure of the Diltov War. While the Genevese are not a violent or aggressive people, their culture does accommodate – even encourage – various forms of escapism and collective religious manias.

This is most notable in various hysterias regarding witchcraft and the rapture. The fears of demons, aliens, and contamination via food, drink, sex, or 'the evil eye' rocket through the local cultures every so often, with fingers pointed, kangaroo courts, and the occasional lynching. Visitors trying to live a normal life on the world find the manic episodes rather exhausting, and sometimes terrifying. Less excitable Christians from other worlds sometimes try to calm the masses: if they escape alive, they can count themselves lucky.

As of 1500 Imperial, the latest in crazy revolves around the Rapture Ready. It doesn't matter that these failed prophecies have, always and everywhere, failed for the entirety of the 6000 years since the birth of Christ. It doesn't matter that awaiting an imminent Return of Christ is a wasteful distraction from obeying God's commands to disciple the nations (and yourself) now. Nor does it matter that such lies are part and parcel of destroying the future generation's trust in God. What is important to the Rapture Ready is that the rapture promises an escape from the demands of reality and responsibility.

Most of the Christian cultural leadership work hard to keep such heresy suppressed, as they are not interested in living in a powerless Christian ghetto, blubbering about how wicked the world is and how Jesus is going to make it all right when He comes again. Unfortunately, local quality control failed on Geneva, and it's going to take some time for the locals to get their brains in gear again.

Last times rapture fever:
http://americanvision.org/4566/life-and-death-and-the-last-days-or-why-eschatology-matters/

Planetary theme song: "Disturbia" by Rihanna
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1mU6h4Xdxc

Jerusalem/Painted, Diltov Republic

A system with a population of eight, Jerusalem system is hostile to human life – but very useful for spacecraft production. All the raw materials needed for this endeavour is practically lying on the world's surface, pre-purified, already sorted, and ready for use. Attempts by the Protectorate to prevent the use of these artificially gathered stockpiles were overridden by Imperial Cianji, as no unusual or important information could be gained by further examination.

For unknown reasons, most people who remain on the world for longer than a year will die of a catastrophic DNA breakdown. The agent of their death doesn't spread beyond the initial victim, but this could change with the right mutation, so medical research on these fatalities was begun. Why these men die is officially unknown, but one line of inquiry has proven promising. Eight volunteers have survived on the world for longer than three years now, and a formal medical/physical presentation on the causes of the earlier deaths – and how these lives were protected – is expected in three months. Some form of non-organic parasite, similar to that of certain non-Terran, non-biotic viruses discovered in the distant Third Imperium millennia ago, is the most persistent rumour.

Until the protective agent is mass produced, most of the resource extraction will be handled by robots and technicians who are careful to never set foot on the world. The agent is transmitted by stepping a boot (or other part of a spacesuit) onto the lunar-like planet: merely contacting the dirt doesn't spread the disease.

Planetary theme: "Licking Wounds" by Jeremy Soule.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ormnmIE_aLY

Liege/Painted, Diltov Republic

Liege has a small permanent settlement, dedicated to the production of small arms cheaply on this rather hostile world, but that's not what is most notable about the world: that would be the naval base in orbit over Liege, the current home of the Protectorate Guard.

The Protectorate Guard is composed of military forces, allotted from the armed forces of the Four Empires, for duty in the New Stars. The Commodore of the Guard resides here, as does the Colonel. There is no serious opposition to the warships of the Guard, but ground forces could be in some jeopardy, if deployed poorly.

Note: "There is no serious opposition…" except the Guard themselves. The first loyalty of these military forces is to their sponsoring government, not the Protectorate Commission. In the unlikely event of war, there are procedures for the stand-down of the opposing sides of a conflict, procedures which did hold during the recent Quajorai War.

Planetary theme song: "Bejeweled 2, Track 1" by Skaven.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CC3Ox8KCMkQ

Lifesphere/Painted, Diltov Republic

A very pleasant world, the Lifesphere is where the majority of the Diltovich live. (Local residents are called Lifers: all citizens of the Republic are Diltovich.) This is the primary centre of the Christian faith in Starbreak, as well as the second most populous world of the New Stars. The society is more interested in comfortable family living and cosy communities than in wealth and power, and their faith leans more to a gentle, somewhat humorous piety than a relentless drive for moral perfection. The Lifesphere has much to recommend it for a Christian settler, but lacks a certain drive for excellence, and suffers from complacency.

Politically, there is an internal push for expansion to the nearby, habitable worlds of Amber and Adoria, but this has been resisted by the population. They already have a nearly empty world to fill and develop: why take on even more expensive colonial projects? Despite the prevailing attitude, there are some innovative young men who want to gain a world of their own…

The Lifers are eager to expand their numbers. More hands, well-educated and morally upright, will strengthen the human hold on their world. More and better ideals will improve life for all. And the Lifers are a gregarious people: they just plain like more people around, especially children.

Planetary theme song: "Adiemus" by Karl Jenkins
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UX__4aHwYzM

Councils, Imperia & Protectorates

As of 1500 Imperial, there are four large empires that dominate the Oikouménē – local human-inhabited space – and two Protectorates which are partially ruled by the empires. Three of the four empires claim decent from the Third Imperium, hatred for its protection of nonhuman interests, but envied for its power and wealth. The Third Imperium has not been heard of for centuries: exactly what happened to it is unknown. Rampant speculation abounds.

The Human Council

Atmospheric music: The International – End Title, by Matt Bellamy
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSKMVyTzJ3Y

Paradigm: A combination of the Vatican, the United Nations, and multinational conspiratorial groups like the Trilateral Commission. There is a fair amount of of Star Trek's™ United Federation of Planets here too – the scientific/exploration and diplomatic mission, not the military/national security mission. A resident of the Classic Third Imperium would also detect the faint echo of Solomani Security: not full or even half strength, just something in the atmosphere, 'a ghost that you just glimpse, before vanishing like a thin white mist.'

The Human Council was founded in 910, in the wake of the Bond of Man, and the breaking of the authority of the Third Imperium within Starbreak. It exists "with the sole mandate to insure the integrity and survival of humaniti, currently defined to include the Solomani, the Vilani, the Syleans, and mixtures of these groups." The possibility of including other known human races is certainly open and unofficially accepted, but has not been codified into the formal framework of the Council's charter.

Note that there warfare against nonhuman sophonts does not necessarily follow from the stated goals of the Human Council. A defensive or neutral position can be supported as much as an offensive position. However, the extermination of other organic sophont races has become the de facto policy of the Council. Electronic, non-material, and non-organic intelligences were left unaddressed: It is unknown which way the Council will jump, should it be forced to make a decision here.

The Five Oaths of the Bond of Man are repeated by the senior interstellar government – the Four Empires, in 1500 – every 25 years, on Dikaai, the first human world in the sector. Cultures that don't subscribe to the Bond are exterminated: all known Starbreaker cultures extend this to their subjects, demanding at least passive acceptance from every individual, with re-education camps, mental reprogramming, or death as the alternatives.

Among those who do subscribe to the Bond, the Human Council encourages peace, unity, population and economic growth, and territorial expansion. As there is no unclean alien threat on the immediate horizon, the Council mainly work as a friendly and unbiased observer, working to ease conflicts among human cultures. While not philosophically opposed to unifying all of Starbreak, as a practical matter they discourage it among the Emperors, believing that the violence and systematic oppression needed to suppress human differences will take too much energy, better put into taming worlds, raising children well, and building wealth.

(So no, the Human Council isn't a biggie-sized Tolerance Commission, so beloved by Our Betters.)

Public Support

The Ruling Elite and the upper classes strongly support the Human Council, some out of genuine belief, others out of practical considerations. The working classes don't challenge the work of the Council, but put more of their faith in people linked by blood, proximity, or religion. The middle classes are torn between their aspirations and their origins.

Among the Four Empires, Imperial Cianji most strongly and comprehensively supports the Council, and the Reborn Imperium gives the least consistent support. The Ziru Sirkaa formally back the Council on most issues, but avoids entangling themselves in the internal affairs of others. The Holy Imperium and the Var Kirat both try to dominate the Human Council for their own ends. The Council plays a careful game with these two, drawing in their participation and support, but using the other powers to block or limit most actual power shifts.

The Human Council publishes a Forbidden List, revised once every 40 years, outlining ideals and implications which are proscribed within the members of the Bond. This list of targeted ideals to be censored is enforced across Starbreak and encoded in the legal codes of every world, much like the blasphemy and hate speech laws of today. How stringently these limits are policed among the general populaces is a good indicator of actual popular support for the Human Council.

The Venture

Within the last ten years, the Human Council has managed to get the Four Emperors and the Var Kirat to back a network of hospital ships, giving aid and support to the poorer worlds of Starbreak. Based in the Ziru Sirkaa capital world, the All-Imperial Charitable Venture (as the project is known) is expected to be the seed of an entire range of Human Council services and projects, building up the poorer worlds across Starbreak. Various independent worlds are expected to benefit the most, but many worlds within Imperial Cianji and the Reborn Imperium will be blessed as well. (Eventually, the Venture will be rolled out in the Protectorates as well.)

Due to their wealth, the Ziru Sirkaa and the Holy Imperium will benefit the least, but are compensated with respect and honour. More substantial rewards are expected, as projects that support technology transfers and free trade are enacted.

Covenantal Structure

Transcendence

The primary duty of all men, from the poorest beggar-slave to the mightiest Emperor, is to insure the spread and supremacy of humaniti in this portion of the universe. In the eyes of the Human Council, this duty supersedes all other duties, religious or secular. “The Oikouménē MUST Be Expanded!”

One of the interesting consequences of this is the interstellar tradition that an interstellar power can only claim the worlds & systems that have a permanent human inhabitant. In practice, it isn't necessary to have a settlement on every world of a given system, but it is necessary that all the inhabitants of a given system are allied to one and only one interstellar polity.

Hierarchy

The Human Council is an odd organization, with aspects of a religious order, a scientific investigation committee, a diplomatic corps, and a communications & librarian bureaucracy. The Senior Members of the Council, led by the Master of the Council, generally act as a diplomatic liaison between interstellar governments and independent worlds. They also act as crypto-religious leaders of humaniti as a whole, propagating policies that they feel will serve all mankind. They are treated as highly respected religious leaders by both government officials and the general populace.

Below the Senior Members, Common Members run various libraries, scientific and research societies and foundations, as well as history and military clubs. In addition, they host assorted 'meet and mix' functions - some very formal and ceremonial, some very informal and folksy. All these functions and organizations exist to promote the unity of mankind, and the destiny of mankind to reshape the stars and the worlds for his own benefit.

Low Members are by far the most common members of the Human Council. Essentially, these bright-eyed idealists work tirelessly to encourage friendship and unity across all human cultures, governments and religions. They also encourage the founding of new colonies and terraforming work. Most importantly, a large minority of the Low Members are in 'for the long haul.' While colonization fads come and go, there remains a solid core who is willing to dedicate themselves – and two to four generations of their family – to turn a barren rockball to a living world fit for human habitation.

Unlike most human societies in Starbreak, sex means little within the Human Council. Men and women rise or fall strictly on their merits and dedication to humaniti, as determined by the Council. (Good political instincts help a lot, though…)

Law

The Human Council has no interstellar legal authority per se, but they do have enormous prestige. They are entrusted with the essentially religious mandate to encourage the propagation of man across Starbreak Sector, to reduce destructive competition and hostility within humaniti, and encourage the total annihilation of all other sophont life.

The Bond of Men, an oath that all human governments renew four times a century on Dikaai/NightVision, is the oldest agreement between the various societies of Starbreak Sector. In this oath, these human cultures swear by what they regard as holy - be it God, the State, the Race, the Will of the People, the Will to Power, the Iridium Throne, or anything else - that they will insure the supremacy of Man, and that they will pursue policies that promote the spread of Man across the Stars.

A set of simple but sweeping restrictions on the scientific use of human genetic material is also established, as a matter of course. Marriages are strongly endorsed, as the heart of human society and the cradle of worthy men, ready to shoulder the burdens of an expanding Race.

Note that the Holy Imperium is in direct violation of this policy. However, smooth words and ample coin has kept Human Council discontent to a low, steady growl.

Sanctions

Non-state violators of the Bond of Man are generally handled by the government where the act took place and/or the government that the suspects are citizens of/subjects to. As these are crimes against the Race of Men, the punishments tend to be severe - usually, death of the individual in question.

Occasionally, this is commuted to some form of severe crippling - losing both arms, being rendered a quadriplegic, forced to carry a painful but non-infectious disease, etc. Torture as punishment is legal on certain worlds - although not used by any of the four Imperial governments. Following Imperial precedent, the Human Council forbids torture as a form of punishment for a Race Crime.

The very maximum punishment, the genocide of humans who challenged the Bond, has not been used against a large population since the Purification of the Tri-Worlds six centuries ago. Within the last century, Council-sanctioned military action has been engaged against secret pro-alien cults, and a few scientific cabals who were attempting to recreate the lost non-human sophonts from genetic material uncovered on the Tri-Worlds. The creation of a class of eunuchs by the Holy Imperium has been deemed acceptable by the Council 'as a cultural quirk', within limits: historically speaking, numerous ruling elites and noble houses have emasculated men, to build up their power in pursuit of some visionary goal or other.

Most recently, in 1473, the premature revelation of Imperial Cianji attempts to create a very infectious disease that would quickly sterilize large populations - especially effective on a crowded, poor, unsanitary population like the Cianji underclass - created a wave of rage and anti-Imperial riots across the Cianji homeworld, forcing the Emperor to quickly sacrifice the researchers and their families to appease the furious subjects (and buy time to hide his own approval of their activities.)

All forms of punishment for Crimes Against the Race involve being physically branded 'race traitor' on the forehead, at minimum. Such branded individuals, even if punished in no other way, rarely survive long in any urban setting within Starbreak Sector.

Destiny

The goal of the Human Council is to have humaniti – and humaniti alone – dominate and rule all the stars of heaven. In the very long term, the Human Council desires to have humaniti evolve to a form of godhood, immortal, all-powerful, and self-sufficient, with the very laws of creation treated as nothing more than silly-putty in the hands of the Final Man, with no master above himself.

Economics

The Human Council does not concern itself with religious or racial matters, so long as the supremacy of the human species is assured. It does handle financial transactions between the Four Empires, with all accounts denominated in gold. The Council Bank serves as a gold depository, not a fractional-reserve bank, a lending institution, or an investment trust.

Appendix

Distant Aliens

- There are no known living non-humans within Starbreak Sector, but Starbreakers know that they exist within the universe, especially in the distant realm of Charted Space, home of the Third Imperium and various large alien governments. Moreover, the alien Tanatelul used to dominate the sector, and their enigmatic works remain scattered on several words.

- Within the last twenty years, careful study of natural radio signals over 300 years point to an unknown alien civilization, at least 1000 light years coreward. Careful analysis suggest a GTL 9 civilization, restricted to sub-light drives, expanding their sphere of habitation by 0.3 light years every year, or a parsec every 10 years. The number of sophonts estimated to inhabit this sphere is enormous, on the order of quadrillions. This news has been kept very quiet, but the Four Emperors have been informed, as well as the Var Kirat. No action has been decided upon yet.

- Common members stress religious and evolutionary arguments for the extermination of nonhuman races, depending on the audience. Friends of the Human Council - and their number are legion - encourage the strongly negative depiction of non-humans in both popular media and elite entertainment. As it has been over five centuries since the last living alien was killed, the very notion of nonhuman sentience is fading into the world of myth & legend on some worlds, with ‘alien’ becoming a synonym for ‘demon’.

- In certain irreverent intellectual circles, the Human Council's insistence on 'death to the aliens!' is quietly mocked. However, for their own reasons, elite opinion in the four Imperial still supports both the spread of humaniti and the eventual need to destroy non-human sophonts, and disdains those who would challenge this Sacred Duty as pathetically short-sighted and naive. Middle-class opinion feels far more strongly about the matter, and demands all sorts of restrictions, censorship and punishments on the 'fifth column enemies of humaniti.' The lower classes are more likely to start a riot on the matter, knowing that no-one will raise a finger to stop them from lynching a race traitor. Naturally, mockery of the Human Council is kept sotto voce.

- The logical implications of an intense anti-alien stance encourage a form of limited atheism among the most dedicated members of the Council. While non-sentient gods and vague spiritual forces are tolerated - especially if they encourage Human Greatness - intelligent non-human deities are increasingly seen with a hostile eye. Internal debates between adherents of this form of limited atheism and the Christian Church, with her insistence on the rule of the God-man Jesus Christ, is growing more strident.

    - Interstellar Mormonism - a polytheistic religion derived from Christianity that denies the uniqueness of the only begotten Son of God - is seen by some Human Council members as an acceptable compromise between the need for Human Greatness (i.e. humans as their own gods) and the fundamentally transcendent Abrahamic God (who insists, first and foremost, that He alone is God.) Under Interstellar Mormonism, all men can become gods over their own starsystems after death; just as Christ became a god, so can any loyal member of I.M. The religion had no followers in Starbreak Sector before some Human Council members chose to

revive the heresy in 1438, but it grew strongly afterwards. As of 1500 Imperial, a bit under a million members exist, mainly on the Reborn Imperium worlds of Comerwake (800,000 members), Samtara (50,000 members), Ipinnae (30,000 members), and Mist (20,000 members). The world of Bitterend has completely converted to I.M., bringing in another 3,000 members into that religion.

- UFO sightings and shaggy Vargr tales are still spun by traders on their liquor: the Human Council sends Investigators, teamed up with local law enforcement and a platoon of soldiers, to check out the most likely tales. All incidents have all turned up negative: this includes persistent rumours of a few Bwap serving the Vilani Emperor in secret "for old times' sake"; a hidden colony of blue-skinned Yilean humans, somewhere in the jungles of Wsi; and a handful of Darrian ~~elves~~ humans residing somewhere in the New Stars, on the other side of the Starbreak.

Psions

Psionics is not part of the public consciousness within Starbreak, excluding some distant fairy tales from the exotic Noble Federation, and a secretive office within the Holy Imperium. The very fact that psionics *did* exist has been practically forgotten by even the most learned men in the sector, including the facts that 1) the Third Imperium citizenry and aristocracy hated psionics with a passion, and 2) in ancient times, there was a major multi-sector empire that was built on psionics.

The only mainstream interest in psionics can be found in the 96th Research Circle of the Human Council, focusing on 'Paranormal Activity'. The state of their knowledge is similar to that of the brief flare-up of scientific interest in the 1970s.

Imperial Cianji

Atmospheric music: Inner Universe, by Yoko Kanno
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIVgSuuUTwQ

Paradigm: Monotheistic Republican Rome. (Don't let the local 'Emperor' fool you: during the Principate, the Emperor tolerated no equals, no challengers, and no restraints.) Also, interestingly enough, a Rome that lost half her empire to secessionism, survived a nasty full-spectrum terror war (led by an enemy far more competent & disciplined than the Arabs, as noted here: http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=16234. Think Ho Chi Minh, not Osama bin Laden), and came out her defeat strong enough to cause serious trouble after some recovery time…

This Imperium is run strictly for the benefit of the world of Cianji; Cianji is run primarily for the benefit of the noble Households. As of 1500 Imperial, the nobles believe that following the Zanist deity provides the most political, financial, and economic benefit for themselves, so the doctrines of this religion are aggressively enforced.

Among these Houses, the Imperial House is only one of many, if uniquely respected when it comes to off-world affairs. While House Kovačević has free reign to do what they like off-world, their authority is heavily restricted on Cianji herself. Not only the aristocracy, but the upper levels of the commoner classes are genuinely free. A series of noble courts handles intra-noble controversies; while a network of formal diplomatic treaties between these Sovereign Individuals govern their relationships with each other. (Marriage counts as a unique legal treaty, and are usually drawn up by teams of lawyers and Zanist clergymen.) Careful etiquette is mandatory among the aristocracy at the price of harsh humiliation (at best: death at worst), and strongly recommended with the upper-class commoners.

Within their demesne, the nobility are kings of all they survey, with only a few limitations on what they can do. (Before the Civil War, they were more like gods, without any limitations at all, moral or legal.) They have their own armies, many of which are larger, better equipped, and better trained than that of the Imperial House. The strongest restriction on their behaviour is the Zanist religion – mandatory among their class. The political need to maintain good relations with the upper classes, to better tap their expertise and business wealth, also acts as a better limit than any number of paper constitutions.

The middle classes are devout Zanists, or at least pretend to be. Punishment for unbelief is not as harsh, but trying to protect your property rights against a noble or upper-class claim is a chancier proposition. Fortunately, they are generally left along as long as they tug their forelocks at the right time, do their jobs, and keep their opinions to themselves and their family. Grumbling is permitted, but openly challenging their masters' authority is a bad idea. Their lives are heavily structured, and their education is limited to what is necessary for work and proper religious observance. Obedience is rewarded with leniency, usually in non-criminal matters. Monetary rewards and debt forgiveness are also routine rewards for compliance.

For the lower classes of Cianji, life is tough. There are more beatings, more rules, and more severity. Censorship is pervasive on all matters, sexual, political, religious, scientific… you name it, there's a censor, with men with sticks or guns to back his dictates with force. Informers are inescapable. Criminal acts that would be punished by gossip among the aristocracy and large fines among the middle classes are rewarded with a brutal, public death among the lower classes. Exile is usually given for criminals with some public support, but slavery, maiming, or death is a much more common punishment.

In the major colonies, the local nobles are more closely aligned with the Imperial House, as they are more dependent on the favour of the Emperor. The commoners are usually descendants of criminal exiles; but the kind of criminality matters. Religious exiles will build a different society than a dumping ground of violent rapists, or tax-evading businessmen, or media personalities who mocked a ruling House a bit too explicitly.

Most criminals are men, so most of these settlements have died out: but a few are successful enough to purchase mail order brides, or otherwise find a woman to bring home and start a family. These surviving cultures tend to be

quite self-reliant, and too focused on survival or wealth generation to earn the undivided attention of the Imperial military. Those that *do* attract the wrong kind of attention tend to get vanished, leaving behind only a crater or some scattered bones in a silent village.

Covenantal Structure

Transcendence

The Absent God 'rules' Cianji, in accordance to the teaching of the deist Jack Zandilate. The leading cleric of the religion is known as the The Guide of Ircan, Primate of the Zanist Truth of Cianji, and – despite his simple living – has more real power than the Emperor, and possibly the entire aristocracy, if put to the test.

Hierarchy

Despite the Zanist clergy having the final say in all aspects of life, they are very reluctant to use this power outside of the sphere of faith, morals, and family life. They feel unqualified in regard to political, financial and military affairs except in extreme emergencies. And even then, they know that the longer they work in a field they are untrained in, the greater the loss of their righteousness, which they value much more than money and power.

All interstellar authority and power is invested in the Emperor – a.k.a. The Ruby Crown – in his position as Prince of Cianji. While his primary and most sacred duty is to insure the protection of Cianji - her people, and also the world herself - he is also expected to protect Imperial Cianji humanity as a whole (in territorial, technological and genetic terms), while taming the worlds of this part of the galaxy, terraforming them and making them fit for Imperial Cianji human habitation. His attitude towards the Zanist religion is expected to be of passive support, by and large: no interstellar crusades are expected of him, and the Zanist clergy prefer to handle their own missionaries and internal affairs.

The noble hierarchy consists of:
The Emperor, assisted by his Privy Council, usually consisting of a mix of three to eight nobles, bureaucrats, leaders of the Zanist Faith, and notable family & friends.

The 66 Counts, all of whom rule large Counties of approximately 10-20 million people, a single city containing such a population, or an important site of unique military, cultural, or religious significance. All but four of these counts reside on Cianji herself. These counts and their titles are independent of the Emperor, and maintain sufficient military, political, and economic strength to easily replace any Emperor who gets too big for his britches. The Counts and the Emperor make up the Cianji Moot, which – unlike the Imperial Moot of the long-vanished Third Imperium – has quite a bit of authority, especially in managing trade and relations between noble houses and their territories. For example, the Noble Financial Union, a standing committee of the Cianji Moot, manages the gold-backed currency.

The c. 200 Barons, c. 5000 Baronets and c. 20,000 Earls. Most of these minor titles are dependent on either a Count or the Prince. Barons are tied to small cities of 1 - 10 million, or worlds of similar populations: about 60% of these barons are independent or quasi-independent city-states. Baronets rule large towns of 100,000 - 1 million: senior bureaucrats and military men of the various Houses also gain this rank. Earls dominate the upper ranks of wealthy and notable families without the rank of Count or Baron: they also own large private holdings of little population.

Knights are usually senior agents of a noble House: Knighthood may also be given as an honour for Imperial service to the Ruby Crown, in the military, scientific, economic, or artistic field. Major business figures & intellectuals may also be knighted, depending on their achievements and support for the Emperor. There are about 100,000 Knights in Imperial Cianji, divided into 90 orders (one order per major House, six Imperial orders, 17 Zanist orders of Knighthood, and one order for loyal unbelievers). In addition, the few who can legitimately claim membership within a hereditary Third Imperium order may claim recognition.

Religious figures that please the Emperor are not usually rewarded directly with honours, but are instead indirectly rewarded by the Emperor's informal seal of approval. Said priests, theologians and scholars find that they get hearings before powerful men, financial & legal troubles somehow fade away, and the monument to themselves

that they always dreamt of - be it a cathedral, a university, or a community - now becomes possible. Religious leaders with a large following often gain the support of a city they can rule as they please, much like the Vatican or Mecca. The Guide of Ircan is usually a member of the Imperial Privy Council and, on occasion, one or two of the secret Inner Circles, as well.

Each level of hierarchy has complete and unlimited authority over the men under them. Even a Knight, attending to Imperial business, has utter and complete authority to take whatever he needs to fulfil his duty, hedged only by the power of nobles of equal or higher rank. Note that the Counts do NOT stand under the Prince, but are co-equals with him, with independent authority. While men are preferred as nobles, in rare instances a woman may be permitted to rule, or in even rarer instances a child under the age of 12 - so long as that the noble has a suitable regent.

There is one notable exception to the Imperial Hierarchal structure. Quajora system is not a true member of the Imperium: instead, she is better understood as an Imperial Client State. As such, Quajora is legally an independent system, with Imperial military support provided in return for trade concessions and tribute, as well as the rejection of all non-Cianji external military & political alliances. In trade matters with the Reborn Imperium, Quajora adheres to Imperial Cianji policy: in all other external trade concerns, her government is free to do as she pleases.

Law

Planetary laws are the matter of the local government: note that planetary laws have no authority over the person or property of an Imperial Cianji Noble, who are legally Sovereign Individuals: that is, they are effectively outside the authority of any planetary nation. Nor do planetary laws have any authority over personnel under the employ of the Emperor. Finally all Imperial laws supersede all planetary laws – except on Cianji, where all County law supersedes all Imperial laws. Following Third Imperial custom, planetary authority stops at the 100-diameter limit. System-wide governments are discouraged, excepting those created by the Emperor himself.

Officially, the Ruby Crown has authority and dominion over all Imperial worlds and affairs beyond the atmosphere of Cianji. Most of the major Imperial Cianji worlds - including the throneworld herself - are balkanized into various feuding Houses.

In Zanist culture, there are three sets of Rules: Military, Financial, and Familial. They are organized according to their respective Zanist sacred texts. The Noble houses stand at the peak of all three social pyramids – but not in the unmentioned fourth pyramid, Cultic. The strongly hierarchal church is organized by an organized body of law and commandments: the three sets of Rules must conduct themselves within the ambit of the Zanist code, or they lose all force and legitimacy.

Law Among the Nobles

All nobles must maintain a high degree of competence as legal judges, as military officers, and as Zanists in good standing. (There is an order of Knighthood for non-Zanist subjects of legal religions outside of Zanism, who has demonstrated unusual loyalty to the Ruby Crown.) The demanding levels of competence, cultural sophistication and moral standards expected of nobles from childhood - complete with public tests - does a good job of weeding out most of the easily corruptible aspirants to noble authority. An austere noble lifestyle and a demanding workload reduces the temptations of wealth and decadence.

Note that all nobles are members of the Zanist Faith, and almost all are men between the ages of 20 and 60. Every noble & knight is expected to cultivate expertise in at least one (preferably two) of the following fields: military leadership; political governance; law; financial management; Zanist philosophy, theology & theodicity; applied sciences & technology; diplomacy, propaganda, public psychology & mass marketing; interstellar trade & commerce; and terraforming & colonial sciences. While not required, many nobles are also involved in artistic patronage; studying the personal martial arts; city planning & architectural design; agriculture; and history.

Few are interested in the pure sciences; genetic engineering; foreign religions and cultures; psionics; robotics; deviant sexuality per se; or any kind of utopianism. Finally, there is an open hostility to non-humans per se; any culture, religion or ideology that doesn't exalt the nobility; egalitarianism (but socialism is OK, so long as the

nobility gets to join the ruling bureaucracy and decision-makers); pacifism; divorce (adultery is frowned upon, but unofficially permitted if it's kept discreet and both the husband and wife approves). Cryptography, covert operations and spycraft is tolerated as a necessity when dealing with foreigners and traitors, but otherwise its use is despised among the nobles.

Games without a practical 'dual-use', preferably military, agricultural or economic, are simply not played. Hunting animals is loathed by environmentally-aware nobles, careful to nurture the biomes of their terraformed worlds. On the other hand, hunting criminals remains legal, and is seen as good sport. Racing games are tolerated, if there is a direct military application for the skills learned. Fighting games - man vs. man, man vs. robot, ship vs. ship, and team vs. team - are the most respected sports. 'The fewer the rules, the better.'

Exuberant expressions of emotion and religious ecstasy are mocked among the nobility: the elite are expected to project a serious, stoic mien at all times. Noble rank can be lost by failing to consistently act the part, as well as demonstrated incompetence or suspicions of disloyalty to Cianji, Humaniti, or the Zanist faith. (Note the lack of a requirement of loyalty to the Prince of Cianji.) A certain level of intense jealousy regarding their family, property, rights, and freedoms is considered a birthright among Imperial Cianji nobles. In older days, a certain level of sadism and cunning viciousness was also expected: but this is now discouraged outside of the Diaoran system. Even so, Imperial Cianji nobles enjoy exacting vengeance on nobles of similar rank to themselves. Commoners are generally considered too petty and low to be worth crushing. “What pleasure is there in smashing the weak? What kind of manly challenge is that? Shall we sing the praises of the mighty men who do so?”

Family and clan are highly respected: the husband and wife are expected to bond as a complementary unit based on shared goals and a reasonably high level of cultural, intellectual, religious and sexual compatibility. Noble marriages are subject to lengthy negotiation between the two families, and are difficult to break outside of death. Adultery, disastrous child-rearing, gross financial mismanagement and bringing major shame are permitted reasons to divorce: they are also legal reasons for one spouse to kill, maim, or publicly humiliate the other. Remarriage after divorce bring the possibility of adultery charges, with the punishment to be chosen by the wronged party.

Finally, all Imperial Cianji nobles (and the general citizenry, as well) have a loathing of the idealistic semi-egalitarian ideology governing the secessionist Reborn Imperium, and a focused, special hatred for people from Wsi, the capital world of that government. The other Reborn systems are seen as misguided or deceived, but Wsi herself is viewed as a true enemy, and the Reborn Imperium as an impostor, fit only for destruction.

Law Addendum: Military Women and Sexuality

According to Zanist theology, Imperial Cianji is a patriarchal society, with women formally restricted to the roles of wife, mother, healer, and teacher. Why women are banned from military service is alluded to by Gary North’s “Questions for a Four-Star General (Retired)” - http://www.garynorth.com/public/7687.cfm, and clearly listed in the standard text for the against camp, Women in the Military: Flirting with Disaster by Brian P. Mitchell.

(If you’re an officer, don’t get caught with this book in your office. Liberals bleat on and on about their bravery in ‘challenging authority’, but I’m sure you know what the real score is.)

However, due to certain interesting subtleties within Zanist legal theology, women who choose to forgo family are permitted the same range of opportunities as men have, including military service in all-woman units. Note that this does not mean a quota system: unlike early 21st century America, for example, women in the military are expected to meet the same standards as men (physically, in aggression, self-sufficiency, situational awareness, bravery, etc.); and abruptly cashiered if they don’t meet them. Cowardice isn’t excused, but rewarded with execution, as it is with the men.

The Cianji are a sexually restrictive society, as the Zanists believe that sexual restraint leads to increased self-discipline and ‘soul strength’, vital components of a people called to dominate and tame the universe. (An analog of their beliefs can be found in the book “Sex and Culture” by Unwin: a copy of this thousand-dollar book is downloadable at http://rapidlibrary.com/download_file_i.php?file=19086067&desc=SexCulture+.zip). An example

of their uncompromising attitudes may be seen in their treatment of military women. Unlike the 21st century, women in the military services have no need to fear rape by their fellow soldiers. But certain related polices suggests that 'improving public morality', however laudable a goal, is less a motive than expanding political control over others – for the right motives, as every politico always claims.

Women within the Imperial Cianji Armed Services who get pregnant without prior authorization (married or not) do not undergo a forced abortion (as per Third Imperium protocol), but instead are shot for treason and gross insubordination. (As no artificial womb is provided, the child dies, as well.) Again, women who get involved in sexual dalliances with men not their husband are tried and shot – just as adulterous male soldiers are. Battlefield rape is only one of a lengthy list of Unclean Offenses that is expected to be handled by any officer with a sidearm handy. Soldiers who complain about these polices are promptly shot.

Finally, front-line soldiers are specifically forbidden from granting women soldiers any special slack whatsoever in the face of harsh penalties: the Imperial Cianji military is a serious profession, and will gleefully slice to ribbons – verbally and physically – any weakling whose mere existence is a burden to the team. Similar rules are enforced in the other noble military forces within Imperial Cianji.

Outside observers are highly surprised that the ranks suffer only a 4% reduction on a yearly basis. The austere Zanist officers insist "if you demand the best, and refuse to tolerate substandard substitutes, you get the best."

Incidentally, plans are being laid down to ban all forms of cursing among all Cianji military units, and are expected to be enacted by the majority of noble Houses, including the Imperial House, by 1502 Imperial.

Note that this stringent and aggressively enforced sexual legislation makes the various Cianji militaries very unusual in the history of armies. The Third Imperium had a few societies that went this route, but they used the support of drugs or extensive mental reprogramming on their soldiers, mental manipulations proscribed by the relentlessly demanding Zanist culture.

In contrast to all these steel-edged moral strictures, it should be remembered that Cianji military in the field do not recognize the distinction between 'civilian' and 'military', only 'possible threat' and 'neutralized threat'. Internal standards are as high as humanly possible, but – thanks to the cruel lessons of the long-gone terror wars – all enemies of the Imperium are assumed to be honourless swine. Prisoners are rarely taken: specialized intelligence units have to be sent if Command wants someone to interrogate, as regular troopers have no interest in giving quarter, and do not expect any from their enemies.

Sanctions

The legal codes that Zandism encourages tend to be harsh and cold, without the concept of parole, leniency, repentance, or forgiveness: only justice, pure and absolute. On Diaoran, legal punishments are unrestrained by Zanist morality, and tend to be sadistic and cruel, in the style of Old Cianji. Outside of that system, punishment tends to be swift and harsh: on the other hand, it isn't unduly prolonged, and once the punishment has been borne, the matter is officially forgotten. There is no such thing as an 'official criminal record' in Zanist-influenced laws, nor is a vast and inevitably abusive prison system tolerated.

[**Referee:** See "in Defense of Flogging", in http://chronicle.com/article/In-Defense-of-Flogging/127208/ , for the attitude behind the laws. Zanist laws may be brutal, but they are quick, and are far more merciful and respectful of the convicted than secular liberal democratic legal systems.]

On Cianji herself, Noble pressure restricts Imperial punishment to only the individual who committed the offence: punishments rarely extend to the criminal's family, town, religion, or race. More thought is given to making the punishment fit the crime, rather than merely demanding the maximum penalty.

Illegal activities that don't directly threaten Imperial rule or Zanist interstellar supremacy tend to be more lightly punished; the nobler the perpetrator is, the lighter the punishment. Only with the rise of the Zanist religion has any noble had to pay serious penalties for the loss of life or property inflicted on a commoner. On Diaoran, nobles

still don't suffer any official penalty for doing so, although in the last few decades it has become expected that some form of unofficial restitution be made.

Destiny

Imperial Cianji sees herself as the legitimate heir of the Third Imperium, inevitably fated to rule the Oikouménē, and, eventually, all of humaniti. At the moment, it is impossible to militarily defeat and annex all the other major powers in the sector, so she is satisfied in strengthening the power of the Cianji homeworld. Both the Vilani and the Syleans have chosen to build up their homeworld by directly improving it, but long ago the Cianji decided to build up a network of colonies, both to establish a defence perimeter for Cianji and to provide a broad internal home market for Cianji goods and trade. Such a commitment to colonization is also seen with favour by the Human Council, who desires to see the space under human dominion increased.

Those who follow the sacred Zanist texts will have their spirit unify and empower the New God, the Spirit of Man. Those who don't will have their sprits scattered and forgotten. Even in this life, obedience to the Zanite teachings brings wealth, safety, honour, and finally life; disobedience brings poverty, fear, dishonour, and death. These are the natural consequences of the power of the rules, and don't ordinary require government assistance to make them effective. However, the government that hinders them will grow weaker, while the ruler who speed things along will wax mightily.

Hierarchy Addendum: The Imperial Ministries

Imperial Cianji maintains a series of ministries that closely replicates the organization of the Third Imperium.

Ministry of War
- Imperial Navy
- Imperial Army
- Imperial Military Intelligence (covert)

Ministry of Justice
- Imperial Sheriffs
- Imperial Security (covert)

Ministry of State
- Imperial Diplomatic Corps
- Imperial College of Arms
- Imperial Intelligence (covert)
- Mission to the Human Council

Ministry of Colonization
- Imperial Terraforming

Ministry of Commerce
- Imperial Starports
- Imperial Mint
- Imperial Taxation
- Imperial Treasury
- Imperial Banking
- Imperial Surveillance (covert)

Ministry of Technology
- Imperial Standards
- Imperial Uplift
- Imperial Colleges and Universities
- Imperial Research (some covert)

Ministry of Conservation
- Imperial Rangers

Ministry of Communication and Information
- Imperial Libraries and Museums
- Imperial Cianji Scouts
- Imperial Cultural Survey (covert)

Note that these offices only have authority over the colonial worlds, and the two Imperial cities on Cianji.

Religion

The dominant religion of Imperial Cianji is the Zanist faith, a form of Western moralistic, legalistic deism. The leader of the faith is named The Guide, and is officially nameless upon taking the office. Guides hold office for life. Their power and influence is similar to that of the popes of the late 19th century: no private armies or countries, but a very powerful and respected influence when it comes to morality and ethics, and in many cases law as well. Underneath him is a hierarchy of Advisers, Counsellors, Mentors, Experts, Teachers, and – at the lowest rung, with the most contact with the regular public – Instructor.

Like Western Deism of the 18th Century A.D., Zandism is derived from the 'best principles' of Christianity, without the supernatural elements, or the unpleasantness of the power elite being subjected to a will other than their own, even theoretically. God is seen as a wise and crafty watchmaker, who set the universe in mechanical motion and no longer interferes with reality. An optimistic, Newtonian view of the universe is pervasive in this religion, a universe of checks and balances, sweet reason and firm organization. As God has left the building, His lawful heir, Man, stands in His place and has the right and the duty to govern the universe as he see fit.

The Cianji aristocracy are all members of the Zanist religion, some of whom are seriously fanatical in their allegiance. Public obedience and submission to this religion is expected without fail, and private obedience is strongly advised. Sexual adventurism and financial deceit will get a noble ostracized, and public heresy or treason against the Social Order will get him killed.

The middle classes are if anything more devout than the aristocracy. The lower classes are of different minds: everyone conforms to the official rituals, but not everyone cares to uphold the stringent personal moral code commanded by the Zanist clergy and holy texts. Despite their numbers, the poor are closely watched – by their masters, and by their gossiping, envious fellows – and their lives tightly ordered from On High, so they have less ability to flout the regulations. Holes in the surveillance net can be sniffed out, and low-ranking supervisors can be bought off, but it takes a lot of local knowledge, careful surveillance, and quite a bit of luck to find the weaknesses in their invisible cages, cages always being thoughtfully strengthened by their betters.

Economics

If the legal system was taken at face value, then the economy would be seen as extremely free. Outside of the requirement to pay taxes according to a currency backed by a Gold Standard (open to revision by the Noble Financial Union, and not by the Emperor's autonomous authority), there are no economic laws of note.

> Fascism should rightly be called corporatism, as it is the merger of corporate and government power.
> Benito Mussolini http://lewrockwell.com/orig12/kolbjornsen1.1.1.html

It shouldn't be taken at face value. The nobility have insinuated themselves into all major financial transactions, with their opponents being socially iced out of all major (and most minor) contracts and transactions. A complex web of self-interest and public generosity, middle-class innovation and elite preservation, is woven throughout the business world.

Among the middle classes, guilds and trade unions work to freeze employment and benefits to the Right Sort of People. Challenging these organizations invites violence: the noble courts will refuse to punish union & guild destruction of life & property, but will come down like a ton of bricks on those who challenge the Established Interests of Society.

The lower classes are even more strictly and systematically organized. Large percentages of the population are enslaved or in indentured servitude: only 10% of the poor are actually freemen. As most forms of slavery are relatively mild, and comes with benefits like guaranteed health care, pensions, and housing, there is no organized movement for freedom. And, of course, the comfortable slaves can see how the desperately free live: without a

safety net, without a noble patron to protect them, and often crossing legal lines to survive, hoping that they don't get caught.

(Socialists may replace "noble patron" with "bureaucrat" or "Party member", just as it pleases them. Pareto's Law – 20% of the people own 80% of everything, and 20% of the 20% owns 80% of 80% – remains in effect, regardless. Sure, the ancient Third Imperium lived and breathed this law, but so did the Democratic People's Republic of Whatever. Only the names and the justifying ideology changes, nothing else.)

It should be noted that the masters of Imperial Cianji are not nearly as short-sighted as the lords of today's Western Word. There is no government system designed to bankrupt the future for the pleasure of baby boomers today, and Too Big To Fail is applied to the senior noble houses, not banks or businesses per se.

Imperial Cianji is a ~~crypto~~-fascist warfare-welfare state, so the "Gold-backed currency" is always vulnerable to re-valuation, to protect the debtor government by financially raping the lower and middle-classes. (The nobility always seem to be in the right investments when this large-scale theft comes down the pike.)

Interstellar Trade

The Imperial House Kovačević does maintain some notable interests on Cianji herself, but this amounts to only 4 - 6% of the planetary economy. Of far greater importance to them – and most Travellers – is their controlling interest in interstellar trade. They don't tax interstellar trade itself, but do demand minority ownership of all interstellar businesses. Not even foreigners can operate in Imperial Cianji space outside of a joint venture, where the Imperial House gets a 50% stake.

Until 1480 – twenty years ago – there were no 'free traders' in Imperial Cianji. In order to increase support for small businessmen and interstellar speculators, the regulations have been freed up, with the Imperial House satisfied with a 20% share of native free trader corporations for the most part. Every two years, household lawyers and auditors comb through the books, to make sure that the Emperor isn't being cheated of 'his fair share of the profits.'

It should also be noted that half of the interstellar settlements and colonies are owned either directly by the Imperial House, or by close supporters of the Emperor. The remainder are often run by maverick nobles, non-Zanist religions, daring entrepreneurs, and political dissidents. All are careful not to challenge the Emperor's authority on the major political issues. Minor aggravations and petty disobedience are usually tolerated, but pressure may or may not be slowly brought to bear. If the target can put up with the pressure while showing the Emperor proper respect, it's quite possible that the Emperor will back off – the cost of enforcing minor laws may simply not be worth it, and other issues are continuously competing for his attention and large but finite resources.

Even when successful, it is advised not to publically flaunt a successful rebellion: interstellar interests who publicly humiliate the Emperor will have Imperial power smashed into their brains with great force. Guaranteed.

Race

Race as an issue is tied to particular groups and a particular geography. For example, the majority of Mixed Vilani of Cianji's Calibri Mountains are the thin, grey-skinned, brown- and black-eyed descendants of the world of Zeda/Zeda/Dagudashaag (in 700 Imperial: B87399B-D). Outside of their territory, they may well be discriminated against, even by other Mixed Vilani. "Everyone is mixed, but the exact components of the mix matters…" Within their territory, they are permitted – even expected – to discriminate against outsiders.

There are three classes of cities on Cianji, National, Zanist and Imperial. National cities are capitals of their associated racial-territorial regions, and exemplify their given culture. Zanist cities exist for the propagation of their religion, and tend to ignore race as a factor in their lives. The two Imperial cities are racially cosmopolitan (but religiously Zanist), and exist for the glory of the Imperial House. The starports are located at these sites; one city focuses on interstellar trade, and the other on interstellar war.

The Reborn Imperium

Atmospheric music: A Thousand Years, by Sting
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zn7eWTsj9wU

Paradigm: A mix of 1) the Bonaparte French Empire 2) Left-Anarchic Revolutionaries 3) Reactionary hyper-honourable cultures 4) Communist Revolutionaries 5) a diverse, multicultural/polytheistic empire, perhaps a mix of Rome, India, and the ancient Persian Empire 6) a powerful city-state as first among equals, something like Athens of the Delian League, Tyre in Biblical times, or Venice in her heyday.

The Reborn Imperium has a strange lineage. It is a revolutionary monarchy, which came to power largely by acts of violent terrorism and irregular 'full spectrum' hostilities (from cultural assaults to black propaganda to economic disruption to biowar to relentless rioting), which insistently claims to be the true and most honourable representative of the highly conservative Third Imperium. In contrast to the centralized Imperial Cianji – which openly runs its colonial worlds for the benefit of the metropole – the Reborn Imperium insists on holding all worlds of equal honour, and thus of equal value (theoretically). Despite its mild resemblance to Napoleonic ideology, there is also a deep strain of conservatism in its behaviour, hearkening as far back as the Second Imperium in its policies and view of the universe. Honour is a powerful part of the societal framework, and is as influential as revolutionary zeal is.

The Honourbound – generally, ambitious families of the old older, whose betrayal of it permits their dominance of the new order – claims that they are honour-bound to protect the freedom of the people below them, against the demands of the interstellar state above them. Now that they are the masters of their own interstellar state, most have redirected their hostility to Imperial Cianji, demanding ever more authority (legal and extralegal), taxation, and military commitments To Defend the Freedom of All. The old heritage of Maoist gruella warfare has largely vanished: centralized control is the name of the game, when it comes to military organization. This shift in attitude has accelerated due to the failure of the Black War units during the recent Quajorai War (1493-95).

A notable minority, especially those on the trailing rim of the Reborn Imperium, have decided that the Reborn Imperium is not exempt to their hostility to any authority higher than themselves. As the Reborn government feels that it can't afford a two-front war, it has chosen to appease these noble's desire for independence, while claiming to retain official sovereignty. As the worlds themselves no longer recognise their subservience to the Wsi government, the starmaps of this issue of **Stellar Reaches** mark them as 'independent', ignoring the unenforced claims of the Reborn Imperium.

With the recent exile of the most radical and stringently honourable of the aristocrats to the distant Noble Federation, the ever-turbulent interstellar government has bought itself a measure of peace and stability. Political violence among the Honourbound aristocracy has vanished, again permitting hostility to focus on Imperial Cianji.

Covenantal Structure

Transcendence

All authority and power is invested in an Honour Code. The Reborn Code of Revolutionary Honour greatly values the keeping of promises & oaths; valiant and brave behaviour after earlier consideration and thought; standing with your family, military unit, and the Honourbound as a whole thru thick and thin; the necessity of telling the truth (except to external enemies, i.e. Imperial Cianji); and the protection of the weak and those subjects who are unable to defend themselves (this includes the biospheres of the terraformed worlds.) The great example of the spirit of the Renewed Imperium is illustrated by the lives and defined by the various writings of the great Reborn Fighting-Philosophers.

Hierarchy

The ruling class throughout the Reborn Imperium are members of Honourbound families & clans. This oligarchy is descended from the nobles, intellectuals, and military officers who led the rebellion against Cianji a century ago. (A few of the original founding Honourbound revolutionaries still live. While they no longer hold positions of authority, they are still highly revered and respected.)

The first Emperor was selected by acclimation of the Honourbound houses. All other Emperors are elected by the Reborn Archonate, and rules for life. No ruling house is permitted to mount the Imperial Throne twice in succession. Unlike the original Imperial Moot of the Third Imperium, the Reborn Archonate can do more than 1) select the next Emperor and 2) dissolve the Imperium. While actually running a war is the purview of the Emperor, it is the Archonate that authorises military action, a privilege it guards far more jealousy than the U.S. Congress does in the post World War II era. Most other matters of state are handled by selected clusters of Honourbound houses, but it is the Archonate that grants or takes away noble titles and fiefs, not the Emperor, and it is the Archonate that decides on family responsibilities within the Imperial government.

The Emperor acts as Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Arm (the local term for the Reborn military.) The Praetor acts as Master of the Reborn Archonate - the body composed of all the heads of the Honourbound families (known as Archons) - and as Head of Government. Worlds per se are not directly represented in the Senate, but the families Bound to a particular world are expected to place great weight on the desires of the planetary population where they reside. Every member system has at least one Honourbound family that resides there permanently.

The imperial Family is supported by their Counsellors and their Knights. The Praetor is supported in his duties by Aides and Centurions. Honourbound families are led by their Archon: terms for their hirelings and servants differ between families.

As the majority of cultures within the Reborn Imperium are as sexually conservative – men rule, women serve – as they are politically revolutionary, Reborn women generally serve in domestic matters. About a quarter of all women are veiled: about 2/3rds of all women wear baggy, loose clothing that obscures their curves and hides their skin, as well as a head covering. Those women who live in more liberal societies are permitted to work outside the home - usually in business, medicine, teaching young children, or agriculture/ terraforming. Liberal Reborn women dress daringly for their culture, but still don't flash much skin in public, to avoid running afoul of various local decency laws.

The Reborn who accept the teachings (or influence) of the Holy Imperium enjoy being as sexually liberated as any early 21st century Western European, while being (on average) more religious, more old-school socialist, more interested in honourable behaviour, and more respectful of the distant past than said modern.

Law

The laws of the Reborn Imperium do not govern either the worlds or the general population directly: instead, their focus is on the Honourbound families. Each family is expected to live up to a demanding Code of Honour, with various punishments for transgressions of the Honour Code and rewards for exceptional acts of bravery, self-sacrifice and extreme success in carrying out their duties. The senior Honourbound families can hardly be said to have independent lives: their world is completely shaped, from birth to death, by the needs of family honour and the sociopolitical demands of their followers.

The current Code of Honour is heavily based on the writings and philosophies of ancient philosophers concerned with honour - as defined by Greek, Roman, Chinese Confucian, Arab Muslim, Medieval Christian, Techno-feudal, and Old Imperial sages - with a strong gloss provided by the recent Reborn Fighting-Philosophers. As the nature of honour hasn't changed much since early Old Imperial times, there isn't a felt need to revise or alter the Codes.

There are a specialized set of laws regarding Honourbound military services within the Reborn Imperium, and another, looser set of customary laws which govern trade and interstellar commerce.

Most Reborn law actually originates from the Honourbound families, and can vary considerably in scope and punishments. In all cases, the scope and detail of the law is delimited by the Reborn Code of Revolutionary Honour: said Honourbound family may have additional, in-house codes, laws, and regulations as well.

Note that generally, these in-house rules and codes are not codified bodies of law, but are instead customary laws, traditions, and customs. Violating these customs can and usually do have a given set of possible penalties.

Planetary governments, and even the Reborn interstellar government, only exists as interlocking networks of Honourbound families, and do not have a separate organizational existence per se.

Sanctions

Any Honourbound violation of the Code of Honour is sharply punished, usually by the peers of the violator. Honour Aspirant families and Honour Judges are also held responsible to the Code. Interestingly, commoners cannot be punished for Code violations, not even for such fundamental crimes as treason against the Reborn government: after all, they have sworn neither a military nor an Honourbound oath to uphold the rule of the Reborn Imperium. Even the Honourbound can be punished for it only so far as they violated their sacred word. Note that oath-breaking and violating covenants is a serious transgression within the Reborn Imperium, and can be worthy of the death, maiming, and/or impoverishment of the oath-breaking individual.

Fortunately, both torture and collective punishment is seen as dishonourable acts within the Reborn Imperium. Even though families of oath-breakers don't suffer direct loss of their lives and property, the prices in social esteem & prestige, economic losses and forfeited opportunities are still pretty steep.

The Honourbound enforce sanctions against their rule as they desire, as limited by the Reborn Code of Revolutionary Honour.

Destiny

In the eyes of the Honourbound, their destiny is to have their Code of Honour become the code of behaviour for all men, first within Starbreak Sector, and later, if possible, back in the original home regions of the Old Imperium. Women are not expected to hew closely to the honour code, as such things are by their nature, masculine. (A few women, the Honoured Matres, have explicitly placed themselves under the Code, and are pointedly held to their oaths. Disputes among them are resolved by the violence of the Code, and not egalitarian blather regarding ‘fairness’ or ‘oppression’.) Aliens have no honour, of course, and therefore have no worth.

Hierarchy Addendum: The Senior Honourbound

Instead of a Western-based bureaucratic organizational structure, the Reborn Imperium is based on the rule of families and clans, unified by the Emperor and the Archonate. The great clans and their traditional fortes are as follows:

Honourbound Zeng (Chinese), Fofana (African), Biswas (Indian), Garcia (Latin-American):
The Imperial Arm (the military forces of the Reborn Imperium)
Honourbound Durai (Indian), Taylor (Anglo-American), Jahjah (European Arab), Pasaribu (Batak Indonesian)
Sastrowardoyo (Javan Indonesian), Wang (Chinese):
The Imperial Core (maintaining and enforcing the Code of Honour)
Honourbound Sayeed (Arab), Mussa (European Arab), Gupta (Indian), Luo (Chinese):
The Imperial Eye (intelligence services)
Honourbound Sylla (African), Li (Chinese), Ba (African):
The Imperial Shield (health & terraforming services)
Honourbound Shang (Chinese), de Gotari (Latin-American), Sane (African), Jaiteley (Indian):
The Imperial Purse (finance and commerce)

There are hundreds of Honourbound families, tens of thousands of Honour Aspirant, and millions of Honour Respecting families (a.k.a. The Worthies, or the Decent People.) Most commoners are considered 'Honour Respecting' or 'Weakly Bound'. Truly Honourless people - generally major criminals, infamous personalities, or scoffers of honour - either live in no-go ghettoes or deep in the wilderness.

Honourless men are outlaws - that is, they are outside of the protection of customary, local, clan, corporate, and Imperial laws. As such, they can be robbed, abused, and/or killed without any legal consequence.

Religion

Political Religion

In this sector, three of the four major empires (and one of the two Protectorates) are grounded in a supernatural religion: Zandism in Imperial Cianji, Vilani Ritualism & Ancestor Worship in Ziru Sirkaa, Rohisa in the Holy Imperium, and assorted flavours of Conservative Christianity in the Diltov Republic.

The Reborn Imperium is grounded on two pillars: 1) the demands of honour and family loyalty, 2) a deep faith in revolutionary change, emotional fervour, and the action of the masses. Usually, revolutionary states of angry young men naturally become bureaucratic states, full of angry old men with tenure/job security, good salaries, and light workloads. The several attempts of the older revolutionaries to secure public (as opposed to household) wealth and power have been violently overthrown in the name of Honour, Family, and Liberty.

Only the Emperor and his family remain above the fray – a position he has maintained by sticking with attacks on Cianji, closely hewing to the Honour Code, and generally siding with the revolutionary youth over the aged. The Reborn military, closely affiliated with the Emperor, is extremely honour-bound. This death-grip on Honourable Conduct has allowed the Imperial military to escape the political feuding, ideological clashes, convulsive revolts, and organizational disintegration that faces most of (urban) Wsi society.

[**Referee:** the example of China's Cultural Revolution is useful here, including the shuttering of the universities. However, the revolution isn't directed against the bourgeois per se, but against 'dishonourable authority', especially those who are visibly above 'the oppressed masses of men', and within easy access to their fists, vehicles, Molotov cocktails, and mobs.

Also, note that the year A.D. 6020 is far different than A.D. 1965. Portable fusion generators, the information revolution, robotics, and biotech permits decentralized Reborn society to muddle through far better than any 20th century culture could, with its reliance on strict top-down hierarchies in the

- economy (central banks -> hyperinflation and the collapse of the division of labour);
- distribution (expensive, scheduled trains and planes -> disruption of supplies and vulnerability to delays);
- information (centralized publication and universities, radio and television -> end of education);
- production (organized & regulated labour -> strike action and increased costs & delays);
- and power (huge nuclear and coal plants and top-down power distribution -> vulnerability to network disruption.)

In contrast, Reborn culture is grounded in

- Independent, networked money, outside of government control. (Commodity money is also common) See http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2011/06/silkroad/ for an example how this would work;
- Distribution is by foot, cars, trucks, bikes, and occasionally ultra-lights. (Grav vehicles are far too expensive, but cheap grav belts have their place);
- Information networks are by wireless networks and cheap handsets, with no central control nodes;
- Production is by independent labour and cheap robots, usually in the countryside, far from the mobs;
- Power is provided by a large number of distributed, independent plants.]

Even the Reborn are incapable of sustaining the religion of 'revolution & rebirth' continuously. Violence comes in unpredictable waves, with the young men, the heart of revolutionary violence, dispersing for a time. Crime is unheard of between the waves of revolutionary violence, as every man strives to be the very epitome of the Honourable Gentlemen.

But during the chaotic periods, it is the numerous criminal syndicates and aggressive, fast-moving entrepreneurs who keep the economy moving: they have grown adept at riding whatever revolutionary Wave of the Future appears. What economic growth exists during the revolutionary times is handled by these numerous, scattered, loosely interlocked groups and their teams of innovative engineers and patched-up robots.

Finally, the endless destruction-rebuild-destruction cycle runs more slowly the farther you get from Wsi, and the lower the population density. The countryside of Wsi and the Imperial-owned orbital facilities are the most important economic centres of the Reborn Imperium, as are the mid-pop Reborn worlds farthest from Wsi (which are able to enjoy longer stretches of peace, and shorter periods of violent anarchy/tyranny.) And yes, it is these distant worlds that are most likely to secede, unless they are facing Imperial Cianji directly.

Supernatural Religon

Most of the Reborn follow interstellar polytheistic religions, including the old Third Imperial religion of Stellar Divinity. Among the old Terran religions, Hinduism and Buddhism are the most followed, with 16% of the population being Hindus – complete with transplanted sacred cows wandering their streets. Among atheistic religions, the Terran Eastern religion of Buddhism is most common, and most prestigious, at 12% of the population. Standard atheistic materialism of the socialistic variety was influential among the elites during the Civil War era, but fell out of favour soon afterwards: by 1500, most of the true-blue believers have migrated to Daskomo. Atheistic right-wing Darwinism is vanishingly rare, as are the descendants of Confucianism.

Monotheism is a minority belief, with no more than 3% of the population, almost all of whom are Muslims. The Rohisa of Sylea are trying to change this, with little success so far.

It should be noted that, while the Honourbound are socialists, they are only mildly secularistic. There is no great hostility towards believers, and the general populace can express their faith in public, and let it govern their business and associations as they please. Religion isn't supposed to affect governmental decisions: but in reality, political power outweighs the secular ideal, if the pain of rejecting the believers is high enough.

Due to the unpredictably violent, short-sighted culture, it is difficult for religious organizations (or any organization, with the Emperor and his military being partial exceptions) to invest and build power on a long-term scale. However, due to the serial failure of the various revolutionary regimes over the last twenty-five years, the believers have grown more capable of inflicting political pain, leading to a more religious Reborn Imperium. This still has not provided political stability, but outside of the major cities and centres of power, some measure of normality is now possible on Wsi and those who share her culture.

Economics

There is a wide range of economic practice conducted within the Reborn Imperium, everything from completely unregulated free markets to Stalin-style totalitarianism. The interstellar government is officially funded by voluntary contributions from all the worlds, but the minor systems can easily avoid paying anything at all. In reality, the Imperial government is largely funded by the business and political interests of one world, Wsi, and largely reflects her interests and goals. "He who pays the piper chooses the tune." To a very real extent, the Reborn Imperium is a Wsi expense, to insure a territorial security zone vis-à-vis Imperial Cianji, and to gain some indirect leverage in shaping interstellar culture, trade, and military affairs in her near abroad. As the member worlds are fiercely independent in attitude and utterly sovereign in law, ensuring Wsi dominance is a thankless task. A hunger to Improve Others (a.k.a. 'World-Improvers' in the Woodrow Wilson style), dread of Imperial Cianji vengeance, and cloaked power-lust permits this serious drain on the Wsi treasury to continue.

Currency

Reborn currency is a fiat currency with a value set similar to that of a stock, worth whatever the market says it is. There are no legal tender laws, and the individual worlds and sovereign governments are able to produce their own currency at will. There is some discussion of tying the value of a Reborn Credit to the worth of all the worlds within the Reborn Imperium, to be revalued once a decade: currency (generally electronic) would be created or destroyed according to the desires of the Emperor, the major worlds, and the large interstellar corporations.

Interstellar Trade

The Reborn Imperium is an officially socialistic government, under the wise and beneficent rule of the ~~Party~~ Honourbound. In reality, there are regular attempts to take money from wealthy Wsi and redistribute it to the less successful worlds, with varying success. All interstellar businesses must be registered, and are heavily taxed. Small free traders can escape most of the regulations, but still need to work the angles and arrange bribes if they wish to

turn a profit. The larger businesses are stagnant and slow: but their CEOs are satisfied with this state of affairs, as no new competition can get past the maze of obscure rules and costly licenses 'for the safety of the public'. Interstellar monopolies are common, and rigorously enforced; State enterprises are common as well, both planetary and Imperial. It is almost impossible for an interstellar business to fire anyone, including the incompetent.

Young and hungry entrepreneurs are kept hungry until they starve, or join one of the Big Boys.

Race

Racially, almost the entire population are descendants of Cianji's. An eclectic mix of majority-Solomani bloodlines dominates the Reborn, culturally and politically. Strong traits of East Indian, European Arab, Chinese, and Hispanic bloodlines are interwoven among the major houses. They are roughly 25% Vilani on average: this varies somewhat. Small amounts of Sylean and Answerin heritages can also be detected as well.

Note that the Reborn Imperium has no officially favoured culture or race, besides humaniti itself. It is by far the most culturally and racially diverse interstellar state in Starbreak. Regarding the minor races, there are small Vilani and Sylean communities, and smaller Answerin, Geoneese, Irhadre, and Luriani. (**Referee**: note that this affiliation is far more cultural than genetic, excluding the Vilani, Syleans, and Luriani.) There are persistent rumours of a hidden blue-skinned Yilean settlement, as well – but this has been discounted by scholars. "Everyone here was originally from Cianji, Enlugal, or Sylea, and none of these worlds had a Yilean community. If they existed, we would have seen them before!"

Hostility to non-human sophonts varies quite greatly, for a population that doesn't exist. (Consider the amazing hostility to Jews in Eastern Europe today, long after most were either killed or fled for their lives). While the interstellar state is as hostile as the rest of the sector governments, the general population uses the idea of aliens more as a bogeyman than a real threat. The "evil alien" that ends up being a harmless Bwap is a common trope in local stories, stories that seem purpose-built to annoy the more hard-core humanists. Nationalistic hatred of Imperial Cianji is real, and not to be mocked, but the fear of aliens is ranked close to the dread of ghosts in popular opinion: widespread, but unnecessary.

Certain underground Hindu cults that focus on the worship of the alien do exist, and are subject of melodramatic visual novels and Tri-V tales, but are far less common than popular media claims. Travellers should remember that membership in these cults is strictly forbidden by the Imperial government. If caught, members are punished by long terms of imprisonment.

Ziru Sirkaa

Atmospheric music: Blade Runner Blues, by Vangelis
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vo0d4-Fs29U

Paradigm: A variation of one of the monoracial, monolingual, monocultural Hermit Kingdoms – Korea, Japan, or isolationist China – as they were in the past. Now with industrialization, massive industrial combines, unthinking media-backed conformity, starships, and 10,000 years of starfaring history. "This isn't America, you know. Productive industrial corporations own the government, not paper-shuffling financial institutions!"

The Ziru Sirkaa is a transplant of Vilani culture, as described in previous Traveller material – especially **MegaTraveller's** Vilani & Vargr (Digest Group Publications), and **GURPS Traveller's** Interstellar Wars. The short and simple summary: a hugely important branch of the human race, focused on "tradition, efficiency, and community prosperity," who built a simply massive interstellar empire – the Ziru Sirka – that lasted for ~1500 years. Before the empire, the Vilani built a Jump1 interstellar community grounded in large corporations/castes, of about 60 parsecs in radius around Vland. The earlier civilization stood for ~5000 years. The Vilani are rather long-lived compared to the Solomani – that's you and me, 3000 years into the future, with a racial chip on our shoulders – averaging 130 years for purebred Vilani (verses 70 years for the Solomani of the Third Imperial era): and 150 years "is not uncommon".

The Vilani were really, really good at making lesser cultures – human or not – conform to Vilani norms, until the Solomani showed up. Universal Vilani cultural supremacy has not done very well since then, but there are various local exceptions. The original Vilani settlers come from minor Dagudashaag cultures with a long and ferocious tradition of hostility to the Solomani, even as most of their brothers adapted to the Solomani to a greater or lesser degree.

The Enlugal settlement was led by Vilani who saw the Mixed Vilani as the bastard children of Vilani failure, and the Solomani as mere squatters on the Vilani worlds of the First Imperium. (The fact that the Solomani have been kicking around now in Imperial Space for millennia, and have dominated the post-Ziru Sirka Second and Third Imperial aristocracy until the 600s Imperial, cuts no ice.) Their desire for a pure and precise recreation of pre-Conquest Vilani society has floundered on the rocks of reality. But while the practical means of gaining their goals have had to be revised with great regret, the essential dream of a changeless future mirroring a changeless past remains.

Covenantal Structure

Transcendence

Transcendent authority is not invested in the person of the Emperor, as it is in the Holy Imperium; nor are all things dedicated to the supremacy of a religion, as it is for the Imperial Cianji; nor is the Ziru Sirkaa grounded in the spread and dominance of Humaniti Over All (although they support this goal.) The Vilani are similar to the Reborn Imperium, as they hold a set of ideas as supreme over everything, even their lives. But instead of a Code of Revolutionary Honour taking the throne, it is Vilani conceptions of Tradition, Prosperity, and Unity/Conformity that stands over all that they do. In addition, the Vilani of Starbreak Sector has taken upon themselves the duty of Remembrance: to insure that the greatness of Vland - and, secondarily, the might and glory of the First and Third Imperia - is not forgotten, but passed down from generation to generation, scholar to scholar, father to son.

Hierarchy

The Ishimkarum – a.k.a. the Shadow Emperor – is guided in his rule by the Igsiirdi, the senior ruling council whose members are selected from the eight (soon to be ten) bureaux that make up the government of the Ziru Sirkaa.

(It should be noted that the entire Vilani government in Starbreak is actually a branch of the ancient Makhidkarun Vilani megacorporation. Trace the lines of decent far back enough, and you will find the links to the ruling Makhidkarun bureau of the First Imperium, which originated in the ancient military and noble caste of Vland.)

The heavily populated throneworld of Enlugal is divided into twenty provinces, each ruled by a Karunii ('petty emperor'.) Each of these provinces are divided into between two and ten counties, each ruled by a Saarpuhii ('underking'.) The Sarriu (traditionally translated as 'Counts' in the old Third Imperial hierarchy, but functionally closer to 'Barons' in the Ziru Sirkaa) rules the worlds and systems outside of Enlugal, including the lesser worlds and regions of Enlugal System. The Iishakku rules over large cities and important Imperial installations, and the Kiduunuuzii function much as the Knights of the Third Imperium did.

The Noble, merchant, and priestly (Shugilii) castes are of equal importance, although the Noble caste is 'first among equals'. Attached to each caste are numerous clans, which differ in prestige, wealth, numbers, and traditional duties. Membership of a clan (and said clan's caste) is determined initially by birth. However, upon a child's 14th birthday (in Vilani years: 18th birthday according to the Imperial/Terran calendar), the family consensus determines the child's adult caste, which he will stay for life.

Within each clan, members also differ in position: a wealthy member of a legendary merchant clan is far more powerful and respected than a poor and unimportant member of a weak and despised Noble clan.

Due to Vilani sumptuary laws, position and due respect is represented by clothing: the more clothing (and the more asymmetrical, ornate & colourful it is) the greater the status. The converse is true, the lower the social position. Convicted criminals were little or no clothing: if serving a term of punishment, they are not permitted to hide themselves, but are kept in the public eye - preferably in chilled or freezing conditions (depending on the severity of the crime.)

Vilani culture, while very traditional, is also quite egalitarian on the subject of women's roles in society. Women make inefficient soldiers, and are therefore forbidden from entering the army (excluding a few specialist teams of remarkably proficient female fighters.) Women also have poor spatial senses and reaction times, and so are barred outright from manning fighting aircraft. On the other hand, they are reasonably proficient in naval matters: it helps that Vilani culture emphasizes obedience to prior orders, not aggression or innovation in the field. As such, the Navy is quite open to women, and there are several woman Admirals currently serving with the Aasha Ziru Sirkaa, 'the Fleet of the Restored Grand Empire of the Stars'.

Hierarchy Addendum: The Imperial Bureaux

There are currently eight bureaux that run the Ziru Sirkaa, with a further two planned to go in operation in the 1500 - 1525 period. Each bureau is self-funding and self-managing, with resources provided by various committees.

Mugurnuuunpia: provides governance and Imperial-wide planning. This is the Noble bureau - non-Noblemen are specifically forbidden from entering Mugurnuunpia facilities without a formal invitation.

Iisuukhemlaar: provides military resources and training for the Ziru Sirkaa. This bureau is closely linked with Mugurnuuunpia: most senior personnel within Iisuukhemlaar (i.e. the brass) are also ruling nobles in Mugurnuuunpia. The Noble castes direct both the low-level and high-level operations of this bureau. The Navy, Marines, and Special Forces are manned by low-level members of the Noble clans. Most of the Army are reserve units, which are led by low-level Noble clans, but with the ranks filled with conscripts from all the Vilani castes.

Uusnusheg: handles food & water supply; air supply (if applicable), gravity supply (if applicable), the radiation shielding and structural maintenance of all civilian buildings and settlements; electrical supply, pest control, disease control, and general health services; kitchens, eateries, cafeterias and restaurants within the Ziru Sirkaa. All agriculture - be it garden plots, continent-wide rice patties and grain fields, or orbital algae plants - operate under the Uusnusheg aegis. This bureau is owned and operated by the Shugilii religious caste.

Unushagarar: this bureau provides & manages the media and information networks within the Ziru Sirkaa. Day to day operations are handled by lower- and middle-ranked members of the merchant caste, but overall direction, major media debates, and censorship (formal and informal) is drawn up, scripted, and overseen by high-ranking members of the Noble caste.

Siianmeshalu: Siianmeshalu is the copyright and trademark bureau. As such, it encourages the spread of useful technology and scientific information, while suppressing unnecessary research and violations of the extensive and complex provisions of Vilani copyright law. A sub-bureau also controls the development of the local form of the Vilani language, while discouraging improper or unwanted innovations of the language. Naturally, Siianmeshalu is run by the merchant clans who specialize in technological development & information trading.

Kuiigshiirgaag: this bureau handles internal production of goods and services for the dominant civilian sector of the economy. All merchant-caste clans have leading representatives in this bureau. Internally, the Vilani use a ration system for distributing resources, with a man's resource share based on his duties, family needs, and social standing. External trade based on various forms of commodity money: usually lanthanum (used for making starship jump grids) gold and silver. Iridium, platinum, palladium, certain isotopes and rare earths are also acceptable. Barter is discouraged, but is possible with special Noble authorization. All trade within the Ziru Sirkaa comes under the purview of Kuiigshiigaag. The Kuiigshiigaag bureau is under the complete control of the merchant caste.

Imlapgugier: Imlapgugier is dedicated to a single purpose: the continued terraforming and shaping of Enlugal into a world evermore fit for Vilani habitation. The world is certainly a comfortable place after almost 800 years of settlement, but there are always another mountain that needs shifting, a weather pattern that needs shaping, an ecological niche that needs filling, or a lifeform whose genes can be tweaked just a bit more, using the best of known Old Solomani techniques. (Despite valiant efforts, Vilani medicine and geneering still lag behind the Solomani, but only by lengths now, rather than miles.) This bureau is dominated by clans of the Shugilii caste.

Ziukipgam: handles off-world civilian trade and transport. Most civilian starships, space stations, and starports within Vilani space are owned by Ziukipgam. Although her members are respected in Vilani society, the low levels of interstellar (or even interplanetary) trade means that Ziukipgam is by far the weakest of the bureaux, ranking below even the two new planed bureaux in every significant metric. Traditionally dominated by merchant clans, the directors of the bureau are attempting to expand membership to include some of the smaller Noble clans. Using their military proficiency as a base, Ziukipgam is expanding into pinpoint, highly deniable military action beyond the borders of the Ziru Sirkaa, to compliment the corporate covert interstellar intelligence service that has already been built up over the centuries.

And the two new planned Bureaux:
Shembi Madimenazar: this bureau is expected to generate a substantial consensus among the Shugilii clans, regarding the best Vilani traditions, the most accurate understanding of history, and promoting the Vilani culture and people within and beyond the limits of the writ of the Shadow Emperor. The stability, growth, and expansion of the Vilani Way is what this bureau is all about, using every means that will be placed at her disposal. Initially designed to be a Shugilii bureau, it is now structured to be a self-consciously pan-caste Vilani organization: the senior positions will be cycled between the Noble, merchant, and priesthood castes.

Ursaaigaargaa: this bureau will work closely with the Human Council to insure the vitality and viability of humaniti within Ziru Sirkaa space. Insuring harmony with the Ziru Sirkaa, nurturing cordial relations between the Four Emperors, and promoting the growth of mankind in numbers, intelligence, ability, and wisdom is the paramount goal set for this bureau. With a few exceptions, the Shugilii will be calling the shots in Ursaaigaargaa.

An important note: all legal disputes within the Ziru Sirkaa are handled first at the clan level, then at the bureau level. Certain inter-bureau issues and problems involving non-Vilani nationals use specialized adjudicators and negotiators from the Mugurnuuunpia bureau to promote a consensus-based resolution. A very small number of urgent **and** important disputes come before the Igsiirdi for resolution, usually two or three cases a decade.

Law

The laws of the Ziru Sirkaa are directly derived from the traditions and customs of the three recognized Imperia (First, Second, and Third.) As of 1500, a few of these traditions still have some flexibility, due to the youthful nature of the Vilani settlement (only about 800 years old). Most policies and procedures are officially set in stone

within the Ziru Sirkaa. "As we have always done, so we shall always do." And with over 10,000 years of precedent, there just aren't that many situations that are not covered by the Ancient Traditions.

Despite this theoretical conservatism, the Law and the Traditions are not in reality nearly as stable as they are claimed. The common language itself has shifted significantly from the Old High Vilani tongue that remains the official tongue. Numerous innovations have been made in regard to the castes and the bureaux, including a significant expansion in the duties of the Shugilii caste. Medical and genetic manipulation has advanced significantly beyond the norms of the old Imperial Vilani culture. Still, cultural mores have remained fairly stable, but with the innovation of Solomani-style patriarchal authority (compared to the more egalitarian Vilani gender roles) mixed with traditional Vilani consensus rule. Finally, the local Vilani claim to be the lawful heirs of Vland, but make a sharp distinction between Old Imperial Vilani and themselves, Starbreak Vilani.

Sanctions

Vilani laws stress punishment for non-conformity, and leniency for genuine repentance and regret. All sanctions and punishments are geared with the goal of reintegrating wayward subjects into the fold. Vilani rarely if ever violate any of the traditions and laws: the inner guilt and public shame (for self, family, and work unit) of the offender is often more bitter than the usually token punishments handed out for first-time Vilani offenders, usually a reduction of their permitted clothing ration.

Men who commit two criminal acts of any kind are punished are a good deal more harshly, with prison terms, light terms of servitude, and/or family demerits: this can affect everything from clothing (or, more properly, the denial thereof) to possible marriage partners to pensions. In addition to the criminal himself, his immediate (and some-times the extended) family is also punished in some lesser manner as well. Unlike the Old Imperial Vilani, the Vilani of Starbreak Sector are big on collective punishment.

Third-time offenders are subject to penal slavery, highly aggressive and sustained re-education, personality reconstruction, mind wiping (selective or complete), or execution in the traditional manner. Moreover, the criminal's immediate (and some-times, extended) family will be made to suffer to a significant extent for the actions of their foolish sons.

Note that foreigners are not given the token punishments that first-time Vilani offenders are given. Serious crimes such as murder, kidnapping, treason, and sacrilege (for example, attacking your parents, a noble, a Shugilii [Ceremonial Priest/Sacred Chef/Master of the Traditions/Family Historian], or mocking or demeaning the Traditions in any way whatsoever, in public or in private) is punished with great severity, even at the very first instance, even if said criminal is a child, mentally handicapped, or an ignorant foreigner.

Destiny

The Vilani expect that, eventually, all men across the Oikouménē will live the Vilani Way. While all Traditions have some merit for some people, the Vilani Traditions are seen as the true Golden Mean for all men, at all times, everywhere. The Vilani of the Ziru Sirkaa teach – and believes – that obedience to the Vilani Traditions brings power, prosperity and peace to all who follow them. Disobedience, especially wilful disobedience from those who knows better, is seen as the harbinger of pain, suffering, shame, and death.

The Ziru Sirkaa isn't keen on enforcing obedience outside of her borders. Instead, she is focused on internal development and building a prosperous future via interstellar trade (*very* slow going, so far, due to her isolated astrographic position). Mainly, they hope to set an example that shines light to all men in Starbreak Sector, a guide to Right Living. And if, one day, the Vilani gain the power to efficiently enforce obedience to the Traditions - at a reasonable cost, of course - she will surely do so, just as her great forebear the First Imperium did, thus bringing Enlightenment to all the worlds of men.

Just as some French Revolutionary philosophers taught that some men must be Forced to be Free, so the Vilani believe that some men must be Forced to Conform. (Strictly for their own good, naturally.) But unlike the visionary French philosophers, the far more conservative and careful Vilani would make such a choice only in due

time, only after suitable reflection, and all in strict accordance to the Traditions, thus guaranteeing objective justice via the only measure that counts.

Religion

The classical Ziru Sirka religion has the Shadow-Emperor leading the unified Vilani community in certain traditional ceremonies intended to endure stability. The State Cult is very formal, very ritualized, and quite austere and clean-cut in appearance, far more Confucian in feel than Roman Catholic.

To the ever-practical, rather rationalistic & efficient Vilani, the souls of the dead Vilani would have the best contact with powerful spiritual forces, so naturally they deserve worship for their assistance. Practically every Vilani household in the Ziru Sirkaa has an ancestral shrine, with photographs (two-dimensional black and white – Or Else) and relics. Many Vilani homes, especially among the lower classes, drift into practices that can only be considered occultic and frankly demonic – various forms of necromancy/attempting to contact the dead/blatant witchcraft (Vilani style) are definitely included here. Upper-class homes lean more to spiritualizing their faith in the ancestors, often adoring the spirit of their family (comparable to the Roman-style Family Genius). The revered dead become minor gods in their families: respected Emperors are also worshiped, but only as a cult among the Imperial House and their closest servants.

All Vilani are expected to follow traditional religions. Before contact with the Catholic Var Kirat, abandoning the ancient religions was punishable with death. Good relations with the Solomani Catholics required a special accommodation for the very few Vilani drawn to worship a Solomani man. In the end, they were ostracized from the general Vilani public, and isolated in a startown ghetto – but still permitted to earn a living, doing low-caste work.

(The Solomani haven't clearly sorted out what to do with non-Solomani converts to their faith: their racial & political preference for simple and total rejection of the aberrant Vilani was short-circuited by Magisterium rulings insisting of a 'lesser heaven' being open to Christ-following para-humans. "After all, isn't it right and proper that the salvation of the entire universe should come from the blood of a 100% pure Solomani man, at once fully human and fully divine?" After 3000 years of contact with the Vilani, certain elementary issues regarding non-Solomani human converts *still* have not been universally resolved across the interstellar Christian church, but developing initiatives suggest that the issue will be broadly resolved over the next 8,000 years or so.)

[**Referee:** calling a Vilani a 'para-human' is grounds for justifiable homicide on 15% of the worlds of the Third Imperium, including most of the worlds of Vland Sector. Just so you know.]

Economics

The Ziru Sirkaa is dominated by eight major corporations/castes, which make up the bureaux that rule the interstellar polity. Smaller businesses are permitted, but they must be tied to one of the eight castes, depending on their industry. Despite an aristocratic veneer, actual business operations are very consensus-driven, and – in a culture where firing someone is a serious felony – personnel management is as crucial as uncovering profitable opportunities. Corporate-grounded socialism is the norm, where the business houses, teaches, employs, cares for, and buries their employees and executives, from cradle to grave. It is perfectly possible for a local Vilani to never see an authority figure – police, priest, professor, or manager – who isn't an employee of his corporation.

Currency

Following the practice of the original Ziru Sirka, there is no currency in use, only an allotment of goods and material as determined by the senior members of a given corporation. A form of valuation is in use to compare the worth of different items, but this is an accounting tool, not a tradable medium. External trade uses hard currency: fiat currencies are simply unacceptable. Barter is possible, but frowned upon.

Caste Determination

The Vilani do not permanently inherit their caste: often, they are taken from their parent's caste/employer to one deemed more suitable for their personality. This happens once in a lifetime, and, should a change be mandated, it is almost always the most crucial and traumatic event in a Vilani's life.

Due of their profound hatred of change and uncertainty, the Vilani children who discover the carefully-hidden, universally unspoken trauma are driven to cheat on their tests, and remain with the family and caste that they know and love. The most cunning, intelligent, and daring Vilani children generally succeed, but the majority are caught, severely punished, and then taken from their families forever. Ancient and effective treatments are available for those Vilani children driven insane by the change.

Innovation

The Vilani loathe innovation, seeing it much as the modern Solomani see deviation from sexual norms. It still occurs, but it is suppressed as vigorously as possible. Punishment for innovators, inventors, anti-establishment researchers, revisionists of all stripes, and other challengers to authority varies from familial contempt to social shunning to imprisonment to personality replacement. (Execution remains on the books, but is seen as wasteful and unnecessary by the noble judiciary – except when it comes to foreigners.)

The copyright system is heavily geared to restricting innovation and unregulated change. All curiosity regarding the origins, the meaning, and the reasons behind reality is discouraged in innumerable ways, including the very structure of the Vilani language itself. Engineers and other specialists depend on a very extensive record of proper procedure, precedent, and exception management to do their jobs: this includes expert systems and professional intranet databases.

> Have you ever actually tried to *read* a Vilani technical manual? It's a solid wall of text! No paragraphs, no diagrams, no quotes: just an unceasing, relentless torrent of words. And you know what they'll say in response: 'If you Solomani need the mental crutches of inefficient punctuation and wasted white space to support your attempts at retaining literacy, we won't interfere.' Complete with a condescending smile.
>
> Sometimes, I really, really want to *personally* restart the Nth Interstellar War. Again.
>
> Second Engineer Ivan Lamanov, Cianji Imperial Navy.

The original Ziru Sirka effectively banned planetary internets: the current Ziru Sirkaa heavily controls and limits internet use to Socially Productive Purposes. Whenever possible, the controls are built right into the nature of the information system, negating the possibility of Unconventional Thinking.

Race

The Enlugal Vilani are pure Vilani. The very few children of mixed parentage are killed, before or after birth. Non-Vilani may not reside within the Ziru Sirkaa for more than four years in their lifetime: the execution of violators does not require noble approval. A unique exception to the residence laws is provided for Human Council personnel, in the course of their duties for all of humaniti.

The known Var Kirat within Starbreak are sworn celibate men, and so far have restrained themselves from sexual adventurism in Ziru Sirkaa space; but eventually, someone will break his oath before God. What will happen afterwards is unknown, but a tragic outcome is likely. This will have detrimental effects for Ziru Sirkaa-Var Kirat relations: how severely and for how long is unknown at this point.

The Holy Imperium

Atmospheric music: Opus 4, by Art of Noise
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yT5CzKGYhQk

Paradigm: Chapter 17: The Shining Wire, from Richard Adam's Watership Down, mixed with Brave New World, 1984, the Culture of Iain M. Banks' Consider Phlebas (if the fleshbag pets weren't ageless, and the technology level were a good deal lower) or even a flavour of early 21st century Western Civilization, before the collapse of the aging welfare state and the dominance of decentralized everything.

"Oh, if only a Flawlessly Rational Mechanical Elite could run our lives – then we could all live on Big Rock Candy Mountain, responsibility-free, law-free and consequence-free forever!"

I will leave it to others to differentiate between our own infantile masses & manipulative masters, and those described in the Culture books.

The Holy Imperium (Sylean: 'Wooeresa Weas') is seen as the political manifestation of the love of the Prophet-Emperor (''Sinrendnoin') for the Creation of God. In the State theology of Rohisa, "The True Way", the Sylean Emperor is not God per se, but merely His Humble Servant. However, just as Mohammed – who was a mortal man – can supposedly be blasphemed (as if he was God) and must be veiled or hidden in all public depictions (again, as if he was sacred) and may never be insulted, condemned, or criticized (as if he was sinless), so it is with the Emperor. What the Emperor says is what God says, in the eyes of the Syleans, and – after proper interpretation by his chosen priests-bureaucrats – must be obeyed to the letter of the law.

The Holy Imperium's stated goal is to bring all men to a state of happiness and peace, under the loving guidance of the Prophet-Emperor. Since the successful destruction of the Athenian Republic 80 years ago, the Holy Imperium's expansionism has shifted away from military action to cultural persuasion. Although these propaganda offensives have had limited success, it is seen as a more reliable (and far more affordable) route to victory over competing interstellar cultures than military action. Most Starbreak worlds of more than 100,000 people have a Holy Embassy or Consulate, with numerous cultural events, seminars, and events.

The government of the Holy Imperium and the government of the world of Sylea are one and the same. However, due to time lags and resource issues, Provincial Governors beyond the atmosphere of Sylea are given more autonomy than planetary Governors: extra-terrestrial Governors also have an expanded zone of authority, including the entire starsystem instead of a geographical region on Sylea. The extra-terrestrial provinces carry far less economic and political weight than those located on Sylea, but one of these provinces – Dikaai province – has great religious weight and prestige, being the first human system in the sector. In contrast, the Tri-worlds are seen as cursed, and are given to priest-bureaucrats likely to be executed in the next five years or so.

Within the borders of the Holy Imperium, a peaceful, comfortable, and sensual culture is promoted. The population is explicitly pushed into a low-consumption, low-energy, low-complexity, low-knowledge lifestyle, making it cheap and easy to satisfy their limited imaginations and restricted desires. Undisciplined, pleasure-seeing drones are easily led with cheap favours, don't disrupt the plans of their betters, and don't get out of their assigned place in life.

The Sylean government does not seriously expect to expand Imperial borders per se, at least not within the next century. What they are after is shaping interstellar opinion across the Oikouménē, teaching minds – both devotees and outsiders – to see the Prophet-Emperor in a favourable light. To the general masses, ease and comfort and pleasure is directly stressed. To the elites, the powers and pleasures of earning a high-ranking place in the priestly bureaucracies is respectfully murmured in academic centres and notable opinion forums. To the other Emperors, the position of being a fellow Prophet-Emperor is quietly planted and indirectly implied.

“Fair representation” of the Sylean race is vigorously pursued for the Human Council. This crypto-religious organization is an acquisition target for the current Prophetess-Empress, referred to as Empress Si outside of her borders, and Si-aka Sinrendnoin within them. As the most sacred world in the sector, Dikaii, is located within in her borders, she has certain advantages that she is learning to leverage successfully.

Covenantal Structure

Transcendence

Authority within the Holy Imperium (in Sylean: Wooeresa Weas) is derived from the person of the Prophet-Emperor (the Sinrendnoin). He maintains his hold on power by demonstrating that he has foreknowledge of the future needs of the Holy Imperium, militarily, economically and spiritually.

Foreknowledge can be by natural or supernatural means: so long as the Emperor's vision is accurate to a given (and mysteriously undefined) standard, his rule is secure. He is also proclaimed to have a special connection with the Sylean people, understanding what they need before they can understand it themselves.

The Emperor is considered to embody all things Sylean – people, culture, history, destiny – in his person. He is not seen as the Sylean State, but the very Will of God for Sylea, incarnate.

A male Sinrendnoi is expected to build up wealth for his society, while a female office-holder is expected to strengthen the mystical, familial and cultural nature of the Rohisa religion, similar to how they operated within the predecessor Ogaspisiti religion. Interestingly, both are expected to lead in military conflicts, if in a sexually-keyed manner. For example, a male Sinrendnoi is expected to physically lead his forces into combat, while a female Sinrendnoi is to inspire her generals and soldiers to greatness.

Hierarchy

Wooeresa Weas is officially an autocratic theocracy, and in truth, the autocratic mode of government is quite integral to the Holy Imperium. The current Prophetess-Empress, Si, has been raised from birth to be heavily (yet discreetly) cyberized, primarily in order to personally analyze, comprehend, and issue orders based on a continual flood of data. Her dreaming patterns and personal routines, casual contacts and formal meetings, are continually monitored by her priestly physicians as if they were the very acts of God, loaded with hidden meaning. The Sinrendnoi Si work time – currently set at nine hours – is rigorously structured and governed by her chamberlain. The Sinrendnoin's two husbands are also intimately involved in government: as foreseen, they have subsumed their mutual jealously into a competitive drive to out-do each other in service to the Sinrendnoin.

Even a true cyborg autocrat, who hungers for complete control and total knowledge, is forced by time constraints to delegate authority to a bureaucracy. The Sacred Officers of the Sinrendnoin have power and authority limited only by the commands of the Sinrendnoin. These priest-bureaucrats often organize themselves into local ruling councils and courts, and informally network amongst themselves to meet shared goals. A minority, chafing at the bonds and political scheming of the networks, prefer to isolate themselves and the people under their care, acknowledging only the Prophet-Emperor's authority.

Like the Prophet-Emperor, the duties of the priest-bureaucrats are tied to their sexual identity. The men are expected to lead in hard power: usually involving the tools of legal punishment, authorized violence, and bureaucratic regulations. The women priestess-bureaucrats control the populace using soft power: media control, rumour-mongering, sexual favours, etc. Whether the sword or the tongue is more destructive is left for the PCs to experience.

Many of these priest-bureaucrats are eunuchs, including some very senior officials. Eunuchs are felt to be more spiritual and broad-minded than other priest-bureaucrats, symbols of perfection that sometimes don’t fit in an imperfect world. In the end, though, they are the unspoken final destination of the Holy Imperium: freed of the unruliness and independence of actual men, stronger and better disciplined than actual women, more focused on the abstract desires of the Sinrendnoin than on the material world that surround them, yet sterile, and unable to have any destiny outside of whatever the Sinrendnoin sets for them. The perfect tool.

Hierarchy Addendum: The Sylean Conclave

The Emperor is assisted in his duties by a conclave of bureaucratic priestly orders. Unlike the other three Empires, they are not divided along the traditional Third Imperium Ministries. Instead, the Sylean Conclave is divided into:

* the War Office (senior members of the armed forces)
* the Thought Office (government mass psychology/manipulation corps;
  also in charge of education and media controls)
* the Financial Office (business, financial, and economic analysts)
* the Humaniti Office (legal human genetic engineering:
  works closely with the pan-stellar Human Council)
* the Lifebuilder Office (agricultural and biome engineers)
* the Water Office (responsible for the supply of water to this highly populated desert world)
* the Secret Office (intelligence affairs and spycraft, at home and abroad)
* the Ceremonial Office (religious ceremonies)
* the Purity Office (law, justice and official religious doctrine)
* the Taxation Office (taxes, but also currency, banking and day-to-day financial operations)
* the Outer Office (relations with other interstellar powers and independent worlds)
* the Outer Body (general home affairs)
* the Inner Body (the family and person of the Prophet-Emperor)

In addition, every member system of the Holy Imperium gets her own Office. Uninhabited worlds have less than a dozen priests, but the Sylea Office has over a million members, and is difficult to distinguish from the interstellar government.

There are also three secret offices: the Black Office, the Closed Office and the Golden Office. The Black Office is composed of scientists who are attempting to understand and utilize psionics, without the guidance of the old Psionic Institutes of ancient times. The Closed Office works to gather the information the Prophet-Emperor needs to rebuild a stargate back to Imperial Space, if he so chooses, and to hinder any other power from gaining a stargate. The Golden Office works to promote faith in the Emperor's divinity: first, among the cognitive, military, and financial elites of Sylean society; and secondly, among 'opinion-makers' outside of the borders of the Holy Imperium.

Even though the entirety of the government works to this same goal, the Golden Office is kept secret, to protect its mystique and allow it greater latitude for action. It is necessary for many priestly-bureaucrats to sincerely believe in the lies that they declare, and to truly believe that they are working for the good of all mankind in the service of the Truth. The Golden Office has no need to believe in their own propaganda, delighting in carefully executed lying for its own sake, and yet too craven to accept public responsibility for their actions. Despite their smug superiority, they are as managed and manipulated as the lowliest illiterate serf with his make-work assignments and time-wasting porn stash (or romance-novel fantasies, if said serf is a woman).

Law

The formal legal system of the Holy Imperium is quite sparse, and covers only a few areas of life - veneration of the Prophet-Emperor, obedience to the priest-bureaucrats, and faith in a set of moral precepts covering property, sexuality, family, and technology. However, the dense network of customs, media & data controls, and the vigorous use of shame/praise/gossip/groupthink leads the 'felt law level' to be actually C, not the 2 or 3 that a strict literal reading of the legal codes would imply.

Pervasive secrecy, which most certainly involved keeping targeted individuals ignorant of any and all investigation and possible charges, is a hallmark of the interstellar state. “Innocence” and “guilt” have no part in the legal system: usefulness to the government and ‘social stability’ are the factors of importance in any ruling. Openly challenging State authority is no different than challenging the will of God, with consequences as pitiless as they are sugar-coated. In liberal cultures, radical challenges to the establishment consensus are deemed a form of mental illness (to avoid open debates, and to insure that the other side gets no hearing): in the Holy Imperium, the concept of Necrosis is invoked in a similar manner.

Challenging the Blessed Consensus of the People is practically impossible, similar to using a sword and a shield to fight a limitless number of fluffy pillows, defy a massive haze of tiny mosquitoes (who are always careful to inject a narcotic before draining your blood), or wage war against an enveloping sea of cotton candy.

Sanctions

In addition to his prophetic powers – which can be lawfully augmented by Science, the Spirits, or (and this is left unmentioned, as a State Secret) Psionics, the Emperor is considered to be the Judge of Death and Life. Sylean society is seen as an organic whole, and her subjects as cells. Good cells, useful to society, are allowed to die the 'good cell death', Apoptosis cell death. Bad cells, which act against society, die the 'bad cell death', a.k.a. Autophagic cell death.

In Sylean Apoptosis, the subject who has passed the point of a cost-effective life is issued a death date, and encouraged to prepare for his death. After all the parties and gifts have been given, a Death Priest kills him with a painless, quick-acting poison of the subject's choice. A bad subject, which passes the point of societal usefulness (usually far earlier than good subjects do) are visited with an Autophagic death: that is, they are eaten alive by well-trained carnivorous animals. The actual animal depends on the judge's preference, the social standing of the criminal, and the nature of the crime.

In unique circumstances, a Wild Hunt may be authorized: few people know the details of what happens there; besides the fact the criminals released in the woods are never seen alive again while the grinning, blood-splattered hunters really do need a good bath. Shards of shattered bone may be found in the area years after the Hunt.

Destiny

Rohisa doctrine teaches that, when the Prophet-Emperor dies, he brings all the souls that were faithful with him to God. The flesh of pain is left behind forever, the spirit of pleasure dances forevermore. This doctrine is expanded for most priest-bureaucrats: after death faithful bureaucrat will be promoted to the Celestial Bureaucracy, where the real matters of life will be decided. Job safety, freedom from accountability, and the joy of enforcing every small detail of every petty rule on other people, forever, is now his.

The Sinrendnoin is seen as a very special cell, a cancerous cell that, carefully controlled, is the gateway to immortality. The entire interstellar government exists to protect, strengthen, and nurture this cell, as it is the key to everlasting life, to an eternity of rulers who will even now reaches back in time to strengthen us in our need.

Among the senior priest-bureaucrats and the Imperial family, there is no belief in a spiritual afterlife. They pursue a different destiny, best described by the first Prophet-Emperor, Thezera:

> Who remembers the millions, the billions, slain by their betters? No one. Their names are forgotten, their hopes dust and ashes. In contrast, the names of their murderers, the Caesars, the Emperors, the Stalins, the Hitlers, will be adored by an uncountable multitude forever – always led by the most empirically rational of intellectuals, who have no concern of malleable morality, and transcend the flimsy beliefs of any given society. Justice is the bleating of the weak, power is the strength of the strong, and the Prophet-Emperor, the servant of the One True God, The Power of Man, stands forever. In time, future Sinrendnoin will travel back in time, and gather his best servants, where we will rule by his side forever. This destiny is sure.

(I will leave it as an exercise for the Christian reader to uncover the flaws of such self-adoring delusions. The rest of you, believe as you wish – especially you pragmatic, sensible, realistic intellectual types.)

Religion

The State Religion of the Holy Imperium, Rohisa ("The True Way") is a direct descendant of the old Ogaspisiti ("Prophet's Return") religion of the original Sylean settlers of long ago. An emasculated version of Ogaspisti is permitted to continue, to insure that there is no revival of the old faith. "Keep the form, but violate the spirit", a tactic various mainline denominations have proven adept at executing in our own time, is the central motivation. Following other religions outside of Rohisa is seen as a form of treason, and their existence within the Holy

Imperium is not tolerated. This is explicitly true of Christianity, which preaches of a king and a law outside of and superior to that of the political authorities, whoever they may be at the time.

Rohisa is a recent religion, established in 1337 Imperial (163 years ago), and political concerns determine what the religion commands, far more than ceremonial regulations, ethical issues, or what any given sacred text actually says.

> The masses never revolt of their own accord, and they never revolt merely because they are oppressed. Indeed, so long as they are not permitted to have standards of comparison, they never even become aware that they are oppressed.
>
> George Orwell, 1984.

The Sacred Officers of the Sinrendnoin – the priest-bureaucrats of the government – lead worship services and handle the administrative affairs of the theocracy. Group hymns to the Prophet-Emperor and the propagation of his latest teachings are integral to the services: on the major holy days, officially approved orgies are planned out and executed. Temple prostitution is a commonly provided service, as well. Impromptu sporting contests, and collective drug use that eases anxiety is actively promoted, and major works of art dedicated to the Prophet-Emperor are part of various religious holidays, as well. Violence and theft during the various festivities is simply not tolerated.

Core Doctrines

From the article "Starbreak Sector: A History":

> The central concept of Rohisa revolves around the differences between Apoptosis (programmed cell death) and Autophagic (traumatic cell death). Dozens of billions of cells die every day in every human, but only some forms of death are healthy to the body. The beneficial form of cell death – Apoptosis – is use as an analogy for the proper life and death cycle for citizens of the Holy Imperium, with the Imperium itself seen as a single unitary being. Necrosis – the destructive and evil form of death – does include the murder of registered Imperial citizens, but the concept also includes a wasted life, or an attack on the authority of the Prophet-Emperor.

While this concept gave the desired *justification* for total control, actually *running* a truly comprehensive Total State proved just too expensive – like all tyrannical governments, the propaganda of comprehensive power does not match the reality. Instead, soft methods of control were made manifest, by encouraging the citizens to unify as one people, while each individual specialized in his greatest skill and contribution to the community as a whole. To the priest-bureaucrats was given the mandate and authority to organize the people into one body.

When the citizen is no longer able to contribute, he is peacefully euthanized: this is called an Apoptotic death. Such deaths are celebrated, and these dead men held in high esteem. Enemies of the Prophet-Emperor die violently at the hands of his agents: such a Necrotic death is greatly feared, and is felt to lead inevitably to hell, as an Apoptotic death leads inevitably to heaven. (Note that soldiers who die in the service of the Prophet-Emperor have their Necrotic end transferred to the Prophet-Emperor, who – by the power of his spirit – is able to turn spiritual death to spiritual life. This claim is acted out for public consumption by certain major, rare ceremonies.)

Family life

Exclusive male-female relationships are prohibited and punished, being 1) an implicit challenge to the Sinrendnoin claim to determine morality as he sees fit, 2) making a socially dangerous claim that there are things more important to the non-priestly citizen than fleeing pain and pursuing pleasure, 3) being an alternate point of deep loyalty, outside of the State and Prophet-Emperor.

To insure that these loci of non-state loyalty don't develop, all citizens are strongly encouraged to take a vast range of partners of whatever sex they desire. Marriage is permitted between any two or more sexual partners; it may be annulled at any time for any reason; it is prohibited from being a sexually exclusive relationship; and this particular religious ceremony bears no weight in any legal decision or consideration.

Thus, redefined to meaningless, any impact of marriage in society is effectively rendered null and void. This brings great joy of the political-religious establishment, as an entire spectrum of challengers to their power and control is cut off at the knees.

[Note that permitted sexuality explicitly includes cross-species relationships. The wrath of the Human Council is avoided by also declaring all nonhuman sophonts 'innately Necrotic', and subject to a violent death by virtue of existing. Human-machine 'marriages', being innately sterile and fruitless, are vigorously encouraged as 'deeply spiritual unions' by the Holy Imperium, 'escaping the filth of the flesh'. The hatred of the Human Council for such behaviour has been consistently bought off with sufficient amounts of money and favours, 'generous donations for the benefit of all humaniti.']

The most prestigious priesthoods handle reproduction via "Sacred and Safe" government-provided artificial wombs. A comprehensive roll-out of artificial wombs has proven prohibitively expensive. To the regret of the Sinrendnoin, this leaves the creation of new citizens outside of government control. Challenging the mores of the Rohisa religion, mass sterilization remains nonviable, keeping sexuality linked to reproduction, which means that family life – an alternative focus of allegiance to the Sinrendnoin – remains possible.

To hinder this, all women are tested for pregnancy; all pregnant women are housed in comfortable maternal centres; all women administered drugs that weaken any 'biochemical attachments' between mother and child; and all children taken away immediately after birth, permitting women to 'celebrate their renewed health, after an unfortunate illness.'

All children are naturally sorted into Divine crèches, run by the priest-bureaucrats. As they age, they are sorted into various groups, determined by their usefulness to the Prophet-Emperor. Sexual exploration is encouraged as young as possible, with as wide a variety of partners as possible; this helps to insure that no deep, exclusive attachments can develop that might challenge the authority of the Prophet-Emperor. Pleasure and ease is the focus of all education – actual reasoning is reserved for computers and the carefully-selected priest-bureaucrats.

Note that eunuchs have a special role within the government. Most eunuchs are products of surgery or genetic tweaking, and work within the household of the Prophet-Emperor. Natural eunuchs are very rare, and make up a specialized cadre of the Imperial government, generally as well-trained magicians or well-compensated mystical seers. Those eunuchs which can't fulfill their selected roles are given an Apoptotic death with full State honours.

Which brings us to virtue. The Neo-Confucian philosophers who shaped Edo-period Japan share with Aristotle a fundamental insight about virtue, which is that virtue is individually possessed but socially realized. If the structures that support virtue are sufficiently compromised, society can lose interest in real virtue, satisfying itself with cheap imitations. Strictly speaking, an individual is always free to practice true virtue, but the temptation to follow society's false ideals can be overwhelming.

Consider our society's dominant virtue: tolerance. Tolerance has supplanted the natural virtues of prudence and justice and their reasonable balance of liberty and restraint in favor of an open-ended permissiveness. Particularly in the realm of sexual ethics, tolerance defends a host of behaviors once considered degrading or inhuman, from open marriages to sex-change operations. We can respond to tricky moral dilemmas however we wish, but the well-trod path of tolerance is far easier than the uphill climb of prudence and justice.

Gabriel Torretta, "The Troubling Virtue of Ultra-Violence"
http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/2011/06/the-troubling-virtue-of-ultra-violence

External expansion

The stated, public, long-term goal of the Wooeresa Weas is to unite all humaniti in the worship of the Prophet-Emperor, ushering in a never-ending era of pleasure free of any and all restrictions. The Holy Imperium has pursued peaceful means to encourage the growth of their values and beliefs across Starbreak Sector.

As of 1500, there are no known local believers within the territory of Imperial Cianji or the Diltov Republic. Not coincidentally, both interstellar governments ban Rohisa missionaries from their worlds, and both governments have official, morally restrictive religions of their own (Zandism and Christianity, respectively). The distant Noble Federation has no official position for or against the Sylean religion, but no dedicated missionary priesthood has been sent to those distant worlds as of 1500 Imperial.

Of the approximately 52 million people that make up the Reborn Imperium, about 250,000 are members follow Rohisa. Most of them live on Wsi and Yelloworld. About a quarter of these numbers are members of the Sylean race: the rest are converts.

The worlds of Engima and Logan's World are dominated by adherents to Rohisai: Reborn loyalists have carefully watched these worlds, but there has been no sign of disloyalty to the True Emperor on Wsi. About 4% of the population of Justince are Rohisai converts: they are considered a security risk by the Justinci government, and are banned from government or military service.

There was also a large settlement of believers on Dune, but around 1450 the population was forced to abandon the religion on pain of death. Few were able to escape into exile, usually fleeing to the Holy Imperium herself. Nearby worlds dominated by the Var Kirat have largely turned down the missionaries, preferring Solomani Catholicism/Racial Destiny doctrine. Finally. the long animosity between Athens and Sylea led to Rohisai missionaries being killed by mobs on that world, even before they were banned from the system by the Athenian government.

Economics

From the article "Starbreak Sector: A History":

> "This basic intellectual framework of Rohisa extends to censorship, law, and public works within the Holy Imperium: many citizens even work to extend it to mowing the lawn, work habits, and sports. The economic system is based on small freeholders/small businesses, corporatist/fascist ('state-business partnership') organizations, and the Divine (read: 'State-owned') Monopolies that completely control interstellar trade within the Holy Imperium."

The common people are encouraged to pursue time-wasting work and diversions. All serious work is the preserve of the priest-bureaucrats, including the management of absolute legions of robots and automated factories, keeping the infrastructure and utilities up and running, military, police, and information control duties, and running the computer programs that run the economy.

There is a particular form of work that the average citizen is useful at. Many choose to serve by having their brains networked into mass computing networks, a cheap and low-cost way to supplement the massive processing needs needed to run the society 'in an efficient and centralized manner, for the good of all under Divine rule.' This can't be done continuously, as it tires the citizen, but it is pleasurable in ways reality can't compete, thanks to direct simulation of the pleasure centres of the brain as it is being used. The priest-bureaucrats discourage addiction, both to preserve the ~~livestock~~ citizens, and to set up 'forbidden fruit' for rebellious enemies of the Prophet-Emperor to gorge and kill themselves with.

> The Blessed One enjoys problems that solve themselves.
> Holy Imperium proverb, 1500 Imperial.

All external trade is handled by starships and traders who exclusively work for the Sylean Emperor. All monies earned become property of the Emperor and his representatives. Good traders who deliver solid profits to the

Emperor are given large allotments of both basic supplies and some luxuries: very useful favours and contacts, which are difficult to value until called upon, also come into the equation.

Currency

Individuals are not permitted to handle money: instead, the worth of their labour is determined by the priest-bureaucrats, and an allotted amount of food & water, energy, computer time, etc. is granted. Barter between reasonably loyal and devout citizens is permitted, but the value of what may be bartered is determined by the priest-bureaucrats. The more loyal and useful the citizen, the greater he is permitted to barter, up to 1/3 of his worth at the start of the year. When a loyal citizen is no longer able to maintain a sufficient level of productivity, he is gently euthanized, and what little he leaves behind – including his corpse – becomes property of the Prophet-Emperor.

The priest-bureaucrats themselves are permitted to use Sacred Credits, which is how the Holy Imperium determines her budgets and trades with foreigners. Because Sacred Credits are so large – 1 Sacred Credit would be worth about 1 million old Imperial Credits – they are generally traded only by actual priesthoods, recognized corporations, and government departments, rather than individuals. To insure that only 'Responsible Individuals and Organizations' can use this money, the Sacred Credit is indivisible, and must be 'renewed' yearly by the Holy Bank, or it expires and becomes valueless.

Managing Expectations

So, when does the 'Prophet' in Prophet-Emperor comes to play? As the Chosen Prophet, infused with both the Spirit of Reason and the Spirit of Love, he alone can rightfully determine how the wealth of the community should be spent. The Prophet-Emperor and his expansive bureaucracy do manage to please the majority of the population, but not by mystically knowing their needs. 'Keeping the people happy' is handled mainly by lowering the expectations of the people to a level easily attainable by the government, and lots of smoothly-justified killing of the older population to insure that population demands don't get 'outside of responsible & sustainable levels'.

This does not only refer to the medical demands of the aged: the older and more cynical people might start spreading their scepticism around. This simply won't do, so in the end, they are driven to either choose a between a pleasant death, with honours and respect, or an unpleasant death.

As the population have no families – by government policy – they have no one who will give them a hand when things get nasty. All they have are fair-weather friends, paradise people who generally can't even conceive of the need for bravery, daring, or risk-taking when things get unpleasant – after all, the Prophet-Emperor and his pure-hearted priesthood does all the difficult work for them, out of the kindness of their hearts.

[Question: if the government successfully lowers expectations, what does it do with the surplus resources? Spend them on what they decide is needed, naturally – in a deeply inefficient manner, as it can't actually **count** the resources. There is no currency for small or medium-scale transactions, only what some priest-bureaucrat decided is 'the fair price' – with a percentage off the top for his services, naturally.]

The citizens are encouraged to take their complaints to the Prophet-Emperor through his representatives. Those expectations that are useful for the government to satisfy are answered. Expectations that the government can't satisfy are dealt with by persuading the individual that they shouldn't be satisfied.

Fortunately for the government, most people just want a comfortable life with food in the belly, drinks that flow as easily as the sex, a light work load, and lots of parties and entertainment. (Think 'college' for forty – sixty years, until your natural death date, as determined by the priest-bureaucrats, kick in.) Those who want a daring and challenging life are sent to the priesthoods, with different priestly orders specializing in different ways to heroically serve the Prophet-Emperor.

Race

The Holy Imperium is composed of almost entirely pureblooded Syleans. About 2% of the population are Sylean/Solomani mixes: while permitted to live and encouraged to enjoy themselves, they are segregated in their own neighbourhoods, silently, subtly, and comprehensively. The few that have been permitted to join the priesthoods tend to be hyper-competent. The few Mixed Vilani who lived on Sylea have been quietly and gently exterminated, with a mix of social isolation, enforced sterility, and early euthanasia.

There is a strong push to get more non-Syleans to worship the Prophet-Emperor, and a select few are permitted to live among the Syleans, to better spread the joy of living under his rule to other worlds.

Appendix

Proverbs and Thoughts within Sylean Society

From "The Guides to Righteous Living":

For the common man: Love the Prophet-Emperor, and obey/fear the priest-bureaucrat. Don't take things seriously, and don't plan for the future. Shun violence and ugliness, and pursue beauty and pleasure. Laugh at family, mock responsibility, sneer at discipline. But, flee from the ugliness of pain and suffering. Sensual and sweet pleasure is the only thing that makes life worth living. The beautiful death is the only right and fitting goal to life. Continually indulge in diversions.

For the petty priestly bureaucrats: Obey the Prophet-Emperor. Strengthen his rule, sing his praises. Manage the people with a gentle but firm hand. A sweet, gentle death for the obedient is a great blessing, but the disobedient are to receive an ugly death. All men everywhere should be taught to love the Prophet-Emperor. Obeying every minor rule is the way of salvation for the bureaucrat, but the greatest pleasure is in successfully twisting the rules to gain personal pleasure at other's expense. But there are no rules that stand against harmless pleasures or chasing empty delusions.

For the high priestly bureaucrats: Gain mastery over your domain, always push for excellence and dominance in your chosen field. Men will happily destroy themselves for pleasure: make sure that the Prophet-Emperor benefits from their beautiful death. The masses love lies: feed them with the secret fantasies of their heart, and they are yours. Never give up power. See what is before your eyes, the obvious and the implicit. Remember secrets, and use them wisely. Remember that dread of the unknown is stronger than actually facing it.

From "Obedience and Disobedience":

For the commoner: Obedience brings pleasure in this life, a sweet and delectable death. Disobedience brings pain, fear, ugliness, and a bitter death.

For the petty priestly bureaucrats: Obedience to the rules brings power without responsibility, safety and honour without fear of any accountability. Disobedience brings mockery and shame.

For the high priestly bureaucrats: Obedience to the Prophet-Emperor brings the pleasure to command and control others, and the very special pleasure of breaking the will of the defiant and the strong – or at least, inflicting horrific suffering on them, ripping apart mind and flesh, before reluctantly allowing them to die.

The consequences of disobedience are best not thought of, as punishment will be delivered by your kindly brothers from within the Inner Circle, who have been waiting for that moment for a very, very long time.

The Var Kirat

Atmospheric music: Hildegard Von Bingen – Vision
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M48_LZUpo0Q

Paradigm: Violence-shy Solomani Christian supremists, who feel that they are destined to be a Master Race not because of innate, morality-free genetic superiority (in the style of Darwin et al), but by the hand of God – a favour that can be withdrawn as easily as it was extended, and Who is more interested in how righteous, noble, just, and self-sacrificing the Royal Race is than their strength, intelligence, power, or wealth. As such, they feel that power and success must be proven before the Lesser Races, not merely taken.

Perhaps the British in India are the best model, using economic and technological means to overawe and rule the Lesser Breeds, and violence used only in rare instances. There isn't any way for 10,000 men to rule 300 million with mere "widespread non-opposition": active support from the Lesser Breeds is necessary for success. The Var Kirat are absolutely committed to building up the level of support necessary to rule the others, "as God intended".

The Var Kirat are a unique people:

- They are derived from the Solomani Confederation of the early 1000's Imperial, compared with the Imperial settlers, who arrived in the 700's.
- Their homeworld is unknown. While astrographic information on all the other Starbreak civilizations is known to all (including the Var Kirat), the Var Kirat have successfully resisted all attempts to uncover their homeworld, formal and informal.
- As of 1500, the Var Kirat have claimed no territory within Starbreak, and are silent regarding territory outside of the sector. Their 'capital' in the sector is a large asteroid ship, currently located in Doumbek system. Several large research/trade vessels are based from this asteroid starship, known as Var Kirat. (The name of the people is taken from the name of this vessel. What they call themselves in private is unknown.)
- All Var Kirat contacted so far are men in religious service, be they priests, monks, or lay brothers. No Var Kirat women or children have been seen, even on the rare occasions outsiders are permitted on their asteroid vessel.

The majority of the Var Kirat are not interested in speaking on internal matters with foreigners. However, there are always some exceptions…

[**Referee:** …and at least one Var Kirat ship was captured intact, with its crew tortured, drugged, and interrogated before being secretly killed and a suitable cover story planted by the Holy Imperium, 1497 Imperial. Data from this encounter was sold to the Human Council after some redacting. Fragmentary information of this encounter has seeped back to the Var Kirat, who are conducting their own investigations while laying down plans for a suitable reprisal.]

…and interested investigators have pieced together a fairly accurate picture of Var Kirat life within Starbreak sector. The lack of information of Var Kirat settlements outside of the sector – not only the location, but other basic data like population and the economy – can be tied not only to strict information control procedures, but actual carefully-engineered memory wipes. "Their personalities are intact, but the history that shaped it is gone – and there is no particular anguish over their lack of a past."

The Var Kirat are descendants of a Solomani/Trita Brotherhood expedition into Starbreaker space, launched to monitor the Imperial settlements, and provide a base for Solomani operations to eventually bring the entire region under the sway of the Solomani Party. Despite their presence in the sector since 1026, official contact with the Imperial colonies was delayed until 1446 Imperial: outside observers believe that the time was spent laying down self-sufficient colonies outside of the sector. The nature, governance, and location of these hypothetical colonies are completely unknown. [**Referee:** Officially.]

As of 1500, all contact with the Var Kirat has been done with male members of various religious orders. These religious men are not very interested in proselyting per se, but are very interested in trade and information exchange. Despite being Solomani supremist, they have preferred to extend a friendly hand, claiming no worlds and supporting the Human Council.

Covenantal Structure

Transcendence

The central focus of the Var Kirat is to insure the survival & supremacy of both the Solomani Catholic Faith and the survival of God's People, the Solomani. These separate goals are one and the same, to Var Kirat thinking. All other concerns are secondary.

Hierarchy

The ruling familial & technical elders of the Var Kirat clans handle most day-to-day disputes and controversies: problems involving military personnel are dealt with by the Confederation Military Code of Justice. The captain of the asteroid mothership determines the resolution of most serious affairs involving the integrity of the ship and handling possible hostile starships. Interstellar policy with other nations is under the purview of the Council of Five - the two mothership Senior Captains (or representatives thereof), the Bishop of the local congregation of the Var Kirat Catholic Church (who is simultaneously the First Secretary of the Solomani Party), and the senior Var Kirat diplomats. The entire Var Kirat is apparently ruled by a Synod of Bishops, with a Chairman selected by his peers to lead the Synod for two years. Obedience to the Pope at Home system (rather than Terra) is claimed, but there has been no contact with said pope for about five centuries.

[**Referee:** The following is believed to be true by Holy Imperium interrogators. Whenever this is actually true, incorrect conjecture, or deeply planted Var Kirat lies, is left for the Referee to decide….

Var Kirat planetary settlements are led by a local Triad: the senior military officer (Usually with the Solomani Army rank of Captain), and the senior leader (typically a Parish Priest/Party Cadre). Typically, the informal breakdown of duties has the military officer handles colony defence, surveys, and foreign contact; and the Catholic/Party officer tends to the people and core colony needs and infrastructure.

> **Note:** Yes, there are only two men mentioned, but it's called a Triad. It's enough to make a curious mind wonder what's *really* going on…

Despite being a theoretically very masculine culture, longstanding restrictions on the number of children per couple, coupled with the need to make every set of hands a productive set, has opened the door for women to fill any and all roles within Var Kirat society, excluding priests and uniformed military personnel (non-uniformed service is fine.)]

Law

The legal system of Var Kirat is closely tied to the laws of the ancient Trita Brotherhood, an allied government of the Solomani Confederation. The laws of the Trita were themselves derived from the civil laws codes of continental Europe, as initially laid down by Napoleon Bonaparte. Some Roman influence of Trita laws can still be detected, as well as the European Union of the early 21st century: but the greatest forces shaping the content (as opposed to the form) of Var Kirat laws is Catholic Canon Law. Solomani Confederation legislation, while certainly in force, has little impact on a society where everyone is a pure-blooded Solomani, everyone supports the supremacy of the Race, and Church and Party has fused into one body (but still divided by function: 'Church' sets the doctrine and the goals of the society, and 'Party' decides the political means. As the saying goes, "Two Legs – One Body – One Direction").

Sanctions

For most civil offences, punishment involves isolation, penance, labour, re-education, and/or community service. Offending military personnel are usually punishable with reduction of rank and pay, as well as a slate of onerous duties. Serious offences such as challenging Church doctrine, military mutiny, violations of the Racial Purity laws

and treason against God, the Race, and/or the Church are all death penalty offences. (Quiet, private dissent from Church/Racial teachings is tolerated: public challenges are not.)

Trade disputes with outsiders are usually been handled by the host government's legal system, with the Var Kirat paying penalties or winning awards as circumstances dictate. However, there is a strong push for a new, comprehensive legal corpus, instead of the disorganized, unpredictable, on-the-spot rulings the few Var Kirat legal rulings have given. A team of interested experts, well-versed with ancient Party and Church precedents, and acting with assistance from the trading ship captains and the Human Council, are building a code that should be acceptable to both the Var Kirat and outside traders. This legal system is expected to increasing the prestige and influence of the Race in Starbreak Sector among all humaniti, including non-Solomani and even the Vilani.

Destiny

The Var Kirat knew long ago that they just don't have the numbers needed to successfully conquer Starbreak Sector themselves. To further insure their survival, a new asteroid mothership is under construction, and it is hoped that new colonies will be planted – perhaps within Starbreak sector, as well as outside its borders. It is felt that the route to Solomani supremacy is best gained by dominating trade and winning friends, so eliminationist talk is prohibited (in public and generally in private), while the ideology of the Firstborn Race, protecting the lesser human races from inhuman monsters and leading the way to prosperity for all humaniti, is encouraged. While this way to power is not as quick as pure military conquest, it is more uplifting, elegant and profitable.

Moreover, the consequences for the failure of the Peaceful Way are far lighter than military failure would be: an important consideration, for as far as the Var Kirat knows, they are the only surviving group of pure Solomani still alive.

Religion

"The Solomani Party, Solomani Security, and the Church hierarchy had fused into one organization by about 5870 (c. 1350 Imperial)."

Race and religion are one and the same to the Var Kirat. They have no missionaries to the local human populations, as they feel that God does not want their tainted souls. (Decades ago, there was some quiet discussion on dispatching missionaries to the pure Solomani populations. This possibility remains shelved for the nonce: one of the major reasons for this is noted below.) As such, they have no problems working with the Holy Imperium or other local theocracies, as they just don't see themselves in competition with them.

For the Var Kirat, the most annoying system is Pax Deorum. It is a 100% Solomani, 100% Catholic system that simply refuses to recognize the Var Kirat as brothers in Christ, due to the racially/politically-infused changes in Var Kirat Catholic doctrine. This rejection grates on the Var Kirat a lot more than they let on. The Var Kirat are already far more wealthier and powerful than the Paxi: if the political situation shifts to permit the Var Kirat to do some serious power projection, things can and will get very lethal indeed for the Paxi.

But at the moment, the Var Kirat can't afford the political cost, not when they are still busy reassuring the rest of the sector of their peaceful intentions and open generosity. So they smile and reply with soft words when the occasional travelling Paxi cuts loose on them, while clenching their fists within their robes.

Economics

Most interaction with the Var Kirat are in the avenue of trade in material and information. They are adept data brokers, and have grown quite sophisticated as politically neutral middle-men in certain inter-Imperial high-value brokerage and arbitrage deals. Before publically revealing themselves in 90-1446, their existence was known by the major interstellar states and the Human Council, but – being humans intent on keeping a low profile – they were generally ignored by all (if carefully watched from a distance by the Athenian Republic and the Holy Imperium.)

Their existence has only been public knowledge for 54 years as of 1500 Imperial, so there is still quite a lot of curiosity regarding these Solomani men. The Var Kirat has submitted to a good deal of investigation and inspection

by the Human Council when first discovered: when they enter the territories of the Four Empires, there was quite a number of detailed inspections as the various governments gleaned what technology they could with just observation and sensor data. This data revealed that the Var Kirat has a good technology base, but no better in general than that of Enlugal and Sylea.

After joining the Human Council in 1492, eight years ago, the Var Kirat agreed to provide a stream of income double that of Imperial Sylea, the previous largest donor. In return, they were not required to discuss their activities, territories, or population outside of Starbreak sector. After joining the Protectorate Commission, the Var Kirat donated the use of one of their scout cruisers, the *Hopeful Journey,* for use by the Protectorate Guard. This is a valuable asset to that force, and currently serves as the flagship of the Guard.

Finally, they entered into extensive negotiations with the Ziru Sirkaa, with the Monsignor of the *Var Kirat* starship – the official 'political head' of the Var Kirat nation, so far as is known – eventually deciding to work together on a trading venture, a shipping line operated by members of both nations. This was followed up with a major financial deal, as the construction of some Var Kirat starships was arranged in certain rented yards in Enlugal System. The Human Council strongly approved of this deal, tying the pureblooded Vilani and the pureblooded Solomani together in commerce. Peaceful and mutually profitable trade between all branches of humaniti is to be continually encouraged, in Council eyes.

Behind closed doors, economic observers of the Var Kirat swear up and down that the trade patterns of the Var Kirat, coupled with their known deployed forces within the sector, points to a population of at least fifty million. Whenever this is true or not is for the Referee to decide.

Race

Taken from "Starbreak Sector: A History"
"The Var Kirat downplays their Solomani supremacist attitude in public, valuing peace and comity with the other humans over demonstrating the power and glory of the Race. Even in private, few Var Kirati Solomani refer to themselves as the Master Race, preferring to call themselves the Firstborn or the Children of God."

Relations with the Holy Imperium are surprisingly good, despite the major differences between the Sylean Rohisa religion and Solomani Catholic Christianity. Even more remarkably, as of 1500 there is a major Var Kirat construction yard over the Ziru Sirkaa capital world, with pureblood Solomani and Vilani men working hard for mutual profit. Var Kirat-Reborn Imperium relations are cordial but distant, while Var Kirat-Imperial Cianji relations are a good deal cooler, if still respectful. The Athenians are the closest in culture to the Var Kirat, but their irreverent attitude grates on the pious Var Kirat. Finally, the Var Kirat do all they can to ingrate themselves with the Human Council, but the Council leaders prefer to keep a fair amount of space between themselves and the Var Kirat.

The leaders of the Var Kirat mission have in mind a vast empire of many human races, wisely led by the Solomani, as their goal. They hold the Second Imperium and the pre-Civil War Third Imperium as their idea. Interestingly, they are not as radically anti-alien as the other civilizations, finding it distasteful to destroy sophont species that God has created. However, they keep their objections quiet before the public eye, and hold their peace before the Human Council. They make the necessary oaths in public, and keep their unspoken reservations private.

There are a minority of Vilani who agree with this attitude. Most Vilani subscribe to the standard anti-alien attitude, but a dissenting minority feel that it violates the Traditions to destroy the other races. "Did not our ancestors welcome the Bwap into the bureaucracy, instead of wastefully destroying them?" they whisper very quietly to trusted friends. Some of these Vilani have certain unofficial channels linked up with the Solomani, and the more powerful individuals among them are the prime movers behind the friendly Var Kirat-Vilani relationship.

Appenidx:

New Worlds, New Colonies

The original *Var Kirat* served well for over 300 years, but the population long ago expanded beyond its carrying capacity. Additional asteroid settlements were made, as were space stations, but no world was claimed. After the

collapse of the Athenian Republic, but before revealing themselves, the additional population was transferred to an undisclosed location outside of Starbreak sector. It is quite likely that a new world or three was selected for agricultural purposes, but permanent terrestrial settlement is unlikely. Old habits die hard.

In time, a new asteroid mothership was selected to be the centre of the Var Kirat culture. Built far away from prying eyes in the distant XXXXXX system, a massive asteroid ship has left the drawing boards, and is very slowly taking shape. The basic sections and modules are being built, with the gigantic vessel expected to take over a century to arrive at its final form. A substantial population already resides in the selected asteroid, even as it is hollowed out and prepped for a very lengthy list of modifications and upgrades.

When completed, the new asteroid ship is expected to weigh in at the 100 million displacement ton level, becoming the jump-capable home of 10 million humans. The original ship, now with only 10,000 men religious, has become the public face of the Var Kirat nation.

Racial Ideology

Why yes, the God & Race-grounded Var Kirat Catholic Church has carefully studied the ancient lessons of the Old Confederacy, the American Indian Wars, the European Empires, the Third Reich, and Apartheid Rhodesia and South Africa. But they didn't just examine the usual discriminatory empires that excite liberal opinion: Chinese actions and behaviour throughout East Asia, Japanese policy during their brief Imperial era, the positions and policies of the ruling castes of India, Arab actions vis-à-vis black Africa and white Europe, black African actions in regard to white, East Indian, and Chinese sojourners and settlers, and Mexican & Brazilian racial stratification were also studied. Finally, Vilani policy during the First Imperium, Terran policy during the Second, and Solomani policy during the Third Imperium (up to the Civil War era) were all analyzed as well.

The first and most striking lesson from the past is taught by the German Nazis, the definitive racial failures. Not only did they fight a suicidal inter-racial war, killing huge numbers of blue-eyed, blond-haired Russians and Ukrainians… and Germans, too! Not only did they bankrupt the European Empires, and thus insure the political end of white supremacy. And not only did they kill a huge percentage of the more intelligent whites via the Holocaust, thus bringing technological advances to a practical standstill after 1945, compared to the era before it.

All the above was devastating to the white race, and sufficient reason for our few blond brothers still around to spit in Nazi faces, now and forever. But it`s more than that. Their racial idolatry led directly to the destruction of any and all claims of white moral superiority, poisoning any possibility of recovery by poisoning the very *concept* of racial pride – among whites. (It was called 'white guilt' for a reason.) All this failure accelerated the collapse of the white race from 30% of humanity in A.D. 1900, to 10% in 2000, to 3% in 2100.

Learn the lesson, my Solomani brothers! The Race, like Family and Tribe, is part of human society, and part of what we are, be it glorified, acknowledged or suppressed. However, the Race exists to serve Someone Else, Someone who was here before humaniti was. Challenge Him, and a new Race can be called out of the computers we use and the machines that we run, leaving us as only an increasingly forgotten memory. Obey Him, and we can stand forever, with the stars as our playthings, and all others – even the abominable alien – kneeling before us, willingly.

Has not Christ said that He can call out worshippers out of stones? Let us not put His claim to the test!

Qui Sak, Cardinal-Racelord of the Var Kirat, 1133 Imperial

The Protectorate Commission

Atmospheric music: Scinfaxi, by Tetsukazu Nakanishi
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtZWXy9I_EI

Paradigm: the League Mandates of the interwar period.

The Protectorate Commission is the successor to the Human Colony Commission, tasked to promote and insure the successful human colonization of the New Stars, on the other side of the Starbreak. After the failure of the HCC in the Diltov War (1453-1455 Imperial), the Protectorate Commission was created to oversee the armistice, promote a peace treaty, enforce a monopoly of interstellar violence, and continue to promote settlement. To insure that no further proxy wars occur, all diplomatic, political, and financial relationships must go through the offices of the Commission.

An armistice was eventually agreed to, and both Protectorates have been stripped of interstellar military forces. No permanent peace treaty has been signed, despite the passage of 45 years. Settlement is still promoted, with an acceptable level of new colonists planted. Ground on new worlds has not been broken for decades, but a habitable planet is a big place, capable of holding more than a dozen, or even a hundred, new settlements.

Covenantal Structure

None. Nobody swears a self-maledictory oath before Divine Authority, asking Him to curse, punish or even kill them if they fail to uphold their part of the bargain. Such oaths are made for marriages, church membership, and national service, not corporate service or para-national organizations such as the Protectorate Commission. As no such oath applies, the Commission is not a genuine covenant: there is no transcendental source of Law, nor a desired Destiny that drives every action. Hierarchy (described below), Law, and Sanctions do exist, but their legitimacy is derived from the Four Emperors and the Human Council, and do not originate from the Commission itself.

[**Referee:** The Vilani DO swear blood-oaths when joining a Vilani corporation. This traces back to ancient Vilani history: caste-corporations are traditionally integral parts of the government, and can lawfully kill to enforce their edicts… and protect their profit margins.

This alone would not make the Vilani different from any of the more aggressive Solomani corporations… except that 1) they are willing to *die* for their profits, and 2) this attitude is broadly supported by the Vilani population. The Solomani feel the need to cloak their violence with words about equality, justice, and other abstract crypto-religious language, but the ever-pragmatic Vilani have no need of such abstractions. The greater collective benefit of Vilani corp, clan, and caste is sufficient justification to kill and to die, in and of itself.]

Hierarchy

The Governor-General of the Protectorate Commission is chosen by simple vote among the Four Emperors, with the Human Council casing the tie-breaker if needed. Governor-Generals serve for a single seven-year term, and no nationality may succeed themselves (i.e. you may not have two Cianji Governor-Generals in succession).

Allocation of the senior positions – Military Governors, Advisors, Division Chiefs, and Section Chiefs – is conducted by the simple majority vote of the Protectorate Board of Directors, the Governor-General and the four-man Board of Directors (each Empire provides one representative for the board). The various leaders chose or delegate populating their organizations as they deem fit, with some oversight by the Board of Directors.

Senior Officers

The Governor-General, the Board of Directors, and their support infrastructure are located at Faunia/Dreamsong, far from the easy reach of the Four Emperors.

The Var Kirat has observer status within the Board of Directors, but has no vote. They are not invited to determine or observe the selection of the Governor-General. The two Protectorates have no representation, whatsoever.

The two Protectorate Advisors do not control the internal affairs of the Protectorate directly. They do have some indirect influence, which is carefully used, to avoid inflaming nationalistic anger. They are the primary link between the native-run Protectorate governments and the Protectorate Commission. They also decide on use-of-force policies within their bailiwick, subject to the Governor-General.

There are four Division Chiefs, for Colonization, Guard, Research, and Transport. Each division are divided into sections, as determined by the Chiefs, and run by the men of their choice. Unlike the Governor-General and the Board, the Division Chiefs circulate within the two Protectorates. Excepting the Guard and their two naval bases, there are no fixed command posts for the Division Chiefs. With their sprawling support staff of four or five subordinates (excluding wives and children) they go where they're needed, and leave when the job is done.

Colonization

Colonization Division handles on-site colonization procedures, equipment, and manpower.

This is mainly an issue of logistics, money, and making sure that the right specialists are at the right place at the right time. As it is rather boring to discuss, I won't be elaborating further – but sharp-eyed entrepreneurs from the Four Empires could make a bundle here, if they could just get their ship across the Starbreak somehow…

Transport

Transport Division controls the actual transport of colonists and material from the Four Empires to the Protectorates, including the various Protectorate bases.

The primary colonial vessel of Transport Division is the 5000-ton, jump3 Melusina-class starship. Because of the enormous prestige of her mission, the crewmen who man her are chosen from the best civilian crews in Starbreak Sector, regardless of nationality - with salaries and perks to match. Competition for her berths is fierce, and many excellent starmen toil years and years to gain a single opportunity to join a Melusina crew roster.

Guard

Guard Division controls the use of interstellar organized violence within the Protectorates. As a corollary, unsanctioned interstellar violence is suppressed, with or without the support of the Protectorate in question.

Note that these forces are taken from four separate empires, two of which are mutually hostile, and all of which are somewhat wary of the other. The men have been chosen for their ability to work well with foreign forces, while keeping national priorities in clear focus. The Division Chief of the Guard, even more so than the other Division Chiefs, is chosen for his political acumen as well as a superior operational skill set. (Strategic and long-term matters are determined back on Faunia.) The senior military officers report to the Division Chief of the Guard, who reports to the distant Governor-General.

Guard Division enjoys the services of the two naval bases in the region, over the minor systems of Liege (within the Diltov Republic) and Truth (in the Noble Federation). The Base Commander insures the operations and security of the base, and has a company of garrison troops. The two small bases are unarmed, but surrounded by twelve firebases – actually, modified 30-ton modules – each armed with a single battery of missiles or lasers.

Naval forces for the entire Protectorate Commission amounts to the equivalent of a flotilla of one cruiser and twenty patrol ships of various types are divided between the two bases. The 5000-man Protectorate Brigade is divided into four regiments, two for each base. Note that both commands are NOT divided according to their base, but are unitary commands, commanded by a Commodore and a Colonel respectively. Both forces are kept circulating between the two bases, being rebased at least once every four years.

The Var Kirat, a fifth group of rather mysterious Solomani supporters, are also present. They have made only one contribution to the force, a large scout cruiser. The *Hopeful Journey* is manned by all four Imperia as well as the Var Kirat: as of 1500 Imperial, a notable naval officer from the Dune system, outside of the Four Empires, is in command of the vessel.

(Yes, this section is vastly more detailed than the others. Guess why.)

Research

Research Division conducts and co-ordinates surveys, colonization suitability studies, and general scientific research within the Protectorates.

While there are about a dozen small scouts and transports available to the Research Division, most of the force is based on the twelve research bases, scattered among the Protectorates and on Faunia herself. Shown as 'scout bases' on the starmap, they may be dragooned to support the Colonization & Transport Divisions, but it is the Research Head who still rules the roost. A few Research Heads play well with others; but most are at best aggravating to the Colonization and Transport personnel, who increasingly prefer to use the civilian ports as their base of operation.

The Noble Federation

Atmospheric music: Mark Isham – The Melancholy of Departure
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAmx4yd7d98

The origins of the Noble Federation are rooted in certain ideologically committed Honourbound houses, which choose to stress aristocratic perfection even more heavily than the Reborn Emperor and the leading houses. The internal divisions would have led to a civil war had not the Human Council persuaded the mainstream groups to fund the removal of the hard-core Honourbound, secure the acceptance of the exiled (with both carrots and sticks) and provided their transport to the distant New Stars to build their own interstellar society.

Their history can be divided by various notable events: Initial settlement and the early years the Diltov War and the war's aftermath; the Civil War; and the present Reconstruction era. The colonists set foot on their new homeworld of Avalon on 36-1440, and immediately put their backs into the immense task of building up their settlement, taming their world, and laying down the infrastructure for an interstellar government. Despite their misgivings for the families that drove them away, they felt compelled to accept Reborn support to match the Cianji funding and armament of the Christians. Human Council Commission attempts to avoid interstellar federations of the colonies were subverted, and both the Noble Federation and the Diltov Republic were proclaimed in 1451. Material for both colonization and war continued to find their way to the two fledging governments. Soon after, a Diltov invasion of Justice at 1453 marked the beginning of the Diltov War in earnest. Avalon struggled to successfully repel the attacks of the Diltov. These attacks, consisting of a merchantman with a few dozen green troops and one or two vehicles with chunks of armour plate bolted on, would be considered mere raids in the civilized worlds; but, for young, sparsely populated, and very lightly defended colonies, these attacks were true life-or-death struggles.

In the end, Avalon did managed to defend herself successfully, hindering Diltov long enough for the other three emperors to convince Imperial Cianji to halt the proxy war, putting the brakes on Diltov attacks in 1455. The failures of the HCC led to the newly established Protectorate Commission taking control of the region, placing the two governments into protectorate status and stripping them of the ability to project interstellar violence.

Without the need to divert funds and manpower into military operations, colonization speeded up appreciably. Problems with the Christians receded into the background, except on Justice, a majority-Christian world in Federation space. Instead, the various aristocratic ideologies – demanding perfectionists, to the core – rubbed each other the wrong way more often, as more money and more people increased the rewards of winning and the cost of losing any given political clash. Aristotelian, Confucian, Genetic, and Vilani aristocratic models were the major contenders, but a host of minor models were also involved in the fray.

In the end, a hidden conspiracy of psions managed to secure leadership over the five most powerful Honourbound houses, only to clash over issues of primacy in a brief civil war/coup d'état in 1488. This brief public display of power was quickly placed under wraps, to avoid the prying eyes of the Commission. The psionic nature of their power were redacted from the datasphere and expunged from the historical records. By 1500, even most of the eye-witnesses to the clash have forgotten about it, due to natural or psionicly-assisted forgetfulness.

In the meantime, the New Sight cliques that rule the interstellar government have again fragmented into camps according to their preferred form of aristocratic rule. Fortunately, there is a strong consensus to avoid violence, resulting in an inefficient but peaceable 'live and let live' philosophy. These cliques have been careful not to intrude into planetary affairs, or aggravate the non-psionic Honourbound. They are willing to suffer minor political and financial losses to maintain the masquerade, being careful to publicise their small failures widely, while suppressing awareness of their major successes.

The victory of the New Sight can be measured to the extent that few even remember the psionic powers of the Federation leadership, or (if they do recall them) consider them any more important than parlour tricks or slight-of-hand magic. In the meantime, the New Sight cliques have managed to successfully reconcile with their surviving Strong Thought opponents, thanks to empaths circulate among both groups, easing misunderstandings and permitting some mutual trust to build.

The enforced lack of hostility between the Federation and the Republic has permitted a strong focus on basic planetary development and forward progress into building up their colonies, in the realms of culture, wealth, industry, and population.

Covenantal Structure

Transcendence

The Noble Federation holds the idea of honour (and, to a lesser extent, her 'spiritual cousins' reputation, brotherhood, loyalty, truth, and honesty – in that order) at the most important thing in existence. Everything in the Federation is geared to the promotion of Honour. Naturally, only the honourable man can be considered noble: as such, nobility in the Federation may transcend family ties and the correct bloodlines. (Many families specialized in adopting promising young people, both men and women, into their houses.) The precise nature of The Rule of the Superior Man is under hot dispute, but for a variety of reasons, violence rarely breaks out.

Oaths and promises are of great value in the Noble Federation, and are rarely given out. Being an oath-breaker is sufficient reason for execution in all Federation societies, no matter how lightly they were given. Most cultures will maim individuals who break even inadvertent oaths, with the more respected houses killing the violator.

Hierarchy

Naturally, the most honourable man should rule. Honour is determined by a man's reputation among his peers: how this is determined varies according to his ties of blood and culture. As it is typical for money to corrupt votes, the honourable man cannot be wealthy (although he can be very powerful): rich people and their friends are by definition held to have little or no honour. If a truly noble man suddenly gets rich, he is expected to swiftly dispose of his wealth: the exact way he spends it – on friends, on family, on the ancestors – varies according to what Honourbound house he is bound to.

Most cultures feel that a woman's honour is tied to her sexuality, while a man's honour is tied to the respect shown to him in the public sphere. In most (not all) Honourbound houses, a woman's honour within the Federation is tied to her virginity before marriage, and fidelity to her husband after marriage. A few houses insist on chastity before marriage, fidelity after marriage, a high public reputation, and success in protecting house interests from all members, male and female alike. While respected, these families tend to be quite small, precisely because of the high demands they put on their membership.

While rich men are held in contempt, wealthy women are grudgingly respected: wealth among women simply shows that the honourable wife is serving her husband and children productively and well. Universally within the Federation, women control the purse strings, the businesses and corporations, and manage the budgets of the governments.

Law

Besides the reverence for honour, the law of "One for all, and all for one!" and the insistence that every real Nobleman must hate the Diltov Republic, her people, and all they stand for, there are no universal laws within the Noble Federation. There are, however, a huge web of customs, understandings, traditions, and quid-pro-quo arrangements.

While men generally make the laws for a given family, settlement, or world, most legal rulings are handled by women: so long as their rulings are seen to be fair and even-handed, they are cheerfully enforced by the general population. A different set of consequences – sometimes humorous, sometimes pitiless – await silly or corrupt rulings, as determined by the general population.

In general, various peacemakers and judges – some self-appointed, some acclaimed to their position – works hard to keep the level of violence down to reasonable levels. Quite a lot of pacifist empaths specialize in resolving familial and corporate feuds, and have grown adapt in speaking the language of honour, pride, and respect to soothe tempers and resolve disputes (instead of the language of money, efficiency, or religious morality, which would only provoke laughter or rage.)

Most of the population – Honourbound and simple commoner alike – are consistently sacrilegious, joyfully willing to pour contempt and scorn on religion in general, and Christianity in particular, as it is the dominant faith of the loathed Diltov Republic. Instead, personal honour, reputation, and public respect are the source of law for the local nobility. The importance of family patriarchs varies according to the household, from a powerful moral influence to the judge of life and death.

Sanctions

Punishments and sanctions vary widely, but are usually set with an eye of entertaining the public. If the judge is sympathetic, the punishment set will respect the honour of the defendant - shooting by firing squad (complete with cigarette and blindfold), a hard set of lashes on the back, tough prison labour, etc. Unsympathetic judges set punishments designed to humiliate the prisoner: parading him naked through the streets, breaking him on the wheel, placing him in the stocks with mocking signs pasted on his body, and such like.

The most popular (and thus, the most honourable – and powerful) judges have a very astute knowledge of human nature, can smell a lie from across the room, and have an amazingly ironic, savage, cruel – yet, impeccably fair and fitting – instinct when it comes to handing down the punishment. Attempting to bribe such a judge is a pretty good definition of insanity: quite a lot of locals will egg on an ignorant visitor to do just this, precisely to see how viscously the judge reacts against the poor fools.

Unlike the vast majority of legal systems, the Noble Federation does not tolerate any appeals from a reasonably legal court ruling: what the judge says, goes – period. Locals have been known to contest a judge's ruling by rioting, forcibly storming a court to free the prisoner (or kill him before he can escape), or mocking and discrediting the court, rendering their judgements useless and without power or authority. Judges themselves are not killed, as this would be very dishonourable (and mark his killer as an outlaw: that is, beyond the protection of the law.)

Off-world visitors should note that 'He needed killing' and 'he showed me disrespect' is often considered sufficient reason to justify murder, especially if the claim is backed by witnesses. Life is usually not paid for by life, but by financial restitution, judged by the estimated economic worth of the dead man over the remainder of his life. This is especially true when a noble kills a commoner.

Destiny

The majority of commoners have great visions of gaining what they love best: Guns and Glory. (Note the absence of God and Gold.) They have little interest in carefully setting up a plan, and working steadily and regularly to reach their goals. The more ambitious ones greatly desire to enter the realm of the Honourbound, but this is the work of two or three generations.

Among the Honourbound, the major desire is to gain the respect of their equals, and both the love and the dread of their inferiors. This is generally gained by increasing household prosperity for family, trusted servants, and even the purchased lackeys in due time. Financial matters are handled by the women, while politics is in the realm of men. Warfare would be too, but as internal conflict is frowned upon, masculine energy is instead poured into taming the land and civilizing the wilderness.

The more farsighted leaders would like to trash the Diltov Republic, and dominate an expending Federation, eventually able to stand as an equal to the Four Empires. Having their names held in eternal honour in a galaxy-spanning Federation is the form of immortality they desire, not avoiding death per se (this suggests a kind of shameful cowardice) or transcending death by humbling themselves before God: the local Honourbound prefer death to such humility.

Religion

Outside of the anomaly of Christian-dominated Justince, the population of the Noble Federation are largely free of any supernatural faith. Instead, they focus on building up their honour, their reputation, and their due respect from the general population. The Honourbound houses generally pursue a particular aristocratic model that shapes their family and influences their society.

Among the commoners that seek a higher power, various forms of superstition, spiritualism, astrology, and reverence for charms are common in some societies. In Vilani and Confucian-style cultures, the careful study of and imitation of 'the family ancestral spirit' takes the place of a formal religion, but actual communication and worship of the dead is seen as foolishness. The more rational cultures prefer to revere genetic legacies, inherited or geneered.

Evading death is seen as a typically dishonourable form of cowardice: a certain materialistic predestination and the certain triumph of Death is assumed to be true across most of the Federation. The only immortality seen worthy of pursuing is the immortality of perfect honour, undying fame, and of having your name in the mouths of others.

Economics

A majority of the Honourbound houses have a great hostility for capitalism, free trade, and the money economy. Most of the commoners and household servants never handle money, but are instead allotted the necessities of life by their lord. All forms of commodity money – which can't be inflated away with some excuse or other – are seized by the Honourbound, and usually transported to Regal for safekeeping. Various Honourbound officials determine the worth of a given product or a certain amount of labour. In many societies, everything is owned by the ruling house or the community itself, itself, with members and servants only receiving goods, services, or currency that can only be spent in certain outlets. The resulting crippling of trade and capital growth is the desired result, not an unfortunate side effect, as this protects the ruling classes from challengers and 'unplanned social change'.

Interstellar trade is handled by various Honourbound-owned starships, crewed and led by women. The Avalon-Regal run is an important source of interstellar commerce, with Avalon being home to most of the Federation population, and Regal the home of most high-tech production.

Currency

There are several forms of fiat money circulating, with the major Honourbound houses each producing their own script. (The lesser houses and the commoner families use the most fungible currency in their region.) The Federation government handles its own accounts only in gold, and receives taxes and tribute in this media. The currencies of the other interstellar imperia are all deemed property of the Federation government: private holders of such currency must deposit it to an assigned government office, and are given the equivalent in the locally-dominant currency in exchange.

Race

True to their Reborn origins – which eventually lead to Cianji – the majority of human races in the sector are also represented in the Federation, save only the Syleans. Some families and houses do place an emphasis on a particular heredity, but this is usually not due to racial goals per se, but to gain and protect certain inherited traits deemed valuable by the matriarchs of a given line.

The Diltov Republic

Atmospheric music: Myth America, by Liz Story
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdgbZCjbGrk

The Republic – named after the Cianji Count Diltov, the prime mover behind the exile of the Christians (as opposed to the far cheaper and cost-effective mode of extermination) – is primarily a holding bin for various colonies with little in common besides religion and origin. The pain of exile and the anger of being manipulated by the aging but cunning Count to wage a proxy war on the Noble Federation have largely receded, and for most, the pleasures of liberty and self-government, the joy of raising a family and the productive labour of bringing forth a new civilization has brightened the future considerably.

> Faith as a mustard seed can move a mountain – how about as much faith as a mountain? Let's move a world now, so our children can move the Perseus Arm of the Galaxy!
> John Hipberry, colonization promoter,
> 1500 Imperial.

Most of the ground rules governing relations within the Republic were informally laid down amongst the various colonial societies before formal unity and independence in 1451, with only war and interstellar relations left in the hands of the central government. As the interstellar government managed to fail in meeting its few duties with the Diltov War (1453-55) and the harsh aftermath, it currently has only one duty, acting as the political representative of the Republican worlds when dealing with the Protectorate Commission. No interstellar power is permitted to interact with a protectorate directly, but only thru the Commission.

The lack of war has permitted the local societies to concentrate on building up their society, rather than diverting resources to warfare, a costly and unproductive drain on small treasuries. The culture of a given world varies considerably, depending on the settler culture and particular Christian denomination, but interactions among worlds generally relate to trade in information and manufactured goods: food and raw materials also make up a substantial portion of internal trade. Colonial transports still arrive regularly to both the Republic and the locally ignored Federation: within the Republic, a majority of the settlers prefer to break new ground to insure their independence and freedom, rather than expand on a settlement already dominated by strangers.

Those who do unite with an older settlement prefer co-religionists who willingly welcome them, and often benefit from assistance and hard-earned advice regarding the land, local lifeforms, and weather. They also enjoy hooking up with a pre-existing economy: often, some basic transport, communication, and power networks, as well as and light manufacturing facilities are already available. It is far cheaper to link up with pre-existing networks than build your own from scratch.

> It ain't about how hard you can hit, it's about how hard you can *get* hit, and keep moving forward. *That's how winning is done!!*
> Rocky Balboa

The religious spectrum of the settlers starts from strongly conservative, and go all the way to hard-core reactionary, ferociously fundamentalist, and blatantly theocratic. After all, everyone without a certain uncompromising attitude knelt before the great wealth, raw political power, and well-oiled rifles of the Zanist faith decades ago. It was – and remains – the pragmatic, sensible, and smart thing to do within Imperial Cianji territory. Only a hard faith will resist such pressure, preferring to fear an invisible God than fear the contempt and loathing (at best) or agonising death (at worst) given to those who will not fear powerful men.

Local residents who are older than forty fully expected to die before the long-expected purge of the resistant Christians, just like a long line of believers before them did, and are still faintly astonished to still be alive after all this time. Younger residents understand that they can still be slaughtered by the Protectorate for any politically expedient and deeply rational reason the Commission may care to dream up, but they can't be bothered living in fear. "Either God will protect us, or He won't. In either case, glory to His name, and let's get to work!"

Internal politics

For a position that has little real influence in an 'interstellar government' of radically devolved authority, there is quite a lot of planetary jockeying for the position of capital of the Republic among the Diltovich. Moscow (the initial capital), Geneva (the current capital), Chalcedon, and Lifesphere. Each world is tied to a particular set of partisans: Moscow for pro-Clanji, war-oriented believers who want to take over Justice and liberate it's majority-Christian population; Geneva for pacifist believers, focused on getting rapture-ready after 6000 years of false alarms and failed hopes; Chalcedon for those of the moralistic-legalistic mindset (for a libertarian version of this mindset, see http://lewrockwell.com/tucker/tucker197.html; for the Christian version, Romans 14) and Lifesphere, for the easy-living, never-worrying, let-things-be folks.

> You have only a few years to live and cannot hope to remake society in so short a time. Nobody now living will see a free society in America. But, in fighting for it, one can have a lot of fun.
> Consider the effort as a legacy to your great-grandchildren.
> Frank Chodorov, Educator
> http://mises.org/daily/4927

Covenantal Structure

Transcendence

The Diltov Republic is a loose collection of variant governments and nationalities. They are united in their faith in the Christian God, as outlined by the Apostle's & Nicene Creeds. Traditionally, the Republic is focused on communal military action, keeping a united front before outsiders, and encouraging trade amongst themselves. These are strong bonds: but there are no other points of unity among these populations.

The Lord's Peace - that is, the ban on military solutions to problems among believers of the two creeds - is the foundation of the Republic. The Lord's Sword (local military forces) and The Lord's Wealth (local businesses and trade, large and small), The Lord's People (the numerous families within the Republic) and The Lord's Nations (the various planetary and sub-planetary sovereign states within the Republic) are all notable concepts and ideals within the Republic.

As of 1500, the Republic has little to say about the Lord's Wealth, as the old regulation and control of trade flows has been completely taken from its hands, and placed into the hands of the individual worlds and settlements. Current controls amount to a standard of weights and measures, a ban on fractional-reserve banking as a form of fraud. The Lord's Sword doesn't exist, as interstellar force is now solely under the authority of the Protectorate Commission, as is external diplomacy and relationships. The Lord's People have little need for the Republic, as no new laws or regulations have been established for over 35 years, and the legislature has been disbanded as an unnecessary financial drain. Finally, legal issues are decided amongst The Lord's Nations themselves, with the Republican government only gaining a say when the Protectorate Commission is involved. Only The Lord's Peace remains, due as much to the unaffordable expense of warfare as the commands of the Prince of Peace.

So fades the vainglorious claims of men, pious or no.

Hierarchy

The Diltov Republic and purposes, the sovereign planetary states and substate governments are at the top of the political power pyramid. As this society is oriented around a particular religion, the various churches are quite influential, but are not integrated into the political structure: what power they have is indirect, via persuasion of their parishioners. Drilling down, it becomes evident that a majority of these 'sovereign states' are practically works of fiction, with the 'citizens and/or subjects' routinely ignoring, circumventing, undermining, or openly mocking the state that claims to rule them. After all, nobody enters politics for any reason except personal benefit and they joy of making others obey, regardless of the pious words said politician may mouth: and since this is always true everywhere, why pretend otherwise? "Leave the Dear Leaders for the statists: we'll govern ourselves as we please, thank you very much."

Each sovereign state and sub-state has their own hierarchy. As the Republic has been stripped of interstellar military forces assets by the Protectorate, authority over trade by the sovereign worlds, legal powers among the worlds by private court systems (some commercial, some religious), and even creating new laws by the dissolving of the Republican Assembly, The Chairman of the Republic is left to involve himself with diners and diplomatic functions with whatever Commission functionary he can ensnare.

In general, women are expected to stay home, support their husbands, and raise children in Christian societies. Many hold this dictum as more of an idea or a goal than actual practice. Even the women who generally accept these limits have developed quite a number of interesting variations, when putting them to practice – variations which are, as often as not, encouraged by their husbands, who as a rule are more interested in increasing family income than in insuring paternal authority.

The last major attempt at guaranteeing masculine authority – a widespread movement to restrict Christian women from gaining access to higher-level materials on science, accounting, and mathematics – has recently collapsed, mainly due to the conviction that smart, knowledgeable mothers raise smart, knowledgeable children. No man wants his children to be the ignorant hired hands of his gloating neighbour's son. Even the idea that women should not fight is being somewhat undermined, as the counterproposal that women should defend the homestead and train their children to fight, even when the menfolk are gone, gains increasing currency. Women remained banned from the military, but few men care for being told what to do; with the local militaries legally unable to punish desertion, few governments bother to create a standing army.

Law

The legal codes of both the Republic and the constituent states are generally tied fairly closely to principles set forth in the Mosaic Code: Case law, judges without lawyers, public trials with public evidence, penalties for false charges laid at the feet of the accuser. The Republic per se is not permitted to lay charges against anyone: the Protestant and Calvinistic governments are likewise restricted. The actual details of the law hew to Biblical norms, to a greater or lesser extent: administrative law is specifically forbidden, and legislatures per se are either weak or do not exist, as it is considered blasphemous for men to claim to create laws. (This is a major reason for the disintegration of the Republican Assembly.)

Sanctions

Torture as punishment is considered to be a divine prerogative: "God may torture, as He knows the level of pain that may be justly justified. Man does not, so he may not." Claims of the usefulness of torture as an interrogation tool are sneered at, as merely a fake excuse for the genuinely sadistic/power-lusting drives of men with uniforms, badges, and guns. Debt slavery, usually limited to a term of less than seven years (and forbidden to be longer than 49 years) is a fairly common punishment for criminals, as is lashings and fines (to be directly given to the victim). Executions are rare in Orthodox societies, forbidden in Catholic cultures, rare or forbidden in most Protestant societies, and common in Calvinistic nations. Long prison terms are common in Orthodox and Protestant societies, uncommon in Catholic nations, and forbidden in Calvinistic states.

Destiny

While the component religions and societies within the Republic have quite strong opinions about their eternal destiny, the Republican government itself has great difficulty justifying its existence. For now, it sticks with the theme that Christians should stay united, growing closer in love and compassion: a pleasant goal, but not exactly as stirring as a call for galactic conquest of the Other or a unified state, ruled by The People, which will guarantee Prosperity For All.

Religion

There are several different forms of conservative/fundamentalistic/theocratic Christianity within the Republic.

The Orthodox and Catholic societies merely work to protect their populace, stay obedient to God, and hopefully increase the numbers of worlds subscribing to their religion over time. The Orthodox send few missionaries, the Catholics many. The majority of Orthodox believers remain within the worlds of the Reborn Imperium; only those within Imperial Cianji were forced to flee to Moscow: a few communities reside on other Republican worlds.

Catholics are found throughout the Reborn Imperium, with a minority still holding on in Imperial Cianji space, either hidden in tolerant worlds or imprisoned and slated for expulsion to the Republic. Notable independent worlds such as Justince and Athens host sizable Imperial Catholic populations: Pax Decorum is especially notable as an important, very Catholic world. Both the Orthodox and the Catholics are amillennialist, believing that things will remain much as they are until the physical return of Christ.

The Var Kirat are dominated by Solomani Catholics: there is some work being done to unify the two versions of Catholicism, but the going is slow. A small number of Var Kirat Vilani believers exists, holding faith to the Solomani God-man – but they still reside in the Ziru Sirkaa. (Some Vilani Empire representatives have visited the Republic, looking for a suitable location to dump these non-conformist Vilani.) Var Kirat theology is postmillennialist, linking the salvation of the universe with the spread of Solomani Catholic humaniti. A lesser heaven is available to non-Solomani humans who follow Christ, according to internal doctrine.

Protestant groups can be found wherever there are Catholics: sometimes in greater numbers, but usually in fewer numbers. Charismatics are especially important on the independent world of Hub, while Baptists now dominate Geneva, originally settled by Calvinists. This group are traditional premillennialists, believing in the imminent beginning of the tribulation, perhaps by an alien invasion, or by Protectorate Commission assault. The failure of the ~~world~~ universe to end after 6000 years is simply ignored.

There are only a few tens of thousands of Calvinists within the Reborn Imperium, mainly as a loathed minority on Wsi. However, they dominate the important world of Quajora. They have an uneasy association with the anti-Christian Cianji, who they now need for military security. Their missionaries have successfully planted churches on the populous worlds of Cianji and Diaoran, but this fact is kept under wraps, so as not to provoke the Zanist Emperor. Calvinists in the sector are strong postmillennialists, despite some serious obstacles to the willing, joyful, broadly universal submission of everyone to Christ. For one thing, the Calvinists themselves have some difficulty meeting that high standard…

Economics

Interstellar trade is fairly widespread, especially when the low settler population is considered. With people able to choose what currency to use or avoid, commodity money (gold, silver, lanthanum, rare isotopes, etc.) is the common choice, as the value can't be easily inflated away. Some experiments in using units of electricity as currency has met a certain amount of success. Barter is rather well-developed among the poorer worlds.

Economics remain dominated by men, especially the sole proprietorship. A large minority of women maintain a home based business: a smaller minority, without children, have established a highly unregulated but increasingly influential network of learning circles and feminine mutual support agencies.

Race

The majority of the population are Mixed Vilani, descended from the assorted groups that originally settled Cianji. As such, the various ethnicities have relatives in Imperial Cianji, Reborn Imperial, and Noble Federation space. It is possible that there may be a pure Vilani settlement of converts within a decade or two.

Attitudes to the long-vanished aliens are rather more diverse than usual: while the population here is as xenophobic as elsewhere in the sector, there is a small number of eccentrics who argue that believers have no right to destroy what God made, ensouled or not. One notable individual, an exiled Cianji noble, has managed to link up with Var Kirat who hold to similar opinions, and with certain Vilani who (very quietly) would extend support for the toleration of the Bwaps, the historical ally of the Vilani.

A few very daring individuals even claim that the imago Dei is not tied to genetics, but is actually linked to the ability to create and generate new ideals. Such a broad definition of divinely attributed worth – and, therefore, divine accountability – strikes at the heart of quite a broad range of assumptions regarding human exceptionalism, and goes against three millennia of specific Christian teaching and general Solomani religious thought. And of course, there is no requirement that non-humans even desire to be deemed of eternal value – and, therefore,

worthy of eternal punishment for their sins. Perhaps they would prefer to remain soulless, and thus escape judgement and accountability as well as salvation and redemption.

So far, however, these revolutionary ideals and their implications merely continue to percolate quietly on the outskirts of human civilization, unknown to all but a few locals.

Not surprisingly, I differ with the idea that FV is declining in influence, but I do agree that the form this influence takes could be unpredictable. For example, when the reconstructionist reactor melted down, that was that, or so some people thought. But since that time, the whole Reformed world (R2K excepted) has been exuding a noticeable radioactive glow. From worldview seminars to every form of cultural engagement, the Reformed have been greatly affected by something they pretend has had no influence to speak of at all. This has happened despite the fact that, except for some mutants living in the crater, there are hardly any people today calling themselves reconstructionists.

Douglas Wilson, "Like Annie Oakley Doing Trick Shots"
http://www.dougwils.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8683:like-annie-oakley-doing-trick-shots&catid=46:auburn-avenue-stuff

On Masters, Today and in the Far Future

[O'Brien said] "You understand well enough *how* the Party maintains itself in power. Now tell me *why* we cling to power. What our motive? Why should we want power?"
…
"[Winston] knew in advance what O'Brien would say. That the party did not seek power for its own ends, buy only for the good of the majority. That it sought power because men in the mass were frail cowardly creatures who could not endure liberty or face the truth, and must be ruled over and systematically deceived by others who were stronger than themselves. That the choice for mankind lay between freedom and happiness, and that, for the great bulk of mankind, happiness was better."
…
[O'Brien said] "Now I will tell you the answer to my question. It is this. The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power. Not wealth or luxury or long life or happiness: only power, pure power. What pure power means you will understand presently. We are different from all the oligarchies of the past, in that we know what we are doing.

All the others, even those who resembled ourselves, were cowards and hypocrites. The German Nazis and the Russian Communists came very close to us in their methods, but they never had the courage to recognise their own motives. They pretended, perhaps they even believed, that they had seized power unwillingly and for a limited time, and that just round the corner there lay a paradise where human beings would be free and equal.

We are not like that. We know that no one ever seizes power with the intention of relinquishing it. Power is not a means, it is an end. One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to safeguard the dictatorship. The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power.

Now do you understand me?"

George Orwell, 1984.

Today

It's unlikely that any of the world-masters and star-rulers of Starbreak actually have such a clear-eyed view of themselves as O'Brien has in 1984 – although the democratic socialists of Daskomo are definitely on the right path. Regardless, their *behaviour* will approximate O'Brien's idea, to a greater or lesser degree. This is why well-mannered sociopaths tend to rise to the top of many businesses and all political cultures – they say the lies people want to hear, and they have the amorality to do it and sleep stress-free at night. Such is the planned result of our culture, where ethics and law are what the power elite says it is.

Regrettably for them, Reality has a way of reasserting itself.

But the delusions of our current masters – best explained in the Network (1976) speech – will be the delusions of our future masters, assuming that they are non-psionic aging humans. There will only be adoration of the *fruits* of capitalism – made possible by the (deeply hated) *moral* society, which permits trust, protects property and liberty, and insures a predictable, stable body of law: something businesses, civil society, and families need to thrive.

The best way to live is without lying masters. They naturally lose power when individual men master themselves, either on their own behalf or in the name of God or another higher cause. Men who take responsibility for their own actions – and don't blame others when they fail – have no need for a Dear Leader who will feed them.

Only a minority of men wish to take responsibility for their own lives, though. Most cry out for Strong Men with Simple Solutions. This is true now, and will be true 3000 years from now. Plan your game accordingly.

The Far Future: Government

The Third Imperium is openly dominated by very well connected families and large interstellar corporations. In today's democratic era – only dating from the end of World War I, a hundred years ago – the aristocracy prefers to keep a low profile. But for eons past, both the military and the economic aristocracy ruled directly and publicly: and considering the sweep of history, is reasonable to assume that our own era is but an aberration of the Standard Human Government.

The Standard Human Government is best described as a single King, assisted by an Inner Circle, who rules the Nation for the benefit of a class linked by shared history, shared blood and a shared confession that justifies their power. The Standard Human Government always has an upper class, composing of the best military officers (who kills the King's enemies), major merchants (who fund the King's goals), and the most respected priests – religious, scholastic, and/or scientific – who provides the ideological support for the King's power. Other members of the upper classes include the senior bureaucrats – judges and ministers – and information gatekeepers, be they the Royal Post or 24-hour news channels.

In some of these cases (Libby, Mubarak), the *Post* couches its defense of political elites in terms of concerns about the process while claiming they're receptive to the possibility of punishment. In others (Edwards), the concerns they raise are not invalid. But whatever else is true, *Post* Editors are deeply and almost invariably disturbed when political elites are subjected to criminal accountability for their wrongful acts, but wholly indifferent -- if not supportive -- when ordinary Americans are mercilessly prosecuted for far less serious wrongdoing.

Glenn Greenwald, "WashPost: criminal law is not for political elites."

http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/glenn_greenwald/2011/06/04/washpost/index.html

Classical aristocracies ruled for several reasons; among them, the expense needed to be an effective warrior, widespread illiteracy, the slowness of information, and the disorganization of the masses. Freedom takes work to gain, and work to keep… and most people prefer to work on something else, be it Tribe or Wealth or Power. Only when freedom is desirable, cheap to gain, and cheap to protect, does it blossom in a culture.

The Far Future: Freedom

By the 21^{h} century, freedom has become rather cheap, excluding socialist nations that artificially increase its cost. But after the Terrans had conquered the Vilani, freedom has become expensive again, on the interstellar scale.

- Starships are expensive – even a pathetic 100-dton Scout costs ~25 million credits or more, depending on the Traveller version.
- By that time, the public school system would have completed its goal of building a mass of ignorant, easily-led drones. (There are *reasons* why illiteracy is more widespread now than in 1900.)
- Starships are far faster than anything we have today, but they are not instantaneous, and space is absolutely huge. And even if Traveller FTL travel was instantaneous, it would only replace one problem with another – the sheer number of worlds out there. That's why Arthur C. Clarke insisted that "We'll Never Conquer Space" (1960 essay)
- The sheer number of fragmented and isolated cultures – on a world scale – was not a real problem during the Ziru Sirka, as the Vilani simply pounded cultural conformity into every skull they could find. However, with the arrival of the Terrans, the genie was out of the bottle – and it's going to stay out, assuming the Imperium refuses to get involved in an internal slaughter that would make Stalin burst with pride.

The Far Future: Violence

No one, in our time, believes in any sanction greater than military power; no one believes that it is possible to overcome force except by greater force. There is no "law" there is only power. I am not saying that that is a true belief, merely that it is the belief which all modern men do actually hold. Those who pretend otherwise are either intellectual cowards, or power-worshippers under a thin disguise, or have simply not caught up with the age they are living in.

George Orwell, on Rudyard Kipling.

Certainly, Orwell's words ring true for the Third Imperium, where vast power rests on the man who commands the Imperial military – a.k.a. he who holds the *imperium*. He who rules by the military can, of course, be disposed of by the military. Ask Emperor Styryx what he thinks about the Aslan Guard sometime.

Recently, the power of raw military force has been in the decline: violence didn't save the Soviet Union, and – despite the fact that the People's Republic of China spends more on internal security than on their military

– it would not be enough to protect the Chinese Communist Party, if it was their ONLY pillar of strength. Today, a well-funded welfare state more important to governments than military/police power…

…but that isn't true if communications is slow, and/or easily hindered. Slow information grids means a slow spread of wealth, as well as fewer restraints on the use of force. True, nuclear explosions allow for very little granularity, vast bureaucracies cost money, and the Solomani-style Imperium isn't as willing to pour as much resources into micromanagement as the Vilani were. But the Amritsar Massacre, for example, only had its impact on the British Empire thanks to instant communications. Empires need massacres when the natives get too uppity, and a Solomani-dominated Imperium needs to keep them out of the public eye to protect their reputation.

Banking

Be advised that there has never been a 'ruling bank' among the Vilani, which didn't have a money economy during the First Imperium. There were most likely powerful Terran banks in the Second Imperium, which were quite possibly the reason for the massive inflation that destroyed that government. There is only one powerful bank in the Imperium, though. Why?

First, the huge megacorporations of the Third Imperium are quite capable of self-financing their own affairs, keeping their money 'in-house'. They were never distracted with paper-shuffling games like American industry was. (Compare post-70s General Electric & General Motors with post-70s Honda & Toyota.) The Imperium has precious little inflation over a thousand years, which points to some form of hard currency, probably gold in my opinion. In history, only the Byzantine Empire has similar economic stability, which also went with a hard money standard.

Question: How did the Imperial government finance their expensive wars with a hard money standard?
Answer: First, there were never that many external Imperial wars, generally occurring at about 80-year intervals. Factor in the widespread use of mercenaries, corporate, and planetary forces for in-house violence, and it is apparent that use of the Imperial military is quite restricted, far more than the British army in the 19th century or the American military today. Unlike today, corporate interests can't use Imperial soldiers as a cat's paw, but have to do their own killing in the style of the pre-Mutiny East Indian Company.

Question: When there is a need for a huge military campaign, though, Imperial currency can't be inflated (or there would have been far more Imperial wars). So, how was the massive Solomani Rim War financed?
Answer: Why, the same way the Byzantine Empire did: directly robbing the more powerful families and worlds, naturally, with whatever excuses got the job done. It's likely that the Third Imperium simply took the wealth of the major Solomani families and most powerful Solomani worlds, solving several internal problems at one blow. Referees are advised to use the internship and wealth seizure policies of the U.S government vis-à-vis Japanese Americans as a model. Remember, this war was planned far in advanced, so plenty of time was available to lay down the suitable pretexts.

While the Senior Banking Establishment – now, or in the far future – is certainly willing to utilize armed force to assist in strip-mining an economy, they always use a borrowed sword. Unlike crypto-national industrial combines like the Vilani bureaux or the East Indian Company, financiers are simply too craven and self-serving to ever willingly die for anyone or anything, even their own financial institution. In the history of all three Imperia, this lack of loyalty leads to the moneymen having harsh, one-sided encounters with a vast range of political, familial/household, ethnic, and/or corporate armed forces.

The Hortalez Exception

Hortalez et Cie, LIC, founded in 221 Imperial, was a partial exception during the era of the Third Imperium. A banking, investment, and insurance house, Hortalez focused on underwriting the huge megaprojects that an interstellar society requires. Unlike the intensely corrupt 'modern investment banks' of America and Europe, fit for a morally corrupt age, Hortalez is an outfit tied closely to a particular trusted family dynasty, in this case House Hortalez, owner of 74% of the stock, with other notable owners being the Vilani megacorporations and House Alkhalikoi itself. Hortalez treats its reputation as an intensely valuable asset. (**Referee:** I advise using the 19th century Rothchilds as a model.)

Note that Hortalez prefers to use the very best mercenaries of Imperial Space to enforce contractual terms, rather than organic corporate forces. How the Hortalez family uses their household troops is unknown: I suspect that they only protect family personnel and personal property, not megacorporate holdings and property.

The Var Kirat – Three Perspectives

I have always been interested with the intersection of race, religion, and the possibilities of some serious bioengineering. The Solomani – a human race of gifted bioengineers, who insist that they are the natural masters of the galaxy – are perfectly fitted tools to investigate these interests.

Their religiousness is *not* emphasised in the original Traveller material: a reasonable assumption at the time. During the 1970s-1980s, the secularization thesis was still a reasonably accurate belief, the atheistic educational and media establishment were still unchallenged as the gatekeepers of knowledge, and fundamentalism – here defined as 'holding a particular religious doctrine to be literally true' – was the domain of uneducated, aging women writing angry letters to the editor.

In contrast, the importance of race, breeding, and genetics is an integral part of the Darwinism that has always informed the Traveller Universe, right from the origins of the various races, to the very concept of a Major and Minor Race, and onwards to the nature of the Solomani, Hiver, K'kree, and Vargr governments.

So why did I write in the concept of 'the religious Solomani' in my understanding of Traveller?

First, it let me play with a whole new set of ideals, concepts, and scenarios that flow naturally from the assumption. Instead of restricting myself to the standard adventure fare of fighting and stealing, I can start peering into the skulls of the local inhabitants, and start figuring out *why* they do what they do.

I don't mind games that are just quick fights with cardboard cut-outs, and it's good that there will always be a place for such adventures. However, I enjoy more complicated worlds, and religious Solomani lets me force some limits on the inhabitants. "All liberals cultures are alike, and all conservative cultures are oddly distinct" and odd cultures make interesting – perhaps dangerous – places to investigate.

Secondly, atheism bores me. Modern, mainstream atheism is just a lot of British, German, and French rationalizations proving why the State, rather than God, should be the Source of Law and the Final Owner of my Life, my Family, and all that I have. Self-serving justifications for unlimited power are a turn-off, regardless of how many prestigious degrees the speaker has. In contrast, I find Reformed Christian arguments for the equal sovereignty of Church and Family and State, with separate jurisdictions, highly interesting. I just *love* the idea of stripping power and authority from our Compassionate Masters – don't you?

Do the religious lie? Naturally! But he can't do the rational thing, and just insist that evil is good, rewrite the Law to suit himself, or insist that there's no Law that he is subject to. He doesn't get to live in an ethical system where 'The People' – that is, the power-elite, speaking in the name of The People – are the source of the Law.

Difficult problems make for interesting role-playing scenarios. Problems where all ethical difficulties can be resolved by personal fiat quickly cease to be problems, and become mere mathematical exercises in saying and doing whatever is necessary to get what you want. Mechanically predictable secularists are a crashing bore, once you know the framework they operate in.

Third, I like to push the limits of the Christian religion, to see what it can do. Certainly, in-universe the Solomani Party Elite will pose as the good believing Christian, even pointing to the Solomani symbol to rally the faithful. (That cross-in-circle symbol is part of the gnostic religion, by the way, not the Christian one). But neither the standard lies of Party politicians nor the social manipulation of the Party cognitive & media elite interests me. What is of interest is that of the honest Solomani believer of the Far Future, in a situation far different than the average Christian of 2011 (who seems to be a female Brazilian charismatic Roman Catholic in her 30s, by the way).

Why would he support the Solomani Party? What does he fear when he sees an alien? What is his stance on geneered humans – and what is his biblical support? Or the Vilani – are they really descended from another Adam?

A lost child of Noah? The lost tribe of Israel? A Satanic mockery of real people? Artificial humans, bred in the labs of the fallen angels – who look a *lot* like the Droyne, by the way…? Or perhaps it's the demonic Zhodani, with their twisted psionic powers, who managed to escape from the Flood in the ancient starships of that advanced era… ("Maybe they have those powers because they are *sinless*," whispers a mysterious agent, tall and thin, deep in the Marches…)

How does the Party emphasis on Race interact with the Biblical demands for Righteousness? And what is the *imago Dei*, anyways? Ancestral lineage to Adam and Eve? Spiritual awareness? Organic sentience? (The Third Imperium denies citizenship to artificial lifeforms). If Solomani humaniti is as superior as the Party claims, is it because of genuine moral righteousness, or simple divine election – "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated?" Or maybe it's just Darwinian racial superiority, like all those evolutionary atheists claim…

Chasing down answers to these questions is what gives rise to the following three viewpoints, described below.

…Bizarrely, this is shaping them to actually *be* the 'kindly elder race & guardian species' their self-image demands. It is actually possible for them to meet their goals of endless tribal/racial glory… right until the moment they no longer follow the difficult "power through service" path, and choose the pragmatic and flawlessly rational "power because I have the guns, money, and technology" route.

The second they abandon the Way of the Spirit and follow the Rational Path, the Var Kirat will have their teeth kicked into the back of their throats by the Lord God: the same wages all the other Master Races in all of history have received, each in their turn. But to the extent they continue to serve the Lesser Breeds, suppress their own narcissistic/self-worshiping thirst for power, and place righteousness above self-interest, to that same extent their reputation, fame, and honour will grow across the stars.

We should not fear them [the Var Kirat] now: they have no land, and have little political pull, compared to the Four Empires. We should not fear them later, if they start actually believing that their glorious ebony skins and massive charisma (as opposed to snow-white skins and massive intelligence) gives them the right to take what they want and kill whom they please: such fools quickly find ways to either wipe themselves out, or get slaughtered by their very annoyed neighbours.

But if they actually make themselves 'perfectly righteous' – using geneering, psionics, cybertech, or just by continuous obedience to God, generation after generation, then we should fear them.

Cultures that lie are inefficient and wasteful, compared to cultures that speak the truth. Cultures that hate children shrink: cultures that love children grow. Pagan states kill for power and pleasure; righteous states kill because God wants the criminal before His Court, *NOW*. Rational cultures hold that the universe is meaningless, and thus learn nothing of importance from it. Christian cultures watch their Maker, and learn.

If the Var Kirat consistently follows the Way of the Spirit, how will we look to them, two centuries from now? We may worship the same God, but we are all Mixed Vilani, while they are all Solomani. We may worship the same Shadow-Emperor; but for them it is natural, and for us it is a difficult thing, learning to think and believe like an profoundly alien God-Man who has little concern for Tradition, laughs at Bureaucracy, and insists on *irnagim* [Vilani: 'weirdness/insanity'] like Forgiveness and Compassion for your enemies.

If such a holy and mighty people look upon us, and are disgusted by our filthy sins, what can we do but die before their righteous hatred? Sure, we could shout 'tolerance' and 'hypocrite' and 'fanatic', but this isn't the 20th century. The Christians now are not the Christians then; today, they will joyfully weave our words into a mocking hymn as our bones and our children's bones bleach in the sun. They may be humble before God; they may show mercy to each other; but for us, there is nothing but pleasant words and watchful eyes at best.

But maybe they will adopt us as a project of theirs. All empires, conservatives and liberal, like to groom chosen minorities for a time as useful proxies… only to abandon them to the night when the political winds shift.

Blessed Mother Cassandra Gi-Hanass, The Moscow Hot-Air Chatroom, 31-1500 Imperial

Blessed Mother Gi-Hanass, you are far too trusting when it comes to the words of men. You are the same kind of woman who would actually *believe* some handsome revolutionary ranting on about 'freeing the peasants from the wicked landlords' and you'll start to argue that 'a peasant society is a low-brow society'. Of course, he didn't mean a *word* of it. He just wanted to take what the landlords had, and give it to himself and his buddies – after starving a few million of the peasants to death 'to Root Out the Reactionaries'. If saying a particular set of sequenced sounds helps him to get what he wants, he'll cheerfully say it; if some different vocalization does the trick, he'll say that instead.

Same difference for our blueblood Christian friends. These are *Solomani* we're talking about here – they can't maintain a single government for even a century without some brutal coup or ugly civil war kicking in. Today in 1500, they go on and on about God and the Royal Race – but by 1750, they will be all polysexual atheists, or hip-deep in a Second Reformation, or mystical monks spending more time in jumpspace than in realspace, or no-tech losers, scrounging a living on a dozen hostile worlds. The Solomani have the attention span of a common [gnat], the loyalty of a [snake], and the memory of [goldfish]. Big mouths full of cant, in big heads full of fetid water.

The killers to watch are our other Noble Ancestral Race, the Vilani. The Vilani of Enlugal aren't the normal Vilani, who don't care about your genes as long as you obey the Traditions. Uh uh. *These* people have a certain hatred for half-breeds like you and me. And they aren't going to care if you mouth the right religious words, like your supposed Righteous Race would. Being far more materialistic and scientifically-minded, the Vilani will just give us a perfectly empirical, objective, and measurable blood test – promptly followed by a perfectly empirical, objective, and measurable bullet in the brain. No muss, no fuss, no pie-in-the-sky theology. Just logical action to ensure the elimination of everything that *might* threaten their particular gene sequence.

I'm not a Christian, but I swore the Military Oath, and I'll die in the field for you and your unseen God if I need to. But I sure hope that you're a praying woman, Blessed Mother, because we'll need all the pull we can get if we have to fight them – or, better yet, prevent any such war in the first place.

Mister Henry Roughbump, The Moscow Hot-Air Chatroom, 31-1500 Imperial

Any Vargr can steal, any Aslan can kill, any Hiver can lie, any Zhodani can mindrape, and any Vilani can oppress. We are the Sons of the Living God, and we are called to a higher path. We, and we alone – what other race can even *conceive* of a law beyond that of power and control and survival? All the other races exist only to serve themselves – only we exist to serve Another.

Bishop Spe, Solomani Catholic Prelate
Before The Third Solomani Council of Neworld
115 Imperial/A.D. 4635

A Few Pointers Regarding Ambushes in the 54th Century

This article is derived from the STRATFOR article, "Protective Intelligence Lessons from an Ambush in Mexico" published June 2, 2011, available here: http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20110601-protective-intelligence-lessons-ambush-mexico Read it first, to understand what follows.

OK, let me mention the highlights of the report, before retro-fitting it into the Traveller universe. Note that one of the armoured vehicles had its wheels blown off, making it a sitting duck, while a lot of the Zetas cartel troopers were killed in their vehicles. They were not able to grab their weapons and get out in time. When the police investigated the site, it was obvious that most of the dead men's weapons were taken.

In Mexico, a cartel convoy of this size usually means either 1) a raid against an opponent, or 2) an escort for some valuable goods, in this case most likely narcotics. The police found no narcotics, which makes the second option less likely, but still doesn't rule it out.

"Whether the objective of the ambush was simply to trap and kill a Zetas military team conducting a raid or to steal a high-value load of narcotics, a look at this incident from a protective intelligence point of view provides many lessons for security professionals operating in Mexico and elsewhere."

…for very large values of 'elsewhere'…

"Lesson One: Size Isn't Everything."

A truth that brings joy to single-ship, four-man Traveller PC groups everywhere. Large groups of armed men can most definitely be wiped out by small groups, if they get to set up the killing ground beforehand. Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate the usefulness of hidden explosives: future conflicts may place more emphasis on corrupting radio communication between vehicles or battledress troops; the wonders of cheap, automated snipers, no larger than a monkey; or even radical environmental changes, if the soldiers dislike wearing gas masks or hot'n'heavy NBC suits all the time. There is the old standby of disease, which has killed far more soldiers than bullets. Even cutting off the food supply can do the trick, if the enemy cannot eat the surrounding fauna & flora.

I wonder what a team of PCs can do with a GTL 10-12 artillery gun, suitable ammunition, and a man with a grav belt acting as forward observer. Even a simple 100-ton scout, properly prepped and intelligently used, can turn the tide for an entire front in a GTL 6 war.

The author notes that the best defense isn't size per se, but a high degree of situational awareness, good surveillance/counter surveillance, and smart route planning/scheduling. I would use a mix of PC intelligence and skills (Small Unit Tactics, for example) as the base for determining PC advantage/ disadvantage, modified by actions the PCs take themselves. For escort & convoy missions, PCs who take the time to covertly survey the route before passing through should be rewarded for doing so.

'Smart route planning' isn't exciting, so I would ignore it for a Traveller game, but hardcore simulationists could make the Admin skill do the job. The skill will be absolutely screaming at the Referee as he does so, though: "I'm supposed to be used for dealing with bureaucratic paperwork, not calculating transport timetables, shift changes, and monitoring the volume of radio chatter!"

The article mentions that "In many cases it is also far more prudent to maintain a low profile and fade into the background rather than utilize a high-profile protective detail that screams "I have money.""

While a good lesson, it isn't always applicable in the Traveller universe. Vargr leaders with massive "I have money" escorts get a big boost in charisma, with enemies instinctively holding back or subconsciously spoiling their own attacks. When senior Chinese officials visit your town with all alarms blazing and huge police escorts, their behaviour actually does make sense – in their society. Showy intimidation has its place, as does swift and silent work: the PCs have to know the most efficient tool to use, when faced with a given problem.

"Lesson Two: Armoured Vehicles are Vulnerable"

This includes armoured troops. If the PCs are using armour and technology as their *only* defense – not bothering to survey the site, gather local information, or get some kind of basic understanding of opposing forces – they are cruising for a bruising. Given time to observe and plan (and sufficient arrogance on the part of PCs), low-tech 'mindless hordes' can and will wipe them out. A plan that worked four times in succession can result in a deathtrap when done the fifth time. "OK, this is where the grav tank rams its way through the brick building and… explodes?"

As an analogy, consider the British in Kenya. Back in 1900, the conflict was all about spears vs. Maxims, with the expected outcome. But over time, capitalism will work its magic: even just a few Mau Mau natives, with a handful of cheap modern weapons provided by mysterious benefactors, was enough to raise the cost of holding the colony to intolerable levels. More than one planetary government/el cheapo occupation force/ambitious pirate gang made the mistake of grounding its power on "one hundred air/rafts with machine guns". Everything goes as smooth as silk until the natives find a way to lure the air/rafts low enough for a grenade toss or local riflemen to get their say. And watch out when rocket-propelled grenades start showing up…

Armoured troops tend to rely on armour and 'what always worked before' to protect them. They lack the situational awareness granted by listening to subtle sounds, shifts in scent, and perceptual vision. They are tied to technological infrastructure, to power their suits, repair damage, and handle maintenance and reloading. And they are expensive: a trade-off of 100 GTL 6 soldiers for one GTL 11 armoured trooper is just way too high for the GTL 11 civilization to bear for the 'longue durée'. When facing low-tech opposition, I suspect that more armoured troops have been killed by variations of pit traps, IED's, failing electronics, and an inability to maintain/recharge/fix the suit than by all the knives and spears of Chartered Space combined.

"Lesson Three: Protect Your Schedule"

This is useful in real life, but boring to enact in a Traveller game. Still, schedules have their pleasures: a PC who manages to get the transport schedule of an enemy VIP can inflict serious pain. And an ambush that has been planned properly works out very differently from an ambush slapped together at the last minute.

Warning: the Vilani are past masters in putting schedules to work, and this factor should make itself felt in a realistic Traveller game. PCs are played by ~~Solomani Terrans~~ True Humans, and can't help but have their eyes glaze over when faced with rows and rows of detailed information and repetitious action. The Vilani, in comparison, are fabulous at picking out the momentary gap in surveillance, the small flaw in overlapping weapon cover, the weak point in a timetable, and they have both the combat pragmatism and the goal-oriented discipline to make the PCs very, very sorry for challenging them on their point of strength.

Consider yourself warned.

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