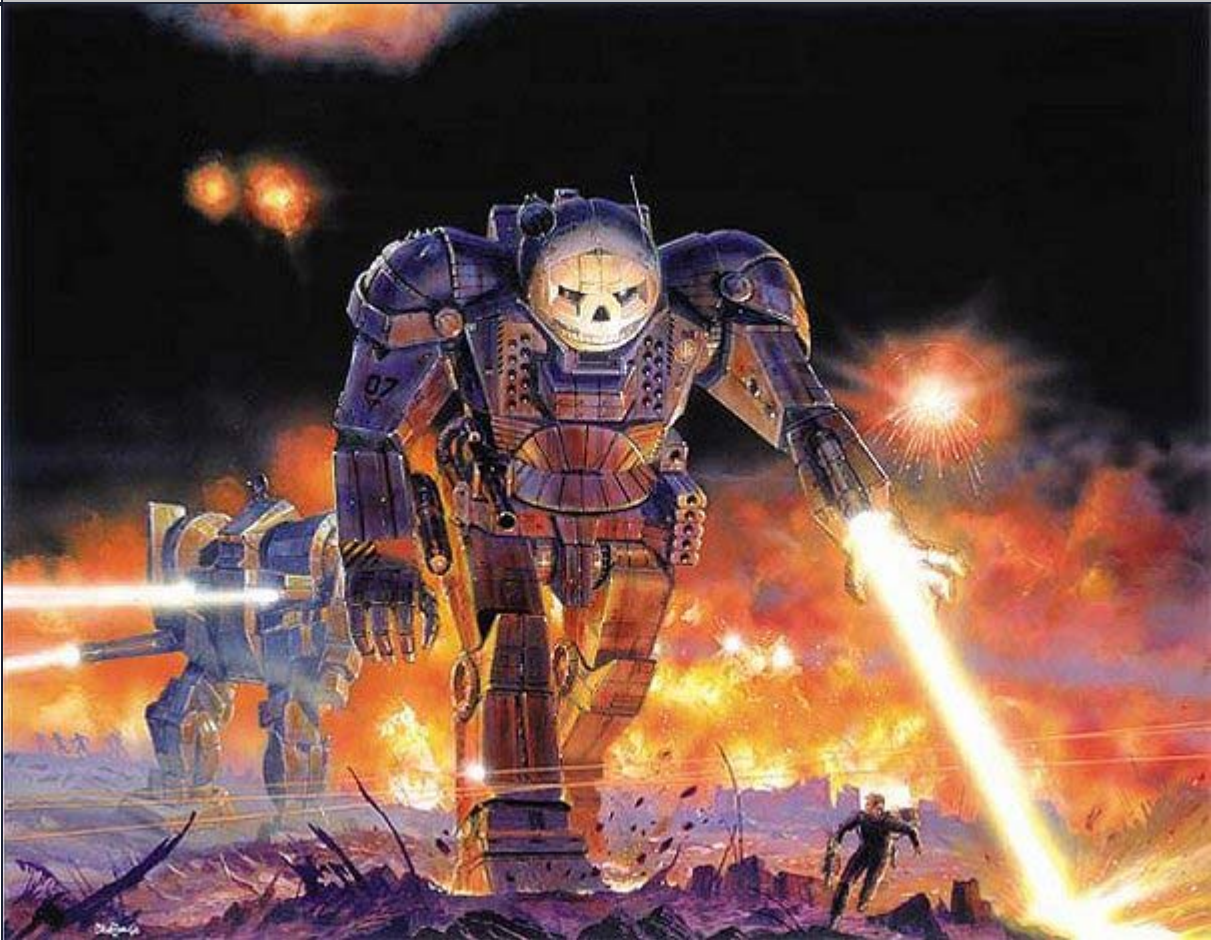


What is Classic Battletech?



Enjoying the Classics By Loren L. Coleman

As I write this, the BattleTech universe is just starting to emerge from the storm of uncertainty and change that enveloped it around April of 2001 with FASA's announcement that, after twenty years, they would be closing their doors. This declaration came as no true surprise to those of us who had been working closely with FASA, or to fans that had seen the dark clouds bunching up on the horizon. However, I think it is fair to say that most of us, prior to the announcement, had hopes of seeing it through to better times. Like mutant ostriches-or perhaps mechanoid ostriches-we had tunneled our heads deep into the sand while taloned feet continued to scratch and claw and entrench ourselves from the inevitable.

The end came with abrupt finality, and the questions began to pile up. What would happen to the game? To the fiction? What about the miniatures and the convention events? There were weeks of panic followed by months of wild speculation. The universe was coming to an end.

Well, the BattleTech universe, at any rate.

Even when WizKids Games stepped in with their promises that BattleTech would continue, it was still with a healthy caveat that the game would also be changing.

Change? Many fans reacted like we had just stomped flat their favorite pewter miniature. Now I for one was thankful that there would be something continuing on. Though while I am certainly a supporter of the new game, soon to be released, I was sad to see the old game let go. Then came the next announcement. Fantasy Productions, out of Germany, would be licensed to keep producing material for the 'classic' BattleTech system and could even keep up the old storylines. Now this truly seemed the best of both worlds. Could we have our Timbiqui Dark and drink it too? It was at least enough to buoy spirits and promote a little confidence as we all waited to see how Classic BattleTech would be handled.

We have kept our fingers crossed, whistled pleasant tunes, and kept up our happy thoughts concerning a universe at war.

CLASSIC BATTLETECH

Condensed down into its most basic form, Classic BattleTech is a universe always on the brink of, in the midst of, or just clawing its way free of the latest interstellar conflict. Try as we might, peace just can't take hold. Thank goodness! Or, maybe the converse, we should be thanking the greed, ambition and dreams of glory belonging to the fictional characters we have crafted to move the universe along. How else would we, the fans and players, get to take out our beloved miniatures and test our battlefield skills against another warrior?

In fact, this perpetual cycle of rebuilding followed by more destruction is also the foundation for one of the game's classic tenets; that technology is no longer an advancing constant. It can regress, be destroyed or simply lost to time. This helps produce the 'scavenger society' which allows us to make believable (or at least credible) the idea that we are fighting interstellar wars with technology that, some of which, might even be bested in today's real military world. It also sets up prizes for this universe, which is often the control of such technology that they do have. The end-all example being, of course, a BattleMech. They aren't simply cool because they are the walking avatars of war. They are also the ultimate reward, as owning one allows you to claim an important piece of the universe for yourself.

It's All About Me.

Well, isn't it?

I'm not saying that a community spirit does not exist among the fans of BattleTech. I actually believe that we have one of the most well-developed and stable communities out there. But what game isn't about some wish fulfillment? A little fantasy escapism? Classic BattleTech has always excelled in this. Some people view their games as legendary battles between good and evil. That is certainly one view, which players are free to take. But at its heart, Classic BattleTech remains so much more. It is a true multiverse of clashing societies and interests, colored in shades of gray rather than black and white, where any person can find and identify with one of the dozens of factions.

At the core of Classic BattleTech will always remain the Great Houses, also known as the Successor States. Not even the Clan invasion sundered this model, as the Clans'

main goal was still the subjugation of the various Houses. They were just a touch more ambitious as to want the entire pie all at once rather than eating one slice at a time. You can break off the Free Rasalhague Republic from the Draconis Combine. You can refuse to acknowledge the St. Ives Compact's re-absorption into the Capellan Confederation. A player can even take their battles out into the Periphery. There is still no escaping the shadows cast by House Davion, et al.

And here is where the fan base was originally built, on five varied cultures, which attracted the players for their own personal reasons. House Kurita fans might be drawn in by the trappings of a feudal Japanese society, or simply enjoy their ruthless approach to battle. Davion players are often just as vehement about their nobility and 'white knight' persona, and never mind that it was their State which started or prompted four of the last five major wars. Even now those players are arguing with a printed page or computer monitor, justifying their faction's actions as 'morally sound.' They may even be right. That's the beauty of it. It is all about the character's (and so, the player's) point of view. Even Sun-Tzu Liao isn't such a bad guy once you get to know him. Really. He's just misunderstood.

And I know some Marik fans that will say that if you believe that, they have a McKenna-class WarShip to sell you.

Where Do We Go From Here?

There is a civil war to finish, the growing problems between Word of Blake and ComStar, and the search for Thomas Marik. We still haven't explored the Vlad-Katrina relationship or the reeducation of Arthur Davion, either. Are there new 'Mech designs on the drawing board? 'Could be,' he says with a smile. What about Omi and the assassin?

Obviously, there is still so much to tell, to show and to do. Classic BattleTech remains a fictional universe full of shattered worlds and disrupted lives, where hope exists but must, at most times, take a back seat to glory and the skill of the knights sworn to protect their way of life. Even now, new lines are being drawn in the sand as alliances break or are forged, as leaders fall or rise. Fantasy Productions, I believe, will be doing their best to live up to the traditions, which have come before, and maybe spark a few new ones of their own.

So, 'Where do we go from here?' Wherever you want. Classic BattleTech is going to deliver the products and stories you've been promised.

What you do with them is up to you.

A Brief History of The Inner Sphere

By Michael A. Stackpole and Diane Piron-Gelmanr

The creation of the great star empires and the formation of the human society known as the Clans begins with humanity's long-ago first steps into space. Among the ancient nations of Terra, the dissolution of traditional alliances and enmities in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries created an era of unprecedented peace and cooperation, in which all societies turned their energies toward the advancement of the human race. By 2020, the ground-breaking research of two scientists-Thomas Kearny and Takayoshi Fuchida-led to the development of a fusion reactor capable of powering a starship. In 2027, the Alliance starship Columbia, powered by the first Kearny-Fuchida fusion engine, made its historic journey to Mars. With that brief voyage, humanity's migration from Terra began.

In 2102, the scientific community began paying renewed attention to pan-dimensional gravitational mathematics, a theory first advanced by Kearny and Fuchida eighty years earlier. Though twenty-first-century scientists had scoffed at it, twenty-second-century physicists used Kearny and Fuchida's work to develop the first faster-than-light ship in an intensive research effort known as the Deimos Project. Deimos produced the first Kearny-Fuchida drive, which created a space warp around a starship through which the craft could "jump" distances of up to thirty light-years. On 5 December 2108, Terra launched the first so-called JumpShip, the TAS Pathfinder, on its famous round trip between Terra and the Tau Ceti system.

The ability to travel between star systems in the blink of an eye led to an unparalleled expansion to other worlds. The first human colony of New Earth, established on Tau Ceti IV in 2116, paved the way for hundreds of others. Under the banner of the Terran Alliance, humanity spread as quickly as its ancestors had once swarmed over Terra. By the year 2235, an Alliance survey counted more than six hundred human colonies scattered across a sphere roughly eighty light-years in diameter. However, this colonial expansion carried within it the seeds of its own destruction. Self-sufficient colonies far from their founding worlds began agitating for home rule, and in 2236 a group of worlds at the edge of human-explored space declared independence from Terra. The Colonial Marines, dispatched to quell the rebellion, failed miserably. Within six years, the Alliance government had reluctantly granted independence to all colonies farther than thirty light-years from Terra.

RISE OF THE HEGEMONY

Over the next several decades, a combination of political infighting and the economic strain of supporting so many colonies-a burden greatly exacerbated by rampant corruption-ate away at the fabric of the Terran Alliance. Tales of colonists starving to death sparked riots among sympathetic Terrans, while the ranks of the poor, dispossessed and angry grew. In 2314, the unrest erupted into Alliance-wide civil war. The Alliance Global Militia, which had remained uneasily neutral throughout the long years of strife, stepped in at the behest of James McKenna, an admiral in the Alliance Global Navy. Using his newfound authority as the Alliance's savior, McKenna tore

down the corrupt Alliance government and established the Terran Hegemony in its place. In 2316, a grateful public elected him the Hegemony's first director-general.

During McKenna's twenty-three years in office, he launched three military campaigns to bring independent colony worlds back under Hegemony control, in the belief that only unity could truly bring peace and prosperity. The first two campaigns, though difficult, were largely successful; the third, launched in 2335, was not. The aging McKenna left control of the final campaign to his son Konrad, whose persistent refusal to follow standard procedure eventually ended in disaster. In 2338, Konrad led his naval convoys blindly into the heavily mined Syrma system, losing all but two of his twenty-nine troopships. This failure gave heart to the worlds opposing the Hegemony, which had begun to ally with one another to protect themselves from the Hegemony's expanding influence.

Konrad's disgrace left McKenna without an heir to take his place. Upon McKenna's death in 2339, the Hegemony's High Council passed the leadership of the Hegemony to his third cousin, Michael Cameron. The new director-general immediately began efforts to cement good relations with the allied colony worlds, which had by this time formed independent nations.

In 2351, Cameron made a decision whose cultural repercussions would echo for centuries. He created the Peer List, establishing the equivalent of a feudal nobility whose members owed their exalted rank to their achievements. Among the first to receive a title was Dr. Gregory Atlas, lauded for his work on refining myomer bundles. These incredibly powerful synthetic muscles were an integral part of early WorkMechs; when powered by a fusion reactor, myomer bundles give a BattleMech its strength and mobility. Though Dr. Atlas would not live to see the first BattleMech used in action on 5 February 2439, his work changed the face of war.

Cameron's Peer List also led to the creation of feudal ruling families in the various independent states surrounding the Hegemony. In the latter half of the twenty-fourth and the early twenty-fifth centuries, tensions between these fiefdoms escalated into open war. Humanity's interstellar nations fought battle after battle, each more savage than the last, culminating in the unspeakable massacre of thousands of civilians on the world of Tintavel in the Capellan Confederation. The Confederation's leader, Chancellor Aleisha Liao, responded to the tragedy by devising the Ares Conventions—a set of rules that, rather than trying to prevent war, legitimized its conduct. On 13 June 2412, the Hegemony and all other nations signed the Ares Conventions, agreeing to limit the use of nuclear weapons and cease assaulting civilian targets. Though hailed as an act of peace, the Ares Conventions in effect made war acceptable. Many of the signatory states wasted little time in abusing the privilege.

THE STAR LEAGUE ERA

The Hegemony engaged in its share of battles over the next century or so, but equally often it served as a mediator between warring parties. Despite the Hegemony's history of military expansion, Terra's presence at its heart gave it a certain credibility as a peacemaker. Ian Cameron, who became director-general in 2549, expanded the Hegemony's peacemaking role and negotiated an end to a number of conflicts. In 2556, Ian persuaded the leaders of the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation to sign the Treaty of Geneva; this famous document laid the

groundwork for the formation of the Star League, the interstellar alliance that all too briefly ended wars and advanced the general welfare of humanity. The Lyran Commonwealth signed the treaty in 2558; the Federated Suns, in 2567. With the inclusion of the Draconis Combine in 2569, Ian Cameron achieved his dream of uniting virtually all of humanity under one leader.

Led by the enlightened Cameron dynasty, the Star League gave its citizens peace and prosperity for nearly two hundred years. Though even the Star League could not wipe out the human need for conflict, it kept disputes between its member-states under firm control. After Lord Simon Cameron's tragic death in 2751, the rulers of all the member-states served as regents for Simon's young son, Richard Cameron, but unfortunately abused their positions to jockey for personal power. The lonely Richard turned to Stefan Amaris, ruler of the Rim Worlds Republic in the far-off Periphery, for friendship and advice. Amaris hated the Camerons and used his false friendship with Richard to destroy the Star League from within. On 27 December 2766, Stefan Amaris murdered Richard and took control of the Star League.

Within weeks of this coup d'état, General Aleksandr Kerensky, commander of the Star League Defense Force, launched a bitter, thirteen-year war to liberate the League from the usurper's grasp. On 29 September 2779, Kerensky led the assault against Amaris's last stronghold on Terra. In the face of overwhelming force, Amaris surrendered. Kerensky ordered SLDF troops to summarily execute him, his family and his closest aides for their crimes against humanity.

In late 2780, the power-hungry Council Lords stripped Kerensky of his title as Protector of the Realm and ordered him to disperse all SLDF units to their peacetime locations. Bereft of central leadership, the member-states of the Star League vied with one another for control of the League. Unable to agree on which of them should become the new First Lord, the lords officially dissolved the High Council in August of 2781, left Terra and began to build their own power bases. When the various lords attempted to persuade SLDF units to back their bids for power, General Kerensky took drastic action. On 14 February 2784, Kerensky proposed to his troops that the SLDF should leave the Inner Sphere and found a new society based on the ideals of the now-defunct Star League. In late November 2784, more than 80 percent of the SLDF departed with Kerensky's Operation Exodus. The bewildered people of the Inner Sphere, mourning the loss of their hero, comforted themselves with the belief that Kerensky and his people would return when humanity needed them.

CENTURIES OF WAR

In the resulting power vacuum, the rulers of the realms now called the Successor States fought endless, brutal wars, each seeking to re-establish the Star League under his own leadership. Throughout three hundred years of conflict, the Successor Lords accomplished little save to blast humankind virtually back to the Stone Age. By the end of the third so-called Succession War, humanity had lost nearly every technological advance that the Star League had made possible. Only stringent restrictions on destroying JumpShips and other irreplaceable technologies of war allowed interstellar combat to continue. The fighting ground down to endless border skirmishes in which no combatant could gain a significant advantage.

One of the few technologies that survived was the hyperpulse generators that made interstellar communication possible. These were jealously guarded by the Holy Order of ComStar, founded by Star League Minister of Communications Jerome Blake in order to preserve communications during the coming years of war. The organization gradually evolved into a cult that worshiped Blake's writings and dedicated itself to guarding technology's secrets.

STEPS TOWARD PEACE

By the turn of the thirty-first century, common wisdom among Successor State militaries held that conquest of the Inner Sphere through conventional warfare was impossible. Those who wished to found a second Star League had to find another way. In 3020, Archon Katrina Steiner of the Lyran Commonwealth sent a peace proposal to her fellow Successor Lords, but only Prince Hanse Davion of the Federated Suns showed any interest. In 3022, the Archon and the prince concluded a secret alliance that would bind their realms together through Hanse Davion's marriage to Katrina's daughter and heir, Melissa Steiner. This union joined two families and two nations into a single strong realm, combining the prosperous Lyran Commonwealth with the militarily powerful Federated Suns. It also put the Draconis Combine in an uncomfortable position between two of its greatest enemies and led the smaller Capellan Confederation and Free Worlds League to fear conquest by the emerging Federated Commonwealth.

After months of secret negotiations among the Capellan Confederation, the Draconis Combine and the Free Worlds League, all three signed the Concord of Kapetyn in 3024. Intended as a counter to the Federated Commonwealth, this triple alliance provided for mutual support and defense. It also guaranteed that any renewed war would engulf the entire Inner Sphere.

The first decades of the new century also saw the beginnings of a technological renaissance, set in motion by the unexpected discovery in 3024 of a Star League-era memory core. Copies of the core soon found their way to each Successor State, leading to a boom in industry and the revival of precious, lost technologies in varied fields, from medicine to military hardware. Calm settled over the Inner Sphere, as the constant warfare between its nations shifted to the scientific arena. As usual, however, the peace was only temporary.

FOURTH SUCCESSION WAR

On 20 August 3028, Hanse Davion and Melissa Steiner held their wedding on Terra in the presence of their fellow Successor Lords. At the reception following the wedding, as he fed Melissa a piece of wedding cake, Prince Hanse announced, "Wife, in honor of our marriage, in addition to this morsel I give you a vast prize. My love, I give you the Capellan Confederation!" With those words, Hanse Davion launched the Fourth Succession War.

In a series of military "exercises" held between 3026 and 3028, Hanse had moved vast numbers of troops under the guise of training. He had also reorganized his army, regrouping battalions and regiments into Regimental Combat Teams consisting of one or more regiments of BattleMechs plus armor, infantry and artillery support. This

organization gave Davion troops overwhelming advantages. Training, traveling and fighting together gave them unusual cohesion in the field, making them a far more effective fighting force than the enemy units they faced. In 3028, the RCTs poured into the Capellan Confederation in seven successive waves, cutting it in half.

Such large-scale mobilization did not come without cost. The vast demand for JumpShips and DropShips to ferry troops across space reduced commerce between worlds to essential items, inflicting economic hardship on many planets. In addition, ComStar opposed Hanse Davion's war and placed the Federated Suns under interdiction, relaying no messages to, from or between Federated Suns worlds. Hampered by the interdiction and satisfied with his conquests, Hanse Davion sued for peace in 3029. The battered Capellan Confederation agreed willingly to the Federated Suns' terms, desperate to free its scant military resources for use against other enemies. Despite the Kapetyn treaty, the Free Worlds League had exploited the Confederation's weakened state, taking more than a few Capellan worlds; if it hoped to survive as a nation, the Confederation could no longer afford war with the Davion realm.

SKIRMISHES AND PLOTS

Between 3029 and 3039, the Successor States jockeyed for power through covert dealings and small skirmishes in lieu of outright war. The Federated Commonwealth completed the integration of its militaries, governments, economies and conquered worlds, forming the largest and most powerful realm in the Inner Sphere. Meanwhile, the Draconis Combine took one lesson from the Fourth Succession War to heart: it overhauled its military. In his role as the Combine's Gunji no Kanrei, or Deputy of Military Affairs, Theodore Kurita took several steps to ensure his nation's safety. He revamped the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery, upgrading training and loosening the command structure to reward personal initiative. In his most controversial act, Theodore signed a compact with ComStar, granting independence to several Combine worlds in exchange for ComStar's Star League-era BattleMechs. Though prepared for storms to follow, Kurita believed the compact was in the Combine's best interests and knew he could justify it militarily if necessary. On 13 March 3034, the affected worlds announced the formation of the independent Free Rasalhague Republic. Despite Theodore Kurita's support, the declaration of independence touched off a minor rebellion within the Combine, as reactionary commanders refused to pull their military units from the new republic. Theodore declared the reactionaries ronin-lordless-and sent his own units to drive them from Free Rasalhague. Theodore's troops and various mercenary groups joined the Republic's KungsArmé in battle against the ronin, but poor contracts negotiated in haste paid most of the mercenaries too much money for too little fighting. Free Rasalhague won its freedom, but its citizens learned to loathe mercenaries.

In April 3039, Hanse Davion set in motion the second great wave of his war to unite the Inner Sphere under his rule. He launched a two-front attack on the Dieron district of the Draconis Combine. The first assault wave succeeded brilliantly, but before Hanse could launch a second wave, the Combine counterattacked and threw the Commonwealth on the defensive. Aided by the Star League 'Mechs ComStar had provided, Theodore Kurita gambled with the fate of his nation and won. By attacking in the teeth of the Davion onslaught, Theodore made Hanse Davion believe the

DCMS was stronger than it actually was. By October 3039, Davion chose to cut his losses and make peace.

The War of 3039 accomplished little, save to remind the Successor States of the severe cost of war. A few worlds changed hands, but the balance of power remained the same. Aside from a skirmish in 3041, in which the Tenth Lyran Guards took the world of Skondia from the Combine, the states of the Inner Sphere seemed content to rebuild their realms in peace. Military readiness and overcharged rhetoric still ruled the day, but the Successor States had-at least temporarily-grown tired of war. The Inner Sphere enjoyed ten years of peace, which ended abruptly on 13 August 3049.

ENEMIES FROM BEYOND

In that year, while hunting pirates in the Periphery near the Free Rasalhague Republic, a detachment of the famed Kell Hounds mercenary unit met and succumbed to a mysterious fighting force on a godforsaken planet known as The Rock. Casualties included Phelan Kell, only son of the Hounds' founder Morgan Kell and cousin to Victor Steiner-Davion, Hanse and Melissa's eldest son. Phelan was listed as missing, presumed killed, but the Inner Sphere did not learn his true fate until several months later. The Kell Hounds' defeat was the first of many battles lost to the Clans, mighty warriors descended from the long-vanished SLDF.

The Warriors of Kerensky

The men and women who had followed Kerensky in order to preserve the ideals of the Star League had made planetfall on five worlds called the Pentagon. Within two decades, they had degenerated into a vicious, fratricidal conflict later known as the Exodus Civil War. Determined to salvage something from the wreckage of his father's dream, Kerensky's son Nicholas led his loyal followers on a second Exodus to a safe haven, where together they forged the eugenics-based warrior society later known as the Clans.

Returning to the Pentagon worlds, the Clans conquered them and began preparing for the day they would return to the Inner Sphere and restore the Star League. In 3005, they sent a unit of Clan Wolf warriors as a vanguard-Wolf's Dragoons, soon to become a famed mercenary unit in the Inner Sphere. The Dragoons fought for each of the Successor States in turn, testing the strength of their militaries and sending intelligence back to the Clans.

Clan Invasion

In March of 3050, the Clans struck in force, hammering the Draconis Combine, the Free Rasalhague Republic and the Lyran side of the Federated Commonwealth. Wave after wave of Clan attacks followed, executed with blinding speed and ruthless efficiency. Using their technologically superior OmniMechs and tenacious armored infantry, known as Elementals, Clan warriors cut down their Inner Sphere opponents like wheat before a scythe. Four Clans rolled across the Inner Sphere in the first wave: Smoke Jaguar, Ghost Bear, Jade Falcon and Wolf. All took their share of planets, but Clan Wolf conquered more worlds than all of its compatriots. Inner Sphere forces

launched a few successful counterattacks, but those strikes came too little and too late. The Clan juggernaut thundered on, halted only when an unlikely catastrophe struck.

On 31 October 3050, a Rasalhagian pilot named Tyra Miraborg crashed her Shilone fighter into the Clan flagship *Dire Wolf*, killing the Clans' war leader. The death of the ilKhan accomplished what six months of desperate fighting had not; the Clans ended their assaults, garrisoned the worlds they had conquered and pulled much of their military strength out of the Inner Sphere. For several months, during what was later dubbed the Year of Peace, the leaders of the Clans debated who should be the new ilKhan. In mid-3051, they chose Khan Ulric Kerensky of Clan Wolf to lead a renewed assault against the Inner Sphere.

During this lull, Colonel Jaime Wolf of Wolf's Dragoons had summoned the leaders of the Successor States to the world of Outreach. There, Wolf revealed that he and his fellow Dragoons were actually Clan warriors-and that, believing Clan conquest of the Inner Sphere would not restore the Star League, they were prepared to aid the Inner Sphere against their own people. The Inner Sphere leaders spent the better part of that year formulating a combined response to the overwhelming Clan threat. Setting aside centuries of mistrust, Hanse Davion and Theodore Kurita sealed a non-aggression pact between the Federated Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine. Davion also extracted material aid from the Free Worlds League by promising its leader, Thomas Marik, that he would devote the considerable resources of the New Avalon Institute of Science toward curing Thomas's son Joshua of leukemia.

In November of 3051, the Clans renewed their invasion. In January of 3052, Clans Smoke Jaguar and Nova Cat attacked the Combine capital of Luthien. In an act of unexpected political courage that sealed the loose alliance between the Federated Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine, Hanse Davion sent the Kell Hounds and Wolf's Dragoons to help defend his age-old enemy's homeworld. The trust engendered by Davion's action enabled both nations to devote all their efforts to fighting the Clans.

Despite the close cooperation between the Federated Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine, the Inner Sphere's unity remained largely an illusion. ComStar had negotiated with the Clans soon after the initial invasion, and upon the Clans' return to the Inner Sphere, the order offered to administrate Clan-conquered worlds. ComStar's leader, Primus Myndo Waterly, intended to use the Clan conquest to bring about the collapse of civilization; ComStar would then step in as humanity's savior, gaining power over all of human-occupied space. However, when Waterly discovered that the Clans intended to conquer Terra, ComStar's homeworld and the cradle of humanity, she abruptly changed her tactics. At the urging of her Precentor Martial, Anastasius Focht, Waterly struck a deal with the invaders and sent the Com Guards to fight Clan forces on the backwater world of Tukayyid. If the Clans won that battle, ComStar would give them Terra. If they lost, the Clans would halt their advance for fifteen years. Unknown to the Precentor Martial, Waterly also set secret plans in motion to strike at the Clans and the Inner Sphere simultaneously while the battle for Tukayyid raged.

The Com Guards defeated the Clans on Tukayyid in May of 3052, in a horrific bloodbath that cost ComStar's forces dearly. While the Com Guards were fighting and dying on Tukayyid to save the Inner Sphere, Primus Waterly gave the go-ahead to her

agents. They launched Operation Scorpion, a series of covert attacks on worlds in the Clan Occupation Zones and on communications sites across the Inner Sphere. Waterly hoped to cripple the Inner Sphere and the Clans through this bold gambit, enabling her ComStar loyalists to seize power. The strikes failed; upon Focht's return from Tukayyid, he deposed Waterly and began a massive reform of ComStar.

VICTORY AND CHANGE

The end of the Clan invasion brought other changes in its wake. Hanse Davion died of a massive heart attack at the end of the war. Chancellor Romano Liao of the Capellan Confederation died at the hands of an assassin, leaving her son Sun-Tzu on the Celestial Throne. Sun-Tzu immediately began to build a power base, allying himself to House Marik through an engagement to Thomas Marik's illegitimate daughter, Isis. Within a few short years, Theodore Kurita succeeded his father Takashi as Coordinator of the Draconis Combine. Ryan Steiner, a perennial thorn in the side of the Federated Commonwealth's rulers, began agitating for an independent Isle of Skye. ComStar, meanwhile, split into two factions over Precentor Focht's reforms. The reactionary group, calling itself Word of Blake, emigrated to the Free Worlds League planet of Gibson with Thomas Marik's blessing.

On 19 June 3055, a bomb blast at a charity event on Tharkad killed the Federated Commonwealth's beloved Archon, Melissa Steiner. Authorities failed to apprehend a suspect. Ryan Steiner, riding the crest of anti-Davion sentiment he had spent years cultivating, accused the new Archon, Prince Victor Steiner-Davion, of engineering Melissa's death. Ryan's native Isle of Skye, already seething with secessionist fever, erupted in open rebellion. Victor's sister Katherine tried to mediate between her brother and the rebel faction, with little success.

In April 3056, Victor's aide and Katherine's lover, Galen Cox, fell victim to a bomb attack in a Solaris hotel that narrowly missed Katherine. Four days later, an unknown assassin shot Ryan Steiner dead. Suspicion centered on Sven Newmark, an expatriate Rasalhagian who served as Ryan's aide. Many people, however, suspected that Victor ordered Ryan's death to silence his allegations about Archon Melissa Steiner. In an effort to defuse the Lyran hostilities, Victor declared the Lyran world of Tharkad and the Davion world of New Avalon co-capitals. He then shifted his government to New Avalon and left Tharkad in Katherine's hands, naming his sister as his official regent. This move, coupled with Ryan's death, quelled the rebellion-but the brief peace would not last.

Victor arrived on New Avalon to the disturbing news that Joshua Marik was dying of leukemia, despite the best efforts of the NAIS to save him. The Federated Commonwealth still desperately needed war materiel that only the Free Worlds League could provide, so Victor could not afford to lose the only hold he had over Thomas Marik. After consulting with his senior advisers, Victor replaced the dying child with a double. Marik, however, had his suspicions. A generation ago, the Capellan Confederation had nearly succeeded in replacing Hanse Davion with a double; to ensure the survival of his nation, Marik believed, Victor Davion might attempt the same trick. Marik took steps to confirm Joshua's identity, unaware that Sun-Tzu Liao was doing the same for his own reasons. Liao wanted war with the FedCom in order to take back lost worlds, but he lacked the military strength to

succeed on his own. By proving FedCom deception over Marik's heir, he hoped to push Marik into a joint war against the Commonwealth.

In September of 3057, two days after Capellan commandos attempted to kill Joshua's replacement, Thomas Marik claimed positive proof that the Joshua Marik on New Avalon was a duplicate. In retaliation for his real son's death, Marik sent troops into the Commonwealth's Sarna March.

A horrified Katherine publicly denounced Victor's deception, recalled all Lyran troops to her half of the Federated Commonwealth and announced the formation of the Lyran Alliance. She then declared her nation neutral, securing the Free Worlds League border and leaving that nation free to fight the Federated Commonwealth. Taking advantage of Marik's invasion, Sun-Tzu Liao sent Capellan troops into the Sarna March to reconquer worlds his grandfather had lost during the Fourth Succession War. Aided by Katherine's neutrality and united by their hatred for House Davion, Marik and Liao prosecuted their war against the Federated Commonwealth with surprising speed and success.

As the threat of a wider war in the Inner Sphere loomed, political infighting among the Clans intensified. The Clans had long been divided into two camps: the Crusaders, who sought to restore the Star League through conquest, and the Wardens (which included Wolf's Dragoons), who believed their responsibility lay in safeguarding the Inner Sphere until the Great Houses re-established the Star League. Many of the Clans, especially Clan Jade Falcon, chafed under the truce that ilKhan Kerensky had signed and seized any excuse to break it. Opposition to the Truce of Tukayyid soon erupted in the Refusal War, a bitter civil war between Clans Jade Falcon and Wolf. Under orders from ilKhan Kerensky to ensure Clan Wolf's survival, a significant portion of Wolf warriors fled to sanctuary in the Inner Sphere. Phelan Kell—who had not died in action on The Rock, but instead had risen among his Clan captors to become Khan Phelan Ward of Clan Wolf—led this remnant to the Kell Hounds' homeworld of Arc-Royal. The rest of Clan Wolf fought a losing battle against the Jade Falcons.

Both conflicts ended suddenly, in a surprising series of twists. Having taken back from Victor Davion the worlds that had once belonged to the Free Worlds League, Thomas Marik concluded a peace treaty with the Archon prince. Sun-Tzu Liao, unwilling to continue his own campaign without Marik's backing, grudgingly agreed to end hostilities. The Kell Hounds, having refused Katherine Steiner's demand for aid in defending the Lyran Alliance, established an anti-Clan defensive zone centered on Arc-Royal. By this act, the mercenary unit carved its own fiefdom out of Katherine's realm. In the oddest turn of events, the Wolves who had battled the Jade Falcons briefly merged with that Clan and then won freedom from their Jade Falcon conquerors. This new Clan, led by the highly intelligent Khan Vladimir Ward, briefly called itself Clan Jade Wolf until Vlad killed Falcon Khan Elias Crichell. That act gave him the clout to revive his Clan as the "new" Clan Wolf. Intelligence indicates that Khan Vlad will stop at nothing to destroy Khan Phelan, leader of the Wolves in exile.

THE UNIVERSE TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

The first five years after Tukayyid, tumultuous though they were, seemed positively tranquil compared with the explosive events of 3058-3061. Those years saw many of

the certainties accepted by both the Clans and the Inner Sphere violently overturned, giving way to a new order fraught with possibilities and perils.

In the wake of House Liao's invasion of the Sarna March, the Word of Blake seized its chance and captured Terra, cradle of humanity and ComStar's stronghold. Troop movements from the Free Worlds League into the so-called Chaos March provided cover for the Word of Blake Militia to move several divisions within striking distance of Terra, just as the high demand for mercenary troops in the March decimated ComStar's forces. Brion's Legion, a mercenary unit that had constituted nearly half the strength of ComStar's Terran Defense Force since the Fourth Succession War, abruptly canceled its contract in favor of a higher-paying Chaos March assignment. Unwilling to relocate Com Guard forces from the Clan border, ComStar's Precentor Martial replaced Brion's Legion with another mercenary unit—the Twenty-First Centauri Lancers. The Lancers, however, never arrived on Terra. Instead, the Word of Blake sent its own troops, which masqueraded as the Lancers for long enough to move the rest of their forces into position.

In late February 3058, the Word of Blake struck. The Com Guards on Terra, taken by surprise and unable to use the planet's formidable defenses because of Blakist sabotage from the inside, fought a bloody but ultimately futile battle across every continent. By early March, the Word of Blake held Terra in an iron grip that has yet to be dislodged. Precentor Martial Focht of ComStar declined to attempt the reconquest of Terra as long as the Clans remained a greater threat to the Inner Sphere. During those same months, Clan Jade Falcon drove deep into the Lyran Alliance and captured several planets, until Inner Sphere forces halted them on the world of Coventry. Conceived as a show of strength in the aftermath of the Refusal War, the Coventry campaign was to have far more ominous consequences for the Clans than the Falcons could have anticipated. On Coventry, the Falcons met a coalition force from across the Inner Sphere, led by Prince Victor Steiner-Davion of the Federated Commonwealth. The Inner Sphere and Jade Falcon armies were evenly matched; neither side could win Coventry without a protracted and bloody battle, and both commanders realized it. At the same time, Khan Vlad of Clan Wolf was threatening the Falcons with strikes at worlds in the Jade Falcon occupation zone. Prince Victor invoked the Clan rite of safcon to ensure a safe landing for his troops and then offered Falcon Khan Marthe Pryde the only honorable way out—*hegira*, the traditional right of a defeated enemy to leave the field with forces and honor intact. Under other circumstances, Pryde might have refused, but with the Wolf Khan making clear his intent to attack her Clan's holdings, she could not afford to leave those worlds defended by mere garrison troops. She accepted *hegira*, and the Jade Falcons left Coventry without another shot being fired.

The success of the coalition force on Coventry taught the Inner Sphere that old enemies could bury their differences in the face of a common enemy. Before the year was out, Prince Victor and other Inner Sphere leaders would act on that lesson, launching the campaign that obliterated a once-mighty Clan and ended the invasion of the Inner Sphere.

THE STAR LEAGUE REBORN

In October 3058, the leaders of the various Inner Sphere powers gathered on the Lyran capital of Tharkad to accomplish peacefully what they had failed to achieve during centuries of war-the rebirth of the Star League. Despite the deep divisions among them, the rulers of the Inner Sphere agreed to join for a single purpose-to end the Clan threat. The new Star League chose to prove its strength by destroying a single Clan: the Smoke Jaguars. Initially, the Star League intended only to drive the Jaguars out of their occupation zone. However, information from a Clan traitor enabled them to strike at the Smoke Jaguars' homeworld as well.

Throughout 3059 and 3060, Clan Smoke Jaguar died at the hands of the Inner Sphere. Their occupation zone overrun, their homeworld in ruins and their warrior caste decimated, the Jaguars essentially ceased to exist. The Inner Sphere force then turned its attention toward the rest of the Clans. Lacking the might to defeat the entire Clan military, Prince Victor Steiner-Davion led his forces to Strana Mechty, in the heart of Clan space. There, they defeated the Crusader Clans in a hard-fought Trial of Refusal. The Crusaders' defeat ended the invasion, leaving them locked in their occupation zones or driven from the Inner Sphere entirely.

Clan Nova Cat, which had sided with the Inner Sphere in obedience to the mystic visions of its leaders, received its own fiefdom in the Draconis Combine. Their fellow Clans abjured them for their "treason" and seized their holdings in Clan space. Clan Ghost Bear, which chose not to fight in the Trial, has also become a permanent presence in the Inner Sphere. They now occupy the Ghost Bear Dominion, part of what was once the Free Rasalhague Republic, from which they guard the Inner Sphere against incursions by Crusader-minded Clans unwilling to accept defeat. What other plans they may have remain anyone's guess.

Clan Steel Viper suffered the most humiliating fate of all the invading Clans, next to the shattered Smoke Jaguars. Thinking to take advantage of Jade Falcon weakness in the aftermath of the Refusal War, the Vipers challenged Falcon dominance of their shared occupation zone. After their campaign of conquest failed, the Vipers left the Inner Sphere rather than be destroyed by the Falcons.

As the man who defeated the most fearsome threat the Inner Sphere had ever known, Victor Steiner-Davion should have been the hero of the hour. In the eyes of many, he was-but his own people were not among them. The prince had left his youngest sister, Yvonne Steiner-Davion, as regent on New Avalon in his absence. He returned to find Yvonne deposed and the Federated Commonwealth in the hands of Katherine Steiner-Davion. Apparently, Katherine had been plotting the takeover for years, as a prelude to becoming the next First Lord of the Star League. Even without a realm, however, Prince Victor remained a political force to be reckoned with. At the Second Whitting Conference, Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht of ComStar announced his retirement and named Victor as his successor. The new Precentor Martial used his position to vote Coordinator Theodore Kurita, rather than his sister, into the post of First Lord.

The newborn Star League remains calm, but tensions are simmering beneath the surface. Prince Victor has so far made no attempt to regain his lost throne, unwilling to inflict a civil war on his people. The fact remains, however, that Precentor Martial Steiner-Davion has a crack military force at his disposal, and increasing numbers in the Federated Commonwealth are beginning to view him as a hero for his defeat of the Clans. Archon Katherine sits uneasily on the throne of New Avalon and may yet

be provoked into rash action. Meanwhile, Clans Jade Falcon and Wolf remain committed to renewing the invasion. Clan Wolf formally repudiated the results of the Strana Mechty Trial, and Clan Jade Falcon is unlikely to abide by an outcome so offensive to its pride. Neither Clan has the strength to move in force yet, but each is rebuilding at a swift pace. The Capellan Confederation has begun military action against the independent St. Ives Compact, intent on recapturing it. And in the Draconis Combine, the presence of the Nova Cats and the stresses of reabsorbing Jaguar-held worlds have breathed new life into reactionary movements opposed to the Coordinator's liberalization of Combine society. For the moment, his position remains strong, but no one can say how long that will last.

Once again, the Inner Sphere is poised precariously between peace and war. At any moment, the balance of power may shift, setting BattleMechs on the march and worlds ablaze.



Full Size Map of the Inner Sphere

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Note: The logos are linked to their prospective factions as well as the text links. The Inner Sphere Map is a large and may take some time downloading please be patient.

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The Realms of Known Human Space

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In every society, you will find the dualism of Man and his works. There is no good without evil, no civilization without barbarism, no life without death. The inevitable progression of Humanity from primitive culture to advanced techno-society is in fact but half the truth, for the forces that would tear down these bastions of progress are no less inevitable. In the end, History is not so much a chronicle of years as it is a story of cycles. Perhaps the ancients recognized this best with their stories of Armageddon, Ragnarok, and Nuclear Holocaust...but they reckoned with the turn of the wheel that will start the whole cycle over once more. (-Dr. Ernst Meyer, Shadow of the Future, ComStar Publications, Terra 3024.)

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"Nothing human is alien to me."

-Terence

When the Clans first came to the Inner Sphere in 3049, they were the enemy. They possessed weapons more fearsome than any we had ever known, and they fought like demons. Our imaginations made monsters of them, alien mockeries of humankind come to harvest us like so much ripe wheat. Against such a foe, our only weapon was the slim hope of gaining their confidence in order to influence them away from conquest. This was my mission as emissary to them in those first dark years of the Clan War-to earn their trust and learn whatever I could that might help us either turn them away or destroy them.

I learned a far more profound truth about the Clans than I had expected. They were not alien monsters, but human-the descendants of the long-departed SLDF, whom many of us had been raised to revere as the last remnant of humankind's finest hour. They shared our humanity, despite the unimaginably different ways, mores and view of the universe they had developed in nearly three hundred years of exile. My time with the Clans taught me to see them not as merely "the enemy," but as our kin-made strangers by time and unfortunately bent on conquering us, but no less our brethren.

Had I possessed the power then to make them see us as kindred, the Clan invasion might have ended in genuine peace far sooner than it did. Now, in the wake of the Great Refusal, some might say there is little need for the Clans to understand the Inner Sphere. The Clan War is over; the Inner Sphere won. The Successor States and Periphery nations can get back to their own business, and the defeated Clans can war among themselves. In the meantime, both sides can ignore each other and enjoy the peace.

Peace, however, is a fragile thing-as both Clan and Inner Sphere history prove. Though several Clans have accepted the Great Refusal's outcome, the Wolves and the Jade Falcons have not. Both of these once-mighty Clans are fast rebuilding their fighting forces, savaged in the recent vicious Refusal War between them. Other threats may raise their heads as well. Clan Steel Viper, beaten out of the Inner Sphere by the Jade Falcons, might avenge that defeat by launching the Clan War all over again-this time with allies among the so-called Home Clans, many of whom would like nothing better than to succeed where the first invaders failed. As for those Clans that now live among us, we cannot take their goodwill for granted. We must show ourselves worthy of their respect, lest they become our foes again. The Ghost Bears, Nova Cats, Diamond Sharks and Wolves in Exile are powerful friends and dangerous enemies. If they are to remain good neighbors, they must see us for who we are-not mere barbarians corrupted by our own worst impulses, but members of the human family with strengths that outweigh our weaknesses.

This volume is an effort to accomplish exactly that. A Guide to the Inner Sphere is intended to make the peoples of the Successor States and Periphery nations at least a little comprehensible to our Clan cousins. Our differences with the Clans are great, but no difference can obliterate the human identity we all share. Against that common heritage, differences of culture, society and viewpoint merely enhance the human experience. They make it richer, as different flowers make a garden more beautiful. In that spirit, I offer this document to Clan and Inner Sphere readers, in the hope of enlightening both to the betterment of us all. The Inner Sphere's diversity is more than an excuse for division. It can be a source of strength, forcing us to enlarge our universe and our imaginations. That larger view brought humanity the Star League, five centuries ago and again today. If we hold to it and let it flourish, it will bring us even greater good in the future.

-Anastasius Focht
Tukayyid, 18 July 3063

Inner Sphere Identity

In a region called home by as many different peoples and cultures as the Inner Sphere, it may seem strange to speak of an overall identity, or of any similarities at all. Yet every Inner Sphere nation shares three characteristics that set them apart from the Clans: a workable balance between vastly diverse elements, families in which parents or close blood relatives care for children of varying ages, and recognition of other human endeavors as equal or superior to waging war.

Clan and Inner Sphere Differences

Like many groups in the Inner Sphere, individual Clans see themselves as significantly different from their fellows. Though minor from an Inner Sphere perspective, cultural differences among the Clans frequently threaten to explode into major rifts. Throughout Clan history, they have prompted everything from long-standing feuds to mini-civil wars to outright obliteration.

The realms of the Inner Sphere are far more different from each other than are any two Clans. Some are virtually bubbling over with different cultural groups and political factions. Others hew sharply to a single cultural pattern and centralized power structure. Yet even the most freewheeling society possesses some sense of unified identity, and even the least tolerant realm peacefully incorporates nonconformist elements.

Falcon vs. Wolf

On the surface, Clans Wolf and Jade Falcon appear remarkably similar. Both are renowned for military strength and expertise even by Clan standards; neither contains any strikingly unusual cultural feature, such as the theocratic Cloisters of the Cloud Cobras or the Goliath Scorpions' devotion to collecting relics of humanity's past. Yet these two Clans have spent much of their mutual history at each other's throats. Each is convinced that it embodies the true vision of Clan founder Nicholas Kerensky, and that its counterpart is a distorted reflection. The long-running feud between Falcon and Wolf stems not from any vast social or cultural chasm, but primarily from a decision made in the Clans' earliest days. Nicholas Kerensky chose to join the Wolf Clan instead of the Falcons, and the Falcons never got over it. Mutual hostility over Kerensky's choice led these two Clans to clash again and again, each confrontation only hardening convictions that the opposing Clan was deeply unworthy.

When the Warden and Crusader political movements began to arise in the 2980s, it was almost inevitable that the Wolf and Falcon clans should end up on opposite sides. That political dispute centered on two interpretations of the Hidden Hope doctrine, General Aleksandr Kerensky's promise that the Clans would one day return to the Inner Sphere. The Wolves espoused the Warden position, which saw the promise of return as an ideal to inspire greatness rather than a literal command. In the Warden view, the Kerenskys meant the Clans to develop free of Inner Sphere ways while remaining ready to defend their lost home against any outside threat. The Crusaders took Hidden Hope as a direct order to raise a new Star League from the ashes of Inner Sphere civilization.

The writings from which the divide arose are ambiguous, particularly in the context of the turbulent times surrounding them. When weighed against the Clans' immense similarities, the Warden-Crusader split seems startlingly insubstantial. With so many of their most important social underpinnings in common, it is hard to understand why the Clans could not simply agree to disagree on this apparently minor point. Yet for the Falcons and the Wolves, choosing sides in this dispute merely confirmed each Clan's long-held belief that the other was an apostate Clan, deliberately rejecting the Kerenskys' vision.

The feud came to a head in the Refusal War, a bitter conflict that nearly destroyed both Clans. IlKhan Ulric Kerensky, a prominent Warden, had agreed in 3052 to a bold gamble that might win all for the Clans in a single, decisive stroke. Clan forces would battle the Com Guards; ComStar's crack military troops, on the backwater world of Tukayyid. If the Clans won, ComStar would give them the prize they most sought-Terra, birthplace of humanity and the Star League. If the Com Guards won, the Clans would observe a fifteen-year truce. At great cost, the Com Guards carried the day, and Ulric Kerensky signed the Truce of Tukayyid. To the Jade Falcons, the truce was a high crime. Balked from achieving conquest, they bided their time and sought allies among: the Wolf Clan's own frustrated younger warriors. In 3057, they accused Ulric of committing genocide against the Clans. By agreeing to a fifteen-year lull in the fighting, they argued, he and his fellow Wolf Wardens had deprived younger warriors of any chance at serious combat, thereby vastly increasing the odds of their deaths in battle.

Ulric refused to accept the guilty verdict handed down by the Clan Grand Council, and the Jade Falcons avidly claimed the honor of forcibly defending the Council's judgment. Wolf and Falcon

units fought bitterly across world after world in their two Inner Sphere occupation zones. The Falcons eventually won a near-Pyrrhic victory, reduced to a fraction of their former strength. The Wolves fared even worse, split into Warden and Crusader groups. The Warden Wolves found sanctuary in the Inner Sphere; the Falcons briefly absorbed the Crusader Wolves, until their current Khan Vlad Ward won his remnant Clan's freedom by killing the Falcon Khan who had engineered the Wolves' destruction.

In the four years since, the Wolves and the Jade Falcons have attempted an uneasy *détente*. Both are Crusader Clans now, removing one bone of contention, and neither wishes to fight another Refusal War any time soon. Yet their legacy of mutual hatred remains. They are allies of convenience for the moment, but may not prove able to overcome what many of them see as a giant rift spawned by a seemingly small incident at the dawn of Clan history.

Clan Blood Spirit

Clan Blood Spirit provides another striking example of an apparently minor difference leading to major repercussions. Like other Clans, the Blood Spirits valued *esprit de corps*, particularly among warriors. However, the Blood Spirits were the only Clan to extend this sense of brotherhood beyond their own members. They reached out to their fellow Clans, attempting to forge ties based on mutual respect and a willingness to aid any Clan in need.

Initially, other Clans welcomed the Blood Spirits' overtures. Struggling to create a viable society on the ruins of the worlds they had settled, the Clans could not afford to let their own rivalries distract them. As they matured, however, they began to drift apart. A sense of common ground gradually gave way to jingoistic pride in one's own Clan, often coupled with disdain for all others. In this atmosphere, the Blood Spirits found their attempts at diplomacy derided, their past aid discounted and their liberality suspect.

Rising distrust reached its apex with the Annihilation of the Not-Named Clan, obliterated for the crime of declaring themselves independent of Clan law and traditions. In the wake of this bloodletting, any unusual behavior appeared to threaten the Way of the Clans. The Spirits' emphasis on Clan-wide unity, along with guardedly expressed sympathy for the Not-Named, made them the biggest potential target. Though the Spirits avoided Annihilation, the Clan Grand Council took action almost as damaging against them. The assembled Clan leaders chastised the Blood Spirits for their "unClanlike" ways and warned them to change or face the consequences.

Other Clans took this censure as an invitation to raid Blood Spirit holdings. Attack after attack swiftly took a toll. Their territory halved and their military in tatters, the once openhearted Blood Spirits severed most contact with other Clans. Their bitter isolationism persists to this day; apart from holdings on the world of York, a few vital trade ties and their enclave on the Clan homeworld of Strana Mechty, the Blood Spirits have withdrawn completely from those they once called brothers-in-arms.

The Azami: Diversity Within Unity

The Azami people of the Draconis Combine provide an example of diversity within the most culturally unified Inner Sphere nation. Descended from the desert-dwellers of North Africa on Terra, the Azami have kept their Arab and African traditions, languages and Islamic religion throughout their history, despite living in a realm where virtually everything reinforces the prevailing Japanese culture. Only once have the Combine's rulers attempted to remake the Azami in a Japanese mold. In the late 25th century, the bloodthirsty Von Rohrs dynasty sent troops to the Azami homeworlds, but swiftly lost its assault force to diseases dormant in the Azami population.

The Azami sent a delegation to the Combine capital of Luthien just six years after the violent overthrow of the last Von Rohrs Coordinator. Siriwan McAllister-Kurita granted the Azami world's formal autonomy and their people unprecedented freedom of conduct and worship, in exchange for rights to Azami mineral resources and the use of their fighting men in the Combine's border defense. Every Coordinator since then has left the Azami to live as they see fit. The Azami have returned the favor by fulfilling their obligations and coexisting peacefully with their Japanese

neighbors.

Remaking the Star League

Much of the Inner Sphere's history is a shameful record of petty squabbles and vicious border wars fought for greed or hatred. The first Star League succumbed to such base passions, and only a fool would fail to acknowledge the threat they pose to the second. Despite all the backstabbing, infighting and mutual hostility, the nations of the Inner Sphere nonetheless came together to create the first Star League and its successor. People were no different in the first Star League era—no less greedy and venal, no more tolerant unless well taught to be so. And yet the quarrelling, corrupt realms of the Inner Sphere gave humanity its finest hour and noblest achievements. Given time, the second Star League may reach those heights again.

The Inner Sphere, no less than the Clans, tends to look back on the first Star League era as a golden age of idealism. We like to think people were nobler then—more honorable, more worthy of trust, more compassionate. Yet the Star League's first act was an exercise of raw power: the Reunification War against the Periphery states, for the crime of having politely said, "No, thank you," to First Lord Ian Cameron's invitation to join the League. Simply to form the Star League required more than a decade's worth of horse-trading and arm-twisting. Though the leaders who signed the Star League Accords in the mid-26th century were undoubtedly visionaries, neither their motives nor their realms were entirely free of greed, power-lust or calculation. The Capellan Confederation, for example, signed its treaty in exchange for badly needed financial and technological assistance, as well as a long-coveted prize: the worlds of Andurien, ceded to it by the rival Free Worlds League. The Federated Suns, recovering from a brutal civil war, joined in the wake of an economic crisis exacerbated by agents of Ian Cameron and Albert Marik, then Captain-General of the Free Worlds League. Both the Federated Suns and the Draconis Combine also received a promise of preemptive military strikes by Star League forces on enemy planets in the event of a Davion-Kurita war.

Nor were the member-states free of suspicion toward each other. These buried feelings of mistrust gave rise to the so-called Hidden Wars that plagued much of the Star League's existence. The first Hidden War, between the Draconis Combine military and the SLDF, arose from a Star League Council edict in 2650 that limited the size of each member-state's army. The decree forced House Kurita, among others, to dismantle numerous BattleMech regiments. Convinced that the First Lord had enacted the decree specifically to curb the Combine's military strength, the Kuritans retaliated by encouraging Combine MechWarriors to fight duels with their SLDF counterparts. By winning enough duels, Coordinator Urizen Kurita II hoped to humiliate the Star League in the eyes of Combine citizens.

The dueling added fire to the second Hidden War, which erupted in 2725 from longstanding enmity between the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns. An attempt by the Coordinator's half-Davion nephew to claim the Federated Suns throne sparked the four-year War of Davion Succession. By the time the SLDF finally intervened to end the fighting, House Davion's ruling prince was dead and several worlds had suffered the ravages of battle. Around this same time, a relaxation of Star League government regulations paved the way for the Periphery's wholesale economic exploitation by the Great Houses and the Terran Hegemony. By 2738, when Simon Cameron became First Lord, support for the Star League among Periphery citizens had withered almost to nothing. This situation laid the groundwork for the Amaris coup, which would end the Star League in less than thirty years.

Given these and other tensions that raged almost constantly beneath the surface, the first Star League's thriving existence for a century and a half testifies eloquently to humanity's ability to rise above its disputes. The successors of this same collection of quarrelsome realms have reforged the Star League after nearly three centuries of vicious infighting, and have so far remained united in the face of considerable stresses. These include recent Capellan military adventurism, particularly that realm's successful absorption of the St. Ives Compact; unrest in the Federated Suns' Draconis March and in Combine regions on the other side of that border at the very rapprochement between Davion and Kurita rulers that made the new Star League possible; and the bitter mutual suspicion between the peoples of the old Lyran Commonwealth and Federated Suns, which the short life of the Federated Commonwealth apparently did little to calm. This last

flash point recently degenerated into civil conflict, a sad end to an era that began with such great promise. Yet even here, hope for the future remains. The victor in the FedCom civil war will have a unique opportunity to heal its wounds, with the unity of the Star League as a living example. That unity was not forged by the Clans, despite their impressive military might and single-minded dedication to remaking humanity's lost Golden Age in their own image. The rebirth of the Star League belongs instead to the Successor States-often corrupt and riven with distrust, but nonetheless capable of rising above their own worst weaknesses when the survival of their way of life demands it.

Family and Society

Clan and Inner Sphere ways of structuring families and raising children offer the sharpest contrast between their respective cultures. These intimate bonds shape the larger society by determining the worldview of the individuals who comprise it. Growing up in a Clan Sibko is profoundly different from being raised in a typical Inner Sphere family; each of these experiences lies at the core of our different ways of life.

Though most Clansmen live outside the elite warrior caste and are frequently raised in nuclear families, the warrior caste's prestige makes its ways and customs the Clan-wide ideal. Therefore, the warriors' method of child raising has a far-reaching impact on Clan society. Warrior-caste offspring are raised in sibkos (sibling companies), groups of children born at the same time from the same genetic line or lines. The geneparents of these sibling groups play no role in their upbringing; in many cases, such as the famous Jade Falcon warrior Aidan Pryde, a geneparent may have died in battle before any of his or her "children" are conceived. Instead, sibko children are raised by individuals who may feel no emotional connection to their charges. A nanny sees to the infants' physical well being and develops their early motor skills; sibparents, usually retired warriors, hone the older children's physical abilities and teach them what it means to be a Clan warrior.

Raised as one of a group with little individual attention, the typical sibko child forms his closest emotional ties with his sibmates. He defines himself as part of that collective and measures his own worth by what he adds to it. The natural egotism of the human psyche is channeled into sibling competition-sibko members constantly test themselves against each other, knowing that superior performance will also reflect well on the sibko as a whole. In this way, the warrior caste ensures a properly Clanlike balance between the desire for individual accomplishment and the need to serve the larger Clan.

By contrast, children in the Inner Sphere are raised by parents who are expected to love and nurture them physically, emotionally and psychologically. Even in collective-minded states like the Draconis Combine and the Capellan Confederation, young children receive considerable personal attention from mothers, fathers and occasionally members of a larger extended family. An Inner Sphere child may have siblings, but rarely several that are the same age. Each child has his or her own place in the family structure: the firstborn, the middle child, the baby, and the only. This unique place, combined with one-on-one parental attention for at least the child's first decade, reinforces natural human egotism and gives most Inner Sphere children a strong sense of individual worth.

Both Clan sibkin and Inner Sphere children eventually encounter the larger world. How they come to terms with it offers insight into a major difference between the Clans and the Inner Sphere. Most human societies are at best indifferent or even actively hostile to the individual ego. For the child of a Clan sibko, society's failure to notice him barely impinges. His collective upbringing has already taught him that his truest value lies in serving group interests. The more ego-driven Inner Sphere child, by contrast, experiences the world's indifference as a profound shock. In order to function as part of his society, he must find a way to retain his self-worth while accepting the reality of the culture in which he lives. The ability of Inner Sphere citizens to do this on a personal scale enables the societies they inhabit to accomplish the same psychological balancing act, albeit imperfectly-believing in their own worth while accepting the equal worth of cultures other than their own.

Attitudes Toward War

For the Clans, warfare represents the apex of human achievement. A Clan warrior by definition is considered worthy of more respect than a Clansman of any other caste, because his life's work-waging war-brings his Clan the greatest honor. No scientific breakthrough, no degree of technical or business expertise, no artistic achievement and no amount of wealth can match the value of what a Clan warrior does. Even freeborn warriors, scorned as near worthless in some Clans, have higher status than members of lesser castes do. Though the Clans acknowledge value in the work of other castes, they see that value in military terms. Scientific research created the eugenics program that breeds trueborn warriors, and also produces such useful items as improved armor alloys and devastating weapons; technicians maintain the sophisticated machinery that makes warfare possible; merchants find the resources and create the wealth to finance Clan fighting forces; and the laborers' menial work oils the machinery of everyday Clan life so that higher castes may devote themselves to more worthy tasks.

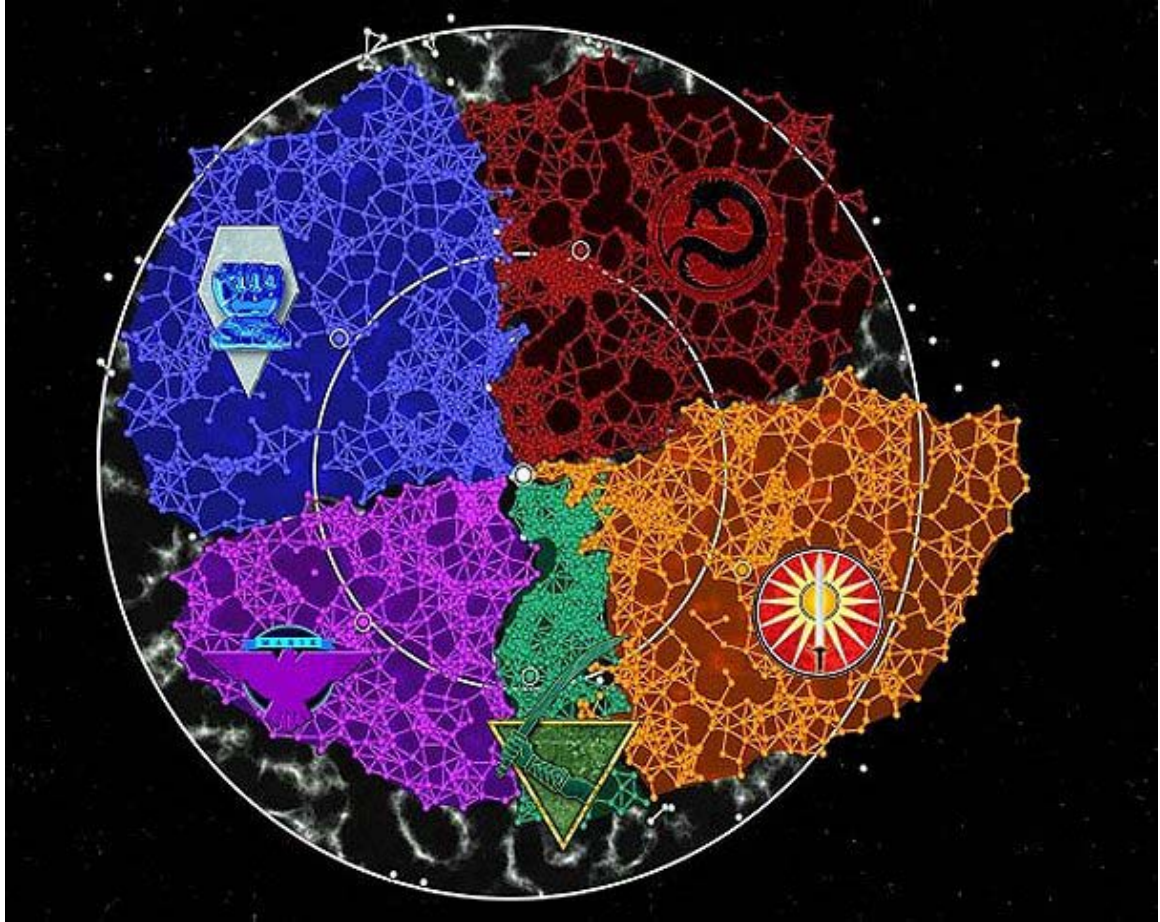
In the Inner Sphere, war is merely one of many human endeavors, and not always the one valued most highly. Inner Sphere citizens generally respect the soldiers who protect them, but some realms rank military service higher than others-and even the most martial states tend not to honor warfare as an end in itself. In the highly militaristic Federated Suns and Draconis Combine, for example, war is a glorious enterprise matched by little else. Yet neither of these realms sees war as the greatest achievement of humankind. Its glory instead rests primarily on the need to protect the nation from real or perceived enemies bent on its destruction. Warfare has no intrinsic worth, but takes its value from the civilian way of life it safeguards.

The Lyran Commonwealth and its successor, the Lyran Alliance, provide an even more extreme example. The average Lyran citizen values prosperity above all, and so accords the highest worth to moneymaking and clever business dealing. Fighting is sometimes necessary to ensure the nation's security, and war can be lucrative to a certain extent. Inevitably, however, its losses outweigh profits. A military machine is expensive to maintain, and warfare generally disrupts the trade that is the Lyrans' lifeblood. Like avalanches, tornadoes and other acts of God, war for most Lyrans is to be avoided when possible, fought or endured only when necessary.

Because the peoples of the Inner Sphere regard other human activities as equal or even superior to warfare, their cultures have a richness and depth that the Clans largely lack. Much of the energy that the Clans direct toward war, denizens of the Inner Sphere may turn in other directions: composing symphonies, writing novels, inventing ingenious gadgets, exploring deep philosophical questions and the like. As illustrated above, the Lyran realm is an excellent case in point. Its greatest strength has always been economic rather than military, and the nation's general prosperity has allowed its various peoples and their cultural traditions to flourish through the centuries.

In other parts of the Inner Sphere, even a warrior may turn his mind toward other things. The Draconis Combine's famous Bushido code blends the art of war with other arts far different-a Combine MechWarrior is likely to be a gifted poet or painter as well. The Xin Sheng movement currently revitalizing the Capellan Confederation is partly based on military conquest, but also encompasses political reforms, urban renewal and a dawning renaissance in Chinese art. And these are only a few examples; countless others abound in the far-flung reaches of Inner Sphere space.

The Great Houses of the Inner Sphere



At the time of the fall of the Star League, human-occupied space was dominated by five interstellar empires which would come to be known as the Successor States. Each of them is ruled by a powerful dynasty known as a Great House, and the leader of each House held a seat on the Star League Council and thus laid claim to the title of First Lord. To this day these Great Houses and their machinations dominate the Inner Sphere.

- House Davion
- House Kurita
- House Liao
- House Marik
- House Steiner



HOUSE DAVION

Trusting Divine Providence to be our guide, we, the Sovereign Citizens of New Avalon, do this day ordain and approve this Covenant, that all Peoples upon the face of this planet shall be forever equal under the Law, that Justice shall rule the Strong as it does the Weak, that Freedom shall be our Sword and Hope our Strongest Shield.

- From The Covenant of New Avalon, 2239

Spacer

A respected historian of the Federated Suns once described his native realm as "a bastion of freedom amid a universe of despots." That phrase sums up the way most of his fellow citizens see their nation-enlightened but embattled, a beacon of liberty that the tyrant leaders of other states will do anything to snuff out. It is true that the average citizen of the Federated Suns has greater personal rights than many others in the Inner Sphere, even in several supposedly freer Periphery realms. He or she can openly criticize the government, worship as he chooses, form political organizations and sue for fair treatment at the hands of local authorities. These and other rights are guaranteed to every Federated Suns citizen under the Six Liberties, enshrined in the nation's constitution throughout seven centuries of political change. And yet these freedoms by themselves do not guarantee a decent life. The well-off New Avalon city-dweller knows little of the harsh realities on poor backwaters such as Baxley or desert-bound Kesai IV and frequently cares less. Secure in his own freedom and comfort, he assumes everyone in the Federated Suns is equally prosperous or believes that those who fall through the cracks have only themselves to blame.

Two worlds illustrate the contrasts between the rich and poor of the realm. New Syrtis, my home since I left the Outworlds Alliance in 3026, is among the better-off planets. Though much of it is permanently buried in ice and snow, the temperate region around the equator boasts several small but thriving cities. The capital, built for defense on the snowbound northern continent, is a vibrant university town as well as a center of government. New Syrtis owes its prosperity to large deposits of precious metals, which sparked a gold rush in the late twenty-third century. Before long, this mineral wealth made New Syrtis a rich gift for the noble Hasek family. Hasek prominence and careful husbanding of the planet's resources made New Syrtis an ideal capital of the Capellan March, which it remains to this day. Its people are a cosmopolitan lot, generally well off or on the way to being there-hopeful, energetic and intensely loyal to the Davion government that guarantees their way of life.

Kesai IV, a desert world best known for its notorious past as a prison planet, could hardly be more different. Native life is nonexistent, local settlements few and far between. The largest human habitations on the hot sands of Kesai are the vast SLDF bases and supply depots built during the Star League era. Stripped of most of their valuables over the past three hundred years, these huge facilities are virtual ghost

towns now, sand-scoured and echoing with the footsteps of long-dead soldiers. Empty or not, the military keeps a heavy guard around most of these facilities-virtually the only contact between Kesai's people and their Davion rulers. With little of value to hold the government's interest, Kesai receives almost nothing in the way of investment or attention. Its natives scrounge a living as best they can, irrigating small patches of desert near the planet's single sea or stealing supplies from the AFFC bivouacs near the ancient Star League bases. So long as the pilfering remains small-scale, local unit commanders tend to turn a blind eye. They and the locals have scant respect for each other, however. Even the most sympathetic soldier merely pities the poor "desert rats," while the locals see the military as arrogant interlopers to be fleeced. On paper, both are equal citizens of the Federated Suns. In practice, the chasm between them looms as large as a kilometer-wide sandstorm.

The possession of freedom-a priceless good-is the foundation of the Federated Suns' overwhelming confidence in its own rightness. This feeling is simultaneously our greatest strength and our greatest weakness. It gave this nation the courage to survive historical downturns that might have crippled a lesser people; citizens of the Davion state are nothing if not optimists and rarely find it hard to believe that destiny intended them for better things. In many ways, they have achieved such a destiny; over the centuries, this nation has become a living symbol of the vitality and hope of a place where freedom rings. But optimism and confidence too easily become arrogance, particularly when harnessed to a sprawling military machine. That combination doomed the Federated Commonwealth and made inevitable the civil conflict currently flaring at the edges of our realm. As the Federated Commonwealth slides deeper into civil war, most Davion citizens express confidence that "our side" will win. Few, however, can say what that means. After thirty-five years of Federated Suns-Lyran unity, just who is "our side"? And what will we sacrifice if we preserve that unity through conquest? Few of my fellow citizens have answers to these questions. But even more disturbingly, few are even asking them.

-Anastasia Marcus

Professor Emeritus of Federated Suns History, University of Saso, New Syrtis

Origins and History

The Federated Suns has been a military power almost from its inception. War expands its territory, frequently bolsters its economy and binds its otherwise loose-knit people together more than any other element of its society. Unusually for such a militaristic state, the glorification of military exploits coexists with a high degree of personal freedom and democratic local government. This democratic strain, a legacy of the nation's visionary founder, has provided a crucial counterbalance to the military-expansionist mindset at critical points throughout the Federated Suns history.

The First Davions

The first three rulers of the Federated Suns-Lucien, Charles and Reynard Davion-created and shaped the Federated Suns in strikingly different ways. Lucien the dreamer, Charles the schemer and Reynard the soldier between them created a realm in which high ideals and real politick were delicately balanced in the service of a

single ultimate object: the continued health of the Federated Suns under the leadership of the Davion family.

Dream of a Nation: Lucien Davion

Lucien Davion founded the Federated Suns in 2317, motivated not by any personal desire to build an empire but simply by fear of losing what he already had. The Terran Alliance had collapsed under the weight of decades of corruption in 2314, to be replaced by the new and vigorous Terran Hegemony under the leadership of Admiral James McKenna. McKenna was determined to bring Terra's former colonies back into the fold, a fate the colonies were equally determined to resist. Lucien Davion created the first political union born of that resistance—the Crucis Pact, which would set the mold for the rise of humanity's other interstellar empires.

Lucien Davion was a native of New Avalon, the colony world destined to become the capital of the Federated Suns. Settled largely by Western Europeans in the early twenty-third century, New Avalon rebelled against Terran Alliance authority in 2237, when widespread upheaval across human-colonized space prompted Terra to make unreasonable demands on still-loyal colony worlds for food and raw materials. The new quotas prompted an uprising on New Avalon, later known as the Grain Rebellion. Lacking sufficient military support from the embattled Terran Alliance, Governor General Emil Varnay fled the planet, while his Vice Governor surrendered to the mobs. By the time Varnay reached Terra seeking reinforcements, the Expansionist Party that had placed him in power was fighting a losing battle for its life. The Expansionists were in no position to send troops, and so New Avalon slipped free of the Alliance yoke.

In the heady first years of independence, New Avalon's people attempted an experiment in genuine popular democracy. The entire adult population voted via computer system on every issue, and so power rested with whomever could best persuade the largest majority. The Prime Minister, nominal leader of the fledgling government, could legally serve a single one-year term. Intended to prevent tyranny, this arrangement brought chaos instead. Within the first decade of independence, a handful of industrialists in New Avalon's few manufacturing centers had amassed fortunes so vast that they essentially controlled the popular vote. By 2248, these often-squabbling industrial titans had formed private armies—ostensibly for protection against rivals, but they had other uses as well. As New Avalon's tenth annual elections drew near, the so-called First Families began jockeying for power with every tool at their disposal. After the armed forces of the Jorgensson family routed the small planetary militia, the other First Families made their own grabs for power unchecked by any central authority.

Colonels Adam Davion and Nathan DuVall, two surviving militia officers who were also First Family scions, recognized that outright civil war would doom the world they loved. Rather than join the free-for-all, they gathered their own armies and launched a campaign to end the fighting. After seven years of battles punctuated by tense negotiations, the conflict finally ended with the signing of the Second Covenant of New Avalon. This document and its accompanying constitution essentially replaced the planetary democracy with an oligarchy controlled by the First Families. The Prime Minister's term became lifelong, and popular voting was swept aside. This

neo-feudal system appeared as salvation to most of New Avalon's war weary citizens. After their seven-year nightmare, they were willing to try any form of government that promised stability.

Colonel Davion's eldest son Lucien inherited all the privileges of New Avalon's neo-feudal elite but was also well acquainted with his homeworld's recent democratic past. An avid reader of history, Lucien developed a genuine admiration for the egalitarian ideals of New Avalon's first independent generation. As a trusted minister high in the government of Prime Minister Martin DuVall, Lucien sought ways to meld those ideals with the practical needs of day-to-day governing and the inescapable political realities of money and power. When events in Terran space forced him to look beyond New Avalon in hopes of ensuring his homeworld's freedom, the union he forged with other nearby worlds took on this same balance of idealism and hard-nosed practicality. Davion's Crucis Pact envisioned a loose federation of worlds, dedicated to mutually beneficial trade and defense, with complete local autonomy for member planets. Centralized authority was confined to two indispensable areas: federation-wide defense and High Council charged with settling disputes among member planets.

By 2316, the burgeoning might of the Terran Hegemony made clear to Lucien Davion the need for swift action. He had become Prime Minister of New Avalon less than a decade before, and New Avalon's trading fleet was a familiar and welcome sight to the other worlds in the Crucis Reach region of space. Lucien used these trading contacts, along with the prestige of his office when necessary, to propose an alliance among the Crucis Reach worlds. His sterling reputation for integrity earned him a hearing, as did fear of the Hegemony's growing strength. Though Terra's government was not yet powerful enough to fight a major war in the distant reaches of space, the Hegemony was more than capable of picking off individual planets through economic sanctions and small strikes. Only an alliance could ensure freedom for the Crucis worlds. Lucien made this point again and again throughout his tour of neighboring planets. At its end in 2317, he convened a summit on New Avalon with the leaders of twenty-three worlds. All but three eventually signed the Crucis Pact that gave birth to the Federated Suns.

The leaders of the newborn federation elected Lucien Davion as its president, symbolizing their mutual trust in the man who had brought them together. Throughout his fifteen years in office, Lucien's tireless mediation of interplanetary disputes made the presidency virtually synonymous with the Davion name in the public mind. His unflinching fairness of judgment lent that name and his office a reputation for honest dealing that would greatly smooth the Davions' rise to dynastic power.

Commander in Chief: Charles Davion

The youngest of Lucien's brothers, Charles Davion succeeded him as president after Lucien's resignation in 2332. On Lucien's death just three months later, Charles also became Prime Minister of New Avalon. With this dual power base and the prestige of the Davion name, Charles used his brief term of office to centralize power over the Federated Suns-and in the hands of the Davion family-in ways Lucien had never dreamed of.

Charles' most significant action was a drastic reform of the Federated Suns military. With near-constant border wars erupting along the Federated Suns' Rimward March-today the Capellan March-Charles correctly judged the time right for a radical change in the Suns' military recruitment methods. Since its inception, the Federated Suns had responded to external and internal threats by raising an expeditionary force to deal with each crisis. Member worlds contributed personnel, supplies or transport for the duration of the conflict; at its end, the expeditionary force disbanded. The failure of these hastily raised Federated Suns armies to repel invasions on several border worlds, let alone capture two breakaway planets in 2318, proved the inadequacy of an ad-hoc military. Consequently, Charles Davion replaced this system with the Federated Peacekeeping Forces-a handful of elite military units contributed by each member world-to remain permanently in service to the Federated Suns as a whole. The FPF was the Federated Suns' first standing army and the core of what would one day become the Inner Sphere's mightiest military machine.

Extensive troop training given to the new force stressed loyalty to the Federated Suns over any unit's homeworld. Loyalty to the Davion family was not overtly part of the equation, but pro-Davion citizens of New Avalon were disproportionately represented in the FPF's officer ranks. Similar Davion loyalists controlled key posts throughout the burgeoning military and commercial bureaucracy that formed around the FPF's permanent facilities and the prime minister's office on New Avalon. By the time Reynard Davion succeeded his uncle Charles as president and prime minister in 2340, Davion control over both offices was virtually assured, and the family was well on its way to suzerainty over the entire federation.

The First Fox: Reynard Davion

Part diplomat, part idealist and part strongman, Reynard Davion was a soldier before all else. A veteran of the long-raging wars along the Capellan frontier, Reynard was determined to end the twenty-year conflict with as much benefit as possible to his nation. He began by showcasing the military prowess of the new Federated Suns army. Under Reynard's personal command, an FPF reserve task force penetrated the border region of the enemy Tikonov Grand Union and severed the Tikonov forces' supply lines to the disputed planets of Mira and Mesartim. The unexpected ferocity of this attack overwhelmed the Tikonov troops and gave the FPF its first solid victory. From this position of strength, Reynard Davion negotiated a peace pact with his most powerful-and therefore most dangerous-warring neighbor, the Capellan Hegemony. In 2345, the two powers signed the Acala Pact, a mutual non-aggression treaty. Six months later, they signed the Almach Accord that acknowledged Federated Suns control over Mira, Mesartim and Almach. This second treaty marked the first of the Federated Suns' significant military conquests, as well as the beginning of a rivalry with the Capellan state that would turn more deadly over the passing centuries.

The next major expansion of Federated Suns territory, again at the expense of the Capellans, began in 2357 when Reynard sent troops to occupy the world of Bell in the Sarna Supremacy-then a part of Capellan-controlled space. This action, coupled with a demand to hand over the Sarna worlds of Chesterton and Highspire, forced a shakeup in the Capellan government. The new Capellan Prime Minister, Seluk Tucas, responded to this military adventurism by temporarily uniting the various Capellan states against their common Davion enemy. In early 2363, Tucas formally renounced

the Acala and Almach accords, demanded the return of all ceded Capellan worlds and mobilized his army. Reynard Davion, in turn, declared war. This phase of the border conflict went on until 2371, when Reynard's death deprived the FPF of one of its most talented commanders. Reynard's son Etien, who succeeded him as president and prime minister, signed a truce with the Capellans-reconstituted as the Capellan Confederation-just three months after taking power.

The border war of the 2360s netted the Federated Suns all the worlds it had lost to Capellan states during the first border conflict, as well as several other planets. Despite intermittent economic and political reverses over the next several decades, the Federated Suns lost no territory to any enemy attack. Its military, created by Charles Davion and forged in combat by Reynard, would defend its borders and extend its reach multiple times during the twenty-fourth century, setting a pattern of conquest and military-inspired domestic renewal that persisted throughout the nation's history.

Democracy and Dictatorship

From its earliest days, the Federated Suns grew through military might as well as diplomacy. Though Reynard Davion's successful campaigns are the best known of House Davion's early attempts at conquest, even Lucien the dreamer resorted to military force on one occasion. Among the many Crucis Reach worlds he visited in 2316 was the planet Muskegon, a dictatorship with control over several neighboring planets. The Commander of Muskegon joined the Federated Suns after more than a year of dithering but proved unable to bring all of the Muskegon worlds with him. Heavy-handed treatment by their central government had not endeared the commander or his administration to the populations of the Muskegon possessions. When Muskegon announced its intention to join the new Federated Suns alliance, the worlds of Emerson and Beten Kaitos refused to go along. Instead, they opted out of Muskegon's control and joined the Chesterton Trade Alliance, one of several Capellan powers in the region. Lucien Davion spent the next three years attempting to forcibly annex the two "rebel" planets, without success.

The Emerson and Beten Kaitos campaigns opened the door to several decades of border war with the Capellans, punctuated by a brief interval of peace between 2346 and 2357. The initial years of this long border clash inflicted humiliating losses on the Federated Suns but also helped turn it into a military juggernaut. Without the pressures of the losing border war, Charles Davion could not have altered the Crucis Pact to permit the formation of a standing army. Without a well-trained standing army loyal to the Federated Suns, Reynard Davion could not have managed the impressive military feats that ultimately won back every planet the Suns had lost plus several additional worlds.

Between them, Charles and Reynard gave the Davion family significant control of the FPF's formidable capabilities, as well as of large sections of the Federated Suns' government bureaucracy. Despite this family hegemony, the Federated Suns escaped becoming a military dictatorship. Unlike the rulers of the Draconis Combine or the Capellan Confederation, who turned their nations' highest offices into virtual cults of personality, the Davions maintained power over their developing star empire through family-wide control of key military, political and economic positions. As they generally fulfilled their responsibilities well, few of their fellow citizens had much

incentive to oppose them. If anything, the Davions' knack for good government reinforced their right to govern in the minds of their fellow citizens, without the need for overt political indoctrination.

The realm also adopted elements of the political culture of New Avalon, homeworld of the nation's founder. New Avalon had begun as an egalitarian democracy, collapsed into civil war and subsequently adopted a neo-feudal socio-political order. These two strains—power to the people and rule by a wealthy aristocracy—ran through the Federated Suns as well. Had the young nation continued to be ruled by such charismatic, politically gifted strongmen as Charles and Reynard Davion, its people might well have abandoned the democratic traditions of their forebears. However, several of the rulers who followed Reynard Davion provided sharp reminders of the dangers of tyranny.

The Madman and the Tyrants

Etien Davion, Reynard's eldest son, succeeded him to great acclaim in 2371. Like Reynard, Etien was a decorated soldier. He was also dangerously unstable, though few people realized it until after he had been sworn into office. The first several months of his reign brought peace with the Capellans, embassies to the expanding Draconis Combine and the addition of three planets to the Federated Suns. The honeymoon, however, did not last. Always prone to moodiness, Etien began to deteriorate under the pressures of leadership. Eruptions of irritability metamorphosed into rages, during which the unlucky targets of Etien's wild anger might be injured or even killed. Within a mere two years of assuming power, Etien's mood swings had so seriously affected his judgment that the High Council created a Board of Magistrates to settle disputes previously left to presidential jurisdiction.

As Etien pursued his own pleasures or fell into fits of depression, more and more of day-to-day government went to the Davion-controlled bureaucracy. The High Council was effectively paralyzed by the president's madness; the Crucis Pact forbade it to conduct new business without the approval of the president or his designated representative, and Etien rarely appointed the latter. His excesses eventually provoked a response. In the latter half of his seven-year term, three separate assassination plots were hatched. The last of these, carried out by a childhood friend and longtime confidant, succeeded in a way no one had envisioned. Sickened by the knowledge that someone so close could turn against him, Etien stabbed himself to death with the would-be assassin's own dagger.

Two decades of relative stability followed under Etien's brother Paul and sister Marie. The nation had scarcely recovered, however, when the first of Etien's twin sons came to power. Edmund Davion became President of the Federated Suns in 2399. Weak-willed and given to melancholy fits, he was easily controlled by his ambitious mother, Marion Michaels-Davion, and his twin brother, Edward. Michaels-Davion contented herself with pushing governmental reforms that eroded the High Council's authority and enhanced that of the presidency. After her death in 2410, Edward persuaded his twin to enact "reforms" of his own. Over the next five years, Edmund Davion forced passage of a series of acts that effectively placed House Davion outside all laws save the whims of its leaders. These measures made the two ruling Davions absolute monarchs in all but name.

Edmund died in 2415, making Edward the Federated Suns' ruler in name as well as fact. Robbed of any check on his ambitions, Edward treated the Federated Suns as his personal plaything. Pointless civic projects, new taxes and Byzantine regulations issued from the president's office according to Edward's whims. He also devoted increased funds to his secret police network, begun before Edmund's death and hugely expanded after Edward took power. The enfeebled High Council could do nothing to stop him, and the military chose not to try. In addition to fears of the secret police, many FPF officers were Davion loyalists-some to Edward personally, most simply because they saw no other suitable candidate. The latter feared that outright rebellion would only plunge their nation into chaos. So they bided their time and waited for the only viable replacement-Edward's cousin, Simon Davion-to gain the necessary experience to rule.

By 2417, Edward's activities had persuaded the High Council that he intended to disband it. Thoroughly sick of the tyrant's rule, several Council members determined to escape him the only way they still could. They formed the so-called November Conspiracy, a plot to secede from the Federated Suns during the High Council's customary three-month hiatus. FPF units loyal to the conspirators had orders to blockade the New Avalon system while the politicians proclaimed the new order. Had it succeeded, the plot would have torn the Federated Suns apart. The conspirators aborted their plans, however, when Simon Davion returned to New Avalon just three days before the conspiracy was set to launch.

Thirty-nine years old and a decorated military commander, Simon Davion had long been a potential target on his cousin Edward's hit list. Edward had already slain one Davion heir to safeguard his own son's eventual accession. Simon posed a similar threat, and so Edward attempted to have him killed as well. But a sympathetic commanding officer warned Simon of the danger, and Simon spent the next two years prudently out of Edward's reach. His return to New Avalon was a calculated gamble. Having quietly built a support base among disaffected FPF officers and planetary governments, Simon landed on New Avalon to fervent displays of public acclaim. The outpourings of support from the people and the High Council prevented Edward from moving against him during his first hours on world. By the time of the Council meeting the next morning, it was too late.

The historical record remains unclear as to exactly how much of what happened next were planned, or how many people knew of it. Regardless of who knew what and when, however, the facts remain the same. When Edward Davion appeared in the Council Chamber, flanked by his omnipresent Presidential Guard, Simon snatched a gun from a nearby guard's holster and shot Edward five times. As the corpse collapsed to the floor, Simon threw down the weapon and flung himself on the High Council's mercy. He asked for a trial and agreed to abide by its verdict. The Council duly arrested Simon and set in motion the show trial of the century. Simon Davion became a folk hero, the patriot driven to murder a tyrant as the only way to avoid a crippling civil war. The eventual verdict was justifiable homicide, with a suspended sentence on the grounds that Simon had acted from the purest of motives: the greater good of his nation. He went on to lead that nation-healing its wounds, restoring its strength and forever changing it in the process.

Simon Davion and the Modern Federated Suns

During the first few confused weeks following Edward's assassination, Simon Davion did not wait on events. Edward Davion's death had removed the immediate threat of secession, but brought factionalism in its wake. Between supporters of Edward who backed his young son Arthur for the presidency (with a suitable regent from among their own ranks), equally fervent supporters of Simon, and those High Council members who wanted to end Davion power permanently, the Federated Suns remained at the brink of crisis. Simon used his days under house arrest to devise an elegant political compromise, one that balanced centralized power with a new level of local authority.

Simon's plan divided the realm into five Marches, large administrative districts each composed of several star systems, with the High Council retaining its role as a forum for individual planets. The federation-wide duties that had formerly fallen to the presidency went to the leader of the Crucis March, one of the five new districts. Aside from these responsibilities, the district leaders were essentially equals, with the High Council acting as a central authority to keep their power in check.

As the weeks progressed, Simon built on his already considerable support among the Councilors, most of whom were glad to be rid of the detested Edward. By the time his dramatic trial ended in virtual acquittal, Simon had convinced enough allies to make his compromise a reality. With the High Council's backing, Simon abolished the presidency in favor of an interlocking system of local authorities that would eventually become the hereditary aristocracy of the modern Federated Suns. The highest authorities were the princes of the Capellan, Terran, Draconis, Crucis and Outer Marches. Beneath these were smaller subdivisions determined by population size: duchies, margraves, counties and baronies. The High Council, for its part, was no longer composed of elected or appointed representatives from individual world governments. Instead, the Councilors became the literal rulers of their constituent worlds, awarded the noble title of marquis or duke. The Council's chief power lay in its control over appointments to noble positions in the various districts. It could also remove regional nobles, even March princes, who were found unfit for their authority. The Prince of the Crucis March, by virtue of assuming the duties of the presidency, received the title of First Prince of the Federated Suns.

Though Simon had carefully de-emphasized any special role in the new government structure for himself and his family, few were surprised when the High Council appointed him Prince of the Crucis March. The damage done to the Davion name by mad Etien and his sons had not entirely robbed the Davion name of its magic, and Simon's own sterling political and military record was enough to overcome the doubters. His supporters hailed him as the visionary diplomat who had signed the Ares Conventions in 2412, that famous set of rules for civilizing the conduct of warfare. He was also a veteran of Capellan border campaigns, recommended for decoration and promotion. The final card in Simon's hand was, ironically, the very killing for which he had recently stood trial. By risking his life and his future to ensure a better one for his nation, Simon had proved himself the opposite of the dead tyrant. Against this combination of virtues, no other candidate for First Prince stood a chance. Simon Davion formally ascended to his new position in 2418, to reign over the Federated Suns for the next forty years.

Though the Federated Suns lost ground militarily to the Terran Hegemony during Simon's reign, Simon Davion brought to his realm the cutting-edge war machines that would soon enable the Suns to regain its territory and military prominence. In 2457, Simon paid the government of the Lyran Commonwealth a huge sum for BattleMech technology, which the Lyrans had stolen from the Terran Hegemony two years before. Armed with these kings of the battlefield, the Federated Suns would see few major setbacks and several military victories over the coming century, until the formation of the Star League put an end to large-scale warfare for nearly two hundred years.

The Prince and the Star League

The next great leader of the Federated Suns owed his throne to the military, succeeding to power only after a devastating civil war. Prince Alexander Davion began his reign as a child, spent several months as a captive of one of his own regents, fled captivity to exile on a bog-ridden backwater planet and eventually emerged from that exile to fight for and win his embattled throne. Over the course of his long reign, Alexander would rebuild the shattered Federated Suns, resurrect its military might and lead it into the Star League from a position of strength.

Between 2457 and 2524, the Federated Suns fought minor but successful border wars with the Capellan Confederation and the Draconis Combine. A greater threat came from the Terran Hegemony beginning in 2515, with a raid on the world of Robinson that killed the Prince of the Terran March along with his entire family. General Nikolai Rostov, a gifted military leader known and respected by the High Council, was appointed the new Prince of the Terran March, from which he waged a brilliant strategic war that kept Hegemony advances bottled up for the next several years. General Rostov was also one of five regents for the young First Prince, Alexander, who succeeded to the throne at the age of five. Rostov's command skills and popularity with the army kept the Federated Suns from suffering military setbacks throughout Alexander's minority, despite increasingly bitter political battles between the regency's two feuding factions.

These tensions came to a head in 2523, when regents Cassandra Davion and her husband, David Varnay, kidnapped the seventeen-year-old First Prince and married him to Varnay's niece Cynthia. Held under virtual house arrest on New Syrtis, the Varnay family stronghold, Alexander and his young wife made plans to escape. Meanwhile, the remaining regent, Laura Davion, was setting plans of her own in motion. Backed by an alleged "escort" of DropShips and BattleMechs, Laura landed on New Avalon in 2524. She revealed the kidnapping of Alexander to an astonished High Council, proclaimed the Varnays enemies of the state and declared war against them with the Council's backing. In response, the Varnays declared Laura's occupation of New Avalon treasonous and announced the formation of a new militia that would fight the "traitor" Davion's forces in the First Prince's name. To counter stories of Alexander's captivity, David Varnay arranged for a carefully planned tour of Capellan March worlds where the Varnay militia was being raised. Alexander and Cynthia took advantage of this publicity stunt to engineer Alexander's escape from the Varnays' control.

The First Prince remained in hiding for eighteen months on the backwater world of Nahoni, while the opening battles of the Davion Civil War raged around him. General Rostov was killed early on, a blow to the regular army's morale that the Varnay faction swiftly exploited. By 2527, the initial burst of fighting had ground down to a stalemate. In that same year, Prince Alexander struck his first blow against the regents who had betrayed him, House Davion and their nation. On Nahoni, he met with the First New Avalon Dragoons, a light armor unit nominally loyal to Laura Davion because she controlled their homeworld. The appearance of the First Prince, proclaimed dead by both sides in the regents' conflict, energized the demoralized Dragoons. When two divisions of Varnay militia troops landed on Nahoni two weeks later, the Dragoons and Alexander fought and won a fierce guerrilla campaign—the prince's first victory in what would prove to be a very long war.

The emergence of the Davion heir prompted several units from both sides to immediately join his cause. Among the most significant of these early loyalists was Dmitri Rostov, the talented son of the beloved late General Rostov. When word of Dmitri's choice spread across the Crucis March, unit after unit of the regular army switched from Laura Davion to the young prince. By 2528, Alexander had pushed his aunt entirely out of the Crucis region. Five years later, Alexander's forces defeated Laura Davion's remaining loyalists on the Draconis March world of Tancredi. Laura herself committed suicide rather than face a probable treason trial, leaving Alexander free to finish the campaign against his remaining opponent, Cassandra Davion-Varnay. After four more years of bitter fighting, Alexander and Dmitri Rostov finally routed the Varnay army in 2537. Cassandra Varnay fled into the Capellan Confederation, never to be heard from again. The Davion Civil War was over. Now it was Alexander's task to build the peace.

One of the prince's first acts was to reduce the powers of the High Council and his fellow March Princes. Alexander's governmental reforms made the First Prince supreme ruler over the Federated Suns by hobbling the ability of other nobles to build March-wide power bases strong enough to threaten the throne. The prince forced passage of these and other consolidations of authority through a combination of forceful argument, persuasion and the occasional threat of military action against recalcitrant lords. Neither he nor they ever forgot that he owed his throne to the military, which remained solidly loyal to Alexander throughout his lifetime. Fortunately, Alexander rarely found it necessary to play the military card. The threat sufficed, allowing him to turn his vastly increased political powers toward the rebuilding of his broken nation.

For the next three decades, the First Prince kept the Federated Suns' military actions largely defensive while he concentrated on economic recovery. As part of rebuilding the public confidence necessary for prosperity, he encouraged such democratic liberties among the citizens as free speech, the right of assembly and the right of protest. With regard to military reforms, Alexander moved more cautiously than he had in changing the government. In general, his changes minimized regional and planetary loyalties in favor of ties to the entire Federated Suns. Though individual worlds continued to raise and train their own units, Alexander made a point of integrating offworlders and posted most such units to regions other than those from which most of their men had been drawn. Additionally, he redrew the March boundaries, reducing their number from five to three. He also rechristened his military

machine, calling it the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns (AFFS) to emphasize its national loyalties. Most significantly, he instituted the requirement that the heir to the Davion throne serve at least five years in a military unit, thereby reinforcing the link between Davion military and political power.

The Federated Suns joined the Star League in 2567, the last realm to do so save for its strongest battlefield rival, the Draconis Combine. Typically for this military-minded nation, the dealmaker was Ian Cameron's promise to launch preemptive strikes using Star League troops should the Combine make a move against any Federated Suns world. The twenty-year Reunification War, fought against the Periphery during the Star League's infancy, completed the Federated Suns' economic recovery. This wartime economic boost, without any accompanying loss of territory, was the first instance in which large-scale warfare drove the realm's prosperity. It would not be the last.

Succession Wars

During the Star League era, colonization rather than conquest vastly expanded the Suns' borders, adding 750 new worlds to its possessions. With the Star League treaties prohibiting major wars, the economic wellspring of the Federated Suns gradually shifted from purely military production to more wide-ranging research and development. The expertise built up between the end of the Reunification War and the collapse of the Star League would stand the Federated Suns in good stead during the centuries of vicious warfare to come. The only major military engagement of the Star League period was the War of Davion Succession, in which poor performance by overextended Davion troops nearly lost the war until the Star League Defense Force (SLDF) intervened. For a nation that prided itself on military prowess, this near-defeat was particularly humiliating. Prince Richard Davion reacted by passing the Preparedness Act in 2735. This masterful piece of legislation carefully skirted legal limits on the size of Star League member-state armies by amassing war materiel and creating ever-larger local militias that could be pressed into nationwide service at a moment's notice.

Sixteen years later, the sudden death of First Lord Simon Cameron left the Star League in the hands of an eight-year-old boy. Actual governing authority fell to the Council of Regents, made up of the rulers of each League member-state. These lords had spent the better part of the past few decades in petty squabbles and secret military build-ups, making a crisis inevitable. It came in 2766, when Stefan Amaris of the Rim Worlds Republic assassinated First Lord Richard Cameron and proclaimed himself the Star League's supreme ruler. Though the Council Lords were united in their desire to see the usurper overthrown, they were too preoccupied with guarding against each other to lend any significant military aid to the SLDF. When General Aleksandr Kerensky and his SLDF troops finally routed Amaris' forces in 2779, the Star League they had fought for existed only in name. The Council Lords were deploying their armies and biding their time, each seeking the most advantageous moment to claim the First Lord's title and power.

House Davion and the Federated Suns were no exception. The Camerons had ruled over the Terran Hegemony; their deaths at Amaris' hands left the Hegemony leaderless and its worlds up for grabs. Like its former compatriots, the Federated Suns

made attempts on several planets in the contested region near Terra. However, the economic dislocation that accompanied the final years of the Star League had weakened the Federated Suns' military. Regional loyalties had also reasserted themselves in the largely peaceful Star League years, hampering the AFFS's ability to act as a coordinated fighting force. These flaws cost the Federated Suns dearly in the battle for Towne, a world particularly valuable to the Federated Suns because it lay directly between that realm and Terra.

Elements from two AFFS units were sent to garrison Towne but soon faced raiding parties of Capellan Confederation and Draconis Combine troops. Unable to agree on which opponent to attack first, the AFFS forces dithered while both attackers made off with valuable shipments of military equipment. A larger force of Combine troops assaulted Towne a few months later, counting on the defenders' disarray to give the Combine a victory. Reinforcements arrived too late to save the planet or the garrison units. Towne fell to the Draconis Combine, and the AFFS was left to lick its wounds.

Prince John Davion was determined to avoid any more such debacles, whether in the immediate or distant future. Neither he nor his fellow rulers were the type to compromise when power was at stake, and the Prince knew his nation faced decades-possibly even centuries-of fighting. Determined to survive and triumph, Prince John immediately launched a realm-wide militarization program, with the dual aim of strengthening the AFFS and lifting the Federated Suns out of its economic doldrums. Once again, warfare was the Federated Suns' salvation. Throughout the first three Succession Wars that followed, the Federated Suns would turn to war again and again as a means of reviving a faltering economy and assuaging domestic discontent. Though each conflict ultimately left the realm poorer and more battered, the next war temporarily eased the hard times and offered the false promise of final victory.

Alliance and Conquest

The fourth and last Succession War marked a departure from the Federated Suns' cycle of war-driven booms and busts. Unlike the previous three conflicts, the Federated Suns launched the Fourth Succession War from a position of economic as well as military strength. The marriage of Prince Hanse Davion to Melissa Steiner, Archon-Designate of the Lyran Commonwealth, marked the formal alliance of those two great nations and gave the Federated Suns access to the thriving Lyran economy. Marking the birth of the Alliance with a major war, however, was an error that would eventually prove the Federated Commonwealth's undoing.

Though the Lyran state and the Federated Suns shared many similar ideals, their common democratic traditions and overlapping ethnic heritages did not prevent distrust between them. At best, they tended to regard each other as the lesser of several enemies. Lying on opposite sides of the Inner Sphere, these two empires shared no common border and so rarely warred against each other. However, the Lyran people kept a wary eye on the Federated Suns' military might. Likewise, citizens of the Federated Suns frequently feared Lyran economic clout as a backdoor vehicle for takeover. The personal charisma of Hanse Davion and Archon Katrina Steiner, who signed the treaty that would eventually create the Federated Commonwealth, persuaded the majority of both realms' people to go along with this bold experiment in peaceful alliance. The underlying history and causes of the two

sides' mutual suspicions, however, were never addressed. Instead, they remained as fault lines waiting to be exploited.

Even before the wedding of Hanse and Melissa, the groom had set his ambitious plans in motion. Military exercises along the Capellan Confederation border gave Hanse the cover he needed to move an invasion force into position. Under the increasingly erratic leadership of Chancellor Maximilian Liao, the Confederation had lost ground economically and militarily. Prince Hanse would never have a better chance to conquer the Capellans, bitter enemies of the Federated Suns for seven hundred years. At the wedding reception, held on Terra in 3028, Hanse claimed the Capellan Confederation as a gift for his new wife. His words were the signal for a massive invasion, spearheaded by Federated Suns troops and backed by Lyran funding.

The war was a spectacular success in terms of territorial gains. By the time it ended in 3030, the Federated Suns-Lyran Commonwealth Alliance had captured nearly half the Confederation, as well as fifty-three Draconis Combine worlds taken by Lyran units. The cost of fighting the war and holding onto the gains, however, gave plenty of Lyrans pause. The economic drain coupled with the leading role of militarily superior Federated Suns units made it easy for opponents of the fledgling alliance to portray it as a vehicle for pouring Lyran money into ill-advised "foreign" military adventures.

Clan War and Aftermath

Had the fighting ended with the Fourth Succession War, the two nations might have overcome its two halves' old mistrusts. The War of 3039—an ill-fated offensive by Davion-commanded troops against the Draconis Combine—added some fuel to the opposition's fire but cost the Lyrans no planets and ended swiftly enough to pose no serious economic trouble. The Clan War was another matter. The Lyran half of the union lay directly in the path of the Clan juggernaut, which swept through the Periphery and the Successor States between 3049 and 3052. World after world fell to these formidable invaders, while the vaunted Federated Suns military machine apparently stood idle. From the average Lyran's perspective, the famous Davion fighting expertise had been the prize for merging the two nations and their armies. But the AFFC's Davion units and commanders appeared as helpless as any Lyran infantry grunt to halt the assault on Lyran territory. Some Lyrans began to mutter darkly of Davion conspiracies to save the Federated Suns at Lyran expense. Others resented the ever-widening stream of Lyran resources going to fund an apparently inept military largely under Davion control.

Citizens of the Federated Suns, for their part, tended to take Lyran economic support for granted. At worst, they treated Lyran contributions as "only money," worth little next to the courage and skill of "our" fighting men and women. The fact that Lyran soldiers and officers were also fighting and dying on the Clan front was conveniently brushed under the carpet. Accustomed to seeing themselves as the Inner Sphere's sole military superpower, Davion citizens frequently assumed all the credit for successful AFFC campaigns and blamed proverbial Lyran military ineptitude for the failures.

By the end of the Clan War's first phase in 3052, the Lyran half of the union had suffered far worse than its Davion counterpart. Clan Jade Falcon had taken forty-four Lyran worlds, while the Federated Suns remained unscathed. Another casualty was

the Lyran economy, slowed from its usual robust roar to a faltering whimper by the significant loss of planets and the sheer cost of fighting such a vastly superior enemy. The immense respect of most Lyran and Davion citizens for Melissa Steiner, sole ruler of the two realms after Prince Hanse's death in 3052, kept the increasingly fractious super-state together until 3055, when an assassin's bomb killed the Archon Princess at a public ceremony. After Melissa's murder, the dissolution of the Federated Commonwealth was only a matter of time.

Here it is advantageous to point out a technicality misunderstood by most. The Alliance Treaty was signed in 3032. Though the Lyran and Davion economies began to merge after the Fourth War, with the militaries completing their unification in 3042, the Federated Commonwealth did not officially exist until a child of Hanse and Melissa's union assumed the throne. By the time of the Clan Invasions, most citizens of both realms thought of themselves as Federated Commonwealth citizens. Per the provision in the Alliance Treaty, however, the Federated Commonwealth was not officially formed until 3055, when Victor Steiner-Davion, eldest child of Hanse and Melissa, succeeded his mother as Archon Prince.

Considerably more soldier than diplomat, Victor gave the outward appearance of being more Davion than Steiner—a perception enhanced by his decision to spend the bulk of his governing time on New Avalon. Anti-Federated Commonwealth elements swiftly exploited the situation. The Skye Separatists, a Lyran secessionist movement led by Duke Ryan Steiner, spread rumors and sowed dissent for the next two years in hopes of toppling the entire Steiner-Davion line. They accused Victor of engineering his mother's death, emphasized his Davion roots and portrayed him as a ruthless military adventurer bent on bleeding the Lyran state dry to feed his boundless ambition. This effective smear campaign prompted Victor to make his sister Katherine regent over the Lyran worlds, elevating her to the position of co-ruler of the Federated Commonwealth.

Popular among the Lyran people and publicly conscious of her Steiner background, Katherine seemed an inspired choice. Her loyalty to Victor, however, had already begun to erode under the steady onslaught of scandal mongering. Her attempts to publicly defend her brother against all manner of scurrilous accusations ended up feeding the anti-Victor rumor mill, as more and more Lyrans became convinced that she was protesting too much.

Tensions worsened in 3057 with the death of Joshua Marik, the sickly heir to the Free Worlds League. At the height of the Clan invasion in 3051, Prince Hanse Davion had coerced vital war materiel from Captain-General Thomas Marik by promising to treat Joshua's leukemia at the prestigious New Avalon Institute of Science. Joshua's death put the Marik military pipeline at risk; the Free Worlds League lay far from the Clan front, and Victor believed he could not afford to lose the only hold he had over the Captain-General. He also feared that Capellan Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao, engaged to the only remaining Marik heir, might ascend to power in two realms and plunge the Inner Sphere into a ruinous internal war. In a fatefully ill-advised decision, Victor replaced Joshua with a double. When Thomas Marik learned of the deception mere months later, he responded by attacking the Federated Commonwealth. As the first Free Worlds League troops crossed into the Federated Commonwealth's Sarna March, Katherine publicly denounced Victor and proclaimed Lyran neutrality. Mere days

after this announcement, she declared the Lyran state independent of the Federated Commonwealth and renamed it the Lyran Alliance.

Most Davion citizens followed their Prince's lead and refused to acknowledge the break. Katherine's action, however, played into long-held suspicions of Lyran untrustworthiness. Corporations based in the Federated Suns greatly reduced business contacts with their Lyran partners. Lyran soldiers in AFFC units had their loyalties questioned by their Federated Suns counterparts and commanders. Ordinary Lyrans who had relocated to Federated Suns territory during the Federated Commonwealth's heyday became enemy aliens on their adopted homeworlds. Many of the latter moved back to Lyran space, where their stories of discrimination only worsened relations between the two sides. When Archon Katherine took power across the Federated Commonwealth in 3061, many citizens of the Federated Suns half rebelled quietly. Public protests, though swiftly quashed, increased in frequency and vigor. Victor Steiner-Davion's triumphant return from Clan space and his subsequent appointment as ComStar's new Precentor Martial energized Davion loyalists throughout Federated Commonwealth space. Meanwhile, Katherine's attempts to tighten her grip made civil war almost inevitable.

In December of 3062, the brewing conflict between the two halves of this once-great power finally boiled over. The catalyst was the murder of Duke Arthur Steiner-Davion, with disturbing evidence suggesting Archon Katherine's complicity. The fighting is in its early stages, too early to predict the outcome. One thing seems certain, however. Whichever side finally claims victory will need to do its utmost to heal the breach. Otherwise, the short-lived unity of the Federated Commonwealth will vanish forever-and with it, the Inner Sphere's greatest hope of learning to coexist in peace.

Federated Suns Society

Federated Suns society has always reflected this realm's delicate balance between centralized military and political power and the cherished freedoms of the people. The average Federated Suns citizen is reasonably well off or has the prospect of being so; he credits his comfort to constitutional freedoms and a strong military to guarantee them. Liberty is no guarantor of equality, however, particularly with the devotion of massive resources to military endeavors. The current civil war has exacerbated these social tensions, affecting almost every aspect of daily life.

Prominence of the Military

Though the AFFS does not literally rule the Federated Suns, the military has had close ties to the ruling Davion family since Charles Davion's presidency in the mid twenty-fourth century. Prince Alexander Davion, regarded by many as the realm's greatest leader, intensified this link by coming to power through a de facto military coup. Though his claim to the throne rested on a solid legal foundation, he could not have made it a reality without strong military backing. Grateful for an end to bitter civil strife, the ordinary people of Alexander's day venerated both the man and the armies that had brought them peace. That near-reverence for the armed forces persists to this day throughout the citizenry of Federated Suns, from the highest nobility to the working class.

A valued occupation in most Inner Sphere nations, soldiering is positively glamorous in the Federated Suns. The newest entry to boot camp, still wet behind the ears, feels this reflected glory from the moment he signs up. Not surprisingly, AFFS personnel take immense pride in their military service. The chance to be part of the glorious enterprise of war sustains raw recruits through the hardest phases of training and line units through the most arduous assignments. Such widespread admiration for the military gives the AFFS an endless supply of eager recruits drawn from almost every world and all walks of life. Most families in the Federated Suns have at least one member in training or active service, and few citizens quibble with the military's disproportionate consumption of resources. Public education reinforces this pro-military outlook, stressing battlefield triumphs throughout Federated Suns history. Almost every citizen can recite the facts of some victory over the Capellan Confederation or the Draconis Combine, recalling it as proudly as if he or she took part in it personally.

The high esteem for "our fighting men and women" extends to all branches of military service, though some remain more glamorous than others. In most Inner Sphere realms, MechWarriors and aerospace pilots are the prestige positions, with the rest lost in the shuffle. In the Federated Suns, infantry grunts and tank commanders come in for their share as well. The greater prestige of these often-lesser positions comes from widespread use of regimental combat teams (RCTs), innovative combined-arms units, which existed before this time but saw widespread implementation in the AFFS after the Second Succession War. Impressive on the battlefield for their ruthless efficiency, RCTs are the backbone of the modern-day AFFS. Most civilians understand this on some level, and so regard anyone in military uniform as worthy of great respect. Not quite equal respect, however. As an officer in the Crucis Lancers once put it, "Any grunt can walk into a New Avalon bar and get a free drink. 'Mech- and aerojocks get an all-night free tab. Serve with an outfit like the First Kathil Uhlands, and you can probably drink free for life. Not a bad fringe benefit, eh?"

For all the pride the Federated Suns takes in its armed forces, the sheer size of the military establishment creates problems as well. Maintaining a large, well-trained and well-equipped force costs money and requires vast amounts of industrial resources. Taxes, manufacturing capacity, metals, minerals and chemicals needed for alloys, armor, weapons and fuel are all devoted first to military uses. The rest of society lives on whatever is left. For wealthy urban centers such as New Avalon and various March capitals, or planets like Mallory's World whose primary wealth lies in agriculture, the military's absorption of funds and resources has little effect. Industrial worlds and those with abundant raw materials likewise see little harm and frequently enjoy great benefit from this voracious military consumption. Planets without these advantages, however, suffer immense deprivation. The attention paid to the military comes at the expense of civilian investment, leaving many of these worlds' poor and struggling.

A glaring example of the imbalance is the fate of the so-called "vagabond schools," created by the Ministry of Education in the first decades of this century. These aging JumpShips, refitted to serve as floating classrooms, traveled to backwater worlds in the impoverished Outback District and elsewhere, providing basic education to their people for the first time. Lack of funds, however, made it impossible for Prince Hanse

Davion to expand the Vagabond program. The lull in fighting between the Fourth Succession War and the Clan invasion briefly promised greater funding, until the heightened military spending of the Clan War absorbed the entire budget for such "peripheral expenses." The vagabond schools shut down entirely in 3050, the JumpShips either commandeered for military transport or scrapped for parts. After assuming the throne in 3055, however, Victor once again launched this program. It was frozen again in 3057, but recent times have seen it begin anew, though at nowhere near the broad scope it had several decades ago.

These have-nots-some bitter and resentful, most simply struggling through each day-are largely invisible to their affluent brethren. The equation of prosperity and personal freedom in the average citizen's mind leads most to believe that the former goes with the latter. Therefore, truly poor people cannot possibly exist in this freedom-loving realm-and if they do, their poverty must be their own fault. Blaming a huge military for any part of the problem is far from most people's minds. To admit such a possibility might mean rethinking the armed forces' privileged position in Federated Suns society, an act that would ultimately threaten the foundation of the realm.

Many of the have-nots are politically unsophisticated and espouse a similar view. They often pride themselves on living in a nation where, as one woman put it, "Maybe things get a little tough now and then, but at least I ain't a slave." Such people point to the lower classes of the Draconis Combine or the Capellan Confederation as evidence that their own lot, while difficult, is still enviable. They need not fear the midnight knock at the door or consider themselves the virtual property of their leaders. Most important of all, they need not resign themselves to permanent status at the bottom of society's ladder. Those with some hope of improving life for themselves or their children are least likely to resent the prominence of the military or the benign neglect of their rulers. Those without it are the dissenters; but even among the dissenters, most individuals are too preoccupied with getting through each day to muster up much energy for civil unrest.

The complacency that frequently blinds better-off citizens to the plight of the poor feeds a dangerous arrogance when combined with the military's dominant position. Justifiably proud of its democratic traditions, the Federated Suns often does not hesitate to spread them by force. Such conquests are not always welcome. Local resistance invariably leads to crackdowns, partly fueled by the bewildered anger of Federated Suns authorities at "brainwashed" natives who fail to appreciate their liberation. The crackdowns provoke more resistance, and before long a captured planet may have lost all hope of having the freedoms that justified its conquest. Few Federated Suns citizens appreciate the irony, however. In most people's minds, the military whose power allows them to live free can virtually do no wrong.

Common Rights and Noble Rulers

Like its fellow Successor States, an aristocracy essentially rules the Federated Suns. The logistical difficulties of governing its far-flung expanses preclude a genuinely democratic system; the messy process of government by the people simply does not work on an interplanetary scale, as the early leaders of the Federated Suns found out. New Avalon's egalitarian traditions, however, remained dear to the hearts of the

ruling Davions who claimed it as their homeworld. Consequently, the Federated Suns government never entirely abandoned democratic ideals.

The notion of government by consent of the governed is the principal surviving concept, for hardheaded practical as well as sentimental reasons. With few exceptions, even the most autocratic First Princes have recognized that competent rulership for the good of the people fosters peace and contentment among them. Abuses of power sooner or later lead to rebellion, which deprives the treasury of tax revenues and often creates the need for expensive military intervention. To avoid such problems and safeguard the long-term health of the realm, the constitution and common law of the Federated Suns contain two mechanisms by which ordinary people can potentially depose incompetent or venal overlords: the right of public appeal and direct action.

The right of appeal allows the citizens of a planet to lodge complaints against local barons or counts—the lowest ranks of Davion nobility—before the planetary marques or duke. The Laws of Noble Conduct and Review, enacted by Prince Alexander Davion in 2634, obligate planetary authorities to conduct inquiries based on these complaints. The duke or marques then decides the offending noble's fate. Most often, the noble is replaced by his or her nearest successor. In cases where an entire ruling family falls under suspicion, that family may be stripped of its title. Nobles who attempt to silence their critics face punishment by the central government, ranging from a public reprimand to direct military action on behalf of the local population. The First Prince and his ministers take a dim view of subordinate nobles who cannot keep the peace through competent governance and do not hesitate to back popular rebellions against bad rulers. One famous intervention came in 2701, when Count Donvier Rossini of Tancredi destroyed the Justice Building in his city-state and executed his critics. Soon afterward, an elite unit arrived on Tancredi to arrest the count. Rossini was subsequently found guilty of all charges and beheaded in his city's central public square.

Direct action does not appear in the Federated Suns constitution, but is an accepted part of unwritten common law. Most often strikes or insurrections, direct action comes into play when the right of appeal has failed. A strike is the least desperate of the two tactics, though strikers may risk military occupation by higher authorities if their protest turns violent. An outright insurrection virtually guarantees the arrival of well-armed troops. A military governor replaces the ruling nobles on such planets, and both sides of the insurrection face heavy penalties for breaking the peace of the realm.

The Six Liberties

The power of the ruling class has another limit as well—a guarantee of personal freedoms that goes some way toward explaining the average citizen's contentment with leadership by a hereditary aristocracy. The Federated Suns constitution enshrines the following Six Liberties: the rights to personal liberty, fair treatment, privacy, ownership of property, ownership of weapons, and the right to participate in planetary government. The exact form of the latter right varies widely depending on the government involved, which may be anything from a New Avalon-style parliamentary democracy to the commune of Xenia to an old-Russia-style communist system such as the one in place on Novaya Zemlya. These "civilian governments" are

separate from, though connected to, the governing power of planetary nobles. In theory, a planet's ruling duke or the count or baron of a continent or province can overrule any decision made by civilian authorities. However, nobles who do so too often or without good cause frequently find themselves deposed, through peaceful appeal or less gentle methods.

The Six Liberties give citizens of the Federated Suns much of their boundless drive and enthusiasm, which they turn toward everything from border raids to commercial ventures to civic groups and arts extravaganzas. The freedom to choose their own courses gives them confidence in everything they do—a sense of rightness that is both a blessing and a curse. Pride in their liberties enables them to take bold gambits, such as the alliance that created the Federated Commonwealth. More tradition-bound societies, such as the Capellan Confederation or the Draconis Combine, could not have made such an alliance work, even for less than four decades. Only a people accustomed to free choice could conceive of choosing peace over war, against the weight of centuries of intrigue and conflict.

As with much about this vast realm, however, an individual's attitude toward these freedoms can vary widely depending on his circumstances. The more prosperous the world, the more likely its people are to take extreme pride in their constitutional rights. Not surprisingly, these are the people with the greatest opportunity to exercise them. On less fortunate worlds or in pockets of poverty where the people have lost hope, the Six Liberties often become irrelevant. The right to own property is meaningless when one lacks the money to buy any. Other rights, like those to fair treatment or personal liberty, can often be trampled at will because down-and-out citizens cannot afford to defend them in court. Even among the poorest citizens, however, a certain sense of pride lingers. Many take comfort in their rights—their lives may be wretched, but at least they have their freedom. The extent to which that freedom means anything is a question better avoided.

For too many in the Federated Suns, pride in their democratic traditions easily turns to arrogance. The average citizen sees his homeland as the only truly free realm in human space and therefore superior to all others. Some take this righteousness a step further, believing themselves duty-bound to spread the Federated Suns' enlightened ways by any means necessary. They sincerely believe that, given a choice, any sane human being would live exactly as they do. When confronted with entire interstellar nations whose people live differently, they tend to either pity them as ignorant or despise them for intentionally rejecting a "better" way of life. Such attitudes bolster the pro-military mindset so prevalent in Federated Suns society, turning the frequently ugly business of war into an expression of manifest destiny. On a smaller scale, self-righteousness and complacency win few friends among outsiders. The proverbial arrogance of the Federated Suns ultimately contributed to the Lyran secession and is likely to prove a significant obstacle to rebuilding the Federated Commonwealth once the current fighting is over.

The FedCom Civil War

Scarcely three months old, this conflict has already begun to affect daily life on Federated Suns worlds. Planetary garrisons and local governments, thrown into disarray by Archon Katherine's recent assumption of power, are splitting into bitterly

opposed factions. Sketchy evidence initially appeared to incriminate the Draconis Combine in Duke Arthur Steiner-Davion's death; other elements point to Katherine's involvement. Those who believe the former account have begun to back Katherine, perhaps more fervently than they might have otherwise. Those who believe the latter version see Katherine as a traitor to House Davion. Many of these never ceased supporting Victor Steiner-Davion as the rightful ruler in the Federated Suns, if not the entire Federated Commonwealth. Katherine's usurpation of the Federated Commonwealth throne and her willingness to tear the Federated Commonwealth apart to stay in power have proved to Victor's loyalists what Victor himself only reluctantly came to realize—that Katherine Steiner-Davion is unfit to be trusted with the rulership of the realm.

Victor's eventual acceptance of the need to depose his sister freed his supporters to take action on his behalf. Mere days after Duke Arthur's death, fighting broke out on several worlds between pro-Victor and pro-Katherine AFFC units. On other planets, the peace is increasingly tenuous. The people, their leaders in civilian government and their ruling nobles are a volatile mix of pro-Katherine partisans, pro-Victor loyalists and those who simply want the strife to end. Public demonstrations are frequent and strident, prompting ever-harsher crackdowns by authorities on the opposite side. The tense atmosphere on many worlds threatens to disrupt economic investment, potentially costing millions of jobs and adding to the unrest. Some worlds in the Outback region, already considered risky because of undereducated populations and lack of easily exploitable resources, have lost what little investment they managed to attract during the too-brief boom years of the Federated Commonwealth alliance.

On an individual scale, war jitters are producing a blend of panicky actions and jaunty defiance. Hoarding is common, even on planets that have seen no military action. On those that have, the warring military units have generally avoided large-scale collateral damage. However, the savage attacks on military bases and manufacturing installations are taking a toll on local economies, with thousands of citizens losing their livelihoods in the course of a single battle. Citizens of worlds as yet unscathed by fighting heartily reassure each other, in an eerie echo of Terra's long-ago World Wars: the conflict will surely be over by Easter, by summer, before the rains begin. Battle-scarred civilian populations take a grimmer view. Some flee to nearby worlds still at peace; others are grimly determined to hang on, no matter who finally wins.

Citizens of border Marches are particularly tense, fearing attack by their neighbors in addition to civil strife. In theory, the Whitting Accords that recreated the Star League should prohibit former enemy realms from exploiting the Federated Commonwealth's internal troubles. In practice, however, the Star League is young and the enmities old. Many people find it difficult to believe that the Capellans, the Free Worlds League or the Draconis Combine will not use the current turmoil to launch opportunistic invasions of Federated Commonwealth border worlds. Some believe the invasions have already begun, pointing for proof to the Combine's annexation of the Lyons Thumb this past August.

The Draconis March, on the Combine border, is the hottest powder keg waiting to explode. The region's ruling duke of Sandoval is currently in Katherine's camp, with Victor's history of ties with the Draconis Combine leading the Duke to believe that supporting Katherine is in the best interests of his realm. History and geography

conspired to make this region a hotbed of anti-Combine feeling; alleged Combine responsibility for the public slaying of the popular Duke Arthur has inflamed passions to worrisome levels. Already, Draconis March residents of Asian descent are becoming the victims of increasingly violent crimes. Anti-Japanese graffiti turns up in almost every Asian neighborhood, while roving bands of young toughs smash the windows of sushi bars and torch Chinese restaurants. (For bigots bent on violence, all Asians look alike.) On Robinson, the March capital, a string of vicious beatings has so far hospitalized three Japanese men, an elderly Chinese and two young Korean women. Despite the Sandoval family's appeals for calm, the Draconis March appears on the verge of an anti-Asian pogrom horribly similar to the one that swept the region in the 2790s. That explosion of violence came after Draconis Combine troops massacred the civilian population of Kentares IV. Whether a second wave is in the offing or how severe it will be depends on the extent to which the Sandoval clan can overcome its own hatred of the Combine and defuse the raging tensions. As it is, the known anti-Combine bent of the duke and his family is undermining all appeals for calm.

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Writing Credits:

Inner Sphere Source Book: Federated Suns - House Davion

Diane Piron-Gelman



HOUSE KURITA

Before the formation of the Draconis Combine, chaos reigned as Man drifted aimlessly among the stars. It took the inspired hand of Shiro Kurita, First Lord and Citizen, to forge a dynamic and noble path from which we still derive strength and to which we must still pledge obeisance. - From Observations of Greatness, by Subhash Indrarahar, 3021

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Dawn in Imperial City, capital of Luthien and heart of the Draconis Combine. The morning sky is the color of pearl: gray-white, misty, shimmering. The streets are as quiet as they ever get. The sake drinkers and concert goers have long since gone home, the geisha are sleeping, the yakuza have largely finished their business. Even the all-seeing eyes of the metsuke-the operatives of the Internal Security Force-are half shut, with so few to watch. Then the first streaks of pale rose appear, the same delicate shade of the water lilies that grace Siriwan's Peace Pool in Unity Park. Rose soon gives way to gold, gleaming from the tops of the taller buildings. Teakwood and smoked glass gleam like hot embers in the morning's glory. The first of the day's

inhabitants begin to stir: the street cleaner, the tea seller, the Friendly Persuader in his bright striped uniform starting his early shift. Before long, the streets are bustling. Civil servants scurry to their jobs in the vast Unity Palace complex. Salary men bolt down cups of tea and bowls of cold noodles on their way to office high-rises. Well-dressed servants of the upper classes come out to do the day's shopping, their sharp voices rising through air scented with cherry blossoms.

In the district to the southeast, near Takashi Memorial Spaceport, the air is scented with combustion exhaust from the ancient buses and trucks that crowd the streets. The thoroughways bustle with factory workers going on or off shift, laborers repairing the roads, poorer housewives searching for bargains, Unproductive lounging in doorways while their children roam the concrete. This, too, is the Combine, as much as the grace and beauty of Imperial City's Palace District. They are our yin and yang, day and night, two faces of the same coin. Both are equally true to our soul. The quiet grace of this city's heart is a luxury achieved only by our willingness to suffer equivalent hardships. Our greatest fighters are often poets, their skill at the gentle art of haiku inextricably linked to their prowess at the harsh arts of war. The acceptance of this duality, the acceptance and embrace of beauty and hardship, serenity and ruthlessness, is one that most Combine citizens learn to cultivate from birth. Few of those outside our borders truly understand it, or us. But this acceptance has enabled us to survive for more than seven hundred years, through war and brief peace and war again. And now peace again, young and uneasy though it may be.

In my sixty-seven years, I have heard the Draconis Combine called many things. Militaristic. Expansionist. Xenophobic. A nation of inscrutable Orientals, convinced of its destiny to rule humankind and preoccupied with notions of honor that only it understands. Sheep shackled to the service of House Kurita, brainwashed from childhood into sacrificing their own needs and wants and very lives for the vainglory of their rulers. I have also heard kinder descriptions: a people blessed with courage and devotion, single-minded in their pursuit of greatness. A reincarnation of Old Japan, faithfully embodying that ancient society's twin ideals of honor and duty. A military power second to none and never to be trifled with.

But I have never heard the Combine called "home"-not as I call it. As a child of House Kurita, I know the life at the top. As a businessman with an eye for what is useful, I have come to know life farther down the mountain that is Combine society. This, then, is my view of the nation and people I love. It cannot tell the whole truth-no single viewpoint could-but it should come closer than most.

At the summit of the mountain, my cousin Theodore graces the throne. For nearly ten years he has led the Combine with dignity and vision. As far back as the 3030s, his actions shaped the Combine as much as-or more than-those of his father, Coordinator Takashi Kurita. Takashi's Combine was closed in on itself in many ways, suffocating under our long habit of unquestioning obedience to authority. Soldiers feared to make a move lest their initiative offend their superiors. Artists and poets endlessly recycled old forms and conventions, until the dead weight of them threatened to stifle the Combine's creative spirit. Merchants and entrepreneurs took few risks and brought in fewer profits. Technology and science suffered as well, with little opportunity to learn from advances outside the Combine. The realm stagnated, unable to tap its full potential because those who ruled it feared the consequences of a little freedom.

Theodore did not fear those consequences. Instead, he sought to balance the need to preserve our worthiest traditions while casting off what no longer benefited us. First as Gunji-no-Kanrei and then as Coordinator, he acted to create a Combine for the modern era-true to its deepest self but also able to adapt to situations our illustrious forebears could never have imagined. We still revere our Kurita founder and the Japanese culture from which his dynasty sprang, but we no longer reject all that lies outside that culture-especially the different peoples within our own borders. We remain devoted to honor and duty, but acknowledge that the definitions and requirements of those ideals may change. We recognize that the good of the Combine often requires us to subsume our own desires, but we also appreciate the value of a little indulgence from time to time. Without this broadening of outlook, we could not have survived the Clan War. Certainly we could not have joined with our fellow Successor States to re-form the Star League and defeat the Clan invaders. And now our Coordinator is universally acknowledged as the Star League's First Lord-an accomplishment denied to House Kurita since Coordinator Minoru launched the First Succession War back in 2784. Old Shiro Kurita, father of the Combine, would be proud, I think.

For the average Combine citizen, all this high-sounding rhetoric means little on the surface. From the middle-class university professor to the corner shop owner to the lowest ranks of the Unproductive, ordinary life appears to have changed little. Breakfast is still likely to be a bowl of rice and a pot of green tea, perhaps livened by fresh fruit for those with the means to buy it. The workday proceeds as it always has, though the common laborer is likely to find his workday somewhat shorter than the sixteen-hour slog of Takashi's time. At the day's end, the professor goes home to his family in their small house or apartment, the shop owner to his rooms above his store, the laborer to his hostel, the Unproductive to wherever he sleeps. Yet there is an ease to the atmosphere, a relaxing of tensions that comes from greater trust between the Coordinator and his people.

Our citizens of non-Japanese ancestry feel this most keenly. Swedish farmers on Rasalhague border worlds, Arkab traders of Middle Eastern origins, Russian miners native to Kaznejov, the famed Spanish dance troupes of Altair-all these are as much a part of the Combine as our treasured Japanese heritage. For a time we forgot this fact, and our different brothers suffered. Now we have begun to mend our error. The new thinking shows itself in small ways, though even these are significant in a collective-minded nation such as the Combine. Swedish meatballs are all the rage on Shirotori and Camlann, near the remnant of Rasalhague; Ukrainian balalaika music is turning up on Luthien concert stages; and a wildly popular vid entertainment dramatizes the exploits of an Azami desert clan descended from the children of Araby and Africa on ancient Terra.

Not that Theodore's Combine is without troubles and flaws. The reclamation of Clan-held planets continues to strain the economy, credit is tight and unemployment is rising uncomfortably fast on some worlds. Even in Imperial City, the ranks of the Unproductive are slowly growing as the newly jobless join them. And then there are the Black Dragons, hidebound traditionalists offended by every attempt to move the Combine into the modern age. These individuals see change as blasphemy. Their Combine remains frozen in time, unable to accept the new or adapt to it. Though their

numbers are not great, their influence can be. In unsettled times, the type of rigid certainty they preach soothes the insecurity of the masses. Their insistence on cultural purity calls up our long-standing prejudices against all that is not Japanese. We are accustomed to obedience and we revere tradition. Such people do not find it easy to make choices or break with the past, even when our betters tell us to.

We are a nation on the edge of greatness, a thing we have long striven for but never quite achieved. The mutual devotion between House Kurita and our people has carried the Combine a long way, but that devotion alone cannot lead us to our destiny. Obedience to authority keeps us focused on our goals but can also make us rigid when we need to be flexible. Our reverence for tradition helps us keep the best in our past but also saddles us with the worst. Our virtues are many, but until now we have lacked the one we need most in this brave new universe: moderation. Under Theodore Kurita, we are finally beginning to learn it. We know now that obedience need not be blind, self-sufficiency need not prevent us from accepting aid when needed, and pride in our own heritage need not make us devalue all others. This new understanding can only add to the old. Both together will bring us glory.

-Chandrasekar Kurita

Origins and History

Though every Inner Sphere nation is a product of the people and events that molded it, the Draconis Combine, more than most, has been shaped by a few prominent individuals and a single, dominant culture. Shiro Kurita, the Combine's founder, began with a single planet. By the time of his death five decades later, he ruled over a sizable empire of more than sixty worlds. His descendants have since used their kinship with him and the Japanese cultural tradition from which he came to forge an empire of formidable military strength, indomitable courage and universal devotion to House Kurita.

Founding Father: Shiro Kurita

More than any other of humanity's great star empires, the Draconis Combine exists through the vision and will of one man: its founder, Shiro Kurita. His cultural background and forceful personality left an indelible stamp on the nation he built, and six centuries of Kurita heirs have largely reinforced the legacy of their famed ancestor.

Born in 2270 on the colony world of New Samarkand, Shiro Kurita was raised according to the precepts of bushido, a Japanese samurai philosophy that stresses martial prowess and emotional stoicism. In those years, New Samarkand was a spider's web of shifting alliances between the warlords who ruled over its half-dozen city-states. Each of these strongmen claimed suzerainty over the planet, but none possessed the military power to make good his claim. Political intrigue, composed of equal parts canny diplomacy and saber rattling, maintained an uneasy balance of power.

Intelligent and ambitious, Shiro proved a keen student of his homeworld's political machinery. He entered local politics when he was barely of legal age; by his twenty-fourth year, he was overlord of Yamashiro, his native city. Over the next two years, he used a combination of bribes, blackmail and occasional murder to extend his power across the entire planet. In 2296, he publicly declared himself "First Citizen" of New Samarkand.

With his homeworld under his control and its several small armies molded into a single, loyalist-fighting force by his formidable brother Urizen, Shiro Kurita turned his attention toward building an interstellar empire. His first efforts centered on the destruction of a potential rival for power: the Ozawa Mercantile Association (OMA), a wealthy trading conglomerate on which New Samarkand's economy depended.

The OMA arose in the mid-twenty-third century, one of several shipping and mercantile associations built around corporations that owned faster-than-light ships. (These relatively rare vessels, equipped with Kearny-Fuchida jump drives, could travel the long distances separating the former Terran Alliance colony worlds cut adrift when the Alliance collapsed in 2237.) The mercantile associations provided the only link between many of these planets; they made their money ferrying cargo, passengers and information from world to world. The Ozawa Mercantile Association, led by a Japanese clan of the same name, served the quadrant of space in which New Samarkand lay. Though not fabulously wealthy, their vital business made the Ozawas considerably more prosperous than many of the struggling former colonists they served. Inevitably, the disparity in wealth caused resentment—often exacerbated by the arrogance of many Ozawa traders, who skipped few opportunities to remind their customers of their dependence on the merchants' good graces. Such attitudes, coupled with the association's monopoly in the New Samarkand region, gave more than a few citizens on New Samarkand and surrounding worlds reason to want the Ozawas brought down. Few were more eager to accomplish this than New Samarkand's First Citizen, Lord Shiro Kurita.

Alliance of Galedon

In the first of many empire-building moves, Shiro made contact with the government of Galedon V, a prosperous and important nearby world. Galedon's leaders were nursing their own grudges against the Ozawa Mercantile Association, which sometimes took its profits at Galedon's expense. After several months of correspondence with Galedon's planetary governor, Nathaniel Imura, Shiro visited the planet with a proposal. He wished to form an alliance between his own world and Galedon, pooling both planets' technological and military resources so that together they could defy the Ozawas. If the alliance worked, other worlds would join, persuaded by all the eloquence at Shiro's command. To sweeten the deal, Shiro proposed to call the new confederation the Alliance of Galedon—thereby implying that world's precedence in the alliance's affairs. Swayed by Shiro's charisma, Galedon's governing board agreed to the proposal. They gave Shiro the title of Director, placing in his hands ultimate authority over both worlds' militaries and navies.

With his new ally's strong support, Shiro convinced world after world in the region to join him in throwing off the Ozawa yoke. The Alliance of Galedon grew swiftly, especially after the Ozawas' ill-advised attempt to intimidate member worlds by

sharply raising transport fees. Citing that act as provocation, Shiro ordered armed Galedon naval vessels to board the unarmed OMA ships and confiscate their cargoes and the ships themselves, as war "reparations." Soon the Alliance had its own merchant fleet. In response, the Ozawas armed their remaining ships and launched a massive public-relations campaign aimed at improving their image while sabotaging Shiro's. The campaign proved effective. A little more than a year after forming the Alliance, Shiro Kurita saw his popularity slipping. He retaliated with a ruthlessness that has since become a hallmark of many Kurita Coordinators. During November of 2303, Shiro's agents bombed every OMA office and installation throughout Alliance territory.

Having dealt the OMA its deathblow, Shiro launched the first of several sporadic invasions. In December of 2303, Urizen Kurita and his New Samarkand army invaded Sverdlovsk, a nearby planet whose leaders had hoped to remain neutral in the Alliance-Ozawa conflict. Though Kurita's force consisted of a mere four divisions, it proved more than sufficient to overcome scattered resistance by outraged locals on a world with no standing militia. Scant weeks after the first troops landed, Sverdlovsk's leaders signed over their planet to Lord Shiro.

Like many a move made by Shiro and his successors, the Sverdlovsk campaign had more than one purpose. In addition to giving Shiro complete control over his first planet other than New Samarkand, the bold military strike intimidated the ruling powers on several other regional worlds. None of them possessed armed forces capable of challenging the army of New Samarkand, and so none of them dared call the Kurita brothers' bluff. The leaders of several formerly neutral planets soon signed treaties with Shiro, increasing the power of the Alliance of Galedon and Shiro's personal authority. Over the next six years, Shiro and Urizen Kurita annexed one world after another, sporadically enough to conceal the true extent of their power grab. By 2309, Shiro had persuaded, threatened or outright conquered enough worlds to openly claim complete, personal control over the Alliance of Galedon.

Alliance possessions at this point consisted of seven worlds with significant populations and resources, plus fewer than a dozen others. Shiro wanted more. Among the potentially rich pickings were Dieron, Altair, Benjamin, Worrell, Junction, Luthien and Pesht—all former Terran Alliance colonies grown prosperous and powerful enough to control several of their immediate neighbors. Shiro embarked on a yearlong tour of these and other capital worlds, ostensibly seeking diplomatic relations with them for the Alliance of Galedon. In fact, he was planning to co-opt them. Before embarking on his journey, Shiro had collected considerable intelligence on the rulers of each planet. Soon after his arrival at each world, Shiro contrived to show its king, duke or warlord proof that a neighboring rival intended to invade. Having sunk this hook, Shiro then offered to mediate the looming dispute—or invited the planetary ruler to join the Alliance of Galedon and enjoy access to its military resources. The ploy succeeded every time. Shiro returned to New Samarkand in 2310 with more than a dozen signed treaties. Through a combination of smooth diplomacy, guile and the strategic use of force, Kurita had expanded his Alliance to encompass more than thirty worlds.

Shiro's house of cards briefly threatened to collapse in 2311, when a dispute between the leaders of Dieron and Altair revealed that each planet's overlord had received the

same guarantee of military aid from the Alliance of Galedon. The worlds of Benjamin, Telos IV and Asgard reacted with outrage to Shiro's duplicity and refused to accept his authority. Alliance forces invaded all three planets in late September of 2311; the last holdout, Asgard, fell to Kurita forces in August of 2312. The vicious fighting and eventual Kurita triumph served as object lessons to other would-be rebels; over the next seven years, only a handful of worlds in the region dared defy the overlords of the Alliance. By 2319, Shiro Kurita controlled a narrow strip of planets stretching from the region of space near Terra to the largely unexplored Draconis Rift. Shiro rechristened his realm for the eerily beautiful Rift, calling it the Draconis Combine.

During the next three decades, Shiro Kurita used the same tactics-guile, threats and occasional brute force-to double the size of his empire. At his death in 2348, he left behind an empire of more than sixty worlds that stretched from the edge of the Principality of Rasalhague to the border of the Federated Suns. Politically, Shiro's strategic instincts, love of power and immense personal charisma all shaped the office of Coordinator, the title he claimed over his realm. Even today Shiro's absolute authority and much of his personal glamour continue to imbue the Coordinator's position, despite the reigns of unworthy Coordinators.

The Kurita Dynasty

The intense personal identification of the Kurita family with the nation it governs binds the people to their rulers through a loyalty bordering on veneration. Most Kurita rulers have felt similarly bound to their people, through an almost mystical understanding of themselves as embodying the Combine state. When a Coordinator lacks this understanding, however, the consequences for the realm can be severe. Leonard Kurita, a wastrel who ruled during the Star League era, provides one example. His disgraceful personal behavior came perilously close to provoking a war between the Combine and the rest of the League that would have irreparably damaged them both. During the first eight years of Leonard's reign, the Star League was fighting a bloody war of conquest against the Periphery states, which had refused to join the League. Leonard left the Combine's role in that conflict to the warlords of his various Military Districts, while he spent his days pursuing pleasure. The warlords deployed their forces as they saw fit-some to the benefit of the Star League, others on Leonard's occasional lunatic escapades-such as Leonard's attempts to track down his numerous bastard children, nearly always on planets near Terra. Entire BattleMech units would land on Terran Hegemony worlds, instructed to seek out and kidnap any children who resembled the Coordinator. Initially, the pressures of the Reunification War kept the Hegemony from a military response. After that conflict ended in 2597, Star League forces on Terra began to mobilize for possible strikes into Combine territory. The looming threat of war ultimately evaporated in 2605, when Leonard died suddenly of a mysterious ailment.

The Von Rohrs Interregnum

The Von Rohrs Coordinators of the twenty-fifth century did the greatest damage to the Combine, simply through the length of their disastrous supremacy. Scions of the Kurita family through Marika Kurita, sister of Coordinator Robert Kurita, the Von Rohrs took power through a palace coup in 2421. For nearly nine decades,

Coordinator Nihongi Von Rohrs and his various successors presided over a reign of terror that nearly destroyed the Draconis Combine. Mass executions became commonplace; anyone the Coordinator found inconvenient soon joined the rolls of the dead. Among the many victims of Nihongi's early purges were countless corporate and mercantile executives; Nihongi intended to personally control the Combine's economy, and these unfortunates stood in his way.

Battered by the ruthless elimination of all dissent—real or imagined—and ill-advised economic meddling on a vast scale, the Combine lurched perilously close to internal collapse. Only on the military front did the Combine's fortunes improve. The Von Rohrs Coordinators continued their predecessors' policy of attacking Lyran border worlds, many of which were poorly or ineptly defended. By 2445, Combine forces had taken roughly a fifth of the planets in the Commonwealth's Tamar Pact region. Sixteen years later, during the reign of Kozo Von Rohrs, a commando raid on the Lyran world of Coventry netted the Combine a set of plans for the century's most important military advancement: the BattleMech. However, these accomplishments were overshadowed by the poverty and demoralization of the Combine's subjects. Yet rebellion, even against such manifest tyrants, was virtually unthinkable to the average Combine citizen. The Von Rohrs were Kuritas, destined to rule. Only another Kurita could legitimately dethrone them and end the nation's long nightmare. The people waited, getting through their days as best they could and praying for deliverance.

In 2510, that prayer was answered. Martin McAllister, another Kurita scion, deposed the Von Rohrs dynasty in a coup that paralleled their rise to power. Initially the Von Rohrs' emissary to the nominally independent Principality of Rasalhague, McAllister joined forces with Rasalhague's leader, Lord Blaine Sorenson, to overthrow the Von Rohrs and restore the legitimate Kurita line. From 2494 through early 2510, McAllister gathered political and military power—much of it in Rasalhague but also in the Combine military proper and even at the Von Rohrs' court. He used his power in the Von Rohrs court to engineer the imprisonment of Coordinator Yama Von Rohrs and the accession of Yama's brother Kruger in 2508. The grateful Kruger rewarded him by making him Colonel of the Household Guard. This position gave McAllister the last weapon he needed to end the Von Rohrs' bloody reign. While Lord Blaine Sorenson led Rasalhague's armed forces on a strike into Combine territory, McAllister and his loyalists among the depleted Household Guard took over the Von Rohrs' palace compound and slaughtered every last member of that family. McAllister then publicly revealed his own identity as a descendant of Shiro Kurita, therefore legitimately entitled to occupy the Combine throne.

Restoration and Renewal

The so-called McAllister Rebellion ended the corrupt and bloodthirsty Von Rohrs regime and paved the way for a virtual Combine renaissance under Martin McAllister's daughter, Siriwan McAllister-Kurita. One of the Combine's most famous and beloved rulers, Siriwan used the reverence attached to the Kurita name and the Coordinator's office to radically redefine the dictates of service to the Combine. In so doing, she ensured her realm's future for centuries to come.

Unlike most previous Coordinators, Siriwan strengthened her nation through means other than warfare. After almost ninety years of internal terror and external conflict, the Draconis Combine desperately needed peace. Its economy lay in tatters, and its military would soon follow unless the economic troubles were addressed. Through her talented ambassadorial staff, Siriwan made diplomatic overtures wherever it seemed profitable to the Combine, defusing border tensions and seeking trade. Though military service retained its pride of place, citizens could now serve their Coordinator and their nation in other ways acknowledged as almost equally valuable as military service. Merchants and entrepreneurs, unknown during the dark years of the Von Rohrs dynasty, once again began to grow and flourish in Siriwan's reign. A recovering economy also aided the military, as did Siriwan's emphasis on defending the Combine's borders rather than launching costly strikes into enemy territory.

The groundwork laid by Siriwan McAllister-Kurita taught the average Combine citizen new ways of thinking, not least among them her son Hehiro. His mother's example enabled Hehiro Kurita to take a truly visionary step thirteen years into his reign. In 2569, Hehiro signed the Treaty of Vega that made the Combine part of the Star League and joined his nation's fate to that of all humanity. This momentous act led to the Combine's greatest expansion of trade and other contacts with outside realms. Though the shock of open trade across the Inner Sphere gave the Combine economy a few initial jolts, Combine citizens swiftly adapted. Before long, the Combine's business community was bringing in respectable profits.

The Combine prospered during the Star League era. Healthy trading contacts and various technological advancements shared among the League's member-states benefited every level of Combine society, from the lowest class of citizens to the Combine military. Those strengths proved vital two centuries later, when the Star League collapsed into brutal battles for supremacy among its former members. The renewed Combine military enabled the realm to survive nearly three hundred years of vicious fighting, known to history as the Succession Wars, and remain a viable nation despite staggering losses of life and technology throughout those centuries of conflict.

The Rise of Bushido

Bushido, the ancient Japanese warrior philosophy, helped shape the Combine from its beginnings. But it was merely one of many cultural influences until the early twenty-seventh century, when Coordinator Urizen Kurita II made it the Combine's cultural cornerstone, a place it occupies to this day.

The seed of this shift in Combine culture was planted in 2617, when Coordinator Sanethia Kurita moved the nation's capital from her family's homeworld of New Samarkand to the relatively untouched planet Luthien. Resource-poor and covered in swampland, Luthien boasted no sizable cities, and its population was quite small compared to those of more developed Combine worlds. However, it lay considerably closer to the center of Combine territory than New Samarkand, and its very rawness provided the Combine's people with a needed challenge. Santheia's successor Urizen II, who assumed the throne in 2620, oversaw most of the building of the new capital city.

Patterned on Japanese architecture, the huge government complex later christened Imperial City was a massive undertaking. Huge blocks of teakwood, granite and marble made up most of the buildings, hauled into place with slender cables by laborers drawn mostly from the criminal classes and the lowest echelons of the military. Hundreds died over the years of construction, yet the work never stopped. The sheer size of the effort sparked intense national pride across the realm, along with an interest in the medieval Japanese period that inspired most of Imperial City's architecture. Urizen II was no exception. Already inclined toward the precepts of bushido because of their link with his famous ancestor, he immersed himself in the samurai philosophy and became a fanatical devotee. Eager to honor the Kurita family's cultural roots, Urizen adopted seventeenth century Japanese culture wholesale: not only bushido, but history, art, religions and so on.

As went the Coordinator, so went the realm. One of Urizen's earliest cultural reforms was the Kokugaku, or "national learning," which stressed ancient Japanese history and philosophy. As Urizen had intended, the Kokugaku produced citizens who identified the Combine virtually exclusively with Japanese thought and Japanese ways. With each generation so schooled, the Japanese cultural strand of the Combine grew stronger until it overshadowed all others.

Non-Japanese citizens did not entirely welcome this change, particularly with regard to the education of their children. On the predominantly Muslim world of Arkah, the imposition of Japanese culture and Buddhist religious teachings in the local curriculum led to an uprising, which in turn touched off an ugly phase in the Japanization of Combine society. To prevent additional rebellions, Urizen II turned to the Internal Security Force-House Kurita's secret police. Already formidable, they became more so with a hugely expanded budget and the Coordinator's mandate to cleanse the nation of all "impure," non-Japanese elements.

The ISF took its orders to heart, carrying out countless planet-wide purges throughout the last decade of Urizen II's reign. By the time Urizen stepped down in 2691, the Combine was no longer a melting pot of cultures overlaid with a mild, pan-Asiatic bent. It had become a rigidly stratified society, where those who adapted to the new reality prospered and those who differed even slightly often lost everything. The ISF's role in enforcing cultural conformity strengthened their hand against political dissent as well; the cultural and the political became so intertwined that wearing a Sikh turban or speaking Korean was often labeled acts of treason. Despite this tightening of social controls, however, non-Japanese elements continued to survive and even prosper in certain regions of Combine space.

The Combine and Rasalhague

For much of the Combine's history, the Principality of Rasalhague was the most prominent example of political and cultural resistance. Primarily settled by Scandinavians, the Rasalhague region had proved a tempting target for Shiro Kurita, who first attempted to conquer it in 2330. Its people, however, had other ideas. Unwilling to bow to the foreigners' yoke, these proud descendants of hard-headed Norwegians, Finns and Swedes fought hard to keep their independence against overwhelming military force. Their guerrilla campaign forced the Combine to retreat in 2367, leaving behind a figurehead military governor on the planet Rasalhague and

sufficient troops to guard the governor's compound. For the next hundred and fifty years, the Principality of Rasalhague remained a nominally independent state.

Urizen II's cultural reformation took a toll on Rasalhagian citizens but utterly failed to remake this proudly different region in a medieval-Japanese mold. Native Rasalhagians continued to speak Swedish, which the Combine eventually accepted as the area's dominant language. The people held to their own religions, traditions and ways of thought in the face of every pressure various authorities could bring to bear: mass executions, an oversupply of garrison troops and extra numbers of ISF operatives intent on eliminating the slightest hint of separatist activity. Rasalhague finally gained its freedom in 3034, nearly five centuries after its official absorption into the Combine.

Combine Society

The balance between honor and duty, acceptance of one's place in a tightly structured social order, respect for those more highly placed and a deep reverence for the ruling Kurita family are the touchstones of life in the Draconis Combine. These ideals spring from and reinforce the realm's dominant culture and power structure. Outsiders often refer to the Combine as a conformist nation, with little tolerance for individualism or dissent among its people. To a certain extent, this judgment is true. However, the Draconis Combine incorporates more differences than meet the eye. Individuals and groups who cannot or will not conform to Japanese cultural patterns have their own place in Combine society, either thrust on them or negotiated to the benefit of the nation.

Guardians of Right Thinking: Order of the Five Pillars

Urizen Kurita II initially used the ISF as his principal means of imposing absolute cultural unity, but since his reign that task has fallen to the Order of the Five Pillars (O5P). This ancient society, founded in the mid-twenty-fourth century by Shiro Kurita's daughter Omi, exists to preserve and teach the elaborate code of conduct known as the Dictum Honorium. The Honorium is contained in six volumes of religious tradition, social mores, rules of etiquette and the philosophies behind them that inform every aspect of daily life in the Draconis Combine. Before Urizen II, the O5P concerned itself primarily with ensuring proper loyalty to House Kurita. After Urizen's reign, loyalty to House Kurita encompassed conformity to Japanese ways; thus, the task of ensuring conformity to Japanese ways passed into the Order's hands.

Despite-or perhaps because of-its power as arbiter of the Combine's guiding ideology and social mores, the O5P was not given formal sanction until several decades after its founding. Not until the tenure of Sanyu Kurita did the Order and its highest office-Keeper of the House Honor-receive official recognition. Sanyu was the sister of Parker Kurita, an indecisive man who reluctantly became Coordinator on his elder brother Robert's assassination in 2412. Stronger-minded than Parker, Sanyu Kurita took advantage of her brother's weakness to carve out her own sphere of influence within the ruling power structure. Having persuaded Parker to give her a monopoly over the Combine's lucrative ivory trade, Sanyu used her personal fortune, the prestige of the Kurita name and a well-placed infantry battalion in the Household Guard to make that monopoly a reality.

In taking control of the ivory trade, Sanyu Kurita netted her newly recognized order a lush source of funds, as well as an ideal cover for its initial operations. The ivory guilds' merchant ships and wide-ranging network of trading contacts enabled O5P operatives to go everywhere in the Combine, testing the people's moods and reinforcing their loyalty. Security officers initially assigned to O5P vessels to protect their valuable cargo evolved into a small but highly disciplined paramilitary force, further enhancing the order's power. These formidable resources enabled the fledgling O5P to survive the first four decades of Von Rohrs Coordinators, many of whom resented the order and the Dictum Honorium equally as products of what they termed the "corrupt" direct Kurita line.

The Von Rohrs struck openly at the O5P in 2459, after the death of Keeper Sanyu Kurita. Then-Coordinator Kozo Von Rohrs assumed the Keeper's position for himself, murdered O5P Abbess Jamila Benhashemi and touched off a wave of assassinations among the order's highest levels. As word of the killing spread through the order, its members buried themselves amid local populations and bided their time. Fifty years later, when Martin McAllister restored the legitimate Kurita line, the underground O5P came out of hiding and reassumed its former role.

The O5P reached the height of its power under Coordinator Siriwan McAllister-Kurita, a staunch devotee of the Dictum Honorium. With the lesson of the Von Rohrs' nightmare reign fresh in her mind, Siriwan developed the Order of the Five Pillars into a genuinely formidable counterweight to the Coordinator's power. Through mandated purchases of ivory artifacts by Combine citizens, Siriwan increased the order's funding, a sizable portion of which she used to beef up its intelligence arm. She also instituted the budojin, a corps of operatives proficient in advanced and occult applications of the martial arts. Finally, Siriwan oversaw the building of an O5P headquarters on Luthien, an impressive complex of buildings near the heart of Imperial City. By the end of Siriwan's reign, the O5P possessed intelligence capabilities that rivaled those of the ISF, along with a monopoly on required martial-arts instruction for Combine officers that gave it a long reach into the military.

The modern-day O5P continues to serve the Combine in various capacities. Members of the order are teachers of political and social correctness, scholars of Asian history and philosophy, gifted practitioners of the martial arts and spies. In all these capacities, they serve as potent symbols of the ideals that lie at the Combine's core: loyalty to the Coordinator, reverence for the Kurita name, and purity of thought and action in service to the Combine.

The Caste System

One striking feature of Combine society is its caste system, which provides a place even for decidedly nonconformist, potentially disloyal elements. From the highest levels of government and the military to the lowest menial laborer, every Combine citizen may serve the Coordinator and the nation. No one is completely outcast, not even a beggar or a street thief. By deliberately incorporating potentially disruptive elements into the tightly woven social order, the caste system helps to preserve the Combine's remarkable social stability.

The Combine acknowledges five castes: kuge, or nobles; buke, or warriors; the middle classes; the heinin, or workers; and the so-called Un-productive. The nobility is the smallest in number but wields virtually absolute power over the rest of Combine society. The highest-ranked noble is the Coordinator, who embodies the nation much as ancient Japanese emperors on Terra were believed to embody the divine. The warrior caste encompasses the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery, as well as any individual who serves the nation in a military or paramilitary capacity-an ISF commando, for example. The middle classes are composed of merchants, manufacturers and practitioners of various professions: doctors, teachers, accountants, civilian scientists, artists and so on. The worker caste includes skilled and semi-skilled laborers: factory hands, bricklayers, plumbers, cashiers and others without whom everyday activities would grind to a halt. Beneath these individuals are the Unproductives, a mix of unskilled laborers and criminals who perform the distasteful but necessary tasks no one else wishes to take on.

The Unproductive caste serves a social function more vital than its lowly status suggests. This caste is a dumping ground for every misfit in Combine society: petty criminals, refugees from war-torn planets, higher-caste members demoted for incompetence or subversion, and members of the powerful criminal organizations known as the yakuza. Many of these individuals are potential threats to the Combine's social order. By definition, Criminals operate outside the bounds of law-abiding society. Refugees are, at best, a strain on local resources, at worst a source of rage easily turned against status quo. Those of higher castes perceived as failing in loyalty or duty frequently do so because they cannot conform to the Combine's rigid social norms. Incorporating these individuals into the very social order they threaten robs them of the power to subvert it. Even the most discontented Combine citizen tends to absorb at least some social expectations and so either accepts his lowly Unproductive status or attempts to escape it by redeeming his error. Individuals on the edge of losing higher status often fear becoming Unproductive and so reform their behavior. The yakuza, for their part, are allowed to profit from their criminal enterprises so long as those activities do not weaken the nation as a whole. The Combine leadership tolerates their existence within a certain sphere and does not hesitate to move against any yakuza who step outside it.

In recent years, the Ghost Regiments have brought a modicum of honor to the Unproductive caste. Created to address severe manpower shortages in the DCMS following the Fourth Succession War, these military units are composed of yakuza and other members of the Combine's underclass. Their necessarily accelerated training skimmed on political indoctrination in favor of practical battle skills, which did little to allay the suspicions of some in the more tradition-minded regular military. But despite the dire predictions of many a scandalized DCMS officer, the Ghost Regiments have largely served with distinction. Three fought with honor against the Clans, one at the cost of all but a single battalion. Though some Ghost Regiments are little more than fronts for yakuza operations and others are torn by rivalries, the majority have more than measured up to DCMS standards. The ability of these yakuza-dominated regiments to strike a workable balance between loyalty to their oyabun, or Yakuza lord, and loyalty to the Coordinator is a testament to the effectiveness of the caste system, as well as to the leadership skills of Theodore Kurita (who founded the regiments).

Loyalty to House Kurita

With a large and well-trained military as well as the ISF and the O5P to call on, the Draconis Combine's ruling house has no lack of tools with which to maintain its supremacy. Yet House Kurita's primary hold on power comes not from fear or threats of force, but from the reverence of the Combine's people. Loyalty to House Kurita binds the Combine together, giving the highborn noble and the lowly street sweeper common ground they would not otherwise possess.

From the time citizens of the Combine enter First School at four years old, they are taught that their personal honor depends on how well they fill their assigned place in society and their duty to the Coordinator. Obedience and loyalty are among the highest virtues; honor lies in fulfilling one's duty and thereby serving the state. The present Coordinator has liberalized Combine social codes somewhat, allowing a larger place for personal initiative, but only insofar as it serves the nation. This shift in emphasis is especially stark in the military. To Theodore Kurita's way of thinking, blind obedience to superiors is a potentially fatal flaw in a soldier. Instead, the modern-day DCMS warrior must strive for a balance between respect for higher authority and the ability to recognize those rare cases when higher authority is wrong. Outside military ranks, free thinking is widely discouraged. The six volumes of the *Dictum Honorium* prescribe proper thinking and behavior in almost every situation conceivable to the Combine mind; the good citizen learns these codes of conduct in primary school and abides by them lifelong.

Even the criminal class shares in the general reverence for House Kurita, though other social codes may go by the wayside. When Clan Smoke Jaguar attacked the Combine world of Turtle Bay in 3050, the yakuza clans in the city of Edo demonstrated their loyalty with their own blood. Hohiro Kurita, heir to the Combine throne, had been trapped onworld by the Jaguar assault. The yakuza traced him to Kurushiyama prison, an ISF stronghold taken by the invading Jaguar forces. The Jaguars did not recognize whom they had captured, but the yakuza knew. They staged a prison breakout that left several Jaguars dead and subsequently helped Hohiro flee the planet-acts of selfless patriotism for which they and their city paid a terrible price. Furious at losing the prize they only belatedly realized they had possessed, the Jaguars bombarded Edo from orbit, razing the city. The local yakuza knew they might suffer for thwarting their powerful attackers-yet they saved Hohiro anyway, content to risk destruction for the honor of serving the Kurita family.

Patriotism and Conformity

Ever since the wholesale adoption of medieval Japanese culture under Urizen Kurita II, loyalty to House Kurita has come to mean favoring all things Japanese. School curricula, the arts, ISF control of the media and the universal reverence for bushido among the military all contribute to the continuing dominance of Japanese ways. Despite this merging of political and cultural loyalties, however, non-Japanese elements survive and even thrive within their own regions. Less enlightened Coordinators have often attempted to cleanse the Combine of these "foreign" elements, but wiser rulers recognize the strengths they add to the fabric of Combine culture. The Azami, Muslims of Arab ancestry, are a case in point. They settled several worlds near Terra and the Federated Suns border, planets on which they could

follow their own traditions without unduly disturbing the prevailing cultural order. After a failed attempt by a Von Rohrs Coordinator to eliminate them, the Azami negotiated a certain freedom of belief and action in exchange for nominal adherence to the Dictum Honorium and the use of their fighting expertise in cross-border raids. The Azami and the rest of the Combine adapted to each other, and both sides have profited by it.

The Shadow War and its Legacy

In return for the service of his people, the Coordinator must serve them in turn. He or she is honor-bound to place the interests of the Combine above personal ambitions and desires. When this mutual loyalty works as intended, the Combine prospers. When events call it into question, the nation suffers. Most often, conflict over what precisely constitutes loyalty to House Kurita or to the Draconis Combine arises when one Kurita struggles for power against another. The Shadow War of the twenty-ninth century remains the most famous of these internal battles, and its troubling legacy still occasionally threatens the stability of the realm.

The Shadow War, which raged silently and viciously across the Combine throughout the mid-2860s, remains the realm's closest brush with civil war. The seeds of the conflict were sown four decades earlier, when Coordinator Jinjiro Kurita founded the People's Reconstruction Effort (PRE) to rebuild after the savage destruction of the Second Succession War. The PRE coordinated and oversaw the Combine government's various programs for military, scientific, economic and political recovery. So much responsibility made the position of PRE Coordinator second only to the Coordinator himself.

Yoguchi Kurita succeeded his uncle Jinjiro in 2838. Three years into his reign, he appointed his sister Roweena Kurita as head of the PRE. Intelligent and ambitious, Roweena chafed at the restrictions on female power in the strongly patriarchal Combine. Before her appointment to run the PRE, she had made a point of currying favor with the ISF, many of whose members were deeply insulted that Yoguchi had placed them under DCMS authority. With control over the PRE's vast bureaucracy, Roweena used her agency's power to aid the ISF against its DCMS overlords. In return, ISF agents helped to further or at least refrained from tampering with Roweena's own schemes to accumulate vast personal wealth.

For several years, Roweena confined herself to making money, collecting art objects and reveling in her powerful position. When a Lyran operative assassinated Yoguchi Kurita in 2850, Roweena made no attempt to take over the rulership of the Combine; she happily left that task to her younger brother Miyogi and continued to run the PRE with breathtaking efficiency. Her position, however, made her far more of a public presence than Coordinator Miyogi. That, combined with the sheer size and reach of the PRE, eventually prompted an uneasy Miyogi to launch an investigation of his sister. The ISF, however, had not forgotten the debt it owed Roweena. Orders to investigate her for "un-Combine activities" cost the Coordinator considerable popularity among many operatives; some even questioned his motives, a stunningly disloyal act for people whose foremost task was to ensure loyalty to the Coordinator.

Matters reached a head in 2863, when the end of the Third Succession War gave Miyogi the breathing space he needed to step up the investigation. A small, elite squad of ISF agents unquestionably loyal to the Coordinator began to seek out and assassinate their pro-Roweena counterparts. Roweena's loyalists fought back; by 2865, more than a thousand ISF operatives had been killed in the power struggle, which the public had begun to call the Shadow War. Ordinary people soon became victims as well. The ISF was everywhere in the Combine, but no one knew for certain which agent of which faction might be listening. An incautious word in support of one side on a planet controlled by the other frequently led to the permanent disappearance of the speaker and his or her entire family.

When word of the Combine's internal difficulties began spreading outside its borders, the spiraling conflict threatened to engulf the military. The High Command initially split over which Kurita to back, ultimately came down on the Coordinator's side. In early January of 2866, DCMS commandos stormed key PRE offices and strongholds of the pro-Roweena ISF. Soon afterward, Coordinator Miyogi dismantled the PRE.

Thoroughly cleansing the ISF of disloyal elements required more than twenty-five years of subsequent purges. For the first ten of those years, the organization retreated to its headquarters on New Samarkand and refused to have any direct dealings with the rest of the Combine government. ISF agents continued to carry out their duties but obeyed requests for ISF operations only through an intermediary from New Samarkand's respected Sun Zhang military academy. Furious at having been used as pawns between two scheming Kuritas, the ISF chose isolation as a means of showing its displeasure. Not until Coordinator Shinjiro Kurita visited New Samarkand in 2921 did the rift between the ISF and the Kurita family begin to heal. A series of meetings between Shinjiro and ISF Director Clarissa Indrahar ultimately produced the Davarapala Accords, which awarded the ISF a place in the DCMS High Command. This concession enabled the ISF to accept being placed under military authority, a grievance it had nursed since Yoguchi Kurita subordinated it to the DCMS nearly eight decades before.

On the surface, the ISF had reaffirmed its loyalty to the Coordinator. However, the Shadow War and its aftermath set a dangerous precedent. For the first time in the ISF's history, the organization distinguished between loyalty to the Coordinator and service to the Combine. For Roweena's supporters, serving the Combine meant actively opposing the Coordinator—a virtually unthinkable contradiction. The Coordinator's faction suffered a similar, though more subtle, division of loyalties. They continued to serve the Combine but refused direct requests from the Coordinator—symbolically, if not literally, splitting the two. Coordinator Shinjiro ultimately came to the ISF to mend relations, which he accomplished only through a sizable concession to ISF sensibilities. These events essentially affirmed the ISF's right to judge its Coordinator's actions—with the inescapable conclusion that it could also judge the Coordinator's fitness to hold that office.

Though the ISF has rarely acted against the Coordinator in the decades since, reactionary elements within as well as outside it make little secret of their disdain for the current Coordinator, Theodore Kurita. Even before he ascended the throne, the freeing of Rasalhague and the formation of the Ghost Regiments raised eyebrows and suspicions among the more tradition-minded. During the Clan War, Theodore further

enraged conservative sensibilities by signing a non-aggression pact in 3051 with Prince Hanse Davion, ruler of the Federated Commonwealth and scion of House Kurita's bitterest rival. The development of that agreement into genuine rapprochement with Hanse's son and successor, Victor Steiner-Davion, convinced some diehard traditionalists that their Coordinator had allowed foreign influences to override Combine interests. The DCMS's prestigious role in ending the Clan War, along with the re-formation of the Star League and Theodore's appointment as First Lord in 3061, have eased these tensions somewhat but opposition remains.

Current Trends

As with any other nation in the Inner Sphere, current events have their effect on Draconis Combine society. The unprecedented cooperation between the Combine and the Federated Commonwealth during the Clan War somewhat dampened the Combine's traditional suspicion of anything foreign (that is, non-Japanese). The first beneficiaries of this new attitude were the many Combine citizens of non-Japanese descent who followed different cultural traditions. Acceptance of these "foreigners within" prepared the Combine for the much harder task of integrating a truly alien element-Clan Nova Cat, overlords of the recently created Irece Prefecture. This Clan, once conquerors of Combine worlds, fought for the Star League against its fellow Clans and was rewarded with official rights to several Combine planets. The Cats have since moved wholesale into their new-minted homeland, forced out of Clan space by their former brethren. Their increasing numbers make the Irece Prefecture an uneasy place to be, though the unrest has begun to simmer down. The Coordinator's continued backing and the guidance of his younger son Minoru, currently acting as liaison to the Nova Cats, should enable the two sides to accommodate each other, though not easily or soon.

The slow rise of reactionary elements is more troubling. Since Theodore's accession in 3054, conservative elements in the ISF have made common cause with ultra-conservatives outside their ranks-most prominently with the Black Dragons-against Theodore's military and social reforms. The existence of the Black Dragons reveals a pitfall of those reforms, perhaps an unavoidable one. The loosening of social and political strictures so fervently deplored by the Black Dragons enables them to plot against their ruler and justify their treachery in the name of preserving the Combine. Current economic stresses, the presence of the Nova Cats and the closeness of Theodore's immediate family to Victor Steiner-Davion have all unsettled old certainties and given the Black Dragons an opening wedge to exploit. The use of DCMS troops in the recent St. Ives conflict only added fuel to this fire, even though the units served under the Star League banner and largely confined themselves to humanitarian missions.

The Black Dragon-ISF "alliance" reached its zenith in 3058, when a high-ranking ISF official subverted several commando recruits and attempted to assassinate Coordinator Theodore Kurita. Fortunately for the Combine, the bulk of the ISF is solidly loyal to Theodore, as is the entire ruling branch of the Kurita family. Another Shadow War, with Kurita pitted against Kurita and the entire power structure divided, is highly unlikely to occur.

All in all, the Draconis Combine remains strong and stable, committed to preserving its Japanese traditions while more openly accommodating different elements. Under the visionary leadership of Theodore Kurita and his equally gifted children, the Combine stands ready to meet even the most unexpected challenges that the future may bring.

Writing Credits:

Inner Sphere Source Book: Draconis Combine - House Kurita

Diane Piron-Gelman



HOUSE LIAO

Tyrants seldom come to us openly, hands dripping with the blood of innocent victims. More often than not they appear as tireless friends of the people, individual receptacles of virtue, ready to save us from ourselves. Let it be recalled, however, that the King's Justice is just as often the proud foot of the oppressor. In the end, we ourselves are to blame for receiving him with open arms, in the end, we have deceived ourselves.

-Chancellor Mica Liao, excerpt from inauguration speech, 2530End Data Transmission.

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All my life, the Capellan Confederation has loomed large in my awareness. My mother, my homeworld, every planet over which my family has stewardship-all these were part of the Confederation once, until the Fourth Succession War freed my mother and her duchy from any obligation to her mad family. We Liaos can be less than stable, and the mad ones among us are not truly capable of ruling. They cannot place the people before their own desire for power. My mother, Candace, escaped this taint. I like to think that my siblings and I did as well. Now, with Sun-Tzu Liao and his Confederation once again our overlord, we can only pray our sanity will see us through.

My family remains as it always has-ruling over the worlds of St. Ives. For a time, Sun-Tzu had renamed it the Xin Sheng Commonality. Xin Sheng means "new birth," the name Sun-Tzu chose to prettify his wars of conquest. Now, however, our true name has been restored to us, even if our freedom has not. First against the Federated Commonwealth, retaking former Capellan possessions lost in the Fourth Succession War; next against the planets his own actions had thrown into turmoil, in the so-called Chaos March; and finally against the St. Ives Compact, my home. He took all these worlds for the good of the Capellan Confederation-the entire Capellan Confederation,

including those parts of it that no longer wished to be-or so he says. Perhaps he even believes it. Personally, I question what good is wrought by destroying a planet's cities and lands and killing its people in order to fly a different flag over it. If Sun-Tzu truly cared for our good, he would have left us alone.

Be that as it may, we have rejoined the Confederation. Not easily or willingly, but the deed is done. During my travels along our former border, I have gone among the common people and dealt with the military authorities. I have also learned all I could about the way life is lived on Capellan worlds outside St. Ives, so that I might give our people some idea of what to expect.

Euphoria buoys the Confederation now, a sweeping sense of having finally triumphed in its long struggle for survival. We Capellans-all of us-are nothing if not a patient people; we know how to work together for a goal whose attainment may take years, even lifetimes. Sun-Tzu has this patience in full. It enabled him to take back St. Ives and many other once-Capellan planets. The people of St. Ives also have it, which gives me hope that our recent defeat is not the end of our story. Patience, dedication, attention to detail and a healthy degree of cunning are the birthrights of all Capellans, no matter which side of our former border they call home. These qualities come out in our art-the long years of painstaking craftsmanship to create a leaf from thin layers of red lacquer. They come out in our politics-not even the Draconis Combine excels us in the art of subtle intrigue. And they come out in war-the slow but steady revival of a badly weakened military, the sowing of rebellions that flower among enemies at just the right time, the knowledge of when to strike and when to hold back.

For the moment, it is the Confederation that finds its patience rewarded. The common people, used to privation for centuries even before the Fourth Succession War sundered their realm, raise little objection to the further hardships many of them are suffering while their Chancellor and his ministers spend huge sums rebuilding newly conquered planets. It helps that not all the rebuilding is taking place in St. Ives or the reclaimed Chaos March worlds. Under Xin Sheng, bulldozers and wrecking balls are trundling through the streets of some of the worst slums on various planets, with new housing going up in their wake. Every tenement block has a Chinese touch-mock pagoda roofs, carved dragons over the doors, windows and archways and plumbing all aligned for fortunate feng shui. Shì-Zhong-Xin Park in the capital on Denbar, torn to pieces by a fierce 'Mech battle, has been perfectly restored. Refugees from St. Ives border worlds who fled deeper into the Compact are beginning to go home-somewhat wary of trusting the Chancellor's assurances that they are safe from persecution, but having little other choice. So far, Sun-Tzu has been as good as his word. I have heard no reports of arrests, or even of special Maskirovka attention being paid to returnees. That we must once again fear the Capellan secret police, however, is a dark spot on the brightness of Xin Sheng. We can only wait to see how large it grows.

On Indicass, another St. Ives border planet that saw fierce fighting, the latest public beautification project is a portrait of Chancellor Sun-Tzu. It covers an entire wall of the Government House in the capital city. Such portraits are becoming increasingly common on potentially troublesome worlds. Reminders, I assume, of who truly holds sovereignty over us now. My mother described such portraits of her father, Chancellor Maximilian, and her elder sister Romano. Most citizens kept smaller versions in their houses or apartments, carefully placed for display. I am told that nowadays, many

make altars of Sun-Tzu's portrait; burning joss sticks and praying for blessings from the man some call Enlightened One. Reclaimer of lost worlds, First Lord of the Star League, Conqueror of the Clans ... Sun-Tzu has given his people their pride back, a precious gift. Even those who know him to be merely human rather than demigod cannot help but be grateful.

Sun-Tzu's popularity is one force behind the "Chinese renaissance" sweeping the realm. Things Chinese are in vogue, from architecture to 'Mech designs to food. The Liao family's prominence since the Capellan nation's early days guaranteed our Han Chinese heritage a dominant place in Confederation life, but my cousin has turned that privileged position into virtual cultural hegemony. He finds Chinese symbolism useful to unify and inspire his subjects, and they accord him such near-worship that they follow his lead in all things. And so, more than ever in the Confederation's history, to be most truly Capellan is to be Chinese. Exhibits of Chinese art draw record crowds; producers of bright Chinese silks can scarcely keep ahead of the demand for robes and banners; restaurants known for indifferent kung pao are turning customers away, while Russian cafés, Indian restaurants and Japanese steakhouses go begging. There is even a burgeoning market in cosmetic surgery to "Asian-ize" round eyes.

None of this need be worrisome in itself. Ethnic pride can be a comfort to those who are suffering, and the recent war has brought suffering in spades. There are the war-torn worlds of St. Ives, families on both sides who lost loved ones to the fighting, and the myriad economic troubles of reintegration. These things touch many people, one way or another.

For some, however, pride in being Chinese also means suspicion of anything-or anyone-different. This disturbing trend has already shown itself in St. Ives; how entrenched it may be in the rest of the Confederation, I cannot guess. Throughout our recent war, and now as uneasy peace begins to take hold, I organized relief efforts for the common people: refugee camps, soup kitchens, medical clinics and the like. Initially, local military authorities gave me little trouble. Whatever I needed, I got, often with a pointed comment about how much the Chancellor valued my efforts. Now, as a genuine peace treaty replaces the cease-fires, some authorities are becoming difficult. I ran afoul of one such in Qingliu on Hustaing, where hard-fought combat devastated the Russian sector of the city of Chiangmai. We established a clinic and feeding center on the outskirts of the area, as near could be managed to its displaced inhabitants. The Chancellor set up his own relief efforts some days afterward, all in predominantly Chinese areas of town. I thought little of it at the time. Everyone needed help, no matter what their ethnic origin.

In recent weeks, however, my Russian-sector clinic began to run short of medicines. When I asked the Chancellor's people what they could spare, they seemed willing to help-but the commander of the unit occupying Chiangmai threw up roadblock after roadblock. All plausible, seemingly innocent, but too many for coincidence. When I went to see him about the problem, he told me coldly that he did not approve of Capellan resources being used to aid "foreign elements." "Your face marks you as a true Capellan, a daughter of the Han," he went on to say. "Why does your heart trouble itself over the lives of a few round-eyes?"

I could not answer him. I knew it would do no good to say that the people of Chiangmai were all Capellans, having been made so by his own victory-and by the edicts of his Chancellor, who is not so foolish as to give the new-conquered masses an excuse for another rebellion. I believe-I hope-that such bigotry is not widespread or officially sanctioned. But the cost of rebuilding the very worlds Sun-Tzu's war tore apart must be placing great strain on the Confederation treasury, which means more hardship for the people. On the surface, our fellow Capellans welcomes us as long-lost brothers and sisters. Caught up in victory, they grudge St. Ives nothing. Underneath, however, resentments are surely simmering. If national pride and habitual obedience to their Chancellor preclude open hostility toward St. Ives as a whole, those among us who are insufficiently "Capellan"-Chinese-may become substitute targets.

Xin Sheng cannot lacquer over this or other darker parts of Capellan society. The Maskirovka are omnipresent, scenting out real or imagined disloyalties among every class and caste. Expressing anything less than complete admiration for the Chancellor, House Liao or one's local ruling noble can make a Capellan citizen vanish without a trace. I am told that in Chancellor Romano's day, "disloyal" citizens were frequently shot while trying to escape; when projectile weapons were used, the central government sent the family a bill for the fatal bullet. It would not surprise me to know this is still common practice. Thus far, the apparent general amnesty for St. Ives citizens seems to be holding. I wonder how long it will last. Until Sun-Tzu's patience thins, or until the Star League is no longer looking our way? With the civil war brewing between the two halves of the Federated Commonwealth, I fear we will not have the Star League's attention much longer.

Whatever our fate is to be, for now we can only accept it. For better or worse, we are once again citizens of the Capellan Confederation. Of a realm in which every shadow may have ears, and citizens learn to fear the knock in the middle of the night. A realm where fierce pride in being Capellan springs from terror of absorption by larger, more powerful nations. A realm where the quality of one's life is determined not by laws applying to all, but by the personal virtues or vices of this or that ruling noble. A nation summed up by the deadly beauty of a T'i Tsang BattleMech-its graces, courage and strength all turned toward war. But Capellan heritage is more than these things. We of St. Ives remember when the Capellan nation was a beacon of freedom to the rest of humanity. Though it may take more lifetimes than my own, we will restore that freedom to our fellow Capellans-little by little, year by year.

They believe they have reclaimed us. It is my hope that we have reclaimed them.

-Duchess Kuan-Yin Allard-Liao

Origins and History

The Capellan Confederation came together under the threat of military occupation by an enemy power, and nearly died in its first year under assaults from two different foes. Not surprisingly, absorption by a foreign nation is the greatest fear of the Capellans and their Liao rulers. Political instability runs a close second, as a divided realm is also a weak one. Ever since Franco Liao took control of the fragmented

Capellan states, House Liao has done its utmost to create and preserve a nation where the political chain of command is unquestioned and the Liao family stands indisputably at the top. Only through ironclad internal stability could the worlds in this oft-contested region of space hope to survive the attentions of their larger and militarily more powerful neighbors.

Republic and Hegemony

The two principal powers among the so-called Capellan states of the late twenty-third and early twenty-fourth centuries were the Capellan Hegemony and the Liao Republic. At the dawn of the twenty-fourth century, anyone placing bets on the future of these powers likely would have chosen the Hegemony. Founded by plebiscite in 2270, the Hegemony centered on the planet Capella, renowned throughout human-occupied space for its vast libraries and storehouses of information. Capella had previously been the heart of the Capellan Co-Prosperity Sphere, a loose defense and trade pact that encompassed several neighboring worlds. The Hegemony declaration gave membership in the new state to all original members of the Co-Prosperity Sphere, as well as to all inhabited planets within ten light-years of Capella. For the next three decades, the Capellan Hegemony expanded its holdings and solidified its reputation as the mercantile and cultural center of the region.

The Republic of Liao, then a single planet, spent those same years struggling out of an economic pit dug for it by the Nanking Collective, which blockaded Liao in 2249 in a brief but nasty trade dispute. The blockade cost Liao the export contracts with nearby worlds that had been the source of its prosperity. Within a decade of the Blockade of '49, Liao had gone from creditor to debtor world, with some settlements on the edge of starvation. The tiny republic's fortunes slowly picked up over the last decades of the twenty-third century, as its leaders worked tirelessly to restore trading agreements and rebuild their merchant fleet. Fortunately, the demand for Liao's principal exports—livestock, processed meat and grain—remained high enough to gradually set the planetary economy back on its feet. Liao thoroughbred horses had long been a favorite luxury of rich colonials and the emerging noble classes on many worlds; with the planet's gradual economic revival, the horse trade started up again, bringing in additional profit. By the beginning of the Capellan-Supremacy War in 2305, the Republic of Liao had recovered enough for its leaders to consider expanding beyond their world's horizons.

The Capellan-Supremacy war capped years of simmering hostility between the Hegemony and the Sarna Supremacy, an oppressive military power with grandiose designs of conquering the entire Capellan region. Soon after Capella's first colonists landed, a Sarnese ship mistakenly attempted to intimidate them into acknowledging the Supremacy as their overlord. That early encounter set the pattern of relations between the Supremacy and the Capellan state for decades to come. After the formation of the Co-Prosperity Sphere foiled Sarnese dreams of military conquest, it resorted to economic warfare. The Supremacy imposed a blanket economic boycott of the Capellan Hegemony from 2270 until 2282, by which time Sarnese leaders realized that the sanctions were hurting their own realm more than their enemy's. As the Hegemony added more and more star systems throughout the 2280s and '90s, its expanding territories moved ever closer to the Supremacy's borders, raising tensions

between the two powers. By the turn of the twenty-fourth century, war was a diplomatic incident away.

In 2305, the Sarnese systems of Palos and Wei broke from the Supremacy and declared independence. Knowing the Capellans had little love for the Sarnese, the leaders of the breakaway systems appealed for aid to Capellan garrisons on nearby St. Andre and Tsitsang. Spoiling for a fight with the Sarnese "evil empire" and eager to acquire the disputed planets' considerable metal and mineral deposits, Magnate Paula Aris of the Capellan Hegemony declared war against the Supremacy.

Capellan patriotism and skill unfortunately proved no match for the Supremacy's sheer numbers or its skillful use of paid pirates to draw off crack Capellan units. With the help of troops from the Free Worlds League-which had its own designs on the Supremacy-the Capellans managed to take and hold seventeen Sarnese planets between late 2307 and 2308. Fierce popular resistance on many of those worlds, however, cost the Capellans shocking numbers of casualties. The Hegemony government on Capella responded with large-scale emergency draft legislation and heavy new taxes to pay for training and equipping the recruits. These draconian measures took their toll on Hegemony client worlds, until one of them finally rebelled.

In December of 2308, the planet Arboris officially withdrew from the Capellan Hegemony. The Hegemony's Second Andurien Reserve Fleet headed toward the rebel world, passing near the planet Liao-a choice of route whose unexpected repercussions would sharply raise the Liao Republic's fortunes while sinking the Hegemony's. Upon entering the Liao system, the Second Andurien found its way blocked by a fleet of armed merchant vessels. The merchant fleet's commander, Emile Faulkner Liao, informed the Capellans that Arboris had requested protectorate status under the neutrality laws of the Liao Republic. The Capellan fleet fought the Liao ships and won, but the victory proved costly. Rather than continue toward Arboris, the unnerved Capellan commander left his fleet blockading Liao while he returned to Capella for fresh orders. This dithering did not impress the Free Worlds League, which abruptly withdrew from the Capellan alliance. Without League military aid, the Capellan Hegemony could not hope to hold the Sarnese territory it had gained.

Magnate Paula Aris bowed to the inevitable in 2309 and signed an armistice mediated by the neutral Tikonov Grand Union. The treaty mandated the dissolution of the Capellan Hegemony government; the Magnate's subsequent suicide and popular dissatisfaction did the rest. Within months of the war's end, the plutocrats of the Hegemony had been replaced by a republican government. The new regime, renamed the Capellan Commonality, squandered its honeymoon period in squabbling and political gridlock, while the nation grew poorer and weaker.

The Commonality reached its nadir a mere decade after its birth, when the politicized, underequipped and demoralized Capellan army failed to prevent Terran Hegemony troops from landing on Capella. Between 2320 and 2335, the capital of the Commonality belonged to the Terran Hegemony, with the active collaboration of several leading local politicians. It should be noted that, following a long-standing tradition of selective memory where major defeats are concerned, the Capellan

government has never officially acknowledged the Terran occupation in any document produced for public consumption.

Capella's common people were less easily cowed. The Free Capella Underground, a shadowy organization of civilian resisters and disaffected soldiers, relentlessly harassed the Terran Hegemony forces from the first year of the occupation, using every tactic from street protests to bombings to selective assassination of Terran officers. Eventually, the guerrilla campaign made the price of staying too high. Rather than keep his units bogged down where they could be picked off one by one, Hegemony leader James McKenna left Capella to its own devices. After the Hegemony's departure in 2335, the Commonality government limped along for thirty more years before breaking down amid widespread rioting and apathy.

During this same period, the Republic of Liao rose steadily in power and prestige. Four more star systems followed Arboris' lead between 2310 and 2320: Zurich, Aldebaran, Genoa and Gan Singh. By 2356, the renamed Duchy of Liao also owned an impressively large merchant marine force. The huge Liao fleet allowed the Republic to replace the Capellan Commonality as the region's primary mercantile power, further enriching the former at the expense of the latter. By the 2360s, the Duchy of Liao was the strongest of all the Capellan nations and the only one capable of uniting them in the face of a looming foreign menace.

Birth of the Confederation

The various Capellan states faced potential military action on two fronts. James McKenna had captured eleven star systems in the Capellan region by 2335; not surprisingly, the remaining Capellan powers distrusted his apparent shift toward diplomacy later in that decade. Closer to home, the young Federated Suns saw Capellan disarray as the perfect excuse for empire building. In 2357, Fed Suns President Reynard Davion sent troops to occupy the Sarnese world of Bell. This action touched off a border war that alternately flared and ebbed over the next decade and a half. In 2366, with the Capellan Commonality clearly on its last legs, Reynard saw a chance to annex that entire realm. Citing the collapse of the Commonality government, he announced his intention to send "peacekeeping troops" to occupy Capella "until a suitable governing body is elected." This thinly veiled threat of absorption threw the Capellan states into panic. When Duke Franco Liao proposed a pan-Capellan union with the Duchy of Liao as its principal seat of power, few of his compatriots felt inclined to quibble. Duke Franco proclaimed the creation of the Capellan Confederation in July of 2366, with himself as its supreme Chancellor.

Knowing that a strong defense was vital, Chancellor Franco appointed ten military commanders for each component state of the Confederation and gave them sweeping powers within their newly christened commonalities. These de facto military governors immediately began raising and training an army for the battle they knew would come. In July of 2367, word reached the infant Confederation that Federated Suns troops were less than a parsec away from Capella. Chancellor Franco hurriedly assembled elite units from all ten commonalities, meanwhile opening negotiations with the Fed Suns commander as a ploy to gain time. The looming invasion would be the Capellan Confederation's baptism by fire. Only if Franco's bold gamble worked would his young realm survive.

Less than three weeks after they began, the negotiations broke down. The Chancellor assembled his troops in space near Capella, out of sight of the would-be invaders, and waited for the Fed Suns units to drop on the undefended Confederation capital. The Federated Suns took the bait. Within twenty-four hours, elements of the Sarna and St. Ives navies, along with armed Liao merchantmen, destroyed the enemy troop transports and supply ships in a titanic seven-hour engagement. Having proved the worth of his thrown-together Confederation Navy, Chancellor Liao demanded the enemy's immediate and unconditional surrender. The Fed Suns commander refused. Minutes later, the Confederation Navy razed Capella's capital city to the ground. Two thousand Capellan citizens lost their lives, along with every man and woman of the occupying force. The Capellans' sacrifice proved in no uncertain terms just how determined they were to resist foreign domination. Defeated and unnerved, the Federated Suns backed off. In a final show of defiance, Reynard Davion refused to recognize the Confederation. His son Etien Davion, however, did so soon after his accession to power in 2371.

The Confederation's savage triumph over the Federated Suns was one of the few victories it could claim in its early years. Between 2366 and 2369, the Free Worlds League took the Capellan border systems of Berenson, Zion, Shiro, Hassad and Andurien. These worlds changed hands multiple times over the next two decades, until exhaustion on both sides prompted an unofficial armistice in the 2390s. The cease-fire lasted until 2398, when Chancellor Kurnath Liao launched the first of many wars over the water-rich Andurien systems. This assault inaugurated the period of savage conflict later known as the Age of War. Though this first attempt to retake Andurien ended in failure, those planets would remain a bone of bitter contention between the Confederation and the Free Worlds League for much of the two realms' mutual history.

The Age of War's most vicious phase ended less than two decades after it began, with the signing of the Ares Conventions in 2412. The brainchild of Chancellor Aleisha Liao, the Conventions forbade the use of weapons of mass slaughter, such as those that had massacred the population of Tintavel earlier that same year. By intentionally limiting the scope of the damage combatants could do, the Ares Conventions cut down on the shocking losses of civilian lives. By lowering war's cost, however, they also made it more acceptable-an outcome that would have appalled their author. At the time, however, the signing of the Conventions by every major Inner Sphere power seemed to symbolize a new beginning for the Capellan Confederation. The Ares Summit took place on a Confederation world, under the aegis of House Liao, to ratify a historic document conceived of and written by the Capellan Chancellor. The worst excesses of the Age of War were relegated to the past, recent losses and uncertainties set aside in favor of the brighter future that must surely come. The Confederation had survived assaults from multiple outside enemies; the new century seemed poised to bring peace and prosperity to this struggling nation. No one anticipated that the Confederation's next great enemy would come from within.

A House Divided

After Aleisha Liao's death in 2415, the Chancellorship passed to Arden Baxter, a prominent member of the advisory council known as the Prefectorate. The first

Chancellor not connected to House Liao, Baxter presided over a reign so disastrous that it reinforced intense loyalty to House Liao in subsequent generations. Though he spent only ten years in office before an assassin's bullet cut him down, Arden Baxter came close to destroying the Confederation-an outcome he devoutly desired and for which he actively worked.

Baxter was connected to the Aris family, leaders of the Capellan Hegemony until after the Capellan Supremacy War. During the Commonality era, the Aris clan clawed its way back to political power by every avenue it could, determined to topple or take over the Commonality government. When that government collapsed in 2366 amid a welter of corruption, foreign interference and domestic unrest, industrial magnate Warren Aris prepared to take control. Duke Franco Liao, however, forestalled him. The duke's arrival on Capella and his bold proposal to form the Capellan Confederation won far more backers among the leaders of Capellan worlds than anything Aris could offer, particularly after Liao threatened a trade embargo against any world that backed the Aris faction. Offered the position of Deputy Chancellor in the new Confederation government, Warren Aris refused it, whereupon Duke Franco had him arrested as a disturber of the peace. The Aris family never recovered from that blow to its power, nor did their many supporters. One such was Arden Baxter's father, a staunch backer of Warren Aris to the bitter end. Geoffrey Baxter died a broken and ruined man in 2378, leaving his son a legacy of shattered dreams and a pathological hatred of the Liaos and all their works.

Over the next thirty-odd years, Arden Baxter nursed his grudge and hoarded power. In 2410, he was appointed to the noble House of Scions under an amnesty for past political prisoners. He milked this opportunity for all it was worth, playing the reformed sinner to the hilt and slowly building a power base. Hard work and bribery earned him a seat on the Prefectorate in 2415, just two months before Chancellor Aleisha's death. Baxter subsequently convinced his fellow councilors that his appointment as Chancellor would heal old wounds and bolster unity in the realm. In reality, Baxter planned to tear apart "this bastard Liao state."

His first target was the Capellan military, foundation of the Liao family as well as the Confederation's strength. Over the next nine years, he reduced the Capellan Armed Forces and fired scores of talented generals with pro-Liao leanings. In 2418, Baxter embroiled this unsettled and slowly dwindling military in the Taurian-Rimwards War, a vicious three-year conflict with several small states on the Confederation's Periphery border. The Taurian states had never signed the Ares Conventions, and the fighting on both sides caused skyrocketing civilian as well as military casualties. The Confederation ultimately captured two planets, a poor return for the decimation of its rimward worlds and military units.

Baxter's domestic schemes fared less well. His covert "popular front" movements, aimed at discrediting House Liao, fizzled like a damp squib on most worlds. On several occasions, massive pro-Liao counter-demonstrations made it necessary to call in riot troops. The Chancellor's gravest offense against the Confederation, however, was his deliberate squandering of a golden opportunity to mend fences with the Federated Suns. Though few Capellan citizens recognized the consequences at the time, Baxter was intelligent enough to know where genuine détente with a powerful

former enemy might lead. He therefore chose to deny the Confederation the potential benefits of such a peace, and in so doing shaped Inner Sphere history for centuries to come.

Simon Davion had taken power in the Federated Suns in 2418, ending nearly five decades of corrupt and increasingly tyrannical rule. As part of ushering in a new era for his nation, the new Davion prince attempted to heal the long-standing breach between the Suns and the Capellans. He sent envoys to the Confederation capital of Sian early in his reign, but Baxter refused to recognize them. Instead, the Chancellor called them "toadies of a murderer pretending to legitimacy," and ordered his household guard to throw them out. Mere weeks later, he followed this insult with an offer to recognize the new Davion government in exchange for the border worlds of Lee, Redfield and Safe Port. All three planets had long been subjects of fierce dispute between Capellan powers and the Federated Suns, falling to the latter during the border wars of the 2360s. The Federated Suns was in no mood to give back what it had bought with blood less than fifty years earlier. Chancellor Baxter's outrageous demands came close to starting another Fed Suns-Capellan border war, and permanently destroyed any chance of friendship between the two nations.

Given subsequent Confederation history, Baxter's deliberate snubbing of Davion peace overtures seems horribly prescient. The ensuing centuries of hostility would eventually culminate in the Fourth Succession War, which split the Confederation in half and nearly spelled its demise as a major Inner Sphere power.

Liao Restoration

The damage done by Arden Baxter unfortunately did not end with his death. His successor, Stephen Liao, proved nearly as disastrous a ruler for entirely different reasons. Stephen was determined to restore the nation his forefathers had built, starting with the Capellan military. Arden Baxter's malicious bungling of foreign affairs had greatly increased tensions between the Confederation and its neighbors, raising the odds of attack on several fronts. In such a situation, a weakened military was a virtual invitation to invade.

The new Chancellor wasted no time in revamping his armed forces, launching hugely expensive training and rearmament programs throughout the 2430s and 40s. To pay for the improvements, Stephen first siphoned funds from the nobility and then imposed increasingly hefty taxes throughout Capellan society. The overwhelming devotion of resources to the military left long-neglected domestic problems untouched. They grew and festered, while the common people grumbled about the indifference of their leaders. The pervasive presence of the Maskirovka, beefed up by Stephen as part of the military, kept popular discontent at a low boil. The discontent of the nobles, many of whom came perilously close to bankruptcy as a result of the military build-up, was less easily dealt with. It exploded into violence after Stephen's death in 2450, in a dire crisis known to Capellan history as the Time of Tribulations.

The enormous sums spent on the military throughout Stephen Liao's reign allowed several high-ranking officers to accumulate vast personal wealth and power. Among the most prominent of these was General Merik, commander of a regiment in the elite Capellan Hussars. A gifted tactician with charisma to match, Merik seemed the most

likely to attempt a grab for supreme power. Stephen's son Duncan Liao, a youth of seventeen when he became Chancellor, sought to curb Merik's growing influence by halving the size of Merik's unit. The general and his troops responded with open revolt, occupying the Chancellor's winter palace and taking Duncan hostage.

For the next seven months, Merik's military junta ruled in Duncan's name while the House of Scions squabbled over the proper response. Some of its members favored rescuing Duncan and thereby placing the young Chancellor in their debt; others attempted to ingratiate themselves with General Merik. Rather than continue as a pawn in the power struggle, Duncan Liao committed suicide in 2452.

Duncan's sister Jasmine blamed Merik and the House of Scions equally for her brother's death, and took action against both. Merik's Hussars were her first target. Within hours of proclaiming herself Chancellor, Jasmine Liao ordered the Second Hexare Lancers—afterward known as the Red Lancers—to capture the winter palace and annihilate Merik's troops. That task accomplished, Jasmine launched a purge of the military. The brutal housecleaning and accompanying reforms took two years and gave the Chancellor's office unprecedented control over the Capellan armed forces. Finally, Jasmine Liao set about acquiring similarly absolute political authority. Her most far-reaching addition to the Chancellor's powers was the right of decree, technically making the Chancellor's word law in loosely defined emergency situations. Jasmine and her successors exploited this right to the hilt, routinely using it to circumvent opposition. By the end of Jasmine's reign, the Chancellorship had become a position of supreme authority, with the House of Scions reduced to rubber-stamping the Chancellor's decisions.

Over the six decades between Arden Baxter's accession and Jasmine Liao's death, the Capellan Confederation completed its long journey from a collection of often-quarreling states with vastly different forms of government to a unified star empire ruled by an absolute autocrat. The change heralded a new era in Capellan nationhood, which had been marked throughout most of its two hundred years by chaos, internal upheavals, wars and brief intervals of peace. Between the founding of the Capellan Hegemony and the death of Chancellor Jasmine Liao, the Liao family brought the Capellan nation its longest periods of stability. The Capellan people came to value that stability at almost any price and to revere the Liaos who had given it to them. These two features of Capellan life would define and preserve it during the centuries to come, carrying the nation through the first Star League era and its tumultuous aftermath.

Era of Peace, Era of War

The Capellan Confederation joined the Star League in 2556, induced to do so by offers of favored-nation trade agreements with the Terran Hegemony, access to valuable Terran technologies, and a promise by Albert Marik of the Free Worlds League to cede to the Capellans the hotly disputed Andurien systems. The latter was the most valuable prize in the mind of Chancellor Terrence Liao, who had fought and lost the Third Andurien War just five years earlier. Badly battered by that conflict, the Capellan Confederation desperately needed peace. Its armies had been mauled, its treasuries depleted by war and reparations, and its people were sick of fighting. The Star League beckoned like an oasis in the desert, promising permanent relief from the

Confederation's many troubles. The speedy transfer of Andurien proper to Confederation control seemed to symbolize the rewards of peace. Signing the Star League treaty brought the Confederation a coveted system it had failed to gain through war; possession of Andurien and its sister worlds would enlarge and enrich Capellan territory as few wars had done. (In fact, the remaining eleven Andurien systems never left Free Worlds control. After years of bureaucratic delays and snafus, both sides quietly dropped the matter.)

The ink was scarcely dry on the Star League Accords, however, when the Capellan Confederation and its fellow member-states found themselves embroiled in the Reunification War. This brutal conquest of the Periphery took more than twenty years, during which the economies of all the Star League realms became more or less dependent on wartime production. The Capellan economy, after years of battling over Andurien and heavy reparations paid to the Free Worlds League, was more vulnerable than most. The surge of wartime manufacturing revived it enough to compensate for the cost of the Capellan Armed Forces' own part in the conflict. When the Reunification War ended, however, the sudden loss of the Confederation's major source of revenue threw the economy into deep shock.

Chancellor Normann Aris, elected by the Prefectorate to succeed the childless Ursula Liao in 2599, devised a unique solution to the fiscal crisis that remains a fixture in modern-day Capellan life. Aris put the Confederation's entire adult population to work under what he called "compulsory organization." This system made explicit a normally implicit part of the social contract—namely, that every Capellan owed the state some form of service in exchange for the privilege of citizenship. It also consolidated state control over Capellan citizens by allowing the state, rather than the individual, to dictate the nature of each person's service.

Compulsory organization saved the Confederation from total economic collapse, but at the heavy price of eliminating an important personal freedom. Many citizens protested initially, some so stridently that the Capellan government sent troops to deal with them. Most Capellans, however, submitted to the new order with no more than a little grumbling. The economic crisis made them grateful for any employment that would keep food on the table, and the nation's history of upheavals had already taught them to value stability. Adjustment to the new reality was made easier by the connection of many Capellans to ancient Asian cultures with a mildly authoritarian bent. The tighter social structure would serve the Confederation well after the Star League's demise, which plunged humanity into three hundred years of a fruitless struggle for supremacy.

The Succession Wars

Never as large or powerful as its fellow Inner Sphere realms, the Capellan Confederation fared poorly during the long nightmare of the Succession Wars. The Lyran Commonwealth overshadowed it economically, the huge Federated Suns and the Draconis Combine militarily, the neighboring Free Worlds League in territory. Had its enemies not been fighting each other as well, the Confederation might have gone under. What kept the Capellan nation alive was the devotion of its people to their ruling house; the sheer fanaticism of Capellan troops, which enabled them to hang on and even triumph against desperate odds; and the cutthroat nature of combat

during the first three Succession Wars, which virtually precluded alliances or even simple trust between the five major star empires. The Fourth Succession War was the only exception to the last, and it nearly proved the Confederation's undoing.

The First Succession War initially went well for the Capellans, who took over several worlds from the defunct Terran Hegemony before unleashing a devastating campaign on the Free Worlds League planet of New Delos. In her zeal for quick victory, Chancellor Barbara Liao authorized her forces to ignore the Ares Conventions—a decision that came back to haunt her. Sent reeling by the Capellans' first assault, the Free Worlds League swiftly rallied. Its troops attacked with redoubled ferocity, determined to punish the enemy that had taken so many civilian lives. The savage defeat inflicted on the Capellan navy over the League world of Calloway VI was the beginning of the end of Capellan good fortune. The League took four Capellan worlds in the early 2790s before events elsewhere in the Inner Sphere convinced each side to seek easier targets.

The Capellan Armed Forces shifted its focus to poorly defended border planets in the Federated Suns, which had weakened its Capellan border garrisons under pressure from the Draconis Combine. By 2801, the Confederation was richer in territory by five Fed Suns worlds. It was also considerably poorer in military equipment and general revenues. The final Capellan campaign, on the world of Chesterton, cost the CCAF dearly in both manpower and military hardware. Weighed honestly, the Confederation lost more than it gained from the conflict—a pattern it would repeat in each of the three Succession Wars to come.

By the end of the Third Succession War in the 2980s, the Capellan military teetered on the verge of collapse. Painstaking conservation of dwindling resources, a bedrock tenet of Capellan army doctrine since the Second Succession War, proved insufficient to keep the CCAF's 'Mechs and tanks and fighters in good working order. A few elite regiments and a handful of dedicated mercenary units were all that stood between the Confederation and oblivion, until the dawn of the thirty-first century brought a much-needed interlude of peace to the exhausted Successor States. Chancellor Maximilian Liao, who ascended the Celestial Throne in 2990, took the opportunity to rebuild his shattered military as best he could. Like his fellow Successor Lords, Maximilian assumed that conflict would flare up again before too many decades passed. He could not foresee, however, the dangerous difference between the Fourth Succession War and its predecessors.

The Fourth Succession War hinged on an unprecedented alliance between the Federated Suns and the Lyran Commonwealth, which gave the Fed Suns vastly greater resources on which to draw while providing them with an ally to keep their other enemies busy. Prince Hanse Davion was therefore free to throw the bulk of his Fed Suns troops against his preferred target: the Capellan Confederation. Between 3028 and 3030, the Capellan Confederation lost more worlds than it had in all the previous Succession Wars: half its systems fell to the Davions. His realm split by his most hated enemy, Maximilian Liao succumbed to madness while his less-than-stable daughter Romano attempted to rebuild a shrunken, demoralized military and nation. The secession of the St. Ives Commonality at the end of the Fourth War further weakened the Confederation, bringing its fortunes to their lowest ebb in its history.

Not until the accession of Sun-Tzu Liao in 3052 would this long-suffering realm begin emerging from the depths.

Capellan Revival

The year 3052 would prove a turning point for the Capellan Confederation, though few within or outside that battered nation realized it at the time. In that year, the first phase of the Clan War ended in a Com Guards victory that bought the Inner Sphere fifteen precious years in which to narrow the Clans' prodigious technological advantage. Though Capellan territory lay far from the Clans' line of advance, even Romano Liao could not deny the threat they would pose should the other Successor States fall before them. Nor did her son, Sun-Tzu, fail to recognize the benefits of improved technology on other fields of war. Upon succeeding Romano as Chancellor later that same year, Sun-Tzu cast about for a political alliance that would let him put expected military developments to good use.

He found what he was looking for in a loose alliance with the Free Worlds League, whose Captain-General wanted a buffer against the still-impressive might of the Federated Commonwealth. The League and the Confederation had been allies of a sort under the Concord of Kapteyn, signed in 3022 by the leaders of Houses Marik, Liao and Kurita as a counterbalance to the Alliance Treaty. The Kapteyn agreement had done little for its members during the Fourth Succession War, but the precedent remained. Sun-Tzu Liao and Captain-General Thomas Marik revived and strengthened that tie, cementing it with an engagement between Sun-Tzu and Marik's illegitimate daughter, Isis. Though the marriage never took place, Sun-Tzu swiftly capitalized on his position as Marik's nominal son-in-law to wangle much-needed military aid and favorable trade agreements. He used both to beef up the Capellan Armed Forces while pressing Thomas Marik for open backing of Capellan military ventures.

From the start of his reign, Sun-Tzu was determined to take back every Capellan world lost to the FedCom in the Fourth Succession War. The alliance with the Free Worlds League potentially gave him the manpower to make that goal feasible, if he could persuade Thomas Marik to put League units at the Confederation's disposal. Marik, however, initially balked at aiding his new ally so directly. To achieve his dream of making the Confederation whole again, Sun-Tzu had to overcome Marik's reluctance.

His chance came in 3057, when Marik's son Joshua died of leukemia at the New Avalon Institute of Science. Around the time of the boy's death, Sun-Tzu engineered a commando raid on the NAIS. He intended to find or manufacture proof that the Joshua Marik at the facility was not Thomas' son, but an impostor. Unknown to the Chancellor, his guess was correct. Archon Prince Victor Steiner-Davion had substituted a double for the boy, fearing that the loss of the Marik heir would make the expansionist-minded Capellan Chancellor the new heir to the League throne. With control or near-control over two Successor State armies, Prince Victor believed, Sun-Tzu was almost certain to plunge the Inner Sphere into a war it could ill afford while the Clans sat on its doorstep.

As Sun-Tzu prepared to bring evidence of the switch to Thomas Marik, fate played into his hands. Through operatives of SAFE, the Free Worlds League intelligence agency, Marik learned of the substitution. He responded with an all-out attack on the Federated Commonwealth's Sarna March, in concert with the CAF. Sun-Tzu's war of reclamation had begun.

Over the two-month Liao-Marik Offensive, the Capellan army and Marik-hired mercenaries took back thirteen worlds and sowed chaos on many more. Between 3058 and 3061, Sun-Tzu took thirty more planets through a combination of military force, terrorist action and pro-Capellan popular movements he had spent years creating. The high point of the reclamation campaign was the reconquest of the St. Ives Compact, a hard-won Capellan victory fought over 3061 and most of 3062. Named the Xin Sheng Commonality during the war, the St. Ives Commonality came out of that war a shadow of its former self. The costs of rebuilding strife-torn worlds and reintegrating them into the Confederation will absorb significant Capellan resources for the next few years, leaving Sun-Tzu little time to continue the expansion of his realm. He is unlikely to rest, however, as long as any former Capellan possession lies outside the Confederation fold.

Within ten years, the Capellan Confederation has gone from a demoralized rump state to a rising power in a quickly changing Inner Sphere. In addition to reclaiming much of its lost territory, the Capellan nation achieved a crowning glory in 3058 when its Chancellor was chosen as First Lord of the new Star League-the first Successor State leader to hold that coveted title since the long-ago start of the Succession Wars. Though the First Lord's title and position have since rotated to Theodore Kurita of the Draconis Combine, the Capellan people still take immense pride in their own ruler's possession of it. Because of this and other achievements, the Confederation is once again a power to be reckoned with and its people cannot be too grateful to the Liao who made it happen.

Capellan Society

On the surface, Capellan society strongly resembles that of the Draconis Combine. Both realms favor a single Asian culture above all others: the Combine Japanese, the Confederation Chinese. Both incorporate a caste system, both submit their citizens to tight state control via heavy political indoctrination and a powerful internal security arm, and both foster fanatical loyalty to their respective ruling houses. Despite these important similarities, however, the two realms are far more different than outsiders might suspect. The average Capellan would certainly reject the notion that he is anything like a citizen of the Combine, or any other denizen of the Inner Sphere. Like the Chinese of old Terra from whom the Confederation draws its primary inspiration, the Capellan people see themselves as unique and their society as superior. Nowhere is this sense of superiority made more manifest than in the Xin Sheng movement, which has greatly strengthened the hold of ancient Chinese culture on the Capellan imagination.

Xin Sheng

Loosely translated as "new birth," this sweeping social and political movement is revitalizing Capellan society at every level. Launched by Sun-Tzu Liao near the

beginning of his reign, Xin Sheng has brought the Capellan people increased prosperity, a degree of political freedom, considerable additional territory and a bracing sense of nationalist pride. After the dark years following the Fourth Succession War, this renewal seems even more miraculous. Much of it stands as inspiring testimony to the unconquerable human spirit. As with most things of human origin, however, Xin Sheng has its darker side as well.

On one level, Xin Sheng is about rebuilding the fortunes and the hopes of a nation all but shattered by war and the madness of its recent rulers. Economic reforms to encourage entrepreneurs have begun to raise living standards on once poor Capellan planets; on well-off planets like the capital of Sian, the bold and the lucky are making huge sums. Politically, Xin Sheng encourages planetary nobles to allow their subjects considerably more autonomy than many of them do. On some worlds, the ruling nobles are permitting elected civilian governments for the first time; on others, the planetary refractor as spokesman for the people is playing a larger part in policy decisions. The Maskirovka has standing orders to allow a certain amount of low-level dissent, though few are inclined to raise opposing voices amid the near-universal chorus of pride in Chancellor Sun-Tzu. Acclaimed by his people as conqueror of the Clans, First Lord of the Star League and author of every good fortune, Sun-Tzu has little to fear from a few lonely grumblings of discontent.

Militarily, the Xin Sheng movement has produced skyrocketing recruitment levels across the Confederation. Always among the most honored ways of serving the often-beleaguered Capellan state, military enlistment has acquired extra cachet since the victories of 3057 and the recent war against St. Ives. The respect accorded Capellan soldiers has never been higher, and scores of young people are clamoring for entrance to the nation's military academies. Particularly noticeable is the jump in recruitment among Capellans with no Chinese background. Xin Sheng's extreme identification of Capellan with Han Chinese identity leaves non-Chinese Capellans on the outside. Many attempt to compensate for this by proving their Capellan loyalty in the starkest way possible.

Han Chinese culture-language, arts, customs and mores-has always been among the brightest threads in the Capellan tapestry. Xin Sheng elevates things Chinese over all other cultural and social influences-in the Chancellor's own words, making the ways and heritage of old China "every Capellan's birthright." By explicitly linking Capellan identity with the culture from which his Liao ancestors sprang, Sun-Tzu is strengthening the psychological hold of the Liao dynasty over the Capellan people, as the embodiment of Chinese culture and virtues. So strongly emphasizing one way of life over others gives the people a sense of security and solidarity: they know who they are and how they are meant to live. Unfortunately, the same emphasis risks turning the "other" into the enemy. Though widespread discrimination against non-Chinese Capellans remains relatively rare, scattered rumors and anecdotes suggest that it may be on the rise. There is also the potential for a backlash against the former citizens of breakaway St. Ives, should the costs of its reabsorption become too great a burden.

The St. Ives Conflict

The reintegration of the St. Ives region is the element of Xin Sheng that currently touches the largest number of ordinary Capellan lives. Thus far, joy over the Confederation's victory and reunification with its "lost cousins" has blunted the economic dislocations of the fighting and subsequent reconstruction. The ferocity of many battles cut deep into several Capellan army units; priority given to rebuilding them means fewer resources available elsewhere. The former St. Ives border worlds saw particularly savage fighting, and the costs of reconstruction there are running high. Relatively untouched St. Ives planets promise to add considerably to the Confederation treasury, and Sun-Tzu is canny enough to let all his people share at least a little in the new wealth. It will take a few years for the gains to materialize, however, much less trickle down to the ordinary citizen.

Then there are the people of St. Ives themselves—some happy to rejoin their Capellan brethren, most resigned to it, many others unable to accept the loss of their independence. For the latter, "new birth" has meant the death of their freedom, mourned all the more because they had it so briefly. The prospect of life under Confederation rule, with its rigid state controls and pervasive secret police, terrifies them. Many of them also find it inconceivable that "one of the crazy Liaos" will forgive them for having followed their beloved Duchess Candace thirty years ago. They believe a backlash is coming, but the restrictions of Capellan society make escaping it virtually impossible. Frightened, angry and grieving, their presence may spark unrest among the general Capellan population once the ecstasy of victory dies down.

For the moment, however, St. Ives is relatively calm. Duchess Candace and her family remain in power over the renamed St. Ives Commonality, a reassuring piece of continuity for many troubled citizens. The duchess has signaled her willingness to work with the central government for the good of her people, who currently need peace more than freedom. Given good faith on both sides and no unforeseen catastrophes, the reunion of St. Ives and its parent nation should proceed to the good of both.

State and Individual

With its history of autocratic rule, intense fear of dissolution and tradition of loyalty to the Liao family bolstered by a powerful secret police force, the Capellan Confederation is often dismissed as the Inner Sphere's most repressive nation. In fact, though the Capellan state exercises considerable power over its citizens, those same citizens frequently enjoy an unexpected degree of personal freedom. The balance between state power and individual liberty is particularly tricky for Capellans to navigate, but personal liberty does exist in this apparently totalitarian society. So long as they do not challenge the existing social order, most ordinary Capellans have considerable leeway within it. Few would dream of disrupting it, having absorbed their society's prevailing attitudes through years of indoctrination. For most inclined to break the Capellan mold, the fearsome mystique of the Maskirovka serves as sufficient deterrent.

Defining Philosophies

Three philosophies more than any others define what it means to be a Capellan: the Korvin Doctrine, the Sarna Mandate and the Lorix Creed. Capellan subjects learn these doctrines in some form from their first days in primary school, which begins at the age of five. Throughout each Capellan's eleven-year compulsory education, these defining philosophies are interpreted and reinforced in terms of loyalty to the Liao dynasty and to the Capellan nation.

The Korvin Doctrine, originated by Alana Korvin DeVall in the early years of human space exploration, is the oldest and most central of the doctrines that serve as the foundation of Capellan society. Korvin wrote eloquently of the need for balance between humanity's outward expansion in the universe and maintaining meaningful connections with our racial and social origins. To keep from splintering into ever more isolated and weaker elements, Korvin proposed that all humans identify with a greater humanity in which each individual serves the needs of a greater civilization. She also argued that the immense distances of space demand a central authority, whose task is to define greater humanity and reconcile different human values.

Though Korvin devised her doctrine long before the existence of any Capellan nation, later generations saw a unique Capellan link in her founding of two colonies-Sirius and Epsilon Eridani-in what would later become Capellan space. This "Capellan connection" made the Korvin Doctrine a perfect vehicle for Franco Liao to inspire personal and national loyalty to his infant Capellan Confederation. He and his successors equated the Capellan nation with Korvin's greater civilization, and the Capellan Chancellor with the central authority qualified to judge what was best for humanity. Under this interpretation, taught to generations of Capellan schoolchildren, the will of the Chancellor is equivalent to the good of humankind, and to challenge it is to threaten humanity's future. By extension, all Capellans partake of their Chancellor's prestigious position; if he or she is the ultimate arbiter of humanity's good, they are the embodiment of the greater civilization to which all human societies should rightly aspire. This mixture of pride and awe, all focused on the ruling Liao dynasty, powerfully reinforces the dominance of House Liao and the people's loyalty to it.

The Sarna Mandate, a founding precept of the militaristic Sarna Supremacy, became official Capellan doctrine during the reign of Jasmine Liao. The Sarna Mandate states that every society inevitably develops a military, scientific and political elite, and that this elite class is the only one truly capable of governing. This unique capacity justifies all actions the ruling elite may deem necessary for the survival of its people, culture or nation. In addition to providing a rationale for the continued authority of various political and military leaders-or their removal by the supreme authority, the Chancellor-the Sarna Mandate also supports the pervasive Capellan caste system.

The Lorix Creed is the central philosophy of the short-lived Lorix Order, founded by Major Kalvar Lorix in 2672, and of the Warrior Houses that succeeded it. The Creed narrowly interprets the Sarna Mandate, emphasizing the role of the military elite above the rest of the ruling class. Kalvar Lorix's dictums enshrine the soldier-particularly the MechWarrior, prince among fighters-as the almost sacred defender of his people and his nation. Because they risk their lives on others' behalf, warriors are entitled to the highest respect. In turn, the warrior owes unshakable loyalty to the civilians he protects, the state that employs him in his high calling, and the ruler of

that state as his commander-in-chief. The original Lorix Order disbanded after twenty-five years, but its guiding philosophies remained. Colonel Hiritza Hikaru would use these same tenets in the late twenty-ninth century to create a blueprint for the famed Capellan Warrior Houses, elite military units akin to ancient orders of knighthood.

In addition to inculcating these defining ethics through public schooling, the Confederation ensures their presence in adult life through philosophical examinars and courts of philosophical inquiry. Both have links to the Maskirovka, the Capellan secret police.

The Maskirovka

Created in 2396 by Chancellor Kurnath Liao, the Maskirovka arose from the remains of the Deimos, the intelligence-gathering arm of the Capellan Hegemony. Primarily concerned with military intelligence, the Maskirovka spied on foreign nations and spread misinformation about Capellan military capabilities. Chancellor Kurnath, however, also saw the Maskirovka as one of many tools for enhancing the power of the Chancellor's office. Though the organization's military duties initially outweighed its domestic ones, the Maskirovka always functioned as a means of tracking internal dissent. Several subsequent Chancellors expanded the agency's domestic scope until its two branches were virtually equal in power and importance.

Among Kurnath Liao's innovations were "philosophical examinars," government functionaries charged with fostering loyalty to the Chancellor through the Korvin Doctrine (and later the Sarna Mandate) taught in the public school system. Though nominally independent of the Maskirovka, the examinars received their funding through that agency and reported problems to Maskirovka superiors. Chancellor Kalvin Liao, known to history as "Kalvin the Devourer," vastly expanded the examinars' authority. He empowered them to launch investigations of politically suspect citizens in every social class. As a venue for these witch hunts, Kalvin established "courts of philosophical inquiry"-arenas for the public humiliation and destruction of anyone the Chancellor found inconvenient. Kalvin's saner successor, Mica Liao, scaled back the examinars' power and attempted to put some integrity into the courts, but apparently did not consider eliminating either of these useful tools of control. They remain active to this day, and the mere knowledge of them serves to keep most potential troublemakers in line.

Militarily, the Maskirovka has proved its worth time and again, despite a few colossal blunders. The Confederation's acquisition of the BattleMech in 2456 was a Maskirovka coup, arguably the agency's proudest achievement. Its greatest failure came during the Fourth Succession War, when Maskirovka agents unknowingly vetted inaccurate information about triple-strength myomer presumably being developed at the New Avalon Institute of Science. Based on their recommendation, Chancellor Maximilian Liao ordered the BattleMechs of Warrior House Imarra equipped with the stolen technology. House Imarra's troops were on Sian then, charged with defending the capital against an expected Davion assault. When it came, the Davions sprung their trap. The myomer was bait, infected with a fatal flaw. The crippled Imarra 'Mechs and their pilots could only watch while the AFFS assault team rescued its master spy from the heart of the Chancellor's palace and then departed,

leaving destruction in its wake. House Imarra did not recover from the blow to its prestige until 3057, when it redeemed itself during the Liao-Marik Offensive.

Domestically, the Maskirovka has long been as ubiquitous a presence as the ISF of the Draconis Combine. Unlike the ISF, the Mask has never shown any tendencies toward kingmaking. Its members and leadership are solidly loyal to the ruling Chancellor, particularly to the current incumbent. Over the ten years of his reign, Sun-Tzu Liao has increased the Maskirovka's budget several times-first to finance deep-cover operations and terrorist activities in the Chaos March, most recently commensurate with the Mask's increased responsibilities in newly reclaimed territories. Awash in funding and enjoying its new prestige, the Maskirovka serves Sun-Tzu Liao to the best of its considerable ability. From the examiners to CCAF political officers to the green-coated agents of military intelligence and the thousands of faceless informers among the general population, the Maskirovka has eyes and ears everywhere within and in most places beyond the Confederation's borders. The courts of philosophical inquiry continue to operate, though less frequently than in Calvin Liao's day. They still find against the accused more often than not, on the theory that the innocent would do nothing to arouse suspicion in the first place. However, there is usually at least some merit to the allegations-rarely is the mere possession of coveted monies or property enough to see a citizen condemned. Citizens found to hold "incorrect views" face penalties ranging from loss of social position to heavy fines and property confiscation to prison time.

Personal Freedom: A Delicate Balance

The all-pervading ethics of service to the Capellan state and submission to the ruling elite, along with the looming shadow cast by the Maskirovka, at first glance portray the Confederation as a rigidly repressive society gripped in the Chancellor's iron hand. In practice, however, many Capellan citizens enjoy remarkable personal freedom. The degree to which any given citizen controls his or her own life depends not on the whim of the Chancellor, but on the character of the noble who rules the planet or star system where that citizen resides.

Though relatively small compared to its neighbors, the Capellan Confederation covers considerable interstellar distances over which no single ruler or central government can feasibly extend total control. As with other Inner Sphere states, the Chancellor and the government on Sian concern themselves primarily with statewide power and policy. Individual Capellan star systems are governed in the Chancellor's name by various ranks of lesser nobles, who generally run their fiefdoms as they see fit. The local ruler is expected to keep the peace; how he or she accomplishes this is the noble's own business. Regional, system-wide and planetary governments vary widely, from freewheeling bastions of enterprise to tightly controlled regimes reminiscent of ancient Asia's Bamboo Curtain. The worlds of Ares and Capella, respectively, represent these two extremes; most worlds fall somewhere between the two.

Ares, a commercial free port exempted from the tight trade restrictions of the early thirty-first century, has since developed into an entrepreneur's Mecca, with a degree of political freedom to match. Though no citizen dares openly challenge the wisdom of the Chancellor or the rulership of House Liao (assuming any were so inclined), debates in the Planetary Council are loud, often profane free-for-alls in which elected

delegates from various cities and major companies speak their minds with unusual candor. Trade and labor regulations are similarly lax in order to promote a business-friendly climate. The planetary ruler, Lady Jasmine Dunbar, keeps a light hand on the reins of administration. So long as Ares continues to prosper, local political leaders may run things as they wish, obligated only to send Lady Jasmine regular political and economic reports. Maskirovka agents on Ares are familiar with local customs and demonstrate a fine understanding of the boundary between plain speaking and potential treason.

The planet Capella, equally in thrall to economic interests, is as different from Ares as night from day. Two major industries hold sway here—the Capellan Commonality Bank and Ceres Metals. The former came under the control of a loyalist minor mandrinn after the defection of Candace Liao, its former CEO; it remains a source of revenue for Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao, though he does not manage its affairs personally.

The head of Ceres Metals is the ruler of the Capella system, Duke Benito Rivoli. A latter-day corporate baron in the mold of his iron-willed father, Kingston, Duke Rivoli runs his company and his world as a virtual autocrat. Believing that freedom in one area makes for discontent in others, the duke discourages most manifestations of free thinking. Everything from small business ventures to local arts festivals must be vetted by the Committee for Public Order, consisting of five upper-echelon Ceres officers and two members of the duke's family. Though the laws of the Capellan Concordat clearly forbid "any representative of the chief executive" to deprive a Capellan citizen of life or liberty without due process of law, Duke Rivoli maintains that he is the law on Capella and so may act as he wishes to preserve order and stability.

Whispers of Democracy

Even those Capellans governed by despots enjoy a little democracy, harking back to the Capellan Hegemony's earliest decades. A touch of that long-forgotten democratic tradition shows up in the office of planetary refractor and in the elected leadership of the Capellan caste system.

The office of refractor, created in response to the tyrannies of Chancellor Kalvin Liao, exists in part to check the power of nobles who abuse their position. Each Capellan world elects its own refractor, who serves the local lord as the common people's representative. Under the Capellan Concordat, the refractor may act on behalf of any citizen accused of wrongdoing, and may demand a personal audience with the Prefectorate on Sian to present the defendant's case. Many refractors also serve as the commanders of planetary militias, and can therefore resist orders to act against "troublesome" civilians. Finally, a refractor may try to curb a despotic planetary noble by appealing to the Diem, administrator of several star systems in a given region. If the Diem finds merit in the appeal, he or she can take steps to ameliorate the lesser noble's excesses.

Each caste's adult members similarly elect caste leaders. Part and parcel of Capellan society, the Capellan caste system is far more fluid than its counterpart in the Draconis Combine. Individuals may marry freely into other castes or even change

castes with the caste leaders' permission. The system encompasses all levels of society below the nobility, dividing the people into seven categories based on the type of work they perform. Administrators and bureaucrats make up one caste, scientists and technicians another, various professions a third, medical professionals a fourth, artists and entertainers a fifth, and common laborers a sixth. Indentured laborers, known as servitors, comprise the lowest caste. Natives of newly conquered worlds, prisoners captured in raids, or Capellans who lost or never earned citizenship, servitors can theoretically work their way out of bondage, though in practice this seldom happens. Prisoners of war are the exception to this dismal reality; their term of service lasts for five years, after which they may apply for citizenship below noble rank. Regardless of a servitor's origin, his or her children may join any caste for which their abilities qualify them, and may earn full citizenship like any other Capellan.

Citizenship

Capellan citizenship is another avenue of personal liberty for those who earn it, though in an indirect way. Apart from the legal benefits enshrined in the Capellan Concordat, the process of earning the name of citizen reinforces a sense of individual worth along with the collective ideal. Making citizenship contingent on service to the state clearly emphasizes the state's paramount importance; citizenship is a privilege reserved for those who give something to the nation that nurtured them. At the same time, however, the newly minted citizen experiences a profound understanding of his or her personal value. His contribution alone won him the right to join the select company of the citizenry; he personally did something for his nation, which recognized and rewarded him by making him fully part of it.

This dual effect accounts for much of the average Capellan's fierce pride in his realm. He earned the right to call himself Capellan, and the Confederation would be the poorer without his efforts. A sense of making a difference, however small, sustains most Capellan citizens through many a hardship inflicted by fate or imposed by harsh overlords. It also makes acceptance of their society's many restrictions seem like a reasonable price to pay.

Writing Credits:

Inner Sphere Source Book: Capellan Confederation - House Liao
Diane Piron-Gelman



HOUSE MARIK

The Free Worlds Parliament shall make no law to regulate or control the form of government maintained or adopted by a member province and shall not interfere in the affairs of provincial governments, except as they touch upon or interfere with that collective security and harmony of the Free Worlds League. - The Document of Incorporation

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A friend of mine who'd had one too many bottles of imported Timbiqui Dark in a smoky bar on Atreus once described the Free Worlds League as "the boiling pot of the Inner Sphere." He was looking for the phrase "melting pot," often used to describe the United States on old Terra. I think he got it right the first time. (In beer is truth, to mangle another famous quotation.)

For most of its history, the Free Worlds League has been at or close to a full boil, with no one knowing for sure when it might boil over. My uncle, Thomas Marik, is the first Captain-General to tame all the furious energy of the League's many different pieces, the first to make that energy work for us instead of against us. Quite an accomplishment for old Janos Marik's youngest boy, once so far from the League throne that they sent him off to ComStar. Just goes to prove that the universe is full of surprises.

We're a well-off bunch now, which helps quite a bit. It's harder to resent your neighbor for being different-or the central government for existing-when you've got plenty of food on the table, a solid roof over your head, decent schooling for your kids and the prospect of a fortune to be made. Even the folks not looking to make a bundle are better paid now than they've ever been, busy filling the demand for 'Mechs and weapons and tanks and armor and all manner of militarily useful items. Other things, too. Poor little Rasalhague buys food from us that it used to produce on worlds taken by the Clans. The Lyran Alliance lost a huge chunk of its manufacturing base in the Clan War; now it pays the League to make half a hundred things the Lyrans can't anymore. The Capellans are buying everything from timber to paving stones to the ingredients for concrete, all going to rebuild their "new" St. Ives Commonality. The last time we had this much money was the heyday of the first Star League, more than three hundred years ago. Some people are even comparing today's good times to the founding years of the Free Worlds League, when determination and a little luck could turn scraps of cash into a fortune overnight. (Or when you could lose your last shirt-but then, as now, no one likes to think about the losers.)

Atreus-where I go to play the court game, but only when I have to-is the perfect symbol of the boom times. Not too many decades ago, it was a wilderness backwater with a big capital city for the League central government. Nobles and other rich folks vacationed here, mostly at palatial estates. If you wanted to hunt giant bourneki for their auburn pelts, fish in clear mountain streams or just commune with unspoiled Nature, Atreus was the place. But then the boom got rolling, and a lot of people sold their real estate to big military contractors. A dozen years into the economic expansion, you can't throw a rock without hitting a 'Mech factory. The bournekis' forests have pretty much been cleared, the mountain streams either choked with runoff or harnessed to provide power. I find I miss them, even though I welcome the prosperity that took their place. Materially, there's no question the local people are better off. The whole League is better off. But I can't help wondering what we might

have lost in the process, that we won't even know is gone until it's too late to get it back.

And then there's Sadurni, where my unit has been sitting since 3047. I started there as a captain in the Second Legionnaires BattleMech regiment, fresh out of military school and itching for action. Now I'm the unit's commanding officer, and we still haven't seen much. Sadurni is that kind of place. You'd hardly guess the League fought three wars with the Capellan Confederation over Sadurni and its sister planets in the Duchy of Andurien. The only tip-offs to that ancient history are the big Asian populations-with the Chinese coming second to the Indians-and occasional pro-Liao demonstrations invariably attended by less than a hundred people. (The leading rabble-rouser always seems to speak the local dialect like he learned it off a language tape, and you can tell just by listening that his heart's not in it.)

More recent political history is closer to the surface. There may not be many pro-Liaoists anymore, but notions of independence have a long history in this part of space. My guess is the natives of Andurien got tired of being fought over and figured they'd do better without any Great House sticking its fat nose in their business. Not many Anduriens feel like leaving nowadays, with the League doing so well. But there are those who mutter about it in the corners of the old Humphreys ducal palace (renamed an unassuming "Government House" since the death of old Duchess Catherine Humphreys after the Andurien Crisis of the 3030s). That's why the Second is here-to remind ambitious politicians who's in charge. I think we've done that job well, and I find I don't grudge being so far from the center of things. I tried politics once when I was young and stupid, and didn't much care for the outcome. So I do my work here-on this world two hops from the Confederation and the Periphery-and when we're not chasing off pirates, I get to know the place. So far, I've found the best Indian restaurant in known space, learned how to cook Korean delicacies from a wizened old woman in a town called Little Seoul, and swum in the River Narmada (which the natives of the southern continent sometimes call a goddess, and swear by for bringing you your true love). Life is slow-paced, easy, well adapted to the rhythm of days with a three-hour hot spell in the middle and a cool twilight that lasts half of forever. The nouveau riche of Atreus would hate it.

I love it. Nobody's stinking rich here, but there aren't many dirt-poor people, either. The cities are mostly small towns, where everyone knows everyone else and no one gets left by the wayside. The Second fits in well here, barring the occasional "Mariks go home" scrawled in red paint across a sun-baked wall of yellowish local stone. Of course, I can't deny a certain affection for Atreus as well-even in its new incarnation, with self-made bourgeois in snappy suits clogging the streets and invading the best watering holes. I know Atreus's capital city best, and the influx of new money hasn't changed it much. Made it a little busier, maybe-but the capital always did have a liveliness all its own.

In some ways, Atreus is the face of the new League: brimming with energy and drive, crammed with hopefuls eager to make their mark in a nation buoyed by new unity and strength. And Sadurni is the old League, still with us beneath the boom times-going its own way, leaving its neighbors alone as it wants to be left alone. The greatest achievement of Thomas Marik's Free Worlds League is that it has room enough for both.

- Colonel Corinne Marik
Commanding Officer, Second Free Worlds Legionnaires

Origins and History

The Free Worlds League grew from a loose union of three major powers, each markedly different in ethnic makeup, cultural heritage and political outlook. The Marik Commonwealth formed through conquest, the Federation of Oriente through diplomacy and the Principality of Regulus through the connections between its merchant princes. The delicate balance between these three founding states permanently shaped the politics and character of the Free Worlds League, creating a nation whose diversity gave it unmatched vitality, but also frequently threatened to tear it apart.

The Marik Commonwealth was born in 2238, when Terran Alliance senator Charles Marik declared his homeworld independent of the bitterly polarized Alliance government. The planet Marik, settled and developed for mining operations in the mid twenty-second century, belonged to a wealthy family of East European origin from whom it took its name. By the time Charles re-christened it the Republic of Marik, this mining colony had grown into a thriving center for manufacturing and trade. Independence was a heady prospect, but also a frightening one. The Alliance's shift toward isolationism threatened to disrupt Terran and colonial markets for Marik ores, minerals and manufactured goods. Trade ties could be forged anew, but only through the agency of a strong central government. The people of Marik turned for guidance where they always had-to the Marik family, whose vast fortune and talent for leadership had kept them in a prominent position throughout a century and a half of social change.

Charles Marik became the new republic's leader almost by default, a position on which he was swift to capitalize. Within the first five years of independence, he ensured the survival of a strong central authority through the Marik Constitution and persuaded three neighboring planets to ally with the infant republic for mutual defense. In symbolic recognition of his new allies, Charles Marik renamed the four-world federation the Marik Commonwealth. He then shored up Marik's economy by turning its formidable manufacturing capacity toward military production. At a time when many other former colonies were self-destructing or struggling for survival, the Republic of Marik was building an army-not merely for defense, but also for conquest. Between 2249 and 2271, Charles Marik and his two sons took control of twenty worlds, extending their territory sixty light-years from the edge of Terran Alliance space. Through the military acumen that achieved this success, the Marik family would play an increasingly dominant role in what would become the Free Worlds League.

Like the Marik Commonwealth, the Federation of Oriente owed its beginnings to a declaration of planetary independence by a former Terran Alliance senator. In 2241, the famous statesman Tomàs Allison took his homeworld of Oriente out of the shrinking Terran fold and began to forge diplomatic ties with several neighboring worlds. Over the next three decades, Oriente expanded its web of alliances across

twenty planets. Oriente's original settlers were a polyglot collection of Terran nationalities united by mutual devotion to progressive ideas in politics, science and the arts. By the first year of its independence, the planet had developed into a bastion of scientific and artistic achievement. Highly educated and cosmopolitan in outlook, the people of Oriente-world and Federation-were determined to preserve their freedom and make their mark on humanity's emerging interstellar society.

The Principality of Regulus grew from trade contacts between several rimward Terran colonies, centered on the five-planet mini-empire of the wealthy Selaj family. Among the earliest emigrants to what were then the rimward worlds, the Indian-born Selajes soon dominated almost every business in the region. When the Terran Alliance began its long, painful collapse in the mid twenty-third century, the heads of the Selaj trading conglomerate lost no time consolidating power over their client worlds. Jittery at the loss of their Terran lifeline and concerned with their own survival, a dozen planets in the Selaj trading network gladly agreed to a political union that would give them both the goods the Selaj could deliver and the protection of Selaj armed merchant ships. By 2270, the Selaj Empire had expanded from five worlds to seventeen.

Birth of the League

The Free Worlds League was the brainchild of Tomàs Allison, leader of the Federation of Oriente. As the 2260s drew to a close, Oriente was one of three emerging multi-world confederations in its region of space. The other two were the Marik Commonwealth and the Principality of Regulus. All three realms had spent the past several years slowly expanding their borders, edging ever closer to one another's territories. A scholar of history and a farsighted man, Allison realized that sooner or later, Oriente would clash with one of these neighboring powers. The only hope for avoiding a potentially ruinous war was to forge a mutually profitable alliance first.

Other considerations played a role in Allison's decision as well. The Terran Alliance had limped along for more than seven decades after the shakeup of 2237, but its demise as a political power was only a matter of time. By the 2260s, it was clear to Allison that the Alliance government was dying. He was convinced that its successor would be a military regime, given the status of the Alliance Global Militia as one of the few Terran institutions not discredited by shady backroom dealing. Any new Terran government would need to consolidate its power; what better way to do so than to take back former colonies? Against the large and well-equipped AGM, the smaller militaries of independent worlds could not hope to prevail alone. Union seemed the best hope for survival.

The Marik Commonwealth, with its sizable territory and strong military, made an excellent prospective ally. The Principality of Regulus offered distinct advantages as well, with its robust economy and large, armed trading fleet. Blending Marik's military might and Regulus' economic strength with Oriente's diplomatic skills promised to make an unbeatable combination on all three fronts. In 2266, Allison sent his most trusted envoy to the leaders of the neighboring powers with a proposal to form a federation.

Sir George Humphreys of New Delos was a proud upholder of his family's long tradition of public service. A lifetime spent in politics had honed his natural eloquence and given him unmatched skill at the art of the deal. When Tomàs Allison approached him with the framework for the fledgling Free Worlds League, Humphreys gladly agreed to back it on Allison's behalf. After five years of negotiations, Humphreys brought Detlev Marik and Raju Selaj together with Tomàs Allison for a pivotal conference on Oriente in 2271. Over the next four months, the three leaders hammered out the Treaty of Marik that created the Free Worlds League. The treaty granted internal autonomy to the founding states, gave the leader of each a prominent role in the League-wide government and provided for the appointment of an overall military leader—a Captain-General—in times of crisis. In keeping with Allison's vision of a profit making as well as a defensive enterprise, political representation was allotted according to economic strength rather than population.

The Treaty of Marik was written down, argued over, rewritten, amended, nearly thrown out and rewritten yet again in English, the one language spoken by all three heads of state. The wrangling and the choice of language both hinted at a feature of the Free Worlds League that would become a leading source of trouble over the centuries. The three nations that made up the early League represented a dazzling array of different peoples and cultures: Indian, Pakistani, Romanian, Hungarian, Slovak, Mongolian, Kazhak, Uzbek, Spanish, Italian, Basque and English, just to name a few. Many of these different populations spoke only their own tongues and had little understanding of their neighbors, linguistically or otherwise. The three founding states were also markedly different in political structure: the Marik Commonwealth military-oriented with a powerful (though not absolute) central government, the Principality of Regulus an oligarchy controlled by a small number of wealthy families, and Oriente a British-style parliamentary democracy. All these differences were a source of tremendous vitality for the new nation, but also frequently bogged down the League government in squabbling over where the line fell between federal authority and provincial autonomy. The desire to be left alone, a social force in almost every former Terran colony, had extra resonance in the Free Worlds League, where individual regions jealously guarded their traditions and prerogatives against "outsiders" who could not understand them.

More than once in the League's history, cultural and political tensions led to threats of secession or even total collapse. The League survived by finding a precarious balance between these potentially opposing forces—a balance forged by the knowledge that none of its component parts could prosper half so well alone as they could together.

Booms and Busts

Over the next century, the Free Worlds League saw dazzling growth in size and wealth. From the 2270s through the 2290s, several worlds and small federations near League space joined the League for protection against pirates and hostile neighbors. The League government actually fostered piracy on occasion, granting letters of marquee to its free traders so that their activities might persuade a reluctant neighboring power. This era of largely peaceful expansion came to an abrupt end in 2293, when the six worlds of the Stewart Commonality refused the League's invitation to join. The Commonality bordered the Marik Commonwealth, and no Marik leader cared to see a fledgling military dictatorship grow to power on their

doorstep. At the behest of Commonwealth representatives in Parliament, the League responded to the Stewart rebuff with a declaration of war.

Impressed by the Marik clan's military gifts, Parliament chose Juliano Marik as its first Captain-General. Marik rose magnificently to the occasion. Leading a fleet into the Stewart system, he made short work of its defenses. Within weeks, the League banner flew over all six Stewart worlds. Just over twenty years later, Juliano Marik returned to the Captain-Generalcy when the formation of the Terran Hegemony threw the League into a panic. Marik accurately sized up the Hegemony as too powerful for the League to confront even if the League armies won; the cost of the victory would render it moot. While nervous Ministers of Parliament covered their fears with loud demands for war, Marik sent James Humphreys to negotiate secretly with Hegemony leader James McKenna. McKenna had any number of targets at which to point his Hegemony Armed Forces; Marik wanted to ensure that no League planets would be among them. After receiving assurances that the HAF would not invade League space, Humphreys signed the Treaty of Terra. In exchange for McKenna's pledge to turn the Hegemony military on worlds in the neighboring Dieron Federation, the League agreed to allow Hegemony vessels trading rights in League territory.

With the threat of Hegemony invasion removed, the Free Worlds League prospered. The boom of the mid-twenty-fourth century boosted the League economy, sending it spinning into the stratosphere; fortunes were made and lost overnight, with whole planets changing hands on occasion. The average citizen saw higher wages, more available goods, and greater financial comfort than the League has known since. Successful military endeavors added to the general atmosphere of euphoria. Between 2366 and 2369, the League army took the water-rich worlds of Andurien, Berenson, Zion, Shiro and Hassad from the fledgling Capellan Confederation. Though these systems changed hands several times over the ensuing decade, the League won them back in the early 2390s for what both sides assumed was the final time.

Unfortunately for the League, Chancellor Kurnath Liao had other ideas. Ascending to the Capellan throne in 2395, Kurnath was determined to win back the Andurien worlds no matter what the cost. He launched an all-out assault on Andurien in 2398, the first blow in a bitter conflict that would go down in history as the start of the Age of War. From 2398 until the formation of the Star League in the mid twenty-sixth century, the League and other Inner Sphere powers found themselves embroiled in war after war, scarring planets and straining economies with little concrete gain to any combatant. The League economy, like many others, was a casualty of the fighting. After an initial boost, the constant warfare slowly drained the League treasury until the roaring good times were a distant memory.

The Andurien conflict shaped the League in another way as well, by bringing the Marik family a step closer to political dominance of it. Captain-General Peter Marik, appointed in 2396 to fight the brewing First Andurien War, won the disputed systems for the Free Worlds League after six years of bloody conflict. Between 2404 and 2413, Peter capitalized on his hero's status among the public to continue League military gains at the expense of the Capellans and a new rival, the Lyran Commonwealth much to the unease of parliament, whose members were divided over the wisdom of ceding control over the military to an un-elected officer. In 2416, the Lyran state retaliated by attempting to seize the League world of Dieudonne. Though

the League army drove off the attackers, parliament's military oversight committee ordered the Captain-General to seek an armistice. Peter Marik defied the order, seizing several Lyran worlds before finally ending his campaign in 2418. An angry parliament struck back with the War Powers Act, which severely limited the Captain-General's authority.

Two years later, war with the Lyrans resumed. To parliament's dismay, Peter Marik refused to serve as Captain-General under the constraints of the War Powers Act. The Captain-Generalcy went to Joseph Stewart, a competent but uninspired officer with little experience in interstellar warfare. The League lost two planets to the Lyrans before attacks on Lyran territory by the Draconis Combine turned the Commonwealth's attentions elsewhere. Hostilities flared anew in 2427, costing the League three more planets. Peter Marik had fallen to an assassin five years before, and Joseph Stewart was proving a disastrous choice as the League's war leader. Desperate to avoid more losses, parliament begged Peter's son Terrence to serve as Captain-General. At Terrence's demand, the terrified MPs repealed the War Powers Act. His powers no longer fettered by parliament, Terrence Marik fought the Lyrans to a standstill over the next fourteen years. He could not dislodge them from the captured planets of Bolan and Kamenz, however. Disillusioned by that failure, he resigned the Captain-Generalcy to his brother Peter in 2441. The second Peter Marik liberated the two disputed worlds and captured two more Lyran planets before halting his offensive in 2446.

The successes of Terrence and Peter Marik II loomed even larger against the failures of Joseph Stewart, whom rumors accused of leading the League to utter disaster. In truth, Stewart had done the League relatively minor damage-but to a realm unused to defeat, the loss of five planets was a bitter pill. The Marik brothers' rout of the Lyran invaders confirmed in the public mind an already strong tendency to equate the Marik name with military success. Though the Captain-Generalcy would not become an official Marik sinecure until the Free Worlds joined the Star League in 2556, unofficially the post belonged to House Marik from the 2430s onward. The increasing importance of military conquest to the League's economic health further heightened Marik power. Over the ensuing years, Marik political prominence and military acumen would turn the League's focus from mercantile ventures to military ones.

House Marik and The Succession Wars

Albert Marik, hero of the Second and Third Andurien wars, brought the Free Worlds League into the Star League in 2556. By 2575, the infant Star League had launched a massive assault on the Periphery, determined to unite all humanity at any cost. Albert Marik's daughter Marion served ably as Captain-General throughout the Reunification War, conquering the Magistracy of Canopus in a long and hard-fought campaign. The conquest of Canopus was the last external conflict fought by Free Worlds armies until the end of the first Star League era.

For better than the next century and a half, Marion's successors would contend with occasionally bitter internal troubles. Despite an early recession in the 2620s and the outbreak of a nasty civil war in the first half of the twenty-eighth century, the Free Worlds League generally prospered during the time of the first Star League. The realm's greatest trials did not begin until the final two decades of the twenty-eighth

century, when the Star League's collapse and the brutal wars that followed it shattered the Free Worlds' economic base. The Free Worlds League managed to hold on to most of its territory throughout the long years of the Succession Wars, but internal quarrels frequently divided its military and kept it from seriously damaging its rivals. In more than one instance, the Free Worlds' fault lines allowed rival nations to cut deep into League territory. Regaining this lost ground cost the Free Worlds League incalculable amounts of money and blood that came near to mortgaging its future.

First Succession War: Oriente Rebels

The peace of the Star League had begun to erode years before the final end, when First Lord Simon Cameron's untimely death provoked political power plays and the build-up of personal militaries by the Inner Sphere's various House Lords. The departure of the Star League Defense Force for unknown space in 2784 removed the last, fragile check on the House Lords' ambitions. Determined to triumph in the coming battles, Captain-General Kenyon Marik persuaded a panicky parliament to pass Resolution 288, which granted the Captain-General wide-ranging discretionary powers "for the duration of the crisis." As the Captain-General rather than parliament decided when a particular crisis was over, Resolution 288 essentially gave the holder of that office open-ended control over the Free Worlds League military.

Initially, most Free Worlds member-states supported the new legislation. Kenyon Marik's success in capturing several Terran Hegemony planets and Star League supply depots seemed to confirm the wisdom of turning over so much power to the military men. By 2787, the Free Worlds army had grabbed all it could of former Hegemony territory, and so Kenyon attacked a new target: the Capellan Confederation. The first wave brought the Free Worlds two planets and few casualties against fragmentary Capellan resistance. Then came the Confederation assault on New Delos, a savage attack that threw the Ares Conventions to the wind and killed twenty thousand Free Worlds civilians. Another setback came in 2793, when a surge of unexpected strength by Confederation forces stopped the Marik invasion cold over the Capellan world of Anegasaki. Balked in Capellan space, Kenyon Marik turned his sights toward the Lyran Commonwealth. His attempt to capture Hesperus II, site of a massive Lyran BattleMech facility, ended in a rout that cost the Free Worlds Navy several of its best Battlecruisers. As the First Succession War dragged on with no end in sight, this string of failures came to outweigh the earlier gains. More than one Member of Parliament began to regret the hasty passage of Resolution 288, and regional opposition to the Captain-General's authority slowly grew.

Kenyon's son Thaddeus succeeded him in 2804, with the "crisis" of the First Succession War still raging. After forty-one years under Resolution 288 and the Free Worlds League no closer to either dominance or peace, its political leaders were beginning to chafe at House Marik's authority. Thaddeus gave them no chance to repeal the resolution, however. Upon learning of his father's death, he returned to the League capital of Atreus with a 'Mech battalion at his back, which he deployed around the parliament building. Balking MPs swiftly reconsidered their opposition to reaffirming Resolution 288, and Thaddeus Marik began his term with the same absolute power that had belonged to his predecessor. When Duke Carter Allison of Oriente challenged the statute's renewal, Thaddeus withdrew all military units from the duchy. The Capellan Confederation, still smarting from its recent losses to the

League, invaded Oriente and came close to capturing the Oriente system before Duke Allison changed his mind. With Oriente's capitulation, the Captain-General sent in the troops and swiftly repulsed the Capellans.

The duchy's troubles, however, were far from over. The next Captain-General would plunge Oriente and the entire League into a crisis so dire that it threatened the nation's existence.

The ComStar War

The year 2821 saw a lull in fighting across the Inner Sphere as the exhausted major combatants of the First Succession War attempted to regroup and rebuild. Their industrial bases shattered and many of their worlds laid to waste, the so-called Successor States were in no condition to keep the war going. For nearly a decade, the peace of battle fatigue prevailed. Captain-General Charles Marik used the time to rebuild his depleted military resources, convinced that the next war was just around the corner. Events were to prove him right, but would also teach the Free Worlds League an expensive lesson in the follies of financing warfare to the exclusion of all else.

Throughout the 2820s, MPs from Oriente and the Sirian Concordat agitated for major reconstruction efforts in their war-torn provinces. Charles refused. Instead, every available resource went to the military or war-related industries. In 2825, Charles even issued an executive order authorizing the Captain-General to collect fines from the prosecution of smugglers. The Duke of Oriente, mindful of the painful lesson learned by his predecessor, managed to keep Oriente's MPs toeing a loyalist line. The Sirian representatives were less skittish, and before long became the figureheads of an increasingly vocal opposition bloc. The Principality of Regulus, whose leaders had long envied Marik control of the military, took advantage of the situation to build an anti-Marik power base among parliament's dissenters.

The Regulans' opportunity came in 2837, midway through the Second Succession War. The Free Worlds League had launched that conflict in 2830, when ComStar Adept Jeanette Marik leaked intelligence of a planned Lyran attack to the Captain-General. Charles responded with a preemptive strike that caught the Lyrans napping. Over the next six years, the Free Worlds League military won several impressive victories against the Lyrans and the Capellan Confederation. By 2836, however, the League had suffered major setbacks as well. Charles suspected ComStar of leaking troop movements to the League's enemies, and in 2837 uncovered what he believed was incontrovertible proof. Enraged, he destroyed ComStar's Oriente HPG station. ComStar retaliated by placing the entire League under communications interdict.

With no way to direct his troops across the light-years of space, Charles soon saw his offensives bogged down and his units routed. Mounting League losses provoked a firestorm of criticism in parliament, which the leaders of Regulus swiftly exploited. Hector Lombard, Finance Minister and a native of the Regular province, convinced parliament in 2838 to deny Charles Marik's increasingly urgent requests for reinforcements, supplies and funding. Bereft of extra troops and critical spare parts, Charles's forces lost pivotal battles for the worlds of Shiloh and Van Diemen IV. The latter debacle cost the League military dearly. Had the other four Successor States not

been battling each other over League spoils, the Free Worlds League might have been torn to shreds.

Even after Charles capitulated to ComStar in late 2838, parliament continued to deny funds for his campaigns. Hector Lombard publicly blamed "the imperial airs of the Mariks" for the catastrophes of the ComStar War and began agitating for the repeal of Resolution 288. By 2841, however, the momentum of the war turned the political tide in Charles's favor. The losses of Danais in that year and Asuncion the year before brought Lyran and Capellan invasion forces one step closer to the planet Irian, site of the League's major BattleMech production facility. The capture of this strategically vital installation, or even major damage to it, could potentially cripple the already faltering League military. With the real possibility of the League's destruction staring them in the face, the opposition in parliament collapsed. When a Lyran invasion force landed on Irian in 2842, parliament voted overwhelmingly to restore full military funding. Charles recouped many of the League's losses over the next three years, but at a high price. Several planets remained in enemy hands, and the ravages of war had weakened the League's economy to a shadow of its former strength.

Home Defense: The Rise of Regional Power

The brief tenure of Marie Marik, who became Captain-General in 2873, set the stage for further fragmentation of the League along regional lines. As high-handed as her grandfather Charles, Marie alienated the powerful dukes of Andurien and Orloff by ordering military forces from their respective duchies to defend worlds taken from the Lyran Commonwealth in the late 2860s. Despite Marie's best efforts, the Commonwealth recaptured its possessions after a hard-fought offensive that cost the Orloff and Andurien defenders dearly. The losses fanned growing resentment of the Captain-General among regional leaders, who wanted more than anything to protect their own territories.

Ten years later, the accession of Elisabeth Marik to the Captain-Generalcy gave those regional leaders a chance to assert long-coveted power over their own militaries. A ComStar acolyte since the age of eighteen, Elisabeth had little experience in waging war but a formidable talent for political bargaining. She devoted the early years of her reign to cementing good relations with parliament, convinced that the Free Worlds League could not afford open rifts between the two segments of its government. Initially, her efforts paid off. From the 2880s through the early years of the thirtieth century, Elisabeth Marik enjoyed greater popularity in parliament than almost any previous Captain-General. These warm relations enabled Elisabeth to embark on several military ventures against the Capellan and Lyran states, and contributed greatly to the ventures' success.

Between 2901 and 2910, Free Worlds military units from several provinces-among them Andurien, Orloff and the Border Protectorate-made impressive strikes deep into the Capellan Confederation. These raids gained the League no worlds, but kept the Capellan armed forces busy enough to launch no attacks of their own on League border planets. The leaders of the three provinces contributing the largest armed contingents generally backed the effort, but as the campaigns went on, they and several fellow MPs began to wonder if increasingly heavy conscription was leaving their homeworlds vulnerable to attack. The concerned representatives drafted the

Home Defense Act, a vaguely worded proclamation with potentially explosive implications. The Act gave any province designated by parliament as "in immediate danger of attack" the right to retain up to seventy-five percent of its armed forces as garrison troops.

Elisabeth Marik's own harmonious relations with parliament blinded her to the possible consequences of allowing the Act to pass. In fact, she campaigned actively for what she considered a minor concession. Later Captain-Generals, however, would come to curse the Home Defense Act as a crippling obstacle to their authority. Time and again in the decades to come, regional leaders used the Act to hamstring Captain-Generals with whose policies they disagreed. The Balkanization of military authority kept the League from making any substantial gains in territory over the next century, and occasionally left it vulnerable to enemy assault. The worst losses came during the tenure of Stephan Marik, when the League world of Callison fell to a Lyran assault and a Capellan strike force destroyed a major new BattleMech factory on Irian. Meanwhile, Stephan's deliberate withholding of military aid from those he considered his enemies brought the power struggle between parliament and the Captain-General into the political as well as the military arena.

Civil War

Stephan Marik's son Janos, who became Captain-General in 2991, would reap the bitterest fruits of the thirtieth century's political and military divisions. Expensive and unsuccessful military actions had left the League's economy even more battered; several planets along the Capellan and Lyran borders had suffered retaliatory raids; and the political warfare between Stephan and parliament had confirmed the inherent tyranny of centralized authority in the minds of some regional leaders. All these rifts were ripe for exploitation by Anton Marik, Janos's brilliant and unscrupulous brother. Made Duke of Procyon and overall commander of the entire Capellan front by an unsuspecting Janos in 3002, Anton spent the next twelve years consolidating a formidable power base.

In 3014, Anton and his troops declared open revolt against "the mad tyrant" Janos. After more than a decade of military reverses and the summary execution of one scapegoat general during a disastrous Lyran campaign, the label seemed appropriate to a sizable section of the League's population. Anton's rebellion found supporters among more than a few regional dukes and governors, some of whom evidently believed that Anton intended to repeal Resolution 288. Almost a quarter of the League's provinces joined the revolt, most of them smaller regions hoping to increase their political clout. Larger bastions of anti-Marik sentiment, such as the Duchy of Andurien and the Principality of Regulus, preferred to let the two Mariks destroy each other. Andurien and Regulus remained neutral, with Regulus shifting to back Janos Marik in late 3014. In the end, Janos and the Loyalists prevailed. The civil war ended in a spasm of violence less than a year after it began, when the mercenary unit Wolf's Dragoons killed Anton and a large contingent of his troops to avenge Anton's slaying of their commanding officer's brother.

The war's bitter divisions, however, remained. Though Janos granted amnesty to surviving former rebel units, resentments lingered between those units and many Loyalist commands. Political and regional rivalries frequently fed on each other,

further fragmenting the League military. On paper, the League and its army were both united after ten months of vicious fighting. In practice, neither would come close to regaining true unity until the reign of Thomas Marik, still twenty years in the future.

The lingering effects of civil strife and further impoverishment of the League treasury left the Free Worlds military virtually impotent during the Fourth Succession War, launched by Hanse Davion of the Federated Suns in 3028. The preoccupation of the allied Lyran-Davion nations with other enemies kept the League from major losses, but neither did it make any gains. Technically allied with the Capellan Confederation and the Draconis Combine under the Concord of Kapteyn, the League was too weak militarily to offer either of those nations even token support. This humiliating state of affairs further eroded Janos Marik's standing in parliament, which was already waning as memory of the civil war receded. Marik himself had turned increasingly morose and paranoid since Anton's betrayal, and his behavior only widened the political rift. The deteriorating situation made a crisis inevitable. When it came, it proved the catalyst for the faltering League's renaissance.

The Andurien Crisis

By the end of the Fourth Succession War, Janos Marik's political standing had sunk so low that Derrick Cameron-Jones, MP for the Principality of Regulus, was actually drafting legislation to remove Marik from power. Before Cameron-Jones could bring his bill to the floor, however, events overtook him. In September of 3030, mere months after the end of the Fourth Succession War, the Duchy of Andurien seceded from the Free Worlds League. In concert with the Magistracy of Canopus, a Periphery realm that bordered the League and the Capellan Confederation, Andurien troops launched a furious assault on Capellan territory. These drastic events sent shock waves throughout the Free Worlds League. For all its many internal squabbles, no province had ever left the League before, let alone allied itself with a foreign power in a major military venture. His opposition suddenly uncertain, Janos pressured a nervous parliament into passing the Internal Emergency Act of 3030, which stripped most minor provinces of their sovereignty "for the duration of the emergency." Two of the most powerful regions were specifically exempted from the Act—the Duchy of Oriente for its long-standing loyalty to House Marik, and the Principality of Regulus because no one wanted another major province leaving the fold. Several individual planets rejected the Act and followed Anduriens example, but the tightening of central authority kept the League essentially intact.

Less than a month after the Act's passage, Janos Marik suffered a debilitating stroke. His designated regent, Thomas Marik, was serving as a ComStar acolyte light-years away. In Thomas' absence, his elder brother Duggan and his cousin Duncan both claimed the Captain-Generalcy. Warned of the brewing power struggle by Duke Halas of Oriente, Thomas swiftly traveled to Atreus and claimed his rightful post. For four years, Thomas ruled the League in his father's name, rebuilding shattered ties with parliament and consolidating his hold on power. He made no major military move against Andurien, instead waiting for Capellan resistance to break the Andurien-Canopian alliance. Capellan troops drove out the Andurien invaders in 3035, mere weeks before Janos Marik's near-miraculous recovery. The Andurien drama, however, was far from finished.

On 1 June 3035, a bomb went off during a high-level strategy meeting about the Andurien situation. The attack appeared to have killed everyone in the briefing room save for Duncan Marik, who had been conveniently called away minutes before the blast. The Captain-General and his two sons, Duggan and Thomas, were assumed among the dead. Duncan swiftly proclaimed himself Captain-General and declared war on Andurien, whose separatist partisans he blamed for the ugly deed. Fired by widespread fury at such a cowardly act of terrorism, loyal League troops conducted resoundingly successful initial assaults on the rebel duchy. As they moved deeper into Andurien, however, they met fierce resistance. By late November of 3036, Duncan's offensive was hopelessly bogged down. With its military demoralized and a jittery parliament on the edge of breaking down, the Free Worlds League came face to face with its worst nightmare: total dissolution.

Deliverance came in early December, when Thomas Marik arrived on Atreus and appeared before a stunned parliament. Seriously wounded by the bomb that had killed his father and brother, Thomas had been spirited out of the chamber of death to spend several months recovering under the aegis of ComStar. Parliament greeted his reappearance with delirious joy, particularly those MPs who had suspected Duncan's hand in the bomb attack. The assembly immediately threw its weight behind Thomas, stranding Duncan in the field with vastly diminished authority. The League was fortunately spared an outright civil war when Duncan died in 3037, in a doomed assault on the Andurien planet of Xanthe III. That same year, a grateful parliament raised little objection when its new Captain-General passed the Addendum to the Incorporation. This far-reaching piece of legislation repealed the Home Defense Act and gave the Captain-General de facto veto power over any law enacted by parliament or any provincial government.

His political and military power virtually absolute, Thomas Marik led the Free Worlds military to a decisive victory over Andurien in 3040. The League had weathered its worst crisis, but emerged a vastly different realm. Over the next two decades, the changes made by Thomas Marik transformed the Free Worlds League from a fractious collection of potentially opposing powers into a genuinely unified state with a solid economy and a formidable military.

Free Worlds Society

More so than any other Inner Sphere realm, the Free Worlds League celebrates the differences amongst its people—differences of culture, politics and local history. Its 154 provinces and many independent worlds contain the Inner Sphere's widest variety of the peoples of old Terra, and the League's long tradition of provincial autonomy has made local histories and developments more important in shaping society than the experiences of the League as a whole. Thomas Marik's political and social reforms since 3037 have given this motley collection of mini-states a genuine sense of national unity for the first time since the League's earliest years. The Clan War bolstered this change by bringing the League unprecedented material prosperity. The modern Free Worlds League stands poised on the brink of greatness, its fault lines largely submerged in loyalty to Thomas Marik and the good he has wrought.

Many Peoples, One Nation

Over the past twenty-five years, the Free Worlds League has undergone profound transformation on several fronts. By centralizing virtually complete political and military power in the Captain Generalcy, the Addendum of 3037 vastly elevated the importance of League-wide affairs. The new prominence of the Captain-General also gave League citizens a focus for their new and wider sense of patriotism. Denizens of the League, whether aqua farmers from New Olympia, horse-breeders from Oriente or armorers from Irian, began to look beyond regional ties to the Captain-General and the nation he represented-their nation, shared equally among them.

Military developments, beginning with the repeal of the Home Defense Act, have fostered a similar shift in thinking among the soldiers of the Free Worlds military. From a loose-knit collection of essentially regional troops, the Free Worlds League Military has become a coherent and devastatingly effective fighting force. This unified military machine proved its mettle in the Liao-Marik Offensive of 3057, when Free Worlds units took back every world lost in the Fourth Succession War over a mere eight weeks of fighting. The success of that venture fed the soldiers' pride in themselves, their units and the entire FWLM, further reinforcing national over regional loyalty. Thomas Marik capitalized on this change politically by creating several new military units in the 3040s and 3050s: the Free Worlds Legionnaires and the Knights of the Inner Sphere. Unlike many existing FWLM units, no officer of the Knights or the Legionnaires owes his or her appointment to a provincial duke or planetary ruler. Their loyalties sworn to House Marik and the League, these units subtly undermine one of the few avenues for troublemaking still open to those regional leaders who oppose Marik power and policies.

The Knights of the Inner Sphere, first created by Thomas Marik in 3055, best embody the new spirit of fighting for the League instead of for a home province. Drawn from the best fighters across the Free Worlds, the Knights play a dual role as soldiers and symbols. Though initially derided by some as "goody-two-shoes" for their adherence to a stringent code of chivalry, the Knights gained swift acceptance after their heroic actions against Clan Smoke Jaguar in 3060. Their personal loyalty to Thomas Marik as well as to the League further enhances the Captain-General's power and identifies him with his realm.

In addition to further constraining his remaining political rivals, Thomas Marik recently forged stronger ties with the Duchy of Oriente, long a bastion of Marik loyalty. In 3058, he married Sherryl Halas, daughter and heir to Oriente's Duke Christopher Halas. Two young sons born to the couple will carry on the Marik line and have cemented the Halas alliance for the foreseeable future.

The New Prosperity

The biggest boost for unity, however, stems from the League's robust economy. With money to be made at almost every venture, optimism is high from the palace on Atreus to the smallest town on the most distant Periphery border planet. Earlier and smaller economic boomlets tended to remain local, but the roaring economy of the 3050s and 3060s is bringing its benefits to almost every corner of the Free Worlds League.

Though the average League citizen credits the Captain-General with bringing this new prosperity, the decision that allowed it to happen sprang from external events. In 3051, with the Clan military juggernaut temporarily halted while the Clans chose a new war leader, the heads of the various Successor States held a summit on the world of Outreach. Summoned by the Clan-born mercenary unit Wolf's Dragoons, the Successor Lords spent several months hammering out a desperate plan to save the Inner Sphere from conquest. The battered armies whose realms had so far borne the brunt of the Clan assault could not hope to hold on without vast supplies of war materiel, which the Free Worlds League could most easily produce. It possessed a larger industrial base than the neighboring Capellan Confederation, and its worlds lay equally far from the Clan line of advance. Largely unscathed by the Clan War, the Free Worlds League was the only Successor State capable of resupplying the Inner Sphere's exhausted defenders.

In that year, however, little trust existed between the five Successor States. The simple recognition that they had a common enemy was a major breakthrough; actually joining together to fight the Clans seemed barely possible after nearly three centuries of mutual hatred. To persuade a reluctant Thomas Marik, Prince Hanse Davion of the Federated Commonwealth made him the one offer he could not refuse. In exchange for access to the bulk of the League's war production, Hanse offered treatment for Marik's terminally ill son at the New Avalon Institute of Science, the Inner Sphere's most renowned scientific and medical research facility. Marik agreed, over substantial misgivings that the massive export deal could run the League economy into the ground.

In fact, the arms deal sent the League's fortunes soaring. The Truce of Tukayyid in 3052, which temporarily halted the Clan advance, did nothing to slow demand, as the entire Inner Sphere stockpiled weapons and war machines against the day that truce expired.

After more than ten years of stepped-up production and no lack of willing buyers, the League economy shows no signs of slowing down. Its effects have spiraled far beyond military industries, as workers with higher wages seek avenues for spending them. Sleepy backwater worlds are transforming themselves seemingly overnight into engines for new commerce, or else are losing population to their more developed neighbors as the young and hopeful leave to find their fortunes. On more urbanized planets, the cities are jammed with people seeking opportunities. New businesses are launched almost every day, with three fledgling ventures springing up for every one that dies. New money is everywhere, from always-full tables at bustling cafés to the floors of planetary stock exchanges to rehabbed housing in once-blighted neighborhoods.

Overall, the mood of the people ranges from hopeful to outright giddy. Even many of those still left behind believe that sooner or later, the good times will reach them too. As the apparent author of the League's new golden age, Thomas Marik has the solid loyalty of every citizen touched by good fortune, and of most still waiting. That support from the common masses, more than anything else, holds the newly unified Free Worlds League together.

Not everyone, however, sees the boom times as an unmitigated good. On some worlds, lightly developed and moderately prosperous before the economic surge, local citizens fear unwelcome changes wrought by the new order. The flood of money and the rise of the new rich have already made a few such planets ripe targets for land speculators and unscrupulous developers eager to make a quick killing. Some residents complain of greedy newcomers disrupting the slow-paced lives they loved, turning small and close-knit communities into places where the only value is the M-bill.

Such feelings serve as a potential base for another class of opposition, those who see Thomas Marik's immense personal power as a betrayal of the very freedoms the League once stood for. These anti-centralization factions have sprung up on several of the planets that rejected the Internal Emergency Act of 3030, motivated by much the same reasons. They are so far most powerful on independent worlds like Camlann, with long histories of bowing to no higher authority than their own planetary government. The leaders of Camlann, first of the League worlds to attain independence from a larger authority, set the tone for most of those in the "planetary and provincial rights" camp. It is not Marik's policies per se they oppose, as much as his tightening grip on the reins of power. In their eyes, the most sacred right is the right to be left alone. Any increase in the power of the central government infringes on that right, and free citizens are obligated to resist it.

While the booming economy roars on, such sentiment remains scattered and muted. Most League citizens want nothing more than to revel in their new wealth, or earn some if they haven't already. As long as the good times continue, Thomas Marik and his successors should face little serious opposition. Only a major economic slowdown or other unexpected catastrophe is likely to derail this energetic nation's confident march into the future.

Major Provinces

More than any other Inner Sphere realm, the Free Worlds League is the sum of its parts. Diverse, often fractious and fiercely proud of their own histories and traditions, the provinces and planets that make up the League are a glorious patchwork of the many colors of humanity. A complete atlas of the various regions and independent worlds is beyond the scope of this book, but a brief guide to the League's major provinces offers a glimpse of life in this multi-cultural, cosmopolitan, independent-minded society.

Marik Commonwealth

Stronghold of the Marik family, this province owes much of its cultural roots to the peoples of old Terra's Eastern and Central Europe. Romanian, Slovak, Czech and Hungarian are spoken on many planets, in addition to the League-wide official English. The Commonwealth's location far from the League's borders largely spared its worlds the worst ravages of the Succession Wars, and so Commonwealth-based businesses and manufacturers were among those best positioned to take advantage of the recent economic upturn. On New Olympia, several newly flush corporations have joined with scientific researchers to repair three agricultural domes damaged during the Second Succession War. The surplus crops grown there are expected to cement

New Olympia's position as the breadbasket of the Marik Commonwealth. A sizable amount of the foodstuffs are already earmarked for the expanding cities of Atreus, which is losing much of its arable land to housing and new manufacturing ventures. This trade agreement is typical of many between Marik Commonwealth planets; worlds in this region value their many cultural ties as much as a good deal, and will often bend over backwards to keep trade "in the family."

Other contributing factors to the clannishness of Marik Commonwealth worlds are the region's history as a founding League state, the long-standing supremacy of the Mariks and the presence of the Marik Militia, backbone of the Free Worlds military. Local citizens like to believe that the Free Worlds League owes its existence to their Commonwealth, a military power led by the talented Marik clan from its very beginnings. Without Commonwealth armies and Marik commanders, they say, the Terran Hegemony would have overrun the Principality of Regulus and the Federation of Oriente before the 2330s. The long years of the Succession Wars only confirmed this insular viewpoint by further emphasizing the vital role of the military in the League's survival. This regional arrogance does not sit well with Leaguers from other provinces, most of whom hold similar attitudes about their own home regions or planets. In more troubled times during the League's history, such provincial pride was a source of frequent flare-ups, as different regions jockeyed for prominence in League affairs. The current optimistic mood, flavored with a heavy dose of pro-Marik patriotism, has somewhat smoothed over these rough edges. Visitors to the Marik Commonwealth are more likely to share the locals' pride in their ruling House, and Commonwealth citizens in turn can afford to be generous with praise of other provinces where many of them have never set foot.

The major exception to the insularity of many Commonwealth worlds and their citizens is the Travelers, descendants of the Roma tribes of ancient Terra. During humanity's first great wave of space exploration, a few better-off Roma tribes pooled their resources to build ships that would take them along the space lanes much as painted wagons had carried their ancestors along the trails and roads of Terra. More of the Roma followed, and the Travelers have been plying the roads between worlds ever since. A large number of the later arrivals came aboard colony ships that landed in what would become Marik-held space, and so they came to regard the Free Worlds League as a home base of sorts. Small Roma communities exist on virtually every Marik Commonwealth world, where their space faring brethren can find welcome whenever they feel the need for solid earth under their feet. Otherwise, the Travelers live in their ancient ships, going wherever the mood strikes them. Some remain in Commonwealth territory, while others venture far beyond it. Their vessels are far more space worthy than they frequently appear, lovingly maintained with great skill by gifted Roma engineers. The Travelers' knack for machinery is so proverbial throughout the League that the few Roma technicians in military or civilian jobs can often write their own ticket.

Duchy of Oriente

Known throughout the Free Worlds as a center of learning, arts and sciences, Oriente is the cultural crown jewel of the League to its admirers. Its detractors frequently call it "home to a crowd of oily-tongued politicians, fancy-ass lawyers and whacked-out artsy types who wouldn't know honest work if it shot at them out of a Gauss rifle." No

resident of the League, however, denies the extent to which this cosmopolitan, progressive-minded province has shaped the larger life of the nation. Founded as a federation of largely democratic worlds, the Duchy of Oriente has given the Free Worlds League many of its finer cultural touches, as well as a legacy of democratic government that has sometimes caused considerable trouble. Parliament exists largely because of Oriente, whose long-ago leaders insisted on some form of representative government for the League they wished to create. Without such a formidable elected governing body, the Captains-General of earlier eras would surely have had an easier time ruling a less fractious Free Worlds. But no freedom-loving League citizen would have been willing to pay the price of such unity. Latter-day Leaguers may complain about provincial partisanship and gridlock, but none would give up the personal freedoms secured by centuries of necessary political horse-trading among myriad different interests.

The Duchy of Oriente is the source of another valuable legacy as well: scientific and technological innovation. This region led the League in both until the start of the Succession Wars, and even those centuries of savage conflict could not completely erode Oriente's research edge. Calloway IV, home to several BattleMech factories, also houses the Calloway Technical Corps, one of the League's foremost military design and engineering concerns—a sore point for some Marik Commonwealth citizens, who hate to acknowledge any sort of military superiority outside their own borders. In civilian circles, Metamorphosis Inc. on the planet Dayr Khuna remains consistently at the cutting edge of biotechnology, with a sideline in replacement body parts that remains lucrative despite a widespread bias against such things among average citizens.

Oriente owes part of its democratic bent to the large population of British and North Americans among the region's early settlers. Both of these groups came from societies accustomed to often-raucous representative government, a tradition they proudly carried with them to the stars. Spaniards and Italians were the two other largest ethnic groups, with a sprinkling of Basques as well. The modern duchy shows various traces of all these cultural strands, from the Spanish-style siesta customary on the southern continent of Martiques to the Italian Renaissance-style marble buildings that grace the planet Oriente's government precincts, to the province-wide passion for soccer games. The duchy's location near the often-shifting Capellan border has also given it a sizable Chinese population, along with pockets of Korean, Indian and Russian émigrés from Capellan Confederation worlds. The largest Asian enclaves exist on Les Halles and Anegasaki, both of which were under Capellan control at various times in their history.

Principality of Regulus

The third of the League's founding states, the Principality of Regulus draws much of its population and cultural heritage from India and Central Asia. The Selaj family, Indian-born traders since well before the advent of space travel, dominated this region from its beginnings as a five-world mercantile conglomerate until the 2680s, when their alleged involvement in a brutal terrorist assassination forced the Selajes to flee into the Magistracy of Canopus. The Cameron-Jones clan, tenacious rivals of the departed Selajes in the lucrative Regulus spice trade, swiftly stepped into the power vacuum and has dominated the Principality's capital world ever since. Several other

wealthy families also joined the ranks of the Regular oligarchy over the ensuing years, most prominently the Lombards of Hellos Minor and the Alexanders of Wallis. The newcomers gradually diminished the overwhelming dominance of Indian culture in the region, but the heritage of the Selaj clan remains a vibrant force in Regular society. Hindustani is still widely spoken, Indian classical raga music has enjoyed an energetic revival since the early 3040s and many Principality planets remain dotted with ubiquitous Hindu temples.

Politically, the departure of the Selajes nearly four centuries ago has done little to diminish opposition to House Marik's control of power in the League. Derrick Cameron-Jones, former opposition leader in parliament, has become an elder statesman of the provincial rights movement. The current opposition leader, Kirc Cameron-Jones, and other MPs from Regular worlds tend to follow Derrick's lead. Among the common people, however, good economic times go hand in hand with largely pro-Marik sentiments. Though the masses of Regular citizens generally back their leaders, most prefer them to get on with the business of protecting Regular mercantile interests rather than indulging in anti-Marik political gamesmanship.

Personal loyalty to Thomas Marik runs highest in the Regular Free States, three breakaway Principality planets that won their independence in 2681. Born from Captain-General Gerald Marik's war against the Selajes that he believed had killed his family, this small federation bought its safety as well as its freedom by declaring its loyalty to the Mariks and hastily installing a pro-Marik government. The Free States soon discovered, however, that freedom on paper was worth little against constant meddling in their politics and economy by their former parent province. Not until Thomas Marik passed the Addendum to the Incorporation in 3037 did the Regular Free States finally gain the power to chart their own course. Since then, local cultures and planetary economies have undergone a vibrant renaissance. No longer strangled by Principality trade embargoes, Free State industry and exports are thriving. The Mongol and Kazhak languages outlawed in the early days of secessionist rumblings and then rendered virtually irrelevant by Principality dominance of local life, have made a striking comeback to become the primary languages in this tiny province. Norwegian is also widely spoken on Olafsvik, site of a sizable Norwegian enclave since the earliest days of human settlement.

Duchy of Andurien

The water-rich worlds of Andurien bear the marks of their history as a prize long fought over by two great star empires. Alternately conquered by Capellan and Free Worlds forces since the late twenty-third century, catalyst for three major wars between 2398 and 2551, given to the Capellan Confederation as inducement to join the Star League and retaken by the Free Worlds League in the First Succession War, this region has brought the League great wealth and great trouble. The ruling Humphreys family, once staunch League loyalists, soon came to favor independence as an alternative to constant attack. To quote the late Duchess Catherine Humphreys, instigator of the Andurien Crisis of 3030: "We are not a scrap of meat to be torn apart by two snarling dogs. We deserve better than to have our lives shattered every time some crazy Liao or pompous Marik gets the itch to play conquering hero. We'll go our own way, and a plague on both their Houses!" Though such forthright secessionist sentiment has largely died down under Thomas Marik's reign, the history that gave

rise to it remains a powerful emotional force for many Andurien citizens. Others reject separatism with equal force; eager to live down what they feel is an unjust reputation for treachery. Either way, the people of this region tend to be fiercely proud of their Andurien origins and extremely touchy in matters of politics.

Blessed with large bodies of water, a valuable resource, the Andurien systems should have been among the most prosperous League worlds. Centuries of border wars, however, forced planetary governments to rebuild damaged infrastructure again and again over the years. With the latest wave of rebuilding largely complete, the duchy is finally beginning to take part in the League-wide economic boom. Demand for exported water and seafood is running high on more crowded and less resource-rich planets, enriching Andurien governments and businessmen alike.

Optimism fueled by the good times took a brief nosedive during Isis Marik's nine-year engagement to Sun-Tzu Liao; anti-Liao feeling runs high on many Andurien planets, and the prospect of a Liao Captain-General came close to reviving a moribund separatist movement. With the engagement ended and Isis Marik displaced as the Marik heir, local sentiment swung firmly back into Thomas Marik's camp. Pro-independence and even pro-Liao pockets remain, the latter mostly among large Chinese enclaves on border worlds. However, most Anduriens of whatever ethnic origin are happy to stay part of a prospering Free Worlds League for the foreseeable future.

The duchy's location on the Capellan border has given it a large Asian population, dominated by Chinese, Indians and Koreans. Welsh and Spanish influences also abound, though the former diminished with the plunge in fortune of the Welsh-connected Humphreys clan. Andurien planets closest to the Periphery see considerable traffic with the Magistracy of Canopus, a Periphery realm known for its anything-goes attitude. Cultural and scientific exchanges between the two regions, along with frequent travel by citizens of both, have imbued daily life in rimward Andurien with an easygoing air utterly foreign to many other League regions, whose citizens are more driven to hard work and accomplishment.

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Writing Credits:

Inner Sphere Source Book: Free Worlds League - House Marik

Diane Piron-Gelman



HOUSE STEINER

If there is a weakness in how the Steiner family rules, it is that they show too much intelligence and imagination. Let something happen to a Steiner Archon, whether it be an assassination or the most mild but incapacitating illness, and the entire realm comes to a screeching halt. The Steiners might be good at making others feel an important part of the government, but don't be fooled. They rule the Commonwealth with an iron hand. - Herveas David, Political Advisor to Hanse Davion, quoted in *The Federated Suns/Lyran Commonwealth Alliance: An Intelligence Report* by ROM, ComStar, 3024ta Transmission.

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Five years is a brief time in which to judge the character of a nation. The Lyran Alliance has existed for five years and a few months, hardly long enough to define itself on its own terms. The Alliance is not like other nations, however. It stands on the shoulders of its predecessor, the Lyran Commonwealth—a realm renowned for thriving commerce, free and prosperous citizens, and a deep desire for peace. Katherine Steiner-Davion, the Alliance's creator and ruler, intended this young nation to resurrect the Commonwealth's glory days, when the great Katrina Steiner presided over immense Lyran wealth and corresponding power; when three Succession Wars had come and gone, with the fourth as yet un-guessed-at; when Lyran prestige gave its rulers the strength to conceive of an Inner Sphere beyond war, and to offer an olive branch instead of a PPC barrel to its fellow Successor States.

That nation, which aspired to bring peace and a better life to the Inner Sphere at large, no longer exists on any map. Neither does it exist in the Lyran Alliance, though much of what was good in it survives here. The Whitting Conference of 3058, which saw the rebirth of the Star League, represents the truest embodiment of the old Commonwealth in the new Lyran realm. The Lyran people have always valued peace; war for its own sake makes no sense to us. The Whitting Conference promised to end the greatest threat of war the Inner Sphere had ever known, by bringing all the Successor States together to battle our common enemy. From that kind of union, others can grow. Katrina Steiner understood that equation back in 3022, when she signed the treaty that would lead to the creation of the Federated Commonwealth. Her granddaughter understood it too, however briefly. Ironic that Katherine Steiner-Davion, who brokered peace throughout the Inner Sphere just four years ago, has brought war to her own realm since.

If the old Lyran Commonwealth truly exists anywhere, it is in the minds and hearts of ordinary Lyrans, who want what they have always wanted—peace and prosperity for themselves and their children. The ordinary Lyran realizes, as often his rulers do not, that he cannot have these things unless others have them as well. And now this ordinary Lyran faces a civil war that need never have happened, whose causes he

doesn't truly understand, but which threatens to change his life forever. In the Federated Commonwealth they helped to create, Katrina Steiner and Melissa Steiner-Davion bequeathed the Lyran people a dream of peace made real. Melissa's daughter chose power instead, and we Lyrans must live with the consequences.

The Lyran Commonwealth was a nation brimming with confidence, secure in the strong economy that made it a realm to be reckoned with. That confidence enabled us to contemplate joining our fate to that of another powerful realm, the Federated Suns, without surrendering our own identity. For more than twenty years, we managed this difficult feat. Then came the Clan War, the first blow to our pride. The invading Clans tore a bloody chunk from Lyran territory, while the combined military might of what had once been two armies stood helplessly by. The next blow was the murder of Archon Melissa Steiner-Davion in 3055, just five years after the Clans crossed our borders. The assassin's bomb that cut her down took with it the best part of the Lyran Commonwealth-the capacity for faith in the future that enabled us to triumph over any setback. Without that faith, we could not overcome our own fears and the Federated Commonwealth could not survive. It was not the warmongers of House Davion that doomed Katrina's and Melissa's dream, but our own crisis of hope.

The Lyran Alliance was born of that crisis. Approved history books may blame Victor Steiner-Davion, the bloodthirsty monster alleged to have murdered and replaced a sick child in order to keep his beloved engines of war running. But that man is not the eldest son my friend Archon Melissa knew, and his actions were merely the excuse for a break that had already happened. By 3057, the mass of the Lyran people no longer believed in the bold alliance our parents had forged. We lost courage along with our worlds and Melissa. By proclaiming the birth of the Lyran Alliance, Katherine Steiner-Davion merely acknowledged that reality. No longer the old Lyran Commonwealth or a proud partner in the Inner Sphere's bravest experiment, the new Lyran realm had to find its own way amid a universe fraught with perils.

In its first year, the Alliance could claim to be a worthy successor to the Lyran Commonwealth. True to Lyran traditions of peace, we stayed out of the Liao-Marik offensive against the FedCom. Less than twelve months later, the Lyran capital of Tharkad saw the rebirth of the Star League, humanity's greatest monument to peaceful co-existence. On the home front, Archon Katherine continued the rebuilding of Skye and the slow healing of the nation's economy after the losses to the Clans. Our former prosperity would take far longer than a year to regain, but we were taking the first steps in the right direction. In 3059 and 3060, the proud contribution of Lyran military units to the defeat of Clan Smoke Jaguar paid tribute to another Lyran tradition-fighting hard when we needed to, with no quarter asked or given. Clouds, however, were beginning to form on the horizon. As the nation recovered its economic health, a growing share of profits from various enterprises found its way into a few noble pockets-nobles who happened to be among the Archon's most faithful supporters. Wages stalled across the Alliance, even as planetary stock exchanges exploded with wealth from new trade agreements with the Capellans and the Free Worlds League. Tax revenues earmarked for Tharkad took a sharp jump upward, while monies sent back to individual worlds remained stagnant or declined. The Alliance's recovery, initially so promising, halted in its tracks-with Archon Katherine apparently doing little about it.

In 3061, we began to see why. With Prince Victor Steiner-Davion fighting the Clans on their own ground, Katherine usurped his throne. Since then, the Archon has continued to reward her backers at the expense of the realm, slowing the engines of our prosperity even further. Katherine forgot the foundation on which Lyran fortunes have always rested: trade rather than takeover, connections rather than conquest. We didn't fire a shot to conquer the Federated Suns, but we took it over just the same. That act betrayed our deepest roots, the essence of what it means to be Lyran-all the more so because the mass of Lyran people have yet to profit from it. If anything, they have lost ground over these past two years-not just economically, but politically as well. Demonstrations of support for Victor, sporadic in Alliance space even before the takeover, blossomed briefly in the FedCom before Katherine's government began cracking down. The spirit of censorship has since spread through the Alliance, until now any public questioning of the Archon's actions risks reprisals from higher authority.

For a people accustomed to speaking their minds, this development is tragic. Since the murder of Duke Arthur Steiner-Davion and the resultant outbreak of hostilities, Katherine has either denied increasing acts of repression or justified them as necessary. Many of us question, however, the necessity of mass arrests on Thorin in Skye Province. Or draconian punishments for curfew violations on Muphrid, whose major cities broke out in riots just days after Duke Arthur's death. Surely there is some fairer, more just way of calming fears and restoring order. But the Archon seems more concerned with consolidating her own power than with using it to the benefit of her subjects. Once hailed as a peacemaker and a healer of breaches, she has become a catalyst for war, division and repression. At what cost to the Alliance, only time can tell.

Some of Katherine's backers hail the FedCom takeover as the harbinger of renewed Lyran greatness. They applaud it as representing the true Lyran spirit by bringing peace, prosperity and good government even to those they think neither want nor deserve those things. The rising specter of civil war confirms their view that the people of the Federated Suns don't know their own good. The fighting and the bloodshed are their fault, these partisans say. What else can you expect from a bunch of war-crazed Davions?

And then there are people like me, who grieve for what we might have become while seeking to preserve what we are. The Federated Commonwealth, bright dream that it was, is gone. If a new one arises from the ashes of the coming war, we must find it on the bedrock Lyran value too many of us seem to have forgotten: respect. Respect for the gifts of others and respect for ourselves, for that strength in us that permits us to tolerate-even delight in-the many differences of humanity. We are not the Draconis Combine, rigidly enforcing the boundaries of one narrowly defined way of life. Our fellow humans may not share all our values, but so what? Their differences are no threat to our integrity. Our common human longings outweigh any divisions between us. We all need decent shelter and enough food on the table, we all want comfort and security and a little beauty in our lives. Merchants understand this common ground. The Lyran Commonwealth-a society based on honest dealing to mutual benefit-made such common interests its foundation and rose to interstellar pre-eminence. The Lyran Alliance took what it wanted, and thereby betrayed the core of that proud heritage. Assuming it survives the year, it can only buy that survival at the price of our deepest

Lyran values. Defeat will end the Lyran Alliance as a politically viable state. Victory will end it in another, more lasting way. Lyrans will no longer be a people of peace, but a nation of war.

-Misha Auburn
Royal Court (Lyran) Historian

Origins and History

Though a new realm in name, the Lyran Alliance is essentially a new incarnation of the old Lyran Commonwealth. It lies within roughly the same borders, its people share the same mercantile outlook, and it embodies many of the same strengths and weaknesses as its famous predecessor. Prominent among the former are hardheaded pragmatism, an instinct for a good deal and a genuine commitment to peace as the best guarantor of prosperity. Like the Commonwealth it replaced, however, the Lyran Alliance possesses a weak military relative to its fellow Successor States. Though sufficiently strong to defend its territory, the Lyran Alliance Armed Forces remains plagued by a persistent lack of ability among its high-level officers. Questions of loyalty have added to its military troubles; in the wake of secession from the Federated Commonwealth, unimpeachably pro-Steiner attitudes are frequently given more weight than competence among the soldiery. With a civil war now catching fire, the Alliance faces its gravest threat and starkest test. Whether and how it survives will determine the future of the Lyran people for years to come.

Founding Families

House Steiner, though long identified with the Commonwealth over which it ruled, played no role in its founding. That achievement fell to three other families with far greater prominence in the region at the time: the McQuistons, the Marsdens and the Tamars. The McQuiston clan presided over the Federation of Skye, an interstellar nation built on the profitable Skye Traders mercantile conglomerate. The Marsdens similarly ruled the Protectorate of Donegal, a collection of resource-rich planets held together by the merchant vessels of the Donegal Freights and Goods Company. The Tamars gave their name to the domain they created, the Tamar Pact-blessed with fertile farming worlds and protected against the scourge of bandits by the best-trained soldiers throughout that region of space.

Like other Inner Sphere nations born in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth centuries, the states that became the Lyran Commonwealth formed against a backdrop of turmoil on humanity's homeworld, Terra. Unlike most of those other nations, the people of these regions did not fear Terran military conquest; the threat they perceived was economic. The Tamar Pact came into being in 2235, just two years before the political upheaval of 2237 that drastically shrank Terra's sphere of colonial influence.

Sensitive to the ebb and flow of political tides that could make or break them economically, the merchants of the Tamar worlds saw the Terran pullback coming and took steps to insure their own survival in a suddenly chancier universe. The Federation of Skye and the Protectorate of Donegal, formed in 2299 and 2301

respectively, came into being during the twilight years of the Terran Alliance—a little more than a decade before the Alliance government's violent collapse. Having lived for years under Terra's benign neglect, the leaders of these young nations knew they could not hope for positive change while problems in the Alliance worsened. If their worlds were to prosper, they had to band together.

The rise of the Terran Hegemony in the early twenty-fourth century posed no military threat to Skye, Donegal or Tamar territory. The latter two realms were too far from Terra to make easy targets, and Skye-controlled planets near Terra lay in the opposite direction of the Hegemony's initial conquests. By the 2330s, Hegemony leader James McKenna had begun to realize the futility of attempting to forcibly reunite all human-occupied worlds, and so shifted toward diplomacy. The three Lyran realms benefited hugely from subsequent Terran attention, using monies from healthy trade to finance development and colonization efforts. The Tamar Pact and the Protectorate of Donegal vastly expanded their borders, while the Federation of Skye developed its existing worlds to become a major industrial power.

Throughout the 2330s, the three regions also deepened their ties to one another. Each had resources or capabilities the others found useful—the factories of Skye increasingly depended on the Protectorate of Donegal's abundant natural resources, and both relied on the Tamar Pact as a nearby source of foodstuffs. The Tamar Pact in turn bought finished goods from the Federation of Skye, largely made with Donegal's raw materials. Military concerns also played a role, particularly for the Tamarese. Their worlds lay nearest to the Draconis Combine, which had flexed its expansionist muscles by invading the Principality of Rasalhague in 2330. Rather than become the Combine's next victim, in 2339 Kevin Tamar proposed a merger of their three states to Robert Marsden of the Protectorate of Donegal and Thomas McQuiston of the Federation of Skye. The three leaders met on Arcturus in 2340; near the end of that year, they formally united their territories into a single realm. In early January of 2341, the Director-General of the Terran Hegemony officially recognized the Lyran Commonwealth and welcomed it into the family of interstellar nations.

A Less than Perfect Union

The founders of the Lyran Commonwealth had envisioned it as a means of securing their own and their people's future prosperity, through an elaborate plan for economic integration and a delicately balanced political system of nine co-equal ruling archons. Instead, the Commonwealth's formative decades were marked by economic chaos and political corruption. The blueprint for merging three interstellar economies that had looked eminently workable on paper proved disastrous in practice, leading to wild fluctuations in planetary economies. The archons were in a unique position to exploit these shifts for personal gain. Many of them, long accustomed to small-time graft as the price of doing business, could not resist the temptation to play on a larger scale. While they added to their fortunes, ordinary Lyran citizens suffered. The archons' reluctance to alter this status quo further extended the young Commonwealth's economic troubles. Robert Marsden, the only archon not involved in currency speculation, insider trading and other forms of corruption, could do little but watch as his nation slowly headed toward collapse. Without cooperation from his fellow archons, he was powerless to effect any change.

In the late 2360s, with the Lyran economy still lurching from boom to bust, the neighboring Draconis Combine launched a massive industrial development program. By 2373, the fruits of this activity were beginning to show in a slow but steady military build-up on the Combine-Commonwealth border. When the Lyran central government raised taxes to pay for a build-up of its own, political hell broke loose. Protesters on countless worlds took to the streets, while wildcat strikes and work stoppages threatened a new round of economic woes. Some activists in the Tamar Pact even suggested seceding from the Commonwealth and seeking a treaty with the Combine. The Commonwealth seemed about to implode, until Archon Robert Marsden took action.

Leader of the Protectorate of Donegal and a signatory to the original Commonwealth articles, Archon Robert refused to preside over the collapse of the nation he had helped found. In early 2375, he turned the resources of his office toward collecting evidence of his fellow rulers' dirty dealings. In the meantime, he embarked on an extended tour of Commonwealth worlds. Ostensibly on a fact-finding mission for the next round of economic development meetings, Marsden used the tour to seek out and consolidate political support among planetary government leaders. He also revived old contacts from his days in the Donegal military, and through them built a network of loyal units in the Commonwealth army. By August of 2375, Marsden was ready to move.

The nine archons met on Arcturus that month, as usual. The meeting accomplished little, except to confirm in Marsden's mind the rightness of his course. When the other archons left Arcturus, Marsden stayed behind. Once they were en route to their homeworlds, and therefore safely away from any private armies or boltholes, Marsden broadcast across the Commonwealth the details of their corrupt activities. He then formally stripped them of their powers and declared himself the nation's sole ruling authority. Marsden ended his extraordinary broadcast with a personal pledge that he would not play tyrant, nor continue the mismanagement and outright thievery of the past thirty-odd years. Instead, he promised the Lyran people significant local autonomy and a say in their own government, along with the prosperity so long denied them. In exchange for their support, he guaranteed them all a decent life and a brighter future.

Marsden got the mandate he wanted, fueled by outrage over the other archons' abuses of power. His own reputation for honest dealing added to his public appeal; there was little outcry when Marsden's troops arrested the other archons and marched them off to life imprisonment. The formation of the Estates General in December of 2375 confirmed for many Lyrans the rightness of their choice to support the sole remaining archon. This parliament-like body included representatives from more than half the planets in the Commonwealth, the first time individual worlds had an official voice in their own government. Its first act was to inaugurate Robert Marsden as Archon Basileus over the entire Lyran Commonwealth.

During the first weeks of his reign, Marsden drafted a new constitution and forwarded a copy to each Commonwealth world. The Articles of Acceptance guaranteed virtually complete autonomy in local affairs for member worlds, provided that each world agreed to honor all reasonable military demands made on it for the common defense and to contribute a portion of planetary gross income for the maintenance of a

standing army. The Articles also made the Archon supreme commander of the Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces and any private armies existing in Commonwealth territory. Most planets had no trouble with the former provisions, but the latter raised strident objections from a few. Between 2376 and early 2378, all but twenty-two planets signed the Articles. Some of the holdouts wanted independence from the Commonwealth; others feared the concentration of power in the Archon's office. Pointing to Marsden's control of the military, they argued that the Estates General were an insufficient check on the powers of what amounted to a military dictator.

Marsden's subsequent actions reinforced this view of him. Planets whose governments opposed him soon found themselves blockaded into submission by ships from the Commonwealth Navy. In the face of slow starvation, all but eight dissenting worlds swiftly caved in. The remaining planets were self-sustaining, and so could resist the blockade indefinitely. The Archon, however, did not allow them that chance. Throughout the rest of 2378, Commonwealth armed forces invaded Tamar, Skye and the six other dissident worlds. Hard fought and bloody, the campaigns ultimately unified the Lyran Commonwealth while sowing the seeds of schisms to come. The planet of Skye saw some of the bitterest fighting; its people, largely of Irish and Scottish descent, swore never to forget the violence done to their homeworld. Their descendants would hold to that pledge down the centuries, often with tragic results.

Coming of Age

The sudden transformation of the Commonwealth government set the stage for a near-miraculous economic recovery, fueled by the Archon's policies to revitalize Lyran commerce. Fifteen years after nearly collapsing, the Lyran Commonwealth was manufacturing goods for export throughout the Inner Sphere and had won lucrative contracts to equip the Terran Hegemony military. The Hegemony connection gave the LCAF access to cutting-edge Terran military technology, which it used to equip its own expanding numbers. The Lyran army's material abundance, however, masked a flaw that would cost the nation dearly time and again over the centuries to come.

Every Inner Sphere realm with a noble class has had its share of blue-blooded incompetents cluttering the higher officer ranks, but the LCAF suffered in addition from the presence of an ambiguous class known as "social generals." In the early days of the Commonwealth, the rank of general was bestowed as a courtesy on influential but untitled individuals-political power brokers, wealthy industrialists, bankers and such. Before long, these ersatz generals sought the accoutrements of their "military" station, as well as increasing contact with the genuine article. In turn, more than a few real military generals picked up a taste for the high life from their social compatriots. By the last decade of the twenty-fourth century, a Lyran general's expertise at elegant conversation and fashionable card games had become as important as his skill on the battlefield. Devotion to such un-military pursuits mattered little during the Commonwealth's first few decades, when the quality of its weapons and the availability of other targets kept its neighbors' armies busy elsewhere. In the 2390s, however, the militarization of the entire Inner Sphere took a quantum leap forward. The Age of War was about to rear its head, and the Lyran Commonwealth would pay a high price for the social graces of its upper echelons.

The Age of War reached Lyran space in 2407, when Draconis Combine units overran a Commonwealth border region between the provinces of Skye and Tamar. The Combine vanguard then struck out toward the Lyran capital of Arcturus, cutting a deadly swath through the LCAF. Though far better equipped than the invaders, the defending Lyrans lacked a coherent battle plan. Commanders more comfortable with social than military strategy ordered hopeless last stands and wild death-or-glory assaults, or stood by paralyzed while their junior officers tried to impose order on the chaos. The tide did not turn in the defenders' favor until Archon Alistair Marsden, himself a capable military officer, dismissed the commanding generals and personally took control. In late summer of 2407, Archon Alistair led his troops to a resounding victory on the world of Morningside.

Several Combine units remained on nearby planets, however, within striking distance of the capital. With the approval of the Estates General, the Archon relocated the government to his own homeworld, the wintry planet of Tharkad. Shortly after the move, in the first weeks of 2408, the LCAF struck the Combine planet Vega and crippled the massive secondary invasion force assembling there. That victory was swiftly eclipsed by the loss of the Archon, killed on the desert world of Menkent in a frontal assault on a dug-in Combine position. With the Lyran leader dead and the Combine invasion force shattered, the crisis of 2407-08 came to an abrupt end. The peace would prove fleeting, however.

Over the next three and a half decades, Draconis Combine forces steadily encroached on Commonwealth space through seemingly endless border skirmishes. The LCAF, still saddled with too many incompetent commanders, proved no more of a match for the invaders than it had in the earlier conflict. By 2445, the Combine had absorbed a fifth of the former Tamar Pact. The Commonwealth was also losing worlds to a new enemy, the Free Worlds League. To halt the slow hemorrhage of its territory, the Lyran Commonwealth needed a miracle.

In 2455, it finally got one. Twenty-odd years earlier, the Terran Hegemony had begun developing the BattleMech, a weapon destined to forever change the face of war. Even before the first 'Mech's unveiling in 2439, prominent Lyran military suppliers to the Terran Hegemony suspected the existence of a top-secret Hegemony project. As good Lyran patriots, they reported what they knew or guessed to then-Archon Katherine Steiner. The first Steiner Archon ordered the Lyran Intelligence Corps to infiltrate the nearest site believed to be manufacturing BattleMechs: Hesperus II, then a Hegemony world. (Ironically, this same planet would one day become the crown jewel of Lyran 'Mech production.) The LIC had limited success, however. Not until the reign of Katherine Steiner's son Alistair would the Lyran Commonwealth finally acquire the deadliest weapon in humankind's arsenal.

Before becoming Archon, Alistair Marsden-Steiner had led an elite LCAF commando unit. In early 2455, while Draconis Combine and Free Worlds League forces continued to gain Lyran ground, the Archon gathered a top team of Special Forces operatives and sent them to Hesperus II. Using classic Trojan Horse tactics, the LCAF commandos entered the BattleMech facility and copied virtually all the information necessary to engineer a working 'Mech. Four years later, the LCAF fielded the first results of that raid in a fierce battle for the world of Loric. The invading armies of the Free Worlds League shattered like a glass lance against the Lyrans' armored

behemoths, one of which crushed the League's Captain-General to a bloody pulp. Lyran forces had won their first real victory after years of fighting-brought not by tactical acumen or strategic brilliance, but by overwhelmingly superior technology.

This battlefield edge lasted less than three years, by which time the remaining realms of the Inner Sphere had all acquired their own BattleMechs. The merchant-minded Steiners managed to profit handsomely from one such acquisition, selling their stolen data for a fat sum to Prince Simon Davion of the Federated Suns in 2457.

In one of history's ironies, the woman who shaped an enduring vision of a Commonwealth at peace and founded a dynasty committed to that vision became Archon in the midst of a war. Katherine Steiner, widow of Archon Alistair Marsden, ascended the Commonwealth throne in 2408, mere months after her husband's death in battle. She inherited a realm full of tensions between its three component states, exacerbated by ongoing Lyran military defeats. In the Tamar Pact, murmurings of secession had never entirely died out since Robert Marsden's coup. Creeping gains by the Draconis Combine gave new impetus to these sentiments, which the leaders of the Tamar region exploited in order to enhance their own power. Skye was likewise potentially rebellious, its people still seething over the assaults of thirty years earlier. Though neither of these regions was prepared to secede outright in the face of Combine and Free Worlds aggression, regional leaders eagerly used secessionist sentiment to jockey for greater power within the central government. Katherine Steiner shrewdly co-opted these potential opponents by offering them influential positions and a greater say in policy. The dukes of Tamar and Skye were among the members named to Katherine's Commonwealth Council, a body of eight advisors on whom the new Archon implied she would rely.

Having temporarily won over these two potential rivals, Katherine Steiner engaged in a deft piece of emotional manipulation that has since become a hallmark of the most politically gifted Steiner leaders-including the present ruler of the Lyran Alliance. During the very session of the Estates General that confirmed Katherine Steiner as Archon, she announced her intent to streamline or eliminate many of the trade restrictions between the Skye, Tamar and Donegal realms that continued to impede economic growth and foster regional tensions. At that point, a nurse brought Katherine's small son into the room. The boy was dressed in a soldier's uniform, a tiny replica of the one worn by his dead father. Katherine cradled young Alistair in her arms and spoke movingly of the Lyran Commonwealth she wished to help build-a strong nation at peace with itself and its neighbors, "where my son may play soldier, but need not grow up to be one."

The image of the strikingly beautiful widow holding her child and speaking of peace-an image swiftly spread throughout the Commonwealth via videotape-went far toward winning Katherine Steiner the loyalty of her citizens. Massive government programs to rebuild war-torn worlds turned that loyalty into profound personal affection, which only grew deeper over Katherine's thirty-seven-year reign. Colonial expansion, spearheaded by the creation of the Commonwealth Scout Corps in 2413, further enriched the realm while providing a safety valve for overcrowded Lyran planets. When Katherine Steiner stepped down in 2445, she left behind a richer and more unified Lyran Commonwealth. Though incursions by the Draconis Combine and the

Free Worlds League continued, the Lyran people met these military setbacks with a greater sense of hope and national pride.

The belief that the tables would eventually turn proved true just fourteen years later, when the LCAF became the first army outside the Terran Hegemony to field BattleMechs. Exclusive possession of these huge war machines enabled Lyran forces to drive the invaders off most captured worlds during the 2460s. Its prewar borders largely restored, its possessions greatly expanded through colonization and its people enriched by vigorous internal trade, the Lyran Commonwealth of 2468 seemed to embody Katherine Steiner's vision. That vision of a prosperous nation dedicated to strength through peaceful trade rather than war would persist throughout centuries of conflict and political intrigue. Katherine Steiner-Davion recently invoked it in creating the Lyran Alliance, six hundred and fifty years after her namesake first attempted to make it a reality.

Unfortunately, the Commonwealth's newfound peace and prosperity proved as vulnerable as all human achievements to catastrophic events. In 2468, Archon Alistair Steiner was assassinated by pawns of a disgruntled Tamar Pact nobleman in an ultimately failed attempt to ruin a prominent Tamarese duke. Three years later, a major earthquake in Tharkad City killed the wife of Archon Michael Steiner along with sixty-seven members of the Estates General. The grief-stricken Michael abdicated in favor of his brother Steven and returned to active military service. Mere months later, he died fighting a Combine invasion force on the planet Nox. Had Steven Steiner been a less malleable ruler, he might have restored the stability the nation so desperately needed. Instead, this weak-minded Archon presided over two and a half decades of rising internal intrigue. Regional power plays, virtually moribund since early in Katherine Steiner's reign, rose to fill the vacuum left by Steven's ineffectual government. Along with them came separatist leanings that would soon plunge the Commonwealth into civil war.

A House Divided: Rebellion in Skye

Since the Lyran Commonwealth's earliest decades, when several planets in the Federation of Skye fought Robert Marsden's assumption of power, the Skye region has been a persistent source of political turmoil for the ruling Lyran dynasty. The worst outbreak of Skye secessionist fever resulted in outright civil war at the turn of the twenty-sixth century, when the dukes of Skye and Tamar backed Steven Steiner's wife Margaret as his successor in lieu of his nephew, Robert Steiner. Though Margaret's partisans ultimately lost, the conflict cost the Commonwealth dearly. Its most pernicious legacy was a renewal of bitter separatism throughout the Skye region, an undercurrent of popular resentment against the Steiners of Tharkad that future aspirants to power would exploit again and again.

Very likely schizophrenic, Margaret Olson Steiner had for years claimed to hear voices and experience mystic visions. As the consort of an indecisive and emotionally dependent Archon, she soon became the power behind the throne. After Steven's death in 2501, Margaret proclaimed herself his successor-much to the delight of many Commonwealth nobles, who had grown rich from war profiteering and also militarily powerful during Steven Steiner's lackluster reign. In a stunning example of narrow self-interest, the dukes of Tamar and Skye had convinced Steven to repeal the law-

forbidding nobles to maintain personal armies larger than the LCAF garrisons on their worlds. With that statute consigned to the ash heap, the arms race was on. Before long, several nobles even owned BattleMech units. Backing Margaret promised to continue this status quo, with the Archon a figurehead while the nobles ran the realm to suit themselves.

Robert Steiner, by contrast, was apparently sane and highly intelligent. The illegitimate son of Steven's sister Tatyana, Robert had become an ace aerofighter pilot stationed on the world of Poulsbo. At first disinclined to challenge his aunt for the throne, he soon changed his mind. Two years of the nation's rapid decline while the Tharkad court degenerated into a carnival of dementia made a strong impression, as did the pleas of a contingent of LCAF officers who arrived on Poulsbo to pledge Robert their unconditional support. They begged him to claim his rightful place and save the Lyran realm before it was too late.

In 2503, Robert Steiner arrived on Tharkad with seven divisions at his back. Margaret Olson and several of her supporters had fled the planet days before, ultimately going to ground in the Federation of Skye. A relieved Estates General approved Robert's claim to the Archonship, and the battle lines were drawn. Over the next year, Robert Steiner led his loyalist forces in skirmish after skirmish against Skye troops, drawing ever closer to the regional capital where Margaret and the Duke of Skye had chosen to make their stand. Units loyal to the Duke of Tamar came to the rebels' rescue as the Steiner forces closed in; their savage attack delayed the loyalists long enough for Margaret and the Duke of Skye to escape. The rebel pair fled to Tamar, where they fought their last battle against Robert Steiner's exhausted troops. The timely intervention of soldiers from Fatima, led by that world's duke, saved the day for the battered loyalist forces. The dukes of Tamar and Skye were ultimately executed for treason, their families stripped of their titles and their worlds given to new rulers—the Kelswa and Lestrade clans, both distinguished by impeccable loyalty to the legitimate Steiner line.

Though the final battle of the civil war was fought on Tamar, the Federation of Skye suffered far greater damage. Most of the battles took place on Skye worlds, where countless families lost loved ones to the vicious fighting. Though Robert Steiner personally made reparations for war damage in the ensuing years, his generosity made little lasting impression on many Skye natives. Already primed to distrust Tharkad's government, the average citizen of Skye had little use for the Steiners after the bizarre excesses of Steven's rule and the carnage of Robert Steiner's war. In the years to come, separatist-minded denizens of Skye kept the memory of the civil war alive while conveniently forgetting who financed the peace. A little over five centuries later, this view of the conflict would serve one branch of the Steiner family in its plots against the other.

Successors to Separatism

Until almost the mid thirty-first century, the separatist movement in the Federation of Skye remained a largely unorganized, inchoate mass of anti-Commonwealth and anti-Steiner feeling. All too often, the actions of various Archons stoked the secessionist fires. Archon Viola Steiner, who led the Commonwealth into the Star League and its troops in the Reunification War, went on a crazed rampage that decimated the 25th

Skye Rangers because of baseless rumors that the Duke of Skye was involved in the kidnapping of Viola's son Kevin. Nearly three centuries later, Archon Elizabeth Steiner failed to halt a Draconis Combine invasion that claimed several Skye worlds and nearly cost the region its capital. That an enemy nation could come so close to capturing the planet Skye, emotional home of billions in the Federation as well as literal home to its natives, seemed to confirm in many minds the Steiner clan's utter disregard for the Skye region and its people.

In the absence of fresh grievances, leading separatists stressed the Steiner family's German ancestry in sharply negative contrast to Skye's overwhelmingly Scots, Irish and English heritage. They also appealed to the average Skye citizen's instinctive distrust of the government on Tharkad, a light-years distant authority best known for collecting tax revenues and imposing irritating regulations. In the early years of the thirty-first century, however, several events occurred that would ultimately transform Skye separatism into a potent political force with a Steiner at its head.

The change began with Archon Alessandro Steiner, a tactically gifted but arrogant man who lived for military action. His first major victory, a deep raid on six Free Worlds League planets in 2987, cost him much of his own high command's trust because he neglected to inform them of the true extent of the mission. Ten years later, Alessandro's overconfidence in his own judgment nearly cost the Lyran Commonwealth Hesperus II, site of several major BattleMech factories. That near-debacle convinced many throughout the LCAF that their Archon was a dangerously stubborn fool whose arrogance could cost the nation dearly.

The Archon's decision in 3002 to reinforce the Free Worlds border with garrison troops stripped from interior planets deepened this rising distrust. Though no one publicly objected, several higher-ranking officers privately feared that the Archon's "concentrated weakness" strategy was a military catastrophe waiting to happen. Among these officers was Alessandro's niece Katrina, a general in the LCAF's Strategies and Tactics Division. With the threat of attack looming from the Free Worlds League and the Draconis Combine, however, no one in the high command wanted to provoke an open break.

In 3006, the concentrated weakness policy imploded under a bold assault by the Free Worlds League. League troops bypassed the heavily reinforced border worlds and struck deep into the Commonwealth interior, hitting planets whose garrisons had been moved to the border for an attack that never came. An appalled Katrina Steiner swiftly took action. Having spent the past few years quietly garnering support from various quarters, she announced her intention to depose Alessandro "for the good of the nation." The Estates General backed Katrina with a resounding vote of no confidence in the Archon; the LCAF high command likewise threw its weight behind her. Bereft of virtually all-political and military support, Alessandro Steiner prudently resigned in Katrina's favor in July of 3007. He did not, however, give up his dream of one day returning to power.

Alessandro spent the next twenty years living quietly on his homeworld of Furillo, while discreetly seeking potentially useful allies among Katrina's opposition. He found one in Aldo Lestrade, Duke of Summer in the Federation of Skye. A sleepy backwater planet, Summer was too small a canvas for Lestrade's vaulting ambition.

He wanted power, and so turned to the nearest tool at hand-the separatists of Skye. By 3024, Aldo Lestrade had built fragmented pockets of secessionist agitators into a genuine, coherent movement. Just such a core of diehard supporters was exactly what Alessandro Steiner needed-provided he could convince the Skye separatists to accept a Steiner in their midst. Over the course of several visits during the 3020s, the former Archon convinced the ambitious duke that they had a common interest in power and a common enemy in Katrina. In exchange for the backing of Lestrade and his movement, he promised to grant Skye its long-cherished independence once he regained the Commonwealth throne. Though it remained unspoken, both men understood that a free Skye would belong to Aldo Lestrade.

Confident of eventually reclaiming power with Lestrade's help, the childless Alessandro sought an heir among his younger relatives. He found one in Ryan Steiner, a young LCAF fighter pilot recently given a government post. Ambitious and a fast learner, Ryan swiftly became a major player in the Skye separatist movement. The deaths of Aldo Lestrade and Alessandro Steiner soon afterward-the former murdered by his own son, the latter claimed by cancer-left Ryan in charge, a position he exploited at the earliest opportunity.

Ryan's chance came in 3034, when official recognition of the Free Republic of Rasalhague sparked widespread civil unrest throughout the Skye region. Garrison troops on troubled worlds, many of them formerly attached to the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns, cracked down harshly on local dissent. Ryan Steiner successfully brokered a peaceful solution to the mini-uprising-an act of clever politicking that allowed him to regain control over his own separatist agents, reinforce his credibility with the movement and paint the largely Davion soldiery involved as the enemy of Skye and Lyran interests. For the first time in Skye's history, Ryan Steiner implicitly linked the interests of the secessionists with those of Lyrans everywhere, and presented the ruling Steiners on Tharkad as neglectful of both. This skillful tapping of general unease with the formation of the Federated Commonwealth made Ryan a formidable threat to the new nation's stability and breathed new life into the Free Skye movement.

Secessionist fever simmered in Skye throughout the next two decades, but never quite boiled over. The linkage of anti-FedCom feeling with Skye notions of independence began to work against Ryan Steiner as well as for him; it brought new recruits to his cause, but also prompted many activists to focus their ire on Hanse Davion rather than on Ryan's rival Melissa Steiner, who began her reign as Archon after Katrina Steiner stepped down in 3039. The arrival of the Clans in 3049 threw the entire Inner Sphere into turmoil, forcing Ryan to put his schemes on hold until he saw what use could be made of the invasion. Hanse Davion's fatal heart attack in 3052 left Melissa the sole ruler of the two realms, but Ryan found it difficult to erode her long-standing popularity throughout the realm. In mid-3055, Melissa fell victim to an assassin; less than a year later, so did Ryan Steiner. Bereft of its leader, the Free Skye movement floundered. The rank and file spent their furies on wild spasms of violence that prompted the FedCom's new ruler to send in the troops. Unable to calm the political firestorm, Archon Prince Victor Steiner-Davion appointed his sister Katherine as regent over the Lyran half of the FedCom and entrusted to her the settlement of the turmoil in Skye. This act would later prove to be the first step, not to Skye's independence but to the creation of the Lyran Alliance.

The Alliance is Born

The catalyst for the secession of Lyran worlds from the FedCom was the death of young Joshua Marik, heir to the Free Worlds League. Seriously ill with leukemia, Joshua died while undergoing treatment at the New Avalon Institute of Science. His death came at a delicate time, with the Clans chafing at the fifteen-year Truce of Tukayyid and the treaty itself set to expire a mere decade hence. In addition, Joshua's demise left his half-sister Isis as heir presumptive to the Free Worlds throne. Isis Marik's engagement to Sun-Tzu Liao, Chancellor of the Capellan Confederation, raised the specter of the ambitious Capellan leader controlling the League's army and industrial production. Faced with these dilemmas, Victor Steiner-Davion made a fateful error in judgment. He substituted a double for Joshua-and the rest, as they say, is history. An enraged Thomas Marik learned of the deception in mid-3057 and promptly declared war on the FedCom. Mere days afterward, an apparently shocked Katherine disavowed Victor and proclaimed Lyran neutrality in the conflict. Along with that neutrality came a declaration of secession; henceforth, Lyran territory would no longer be part of the FedCom, but would instead be known as the independent Lyran Alliance.

Primed by anti-Victor rumors and the upheaval of recent years, most Lyran citizens welcomed the break. Victor and his loyalist military units were too preoccupied with the Clans to undo the secession by force, and so the Lyran people had little fear of civil war. As for the Clan threat, the Com Guards' victory on Tukayyid in 3052 had bought the Inner Sphere fifteen years of peace-ample time for the Lyran armed forces to build up adequate defenses, especially given the vaunted Davion army's apparent inability to halt Clan depredations. Out from under the Davion yoke and once again governed by a "true Steiner," the Lyran people looked forward to an upturn in their fortunes.

For a time, their hopes seemed justified. The re-formation of the Star League in 3058 on Tharkad seemed to symbolize the return of Lyran greatness, as did the role of Lyran troops in the final defeat of the Clans less than three years later. That same year, however, Katherine Steiner-Davion made an ill-advised move that may well mortgage her people's future. Not content to rule over the Lyran nation, she took power in the Federated Suns as well. Victor's return from Clan space soon afterward, as the hero who defeated the Clans, energized opposition to Katherine among Federated Suns citizens. Katherine's harsh response, along with her increasing indulgence in high-level power plays at the expense of her subjects' welfare, made a civil clash inevitable.

With their Archon hunkered down on New Avalon, the rest of the Lyran government is slowly taking steps to fill the power vacuum on Tharkad. More than a few members of the Estates General have been heard to mutter that the Archon never should have taken the Fed Suns throne while her own people needed her, and some are going beyond talk to action. Several members, many from Tamar and Skye worlds, have attempted to expand the powers of the Estates General, though so far the changes are incremental and temporary. A few far-sighted delegates have also sent out feelers to other members of the Steiner family, such as Duke Robert Kelswa-Steiner, intent on ensuring a Steiner succession should the Alliance lose the war.

Whether or not the Lyran Alliance will survive the current conflict remains to be seen. One thing seems certain, however-neither the Alliance nor the Lyran people will emerge unscathed.

Lyran Society

Despite the looming shadow of civil war and other ongoing internal stresses, the Lyran Alliance remains very much what its predecessor was: a realm blessed with abundant resources, hardworking citizens and a degree of political and economic freedom that make it a still-formidable mercantile power. The loss of several Tamar Pact worlds to Clans Jade Falcon and Wolf initially sent shock waves through the Lyran economy, but the business community has largely adjusted over the past decade. The Lyran people have been somewhat slower to recover. The formation of the Lyran Alliance helped bolster them through the difficulties of recent years, but the economic disruptions of the Clan War made many Lyran citizens question for the first time their bedrock belief in their nation's primary source of power. Everyday life for the average Lyran is little different today than in the days of the old Lyran Commonwealth; what has changed is the average citizen's perception of his nation and its place in the universe.

Winds of War

Mere months old, the FedCom civil war has already begun to affect daily life in the Lyran Alliance. Even on planets far from the flashpoints of conflict, war jitters are making themselves felt in various ways. The surge in confidence among average Lyrans in the wake of the Alliance's birth masked an unspoken fear of a suddenly unsettled future, largely prompted by the economic upheavals of the Clan War. Several planetary economies in the Tamar Pact region remain severely disrupted by the loss of neighboring worlds, and even the larger economy has yet to fully recover. To a people accustomed to taking prosperity for granted, even a temporarily shaky economy came as a profound shock. Now, with several Alliance planets already battlegrounds in the nascent civil conflict and the prospect of a Davion invasion imminent, ordinary Lyrans' fear of economic chaos have broadened to include other distressing possibilities. Some fear Victor Steiner-Davion's armies; others fear the war's effect on an economy already weakened by Clan conquests and the loss of weapons markets to the humming arms machine of the Free Worlds League. Archon Katherine's recent relocation to New Avalon, capital of the Federated Suns, has done nothing to settle these questions. Indeed, it has raised others in some minds, though these are rarely voiced except in private. Some Lyran citizens are beginning to wonder if their Archon has placed her own desire for greater power ahead of her people's welfare-a deeply unsettling thought for those used to seeing Katherine Steiner-Davion as a Steiner icon.

The habit of confidence remains strong among the Lyran people, however; most Lyrans rarely display their uneasiness outright. Instead, buried fears manifest in subtler ways. Hoarding is increasingly common, accompanied by overly hearty assurances that the war will surely be over by summer. Recycled lines from anti-Davion broadsides have become part of the public conversation, some of them well on the way toward clichéd. Citizens of worlds far from both the battleground planets

and the likeliest invasion route tend to be the most genuinely complacent. Throughout most of its history, the Lyran Commonwealth was a bastion of prosperity and freedom adequately defended by the Inner Sphere's best-equipped army; these heirs to that legacy see no reason to believe that anything will change. They have always been safe and comfortable; surely they always will be. That bedrock faith, to those who still have it, is the essence of being Lyran.

Others are less sanguine. The most apprehensive are those on worlds bordering the Jade Falcon occupation zone. Already suffering from the conquest of their neighbors, the people of these struggling planets rightly fear that civil war between the two halves of the former Federated Commonwealth will doom any prospect of local economic revival. Most are also well aware that Clan Jade Falcon does not consider its invasion over. With the Lyran Alliance Armed Forces busy fighting off Davion assaults, the Jade Falcons could hardly ask for a better opportunity to pick off still more Lyran worlds. War fever on many of these planets is running high, with anti-Davion propaganda a mainstay of the local media. Anti-Davion rallies are equally frequent and vociferous. Despite the best efforts of pro-Katherine local authorities, opposition rallies have also begun to take off in recent weeks. Some are pro-Victor, hailing him as the only person who can adequately defend Inner Sphere worlds against Clan attackers. Others are anti-Katherine, gatherings of Lyrans bitterly disappointed by their Archon's assumption of the FedCom throne. Many of these once counted themselves among Katherine's most fervent loyalists, until the FedCom takeover made them question her commitment to their welfare.

Pro-Davion demonstrations have gradually increased on Lyran worlds ever since the Coventry campaign of 3058, in which Victor Steiner-Davion led a combined force from all the Successor States to a virtually bloodless victory over a Clan Jade Falcon strike force. The Star League triumph over the Clans less than three years later gave new impetus to Victor's supporters in the Lyran realm, burnishing his image as the hero of his age. Now, with Victor poised to take back the Federated Commonwealth throne, these Davion partisans are working overtime to increase their support. On Coventry and the four other worlds briefly claimed by the Falcons, pro-Davion demonstrators generally play to more sympathetic audiences. On other worlds near Jade Falcon territory, voicing support for Victor is a calculated risk. A timely declaration in Victor's favor by the commander of the Eighth Deneb Light Cavalry on Kikuyu turned a potentially ugly clash into a massive show of pro-Victor feeling. On nearby Mogyorod, a similar rally degenerated into a riot when pro-Katherine counter demonstrators surged out of the crowd and clubbed the rally's organizers off the platform. The sole survivor among the latter faces trial and possible execution for sedition.

Despite the publicity given the Mogyorod incident, most Lyran citizens remain unaware of the extent of the crackdown on pro-Davion activity. Though many would likely support it in the face of war, forcible suppression of political dissent runs counter to the very freedoms on which the Lyran Commonwealth was based. In the Alliance as in the Commonwealth, ordinary Lyrans are accustomed to having their say. Dictatorial tactics rarely sit well with these passionate and vocal people, most of whom are deeply interested in politics because of its intimate connection with commerce. Even those who believe strong measures may be necessary prefer not to know too many details. Voltaire's famous dictum about free speech- "I do not agree

with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" -is near and dear to many a Lyran heart, fostered by centuries of leaders who believed in such freedom as a necessary social safety valve.

Loyalty and the Military

Divided loyalties among: former FedCom troops, starkly polarized by the opening clashes of the civil war, have given a new twist to age-old Lyran military problems. Historically, the LCAF suffered from too many incompetent higher-ranking officers promoted for their connections rather than their ability. Now the Alliance armed forces must contend with questions of loyalty to the Archon as well. After thirty-odd years of serving a united Lyran/Fed Suns realm, units that had begun to think of themselves as part of a FedCom army were suddenly asked to revert to simpler and narrower loyalties: pro-Davion or pro-Steiner. Katherine's call for traditionally Lyran units serving in Fed Suns space to "come home" to the Alliance further complicated this delicate situation. The political bent of a unit's commander did not always reflect that of his troops, and vice versa. The resultant massive reshuffling of the newly christened LAAF left the Alliance desperately vulnerable to the Jade Falcon strike of 3058, which temporarily cost it five worlds. Only the timely arrival of Victor Steiner-Davion and his multi-House task force turned that defeat into victory.

Katherine's 3061 takeover of the FedCom vastly expanded an already enormous administrative headache. Pro-Victor, pro-Katherine and neutral units are so thoroughly interspersed, particularly in Fed Suns space, that civil war was virtually a foregone conclusion. Meanwhile, the upheaval is taking a toll on the soldiers and their families. Abrupt reassignments halfway across the FedCom, strain between different political factions in the same unit, and increasing pressure for Katherine's loyalists to report "suspicious" pro-Davion or neutral political leanings are among the fallout, all intensifying as the civil war heats up. More than a few Lyrans, military and civilians alike, worry about what will happen when the conflict finally explodes. Though most believe in eventual Lyran victory, they are beginning to wonder what price they might pay.

The Skye Question

Even in the best of times, Skye separatism remains a force in Lyran politics. In times of turmoil, it becomes a major factor in the lives of Skye's citizens, who comprise a sizable portion of the Lyran population. The late Duke Ryan Steiner's marriage to Morasha Kelswa, Duchess of Tamar, linked the much smaller Tamarese separatist movement to its larger Skye counterpart while giving both the resources of the Tamar Pact to draw on. Clan inroads in Tamar territory somewhat blunted the impact of the latter, but the remaining Pact worlds still serve Free Skye as an alternative power base. The rise to prominence of Ryan Steiner's son Robert, Duke of Porrima and presumptive duke of Tamar, joins the secessionists of both regions in a single, charismatic leader. Without Victor Steiner-Davion to serve as a lightning rod, separatist feeling is once more turning against the regime on Tharkad, thereby enhancing Robert Kelswa-Steiner's appeal as an alternative.

Archon Katherine's recent move to New Avalon has only intensified rising sentiment against her. The people of Skye tend to remember injuries far longer and more vividly

than reparations, as generations of Steiner rulers discovered to their cost. Largely forgotten in the current climate are Katherine's efforts toward rebuilding in Skye in the wake of the abortive 3056 rebellion. Like her ancestor Robert Steiner, who personally paid damages for the destruction he wrought in Skye, Katherine directed vast sums of investment capital into the region's schools, industries and infrastructure between 3056 and 3060. By forming the Alliance and becoming its sole ruler, however, Katherine also made herself a target for regional dissent. The resurgence of anti-government feeling crystallized with the takeover of the Federated Suns. To the average Skye citizen, already turning somewhat skeptical about "those German busybodies on Tharkad," Katherine's power grab stands as proof that she cares little about their interests. Fears of Lyran absorption by the huge Federated Suns have flared up with a vengeance, this time focused on Katherine Steiner-Davion rather than a convenient "Davion" ruler.

For the ordinary resident of Skye, the raging tides of local politics combine with the threat of war in both blatant and subtle ways. Some residents of border worlds near the Draconis Combine—a frequent candidate in the local rumor mill for the Davion army's staging base—are sending their families to presumed safety on planets deeper in Skye, or even out of Skye altogether. Favorite destinations are Alarion and Coventry provinces, both comfortably far from expected invasion routes and from Tharkad. Other natives of these worlds are staunchly staying put, refusing to "run like rabbits from that jumped-up little Davion dictator." Disruptions in delivery of various goods and foodstuffs, mostly prompted by sporadic hoarding across the Alliance, are reviving local grievances between Skye and its neighbor regions. In shops and streets and taverns, outspoken locals often grouse that their province is once more going short to profit more loyalist worlds. Scots and Irish rebel songs harking back to ancient Terra ring from many a roadside pub, with Victor or Katherine equally likely substitutes for the villains of those ancient ballads. Thus far, the gathering clouds of war have kept anti-Steiner sentiment at a simmer. The successes or reverses of the next several months could dampen secessionist fires once more or spark them into a conflagration.

The separatist movement itself is divided into two factions. One advocates immediate action against the Tharkad regime for its alleged betrayal of Skye and Lyran interests; the other is backing a cease-fire in this perennial political conflict, lest internal dissent weaken the entire Alliance and hand it to the man many still sneeringly call "the Davion princeling." Supporters of the second faction believe that a victory for pro-Davion forces would permanently snuff out Skye's prospects of freedom, whereas triumph for Katherine would leave that door open. The two factions claim roughly equal strength among the people; only the course of the war will tell which side eventually wins out.

Daily Life

Occasional eruptions of war jitters aside, everyday life for most Alliance citizens is little different from life in the heyday of the Lyran Commonwealth. The national economy has largely absorbed the jolts of the Clan War; though poverty is somewhat higher by historical Lyran standards, most people remain comfortably off. Increasing rapprochement with the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation continues to strengthen markets for Lyran consumer goods and agricultural products,

compensating considerably for economic changes wrought by the Clan invasion. Even the civil war promises an economic boost of sorts; military manufacturers hit by Marik encroachment stand ready to raise production quotas and profits should the conflict with Victor's forces last any appreciable time.

This general material comfort helps to counterbalance uncertainties about the future, publicly denied but often privately voiced by people throughout the Alliance. Citizens of interior planets, farthest from the Clan border and other hot spots like the shrinking Chaos March, tend to express genuine confidence that the war will soon pass over without greatly disrupting their well-ordered lives. A typical middle-class Lyran on such a world can point to several proofs of his convictions: the plumbing still functions, the lights work, the high-speed maglev trains still run on time and he still earns a regular paycheck. In bustling cities, crowds still fill the cafés and brauhauses with idle chatter about business or the local sports team, with the war only occasionally intruding. In smaller towns and on less developed worlds, the sleeper rhythm of local life likewise goes on. Just as in the old Lyran Commonwealth, these worlds are the envy of many poorer Inner Sphere states, blessed with the abundant material wealth that is the hallmark of Lyran life everywhere outside Lyran borders.

On planets near the Jade Falcon occupation zone and in more troubled regions, like Skye and the remnant of Tamar, the view of life is grimmer, though often the details are not. Here, too, the building blocks of everyday existence continue to function reasonably well. Yet because the people of these worlds feel more fearful about their future, even minor disruptions to the daily routine take on immense significance. To take just one example, the temporary disappearance of imported Donegal apple-pears from market shelves in Chahar's capital city sparked a wave of panicky rumors that Donegal had fallen to a Davion blitzkrieg assault. In fact, the prized fruits had fallen victim to a late freeze that decimated much of the early crop. Their reappearance weeks later at slightly higher prices, accompanied by reassuring government press releases, soon settled the wilder stories. Bolstered by a long tradition of political openness, Lyrans are accustomed to trusting their leaders. Yet unease remains, awaiting only another small incident to bring it out.

Writing Credits:

Inner Sphere Source Book: Lyran Alliance - House Steiner
Diane Piron-Gelman



Clan Nova Cat

A pouncing cat stalks the hunting cat roar the two enraged in a death's embrace the coiled serpent crushes both. A pouncing cat stalks the hunting cat with care, the pouncing cat watches the coiled serpent crushes the hunting cat, a new star is born. - The Remembrance (Clan Nova Cat) Passage: 374, Verse 3, Lines 17 - 24

Star League Nova Cats

The Dagda feline whose mane stands on end (like a sudden nova) whenever it is alarmed was the inspiration for this Clan name. Its mane is tipped with barbs containing a substance poisonous to most creatures. The nova cat is admired for its alert response to danger and ferocious attacks.

Nova Cat Demographics

Affiliation: Star League

Capital: Irece

Population: 876,600,000

Population growth rate: 3.1

Self-Sufficiency Index: 100 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Santin West

saKhan: Karl Devalis

Oathmaster: Minori Kurita Nova Cat

Scientist-General: Andrew Solvenia

Merchant Factor: Amber (Rosse)

Master Technician: Hamerick

Senior Laborer: Khartmanrick

Military:

Clusters: 35

WarShips: 24

Bloodnames:

General

Deleportas

Devalis

Cheng

Morris

MechWarriors

Nostra

Lossey

Drummond

Rosse

Clan Space Worlds:

Asgard (100 percent)

Avon (100 percent)

Caripare (100 percent)

Cyrenaica (100 percent)

Irece (100 percent)

Itabaiana (100 percent)

Juazeiro (100 percent)

Labrea (100 percent)

Mualang (100 percent)

Outer Volta (100 percent)

Port Arthur (100 percent)

Tarazed (100 percent)

Teniente (100 percent)

Yamarovka (100 percent)

Elementals

Winters

West

Lenardon

Pilots

Leroux

Bavros

The path that has led us to this point in our journey has been a curving arc of shadows, fire, and smoke, broken by moments of stark light that never revealed more than a small hint of what was to come. When our founders set us on this path, did they know the end? Did our most beloved Khan Sandra Rosse understand the significance

of her actions or the events that would unfold? One cannot help but ponder these questions.

Regardless, we Nova Cats have always relied on visions and portents to guide us through the murky depths of the future. The fact that out of the twenty Clans created by the Founder, three have been absorbed, two annihilated, and one sundered shows the dangers that come as the waves of time wash past. Yet here we stand members of a new Star League. Does this not prove our feet trod the correct path? Our lost brethren have named us traitors and cast us out. Yet I say again, we are members of the Star League, and we will marshal all our forces to help it survive and grow. - Bicon Winters, Oathmaster, Clan Nova Cat, 18 March 3062

History

The Founders

Although our birth resembled that of most Clans, one of our contributing founders was not a member of the Star League Defense Force, a fact that has made us the object of derision for centuries. That same found joined our Merchant Caste. For some, these are events that cannot be overlooked.

The manner in which the Nova Cat walks as an adult was set down by Phillip Drummond and Anna Rosse. Though some in our Clan belittle Anna and heap praise on her daughter Sandra, one must remember that, unlike modern-day sibkos, a mother still had the upbringing of a daughter in those early years. Without Anna's guidance, Sandra would not have become our ost beloved Khan.

Philip Drummond

When Stefan Amaris executed the First Lord and destroyed the Star League, Phillip Drummond felt bitterly betrayed. He had take great pride in the fact that his nation had stood by the Star League while the rest of the Periphery rebelled. When the true extent of Amaris' plot came to light, Drummond, like many men and women of the Rim World Republic military, fell into despair. In a single moment of clarity, Drummond's loyalty was shattered beyond redemption, and he eagerly transferred his loyalty to Aleksandr Kerensky, convinced that Kerensky was the one man in whom he still might believe.

Drummond demonstrated his resourcefulness, as well as his determination to punish the Usurper, by penetrating the security cordon around Kerensky's headquarters. Just as Drummond was about to be summarily executed as a suspected assassin, the general interceded, and Drummond offered to join the SLDF and share his knowledge of the Rim Worlds Republic's military defenses. Kerensky instinctively recongnized his sincerity and accepted him as a newly commissioned lieutenant.

Drummond, however, was denied an opportunity to fight and landed a permanent assignment with the Intelligence Command. The SLDF warriors around him all believed him to be a spy or traitor. Only years of faithful service, along with

providing unfailingly accurate information, grudgingly earned him the respect of his peers.

Anna Rosse

Life for Anna Rosse was brutal and uncompromising from the time she was very young. When the hated Usurper invaded Terra, Rosse was only nine years old. Captured, she was being led to an internment camp when a resistance cell rescued her.

An all-women resistance cell in Greece took her in after two years on the run. This deeply spiritual group helped heal Rosse of her emotional scars, and she repaid them with sensible and intelligent suggestions on improving their communications networks and their methods of acquiring and distributing supplies. The leaders of her cell quickly realized her value and began to pass her on to other cells to aid in their effectiveness. As she grew older, her methods became common practice among most of the resistance cells in Europe and Asia. By the time of the Liberation of Terra by Kerensky's troops, she was stationed in Moscow.

Quietly hailed as a hero of the resistance, Anna Rosse met Captain Peter Karpov of the SLDF at one of the initial meetings between the resistance leaders and the liberators. The two were married within a year, and both joined the Exodus. They departed the Inner Sphere aboard the Prinz Eugen.

All know of the history of that traitorous ship and crew. Defying the Great Father himself, the Prinz Eugen and eight other ships decided to return to the Inner Sphere. Only one solution was possible: Kerensky captured the nine ships and executed their officers - including Karpov.

All Clans realize that this act saved us from destruction - look at what happened when the Inner Sphere finally did locate us. However, Karpov's death worsened Rosse's emotional problems, and she could not even find solace in Aleksandr Kernsky's General Order 137. When the SLDF finally arrived at five marginally inhabitable worlds - later dubbed the Pentagon worlds - she made her new home on the planet Circe. Living with two of her husband's cousins, she tried to start a new life. Remembering the spiritual strength of the resistance cell, she began her own healing process through a set of private rituals. What began as a mental technique to help her come to grips with everything she had lost blossomed into a way in which to view life. She came to understand the power of ritual and began to accept the truth of visions. It was during their time that she met Phillip Drummond.

Drummond had tested out of the SLDF during the controlled demobilization that followed the arrival on the Pentagon worlds and became a scientist. Rosse became a successful merchant, and in those first few peaceful years of colonization, they joined to create a family and gave birth to three children.

Death of Eden

The peaceful years did not last. Sedition, hatred, and old loyalties quickly found a place in the hearts of those who had traveled so far. Both scarred by the Amaris Civil War,

Drummond and Rosse were horrified when rioting finally exploded and fled with other families into the wilds of Circe. However, their small community was attacked and two of their three children were killed. Though racked with grief, they both joined the forces that supported the planetary government.

The savagery of the fighting sickened them both, and they, along with their surviving daughter Sandra, readily followed Nicholas Kerensky's call for a second Exodus to the world of Strana Mechty.

Drummond easily tested out in the ranks of warriors of one of the new Clans Nicholas created, having polished his unused combat skills in the recent fighting on Circe. When Nicholas announced that each Clan would be led by two Khans chosen from among their ranks, Drummond rose to command the new Nova Cat Clan. Our Remembrance hints that Nicholas influenced this reward Drummond for his years of faithful service to his father and to reinforce the fact that, in the Clans, no previous loyalties mattered. If a man was worthy, he could rise to the highest levels in our society. This was echoed when Phelan Kell was captured during Operation Revival and rose to Khanship of Clan Wolf for this action, but we Nova Cats have always believed that the founder would have been pleased. Had not Phelan proved his worth as a warrior?

As the Clans continued to cement themselves and training began for their eventual return to the Pentagon worlds, Anna Rosse fell into the Merchant Caste. Though strictures against intercaste relationships were beginning to take shape, Drummond and Rosse continued their relationship in secret. For, like the founders of Clan Ghost Bear, they had a family that would eventually define us.

When the order finally came to return to the Pentagon worlds, Clan Nova Cat joined Clans Mongoose, Snow Raven and the Not-Named in retaking Circe. Though Operation Klondike would take a year to complete, the Clans finally conquered the Pentagon worlds. Our warriors' uncanny ability to consistently target the weakest spot on an enemy unit's armor earned them almost legendary status.

Enter Sandra Rosse

Following the Pentagon campaign, Khan Drummond realized he was losing his edge. A degenerative disease was slowly killing him, and Drummond despaired when he realized that he would soon lose his position. However, hope blossomed when he learned that his daughter, Sandra, had tested out in a Trail of Position as a Star Captain.

Sandra was a gifted warrior who had inherited the best of both worlds from her parents. A natural leader, with a conviction that many answers lay hidden in shrouds of mysticism, Sandra was on the verge of greatness. When Drummond confided his condition to her, she retreated to her private sanctuary in her mother's home. After three days of fast and meditation, she emerged with the answer burning in her mind. She had decided to replace her father as Khan.

Although she was already in a command position, she knew she needed a Bloodname. In honor of her mother, she chose to compete for the Rosse Bloodname. Though the

same name, this Bloodname actually belonged to a second cousin of Anna's, Jason Rosse (Sandra's mother had never been a member of the warrior caste, so her surname was not enshrined as part of the eight hundred). Though irregular, the formal paths of the Trial of Bloodright had not yet been cemented, and a plea to the Grand Council granted her the right to compete for that name.

She won her Trial of Bloodright and became Sandra Rosse. Within a few months, having gained a following, she challenged Khan Drummond to a Trial of Grievance, charging he was no longer fit to be Khan. In the Circle of Equals, she then broke tradition and offered him the opportunity to voluntarily step down. For the second time in his life, Phillip Drummond walked away from everything he had known.

However, many Nova Cat warriors were outraged by what they saw as sentimentality and immediately challenged Sandra to a Trial of Grievance. She won every contest and so impressed the rest of our Clan with her combat skill and audacity that they accepted her as Khan.

The Nova Cat Reborn

Upon her assumption of the Khanship, Khan Rosse retreated to her sanctuary once again. Five days later, she emerged convinced that her visions had shown her a way that would lead the Nova Cats to a perfect society, beyond that designed by the Founder. Though many were perturbed when Khan Rosse announced that she was basing these decisions on visions, none challenged her right to do so. With her recent triumphs in the Trials of Grievance still fresh in our Clan's mind, her warriors reserved judgment.

She immediately began to enact sweeping changes. One of the farthest-reaching was to allow the Merchant Caste to fulfill their responsibilities as they saw fit. As the Clans moved into the Golden Century, this would provide ample dividends. However, her greatest contribution was to provide a more spiritual way of life. Her guidance opened our eyes to the fact that life is a path of choices and that every action we take can have consequences that may not appear for centuries. Our ability to see the long road is why we now walk the path of the Star League.

Convinced by her upbringing of the need for self-discipline, Khan Rosse created the office of Oathmaster to aid the Clan's spiritual strength and well-being, naming Lui Cheng to the position as one of her first official acts. Though we have seen several Khans during our history who have not had the strength of vision to properly lead our Clan down the correct path - leaving this powerful role to the Oathmaster instead - it is a testament to the strength of our way that no Oathmaster has ever attempted to wrest the Khanship away from a standing Khan.

Nicholas Kerensky condemned her appointment for a warrior to this position before the Grand Council, and Clan Wolf won the right to defend the Trial of Refusal the Founder called against Khan Rosse. The Trial was won, and a series of Trials of Position ensured for the Oathmaster position. Lucie Morris became the first official Oathmaster. Khan Rosse did not resent the founder for his actions, believing they simply emphasized the importance of this new position.

Though other Clans soon adopted versions of the Oathmaster post, it eventually evolved into an honor-guard position for any official Clan ceremony, administering all oaths.

Ways of Seeing

Following these events, Khan Rosse wrote *Ways of Seeing*, a volume that contained her mother's and her own visions. Most of the rituals we practice today are directly connect to this volume, and it - along with her personal journal, in which she continued to record her visions - has become the cornerstone for the Forum of Law in the Oathmaster Grand Melee.

Though several Khans from other Clans objected to Khan Rosse's bizarre innovations, she simply pointed out the Founder's edicts against interfering with the spiritual life of any people. With no documented cases of outright un-Clanlike behavior, the Khans bided their time, convinced that the Nova Cats would stumble.

However, that day never arrived. Far from hobbling our Clan, Khan Rosse gave us mental and emotional focus for our energy, which allowed us to keep pace with or surpass the achievements of the other Clans.

The Jaguar Conflict

As the Clans grew, many bitter feuds were born. However, the cause for the feud between the Nova Cats and the Smoke Jaguars - which would eventually lead to the destruction of the Smoke Jaguars - had a most unusual beginning. Shortly after becoming Khan, Sandra realized that she was attracted to Liam Ismiril, saKhan of Clan Smoke Jaguar - and that saKhan Ismiril shared her attraction. Though they enjoyed each other's company for some time, Khan Rosse eventually realized that she simply could not ignore the drastic differences in their philosophies.

After retreating to her sanctuary, she had a vision that convinced her that if she continued her relationship, it would lead to the destruction of her Clan. She immediately broke off contact with saKhan Ismiril, but a dead nova cat found in our breeding program's iron wobs let her know that she had earned the enmity of Clan Smoke Jaguar.

Drummond Returns

Without a doubt, Khan Ross's vision set us on the path to our current place in history. However, some of her decisions proved disastrous. When the Not-Named Clan claimed sole possession of their disputed Brian Cache, Khan Rosse supported them in the Grand Council. Following the Not-Named Clan's refusal to accept the results of their Trial of Refusal and their subsequent annihilation, Khan Winson of Clan Wolf personally challenged the Khans of each Clan that had supported the Not-Name Clan to a Trial of Grievance. Though Khan Rosse fought well, she was killed in the trial.

Upon hearing of Khan Rosse's death, a cured Phillip Drummond realized that he was the only one who could continue to foster the Nova Cats' newfound spirituality. Emerging victorious from a grueling series of Trials of Position, he spoke in front of

the Clan Council. So eloquent were his words that the Council accepted him as Khan and he led Clan Nova Cat into the Golden Century, surviving to the age of 112. Even among the Nova Cats, who allow their warriors to remain in active service much longer than the other Clans, this is an unprecedented record.

The Golden Century

The Golden Century proved very good for the Nova Cats. Driven by our Scientist and Merchant Castes, which had been given free rein, we quickly moved into a leading spot among the Clans. As other Clans created the OmniMechs and Elementals and perfected the iron womb technology, our scientists perfected extended-range lasers. Our Merchant Caste contacted Clan Sea Fox (later Diamond Shark), one of the Clans most actively exploiting the Kerensky Cluster around Strana Mechty, and proposed to fund and supply the Fox's exploration in return for a share in any resources found. This provided an endless flow of new resources and revenue. Even our Abjurement has only limited, not ended, that relationship.

Though Clans Widowmaker and Mongoose were absorbed during this time, our Clan continued on our path. Individual Galazies formed animosity toward other Clans - notably the Cloud Cobras and Jade Falcons - but the Clan as a whole held only to our feud with the Jaguars. But as the Golden Century came to a close, a desire by some to return to the Inner Sphere polarized the Clans into the Warden - those who wanted to protect the Inner Sphere from outside aggression - and Crusader - those who wanted to conquer the Inner Sphere and re-establish the Star League - factions.

Operation Revival

Though Clan Jade Falcon initially called for invasion in 2980, the Warden Clans managed to stall the return to the Inner Sphere for another sixty-eight years. But the appearance of the ComStar JumpShip Outbound Light dissolved all remaining resistance, and the return began.

As Oathmaster, I tried desperately to warn my Khans of the impending danger I had seen in a vision. Though Khans Severn Leroux and Lucian Carns were perennial Nova Cat warriors and more than worthy to hold their positions, the glory of returning to our lost paradise blinded their eyes, and we joined the rest of the Clans in the fighting to find a place in the invasion. Though the Nova Cats were denied a place in the initial invasion, we fought well enough to be placed alongside the Steel Vipers as next in line and even participated in limited early actions.

However the Keshik of the Nova Cat Clan served as the escort to Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht as he traveled to the Dire Wolf, the flagship of Clan Wolf. As soon as I saw the Precentor Martial, I realized I was witnessing my vision in the flesh and pinned him to the ground. I attempted to convey to our Clan that we were taking our destruction unto our bosom, but my Khan would not listen. I even challenged saKhan Carns to a Trial of Grievance but lost, and so I was forced to sit by and watch my vision become reality.

When ilKhan Leo Showers was killed and Ulric Kerensky of Clan Wolf was elected as ilKhan, he activated our Clan. However, we paid a price for joining the invasion by

having to share the invasion corridor with the hated Smoke Jaguars. Though we invaded sixteen worlds between November of 3051 until March of 3052 - Tarnby, Bjarred, Sawyer, Chupadero, Jeanette, Chourchevel, Irece, Avon, Luthien, Ltabaiana, Juazerio, Mualang, Teniente, Caripare, Cyrenaica and Kanowit - it was on Luthien that we received our most humiliating defeat. With the Smoke Jaguars, we deployed Alpha and Delta Galaxies to take the world. However with sixteen elite line regiments massed against us, we were brutally attacked and forced to retreat.

Of course, that paled in comparison with the proxy battle for Terra on the world of Tukayyid. Though the Nova Cats managed to inflict the severest damage on the Com Guard of any Clan, it was a Pyrrhic victory, as our forces ultimately lifted off world in defeat.

Future Paths

Rightly ashamed of their blindness and arrogance, the Nova Cat Khans turned to me following Tukayyid for a vision of the path that would lead us back to glory. I spent long days in ritual and fast and returned to inform the Clans that we should attempt to open talks with the Draconis Combine. Though my Khans were shocked, the proof of the truth of my visions lying in shattered Nova Cat 'Mechs on Tukayyid weighed heavily, and they listened to my words.

Although we occasionally raided against the hated Jaguars, our Clan concentrated on rebuilding its shattered Touman, establishing a rapport with the populations on our Inner Sphere worlds, and continuing a dialogue with the Draconis Combine. When Operation Bulldog began in 3058, several of our Clusters became abtakha to the invading forces - adopted as warriors - after which they fought as members of the SLDF against the Jaguars.

When Prince Victor Steiner-Davion challenged the Crusader Clans to a Trial of Refusal against the invasion, our Khans sided with Star League, fighting against Clan Ice Hellion on Strana Mechy. We even took MechWarrior Trent as a bondsman - he who had betrayed the Jaguars and given the coordinates for the Exodus Road to the Inner Sphere. In what has become known as the Great Refusal, both Severne Leroux and Lucian Carns died so that the Star League would triumph. Trent's 'Mech was destroyed, but his body was not found.

As we have known for centuries, the worthiest path is always fraught with peril, and our return to the Star League has had grave consequences. Within a week of the Great Refusal we were Abjured, and the other Clans fell on us. Though our warriors fought valiantly, we could not hold against their combined might. Only through the supreme heroism of the warriors from Upsilon, Rho, and Kappa Galaxies, along with the surprising aid of Clan Diamon Shark and Snow Raven, we were able to relocate the few survivors of our Civilian Caste to the Inner Sphere. Less than three full Clusters of our Clan Space warriors joined us in the Inner Sphere.

And our path is not yet done. Though we understand that most Combine citizens still view us as the enemy, our actions demonstrated our fidelity toward the new Star League. Did not both our Khans sacrifice their lives and our Clan accept Abjurement by our brethren to come back to the Star League? If that is not enough, the clashes

between our forces and that of the DCMS show that we were the aggressors in only one battle. Our restraint in the face of such provocation should cement what is already before your eyes. Though we find the situation lamentable, we recognize the wisdom in Coordinator Theodore Kurita in his formation of the Irece Prefecture several months past. Though it is our hope that this separation of the Nova Cat and the DCMS units will give them time to accept us, it is a firm reminder that we have a long road ahead of us. Even more disturbing is that among our own ranks, there are those who can not clearly see the way and may yet cause dissension.

But my visions are strong, and always, the Nova Cat will survive.

Writing Credits:

Field Manual ComStar: Clan Nova Cat

Randall N. Bills



Free Rasalhague Republic

From its birth following the Fourth Succession War, through the Ronin Wars and the Clan invasion, the Free Rasalhague Republic has known few times of real peace. This has only served to strengthen our people, however, and teach us the value of a strong military. - Christian Månsdotter, Överbefälhavare of the Rasalhague KungsArmé, 26 March 3062

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Origins

The origins of the Free Rasalhague Republic date to the mythic age when interstellar travel was so new that only the adventurous or desperate dared try it. After the Second Soviet Civil War, Scandinavia was left with the double burden of paying assessments to rebuild the Soviet States while dealing with the influx of more than a million Soviet refugees. The Federal Democratic Republics of Sweden, Finland, and Norway coped stoically, though the war-damage taxes continued until the mid-23rd century. When the levy finally ended, many citizens decided to emigrate, selecting a planet far from the oppression and bureaucracy of Terra. Within 60 years, these Scandinavians had colonized and heavily populated Rasalhague and its eight nearest neighbors.

In the late 23rd century, the people of the region created the Rasalhague Consortium, a joint government to oversee the further development of their worlds. The Consortium included all the varldherren or world lords, and members of powerful families. The highest government official was an elected Prime Minister. As the

Consortium came into contact with neighboring states and associations, it evolved into the Principality of Rasalhague, headed by the Elected Prince. The people of Rasalhague became known for their isolationism, being more concerned with expanding and developing their own worlds in a way least damaging to the environment. Despite Rasalhague's political neutrality, the Draconis Combine harassed it, attacked it, and eventually conquered the Principality in 2330.

After being incorporated into the Combine as the Rasalhague Military District, the region changed little. Though Combine leaders encouraged Asians to immigrate to the newly created district, these colonists never outnumbered the Scandinavian majority, nor were they able to dilute the native customs. Before the Fourth Succession War, the official language of the region was Kuritan Japanese, but the vast majority continued to speak Swedish. Even from the earliest days of Kurita rule, secret societies attempted to foment rebellions, but all failed because of the lack of coordination among rebel groups.

In 3029, the Lyran Commonwealth invited Rasalhague resistance leaders to a meeting on Tamar. The Tamar talks lasted for three weeks, during which time the rebels learned of the existence of the Tyr Regiment, a unit of assault 'Mechs sponsored and trained by the LCAF but manned by Rasalhagian exiles. The unit shared the name of the underground movement in the Rasalhague Military District. The secret regiment had made a stunning appearance on Kirchbach, prompting a revolt among the people. At the Tamar meeting, the Rasalhague resistance leaders coordinated plans for uprisings with projected LCAF invasions. Archon Katrina Steiner also signed the Intention of the Free Rasalhague Peoples, a document that recognized the Tyr as the official Rasalhague government-in-exile.

During the Fourth War, Tyr members provided the Lyran military with details on terrain, targets, and enemy location. Its members also undertook hundreds of commando missions deep behind enemy lines to disrupt DCMS communication and logistics. The Tyr BattleMech regiment played an equally important role in the Commonwealth's war effort.

Revolt

The war's end did not bring about the creation of a free Rasalhague, as the Tyr had hoped. For one thing, the Lyrans had not conquered all the worlds the Tyr wanted, including Rasalhague. Indeed, many Tyr members believed that the Lyrans had stopped short of conquering all the former Principality worlds purely to prevent the rebels from forming a sovereign state.

The disgruntled Tyr members became even angrier when Lyran planetary administrators arrived on the conquered worlds. Under orders from Duke Selvin Kelswa of the Tamar Pact, they took over from the military administrators without acknowledging the Tyr or its claim to rule. In their frustration and anger, several extremist Tyr groups bombed government buildings on seven worlds in February 3031, injuring one planetary administrator. Despite objections by Commonwealth officials, Duke Kelswa reacted by ordering the arrest of the Tyr leaders, most of who were on Tamar at the time. He then ordered mass trials, in which the Tyr leaders were convicted in a mockery of the Lyran judicial process.

By the time Archon Steiner learned of the situation, the trials were over. The Tyr leaders had been languishing in Tamar jails for a week while the aggressive Tamar Pact police forces brutally mishandled demonstrations and riots on the conquered worlds. Infuriated, the Archon freed the Tyr leadership, publicly berated the Duke of Tamar for overstepping his authority, and apologized to the Tyr in hopes of salvaging some good will.

The damage caused by Duke Kelswa could not be undone, however, and the Archon saw that the newly conquered Rasalhague worlds would never consent to join the Commonwealth. The best she could hope for was to continue negotiations with the Tyr so that the leaders of a new Rasalhague state would lean more toward the Commonwealth than toward the Draconis Combine.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the report by Precentor Riis does not acknowledge ComStar's role in bringing about an independent Rasalhague, he surely must know about it. As a close ally of Primus Waterly and the most powerful ComStar official in the area, Precentor Riis almost certainly played a key role in the arrangements, if not the actual negotiations, that gave birth to the Principality.]

When the Draconis Combine found itself fighting against its own people as well as the Lyran Commonwealth during the Fourth War, Kurita leaders began to look for a solution to the problem of Rasalhague resistance. They found one and it was ingenious. By supporting Rasalhague independence, the Draconis Combine simultaneously removed a thorn from its side, embarrassed the Lyran Commonwealth into giving up most of its captured worlds, and created a buffer state between the Combine and the newly formidable Lyrans.

Independence

On March 13, 3034, Haakon Magnusson, a Tyr political leader, declared the creation of the Free Rasalhague Republic, affirmed its independence from either the Draconis Combine or the Lyran Commonwealth, and announced that he would be its Elected Prince. ComStar immediately recognized the new realm, and the Draconis Combine followed suit the next day.

That House Kurita would willingly give up so many of its star systems was a shock to the whole Inner Sphere, and it also left the Steiner government in a poor bargaining position with the Tyr. Archon Steiner felt obliged to turn over to the Free Rasalhague Republic most of the Rasalhague worlds the LCAF had captured during the Fourth War, though it infuriated the already-angry Duke of Tamar.

The withdrawal of Combine troops from its former Rasalhague Military District did not go smoothly. Many Combine soldiers refused to leave because of their violent disagreement with the decision to cede worlds to the FRR. Others refused to abandon citizens of Oriental heritage to the danger of backlash from the Scandinavians, a threat that became a reality. Other unit commanders felt that too many Kurita troops had died defending these worlds to now just give them up without a struggle.

Seeing this military insurrection as a direct challenge to his future rule of the Draconis Combine, Kanrei Theodore Kurita declared all disobedient units ronin, Japanese for "masterless." With Prince Magnussen's permission, he led a force of loyal regiments back into the Republic to battle the ronin units.

The Ronin Wars, as they became known, were a series of short, violent clashes between the ronin, which added up to about eight regiments, and the allied forces of the Rasalhague KungsArme (The Royal Rasalhague Army) and DCMS units led by Warlord Theodore Kurita. The KungsArme, just weeks old, received its baptism by fire defending its homeworlds and cities from ronin units, many of which were skilled and experienced. The KungsArme fought better than expected, due in part to assistance from Combine and Lyran officers present in the Republic to help build the military. On many occasions, these visiting officers stepped in to assume command of Rasalhague units against the ronin at a crucial moment.

Even more violent were the clashes between troops loyal to Warlord Theodore and the ronin, most of whom were led by officers loyal to General Marcus Kurita (banished from Luthien for a failed coup attempt) and Warlord Ivan Sorenson of the Rasalhague Military District, who was assassinated at the beginning of the ronin rebellion.

The Ronin Wars created a deep hatred for mercenaries among the FRR's citizens. Because of poorly negotiated contracts, some mercenaries refused to enter battle because they claimed the requirements of their contracts had already been fulfilled. Though the mercenaries were usually within their rights, the people did not see it that way. Ironically, the FRR later had to hire more mercenaries, some of whom made huge demands on the government, to combat growing pirate activity on the Republic's border with the Periphery.

The Ronin Wars ended with the withdrawal of the last DCMS regiment across the border into the Combine's new Alshain Military District in December 3035. For the first time in its short life the Free Rasalhague Republic was peaceful. Prince Magnusson turned from military to political concerns. Based largely upon the former Principality of Rasalhague, the FRR government had a strong democratic element, which the Scandinavian majority deeply appreciated after the centuries of having their fate decided for them.

Still, many people took out their long resentment against everything and everyone Oriental in a burst of riots and lynchings. The government finally calmed the situation, and the whole matter is rarely mentioned today.

In 3044, Prince Magnusson requested and was granted another term in office. He has maintained a middle course between House Steiner and House Kurita, a policy that has allowed the KungsArme to grow stronger.

The KungsArme has recently been more active. Pirate activity along the Republic's Periphery border, always an annoyance, has increased so dramatically in the past five years that the government has had to resort to hiring even more mercenaries to protect part of its border.

Government

The structure of the Free Rasalhague Republic government closely follows that of the Principality of Rasalhague of the 23rd century. Political power is loosely divided among the Elected Prince (the Riksforestandare), the Parliament (the Riksdag) and the individual rulers of worlds (the Varldherren). The citizens elect local officials every four years and representatives to the Riksdag every ten.

The Riksforestandare

To become the Elected Prince, a Member of Parliament must have the support of more than three-fourths of his fellow parliamentarians. Though the public cannot elect a prince, they do hold a non-binding poll to express their opinion on the candidates two weeks before the Riksdag votes.

The Elected Prince serves a ten-year term and is limited to two terms. The Riksforestandare is the political head of the Free Rasalhague Republic, as well as the commander-in-chief of the Rasalhague KungsArme and Chancellor of the Riksbank, the government's financial institution. The KungsPalace is home for the Elected Prince when he is in the capital city of Reykjavik on Rasalhague. The Elected Prince also has the use of several other homes, the most beautiful being the manor at Molnlycke.

The Elected Prince has a circle of advisors to assist him. The members of this Royal Cabinet are the leaders of major governmental departments, though the current Prince is fond of allowing close friends to participate in Cabinet meetings. Prince Magnusson claims to be directly descended from Norse kings of ancient well as the rulers of the old Principality. He alludes to it frequently, especially when hard-pressed to get a favorite piece of legislation through the Riksdag. This has led some to fear that he may attempt to overturn the limitation of two terms as Prince and make his title hereditary.

Nobility

The Free Rasalhague Republic has a nobility system unique among the states of the Inner Sphere. The system of Varldherre (world leaders) and Hertigs (dukes) refers to positions rather than titles. The Riksdag, and others choose some Hertigs by direct election. They can lose the designation as easily as they get it.

Varldherre are appointed world leaders. Each Varldherre has a different term of office, decided by the planetary government. Hertigs are men and women who have earned the trust and respect of the people. Most Hertigs do not have specific duties to perform, though they are expected to counsel the Varldherre on political matters and to attend sessions of the Riksdag.

The Riksdag

The Rasalhague Parliament is composed of four Estates. Though only the First and Second Estates have the power to draft bills, all have the right to vote on legislation. For a bill to become law three of the four Estates must approve it and then the Elected

Prince must sign it. The Riksdag may overturn a princely veto by a vote of all four Estates.

The First Estate is composed of the realm's Varldherren and Hertigs. The director of the First Estate is the Landtmarskalk, or Marshal of the Lands. The Landtmarskalk also sets the Riksdag agenda, a potent responsibility. The post is considered second in importance only to the princship in the Republic.

The Second Estate is composed of the FRR's planetary representatives. Each world elects five representatives to the Second Estate, giving rise to its popular name of the People's Parliament.

The Third Estate is composed of the head clergymen of the major religions in the FRR. When it comes to a vote on the important political or monetary bills, the Third Estate tends to follow the lead of the People's Parliament. On the other hand, the members of the Third Estate believe that moral, spiritual, and social questions are their domain, and often its rulings inspire legislation in the First or Second Estate.

The Fourth Estate is composed of the realm's most important business leaders. Those who control a company with a net worth over 100 million R-bills, or who own more than 10,000 hectares of land are invited to become members of the Fourth Estate.

The four Estates of the Riksdag meet in the immense and solemn Palace Hall. Sessions of the Riksdag normally begin on January 1 and continue until July 1, though crises have forced several emergency sessions.

In addition to the Riksdag, there are Provincial Riksdags on Skandia, Radstadt and Rasalhague.

Political Alignments

Prince Magnusson is a shrewd politician who has been careful not to anger any special-interest group. Among his most ardent supporters are the men and women who fought alongside him in either the Tyr rebellions before the Fourth Succession War or in the Ronin Wars. One of these people is Tor Miraborg. The two met when both were serving time in a Combine prison for attempting to incite riots in 3022. After their release, the two went on to become key members in the Tyr. When Magnusson was angling for Rasalhague sovereignty, he contacted Miraborg, who began building support for him. After the creation of the Republic, the grateful Prince appointed Miraborg as Military Commander of the Radstadt Province. At that time, he also was elected Varldherre of his homeworld of Gunzburg. Varldherre Miraborg remains one of the Prince's staunchest supporters and an iron-fisted ruler of his world.

Despite his attempts to maintain support from all sides, Prince Magnusson's government is notable for the lack of Tyr members from the "Lyran Half," worlds conquered by the Lyran Commonwealth during the Fourth Succession War. Whether this is a coincidence or a deliberate snub is not known.

Those who oppose Prince Magnusson have formed the small Motsatt Stalining Parti, or Motpart for short. This party consists of members of the Riksdag who oppose the Prince on principle or who were once Tyr members from the Lyran Half.

The leader of the Motpart is General Christian Mansdotter, the ranking officer of the KungsArme and the Landtmarskalk of the Riksdag. Born and raised in the Lyran Commonwealth, Christian Mansdotter was an LCAF officer who requested and won the right to command the newly formed Tyr BattleMech regiment. The fame he won as regimental commander and his leadership skills should have made him the obvious choice for head of the new Rasalhague state, but then came Haakon Magnusson's bombshell treaty with the Draconis Combine.

Prince Magnusson could not simply ignore Christian Mansdotter's skills or his popularity, and so he appointed the general to command the KungsArme. The Riksdag appointed him Landtmarskalk in 3042, a post he still holds.

Mansdotter and the Motpart are suspicious of the Draconis Combine's motives for helping Rasalhague achieve independence. Fearing that the Kuritans will return one day to claim their lost worlds, the Motpart seeks closer relations with the Federated Commonwealth, even at the risk of provoking the Combine. For General Mansdotter and his followers, the Federated Commonwealth is the only guarantor of Rasalhague's independence.

Motpart members advocate a stronger military to defend against the Draconis Combine, while the Elected Prince is wary of expanding the KungsArme for fear of offending House Kurita.

Political Organization

The Free Rasalhague Republic is composed of the three provinces of Skandia, Radstadt, and Rasalhague. The political climate on worlds within the provinces varies widely. During the Ronin Wars, most worlds were placed under the control of a Military Governor. Most of the military governors have long since stepped down, but some still hold their powers, suppressing civilian government. Others were military governors during the war and became Varldherren afterward.

Political Goals

Because the FRR is wedged between two great Houses with no love for one another, the Elected Prince is well aware that his political actions toward one realm could be misconstrued by the other. This makes it vital that the Prince maintain strictly equal relations with House Kurita and House Steiner, while attempting to maintain the political neutrality of his ancestors of the original Principality.

Members of Motpart are vehemently opposed to this policy. They believe that trying to appease powerful neighbors interferes with the only way of guaranteeing the continued existence of the Free Rasalhague Republic: strengthening the military and seeking out an alliance with the Federated Commonwealth, the state whose society and government is most like their own.

Rasalhague KungsArme (Royal Rasalhague Army)

The Royal Rasalhague Army fields almost 150 BattleMech, tank, and infantry regiments. The KungsArme also controls 62 militia regiments and five mercenary 'Mech units.

Structure

The KungsArme consists of 12 departments patterned after the Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces. They are the Command Council, Administration Department, Medical Corps, Warriors' Ombudsmen, Mercenary Relations, Reservist Readiness Department, Strategy and Tactics Department, Intelligence Department, Transportation Department, Quartermaster Department, Justice Department, and Military Education.

The Headquarters of the Rasalhague KungsArme is in the Citadel, the large military complex built by the old Principality and then expanded when the Draconis Combine took over. Regional headquarters are on Skandia and Radstadt.

General Christian Mansdotter is the Chief-of-Staff of the Command Council. The General is technically the aide to the Prince, who is Overbefalhavare, or Commander-in-Chief, of the KungsArme, but the Prince does not take an active interest in the military.

The General's immediate seconds are Generalmajor Margrethe Minuit, commander of RRA forces in Skandia Province, and General Gustaf Mannerheim, commander of RRA forces in Radstadt Province.

Ranks (and their english equivalents)

Menig: Private

Korpral: Corporal

Sergeant: Sergeant

Fanjunkare: Sergeant Major

Lojtnant: Lieutenant

Kapten: Captain

Major: Major

Overste-Lojtnant: Lieutenant Colonel

Overste: Colonel

Generalmajor: Major General

General: General

Overbefalhavare: Commander-in-Chief

Pilots of 'Mechs are called Kavellrists, ancient Swedish for cavalry soldier. The Swedish word for Regiment is Regimente, Battalion is Bataljon, and Company is Besattning.

Composition

The KungsArme currently fields 15 'Mech regiments. The Gunzburg Eagles is the only assault BattleMech regiment. The Drakons are heavy 'Mech regiments, and the

Freemen are medium. The Hussars are light but potent regiments, and the Kavalleri are designed primarily for scouting and mobility.

The KungsArme has trade agreements with the 'Mech manufacturers in the Draconis Combine and the Lyran Commonwealth. As a result, Rasalhague BattleMech regiments include machines common to both states, with a few BattleMechs on loan from ComStar. The sight of a Kurita Dragon fighting alongside a Lyran Zeus or a Kurita Panther to cover the advance of a Lyran Commando might be startling to outsiders, but it is a common one in the KungsArme.

There are 32 tank regiments, composed mostly of Hunters and Manticores, but also many Demolishers, Schrek PPC Carriers and Behemoths from Aldis Industries on Terra. During the Republic's first year, General Mansdotter contacted representatives of Aldis about buying a modest number of tanks. In response, Aldis offered to sell the FRR many of its best tanks at bargain prices and to send engineers to service them. The deal gave the KungsArme some of the best equipment in the Inner Sphere, while Aldis got the chance to analyze the performance of the latest tanks as they got their baptism by fire in the Ronin Wars.

The KungsArme has 97 infantry regiments, more than half of them mechanized, with hovercraft as the most common troop carrier. The training of infantry regiments is both heightened and hampered by the Republic's deep nationalism. While it instills pride in the Nordic majority, the resulting prejudice keeps many skilled soldiers buried in the rank and file because they happen to be of Oriental heritage.

There are 62 militia regiments in the KungsArme. The training of the militia regiments is apparently rather poor, probably because the KungsArme is young and concentrating on its frontline units.

Performance

Considering its relative youth, the KungsArme has shown notable skill in the field. During its short history, the KungsArme has had to face renegade DCMS units and innumerable attacks by pirates along its border with the Periphery.

Being barely a week old and only a few regiments strong, the KungsArme was obviously at a severe disadvantage against the ronin forces of the DCMS. Yet, the Rasalhague units showed themselves proud in instances such as the Battle for Predlitz, where Bravo Company, Second Battalion of the Tyr 'Mech regiment, defeated two ronin companies from the Eighth Rasalhague Regulars. In another incident, Charlie Company, Third Battalion of the First Kavalleri, stood up to a combined battalion of ronin armour and infantry outside the city of Thessal on Goito. The KungsArme also had help from military advisors from the Combine, many of whom stepped in and commanded Rasalhague units during the height of battle.

During the withdrawal of Lyran troops from captured Rasalhague worlds, several incidents occurred between the more emotional members of both militaries. The most serious was the confrontation between Captain Schmelling's Company of the Eighth Donegal Guards and Bravo Company, Second Battalion, of the First Drakon 'Mech regiment.

It is the struggle against the Periphery pirates that has given the KungsArme most of its experience. Right from the start, pirates targeted Rasalhague worlds as easy targets. At first, the KungsArme could only protect vital cities and industries, depending on mercenaries to hunt down and punish the pirates. As the Arme has grown, so too has its ability to defend against pirate raids. The 'Mech regiments, in particular, have become adept at countering the tactics favored by Periphery scum. In small-unit actions of companies and smaller, the KungsArme is the equal of any Inner Sphere military.

Where the RAA's ability falls short is in larger, multi-regiment actions. With the exception of those who served in the Tyr regiment during the Fourth War, few in the Rasalhague military have experience with large-scale combat. General Mansdotter has attempted to remedy the situation by holding numerous military exercises, the latest against the Precentor Martial and the Com Guards.

The KungsArme's biggest problem is its negative attitude toward and poor treatment of mercenaries in its employ. To meet the threat of ronin units just after the creation of the FRR, Prince Magnusson knew he had to hire mercenaries to supplement his military capability. Ignoring General Mansdotter's experience with mercenaries, the Prince negotiated the contracts himself. Pressured by the worsening military situation and his need to conserve the new realm's monetary resources, he hired as many mercenary units as possible for the shortest possible contract periods.

The result was contracts that did not contain such standard agreements as the Emergency Action Clause, which obligates mercenaries to assist their employers in times of emergency, even if other contract obligations have been fulfilled. Thus did the KungsArme find itself high and dry in several crucial battles, calling in vain for mercenary assistance from a unit that had just carried out its orders and refused those not mandated by its contract.

Vinson's Vigilantes, for example, refused to come to the aid of the First Kavalleri because their contract stipulated that they were under no obligation to fight once peace was declared on Radstadt, which had occurred just days before. The incident created a hatred of mercenaries among the Rasalhagians, even though the ComStar Review Board later cleared the Vigilantes of wrongdoing. Despite their distrust, the FRR was again forced to hire mercenaries to help combat pirate activity along the Periphery. Some of the more unscrupulous mercenaries demanded, and won, huge contracts from the desperate Republic government, which deepened the hatred against mercenaries.

Because of these and other incidents, the FRR has taken its bit of revenge by making the lives of mercenaries as difficult as possible. All mercenaries are confined to small military areas called reservations, which they are not allowed to leave without a gaggle of passes and papers. Though this protects the mercenaries from an unsympathetic population, it allows the government to force the mercenaries to buy supplies at exorbitant prices.

Defense Industry

When the FRR was created, it inherited the New Oslo BattleMech facility of Gorton, Kingsley, and Thorpe Enterprises. The factory has since been expanded to produce Archer and Panther 'Mechs. It is expected that a second GKT BattleMech factory being built on Rasalhague will be completed in 3051.

Benson and Bjorn, the Republic's second largest weapons manufacturer, is located on Spittal. It has expanded its line of personal weapons and armored vehicles to include the Axel (Swedish for ax) Marks I and II. These are internal-combustion-engine versions of the not-exactly-secret Rommel and Patton designs of the Lyran Commonwealth.

Economy

Though Prince Magnusson has bungled mercenary relations, he has proven to be shrewd at dealing with the business community. Establishing extensive state control over the business world, the Prince found innovative ways to increase production. He gave workers better conditions and pay, coupled with severe penalties for those who did not respond to the new incentives. To please management, he made many positions hereditary, in addition to awarding corporate executives seats in the Riksdag.

Major Industries

Metals of the Earth are the huge mining, chemical, and synthetic conglomerate located on the planet Nox. MOE has adapted well to the new Rasalhague government. Though half its products still go to the Combine, according to an agreement between the two states, the other half has gone a long way to repairing war damage on many FRR worlds.

The attempt to transform Amau Electronics' major plant at Silvaton into a manufacturer of military electronics as well as a producer of its many low-budget consumer items has been less successful.

Under Combine control, Swedenborg Heavy Industries, manufacturer of large industrial robots, was forever in debt and faced with almost constant labor troubles. Under FRR control, its factories have almost tripled their output. Reports that the firm will enter the military industry by constructing a 'Mech or AeroSpace facility on Kirchbach remain unconfirmed.

Trade Relations

The Even Scale Policy is Prince Magnusson's term for his economic relations with the Draconis Combine and the Lyran Commonwealth. Ever mindful not to give preference to one neighbor's products, the Prince has ordered a strict one-to-one relationship between imports and exports with the Lyrans and the Combine. The number of traders from both realms is strictly controlled to ensure that neither side has an advantage. Every ton of food, every crane or holoset imported from one neighbor obligates the FRR to buy something of equal value from the other. Though this may be reasonable in theory, it is a nightmare in practice. Just keeping tabs on imports

from the Commonwealth and the Combine is beyond the capabilities of the FRR's bureaucracy.

This nightmare of red tape is one reason the government has begun to trade with other states. Indeed, trade with the Free Worlds League and the Federated Suns has been brisk over the years. Trade with the Federated Suns may be complicated in the future, however, as that realm becomes more closely joined with the Lyran Commonwealth.

Culture

Swedish is the official language of the Free Rasalhague Republic government and most major universities. With a small minority of only about 15 percent fluent in the language, Swedish is not the language of everyday life.

In the street and shops of the FRR, Swedenese is the tongue most often heard. A mix of Swedish and Standard Kurita Japanese, Swedenese has been slowly evolving ever since House Kurita seized control of the old Principality. Though difficult to learn because it requires a good knowledge of the two parent languages, it is amazingly rich and has produced a respectable body of literature.

The Lutheran Church-Radstadt Synad is the state religion of the FRR, yet only one-third of the people are active members. Other Christian religions, Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism all have substantial numbers of followers. The Republic is also host to minor sects, including the One Star Faith and a growing curiosity called Modern Norse, which attempts to update the beliefs and customs of Scandinavia's ancient polytheistic religion.

While blatant racism has disappeared, a subtle bias against people or things Oriental still exists. Prince Magnusson and General Mansdotter have strenuously opposed racism, but people of Oriental heritage rarely achieve positions of importance.

Conclusion

The major goal of the Free Rasalhague Republic is to survive and grow to the point where its neighbors no longer consider it a military target. The Even Scale Policy is probably a major stumbling block to this goal, but the policy is not likely to change as long as Prince Magnusson is in power.

Some Motpart members would like to oust Magnusson before he is to step down in 3054, but their numbers are small. If this seed of discontent takes a strong enough hold, it could lead to a civil war that the FRR is not likely to survive.

Update 3050 to present

The Clans Arrive

More than a decade of peace followed, enough time for the Elected Prince to get the Republic in order. He delegated command of the KungsArme to General Christian Mansdotter, allowing him to concentrate on politics. He refused to greatly strengthen the military, however, fearing this would arouse their neighbors' anger. This proved to

be a grave error in March 3050, when Clans Wolf and Ghost Bear struck at several Republic worlds on the border of the Periphery. Severely outclassed and outnumbered, the brave troops of the KungsArme could do little to stop the marauding Clans, and world after world fell to them, including the capital world of Rasalhague.

The capture of Rasalhague forced the Elected Prince to flee with only the aerospace wing of the First Drakons for protection. Mansdotter remained on planet, coordinating defenses. With the loss of the world, the general was forced into hiding. He was captured by Wolf troops a little more than a year later, but Mansdotter's aide, General Nels Rasmussen, took command of his guerrilla forces with scarcely a ripple.

Clan Wolf forces met up with the First Drakons again at Radstadt, following the loss of that world. The Elected Prince and his escort jumped in-system only to discover Clan WarShips waiting. The Drakons quickly leapt to the attack, buying time for Magnusson to recharge his jump engines and escape. Kapten Tyra Miraborg, daughter of the famous war hero Tor Miraborg, led the final assault. Her Shilone fighter badly damaged, Miraborg drove it into the bridge of a WarShip, where she was later learned had contained the ilKhan of the Clans. With his death, the Clans stalled their offensive to elect a new leader. One brave woman's final act had bought a year's respite for her people.

Pausing for Breath

During this year, all the Inner Sphere leaders met on the world of Outreach with the Wolf's Dragoons mercenary unit. There, they learned that the Dragoons had long ago come from the Clans but were now ready to help the Inner Sphere fight them. Their training occupied much of the year.

In November 3051, the Wolves renewed their offensive. The Ghost Bears returned a month later, and the slaughter began anew. Devastating news for Magnusson came in January of the following year: his only son, Ragnar, had been captured by the Wolves while defending Satalic. The report rocked the Republic, and for a time, the people lost hope.

Reports also arrived at this time that the Wolves had offered General Mansdotter the governorship of all captured worlds in exchange for helping pacify them. Mansdotter refused and was imprisoned. Despite Magnusson's hatred of mercenaries, the special forces of Wolf's Dragoons - Seventh Kommando - volunteered to use their Clan knowledge to rescue the general. The Dragoons slipped a DropShip past Wolf defenses on Rasalhague, releasing several Kestrel VTOLs containing troops and Elementals. They overpowered Mansdotter's Elemental guards and smuggled him off the world. The general soon returned to leading his forces, which were sorely pressed, despite new skills taught by the Dragoons.

Enter ComStar

In February 3052, Primus Myndo Waterly of ComStar approached the Elected Prince and general with a proposition. The Precentor Martial planned to fight a proxy battle with all of the Clans for Terra and wanted to use a Rasalhague planet as the battle

site, a quiet, agricultural world called Tukayyid. Magnusson and Mansdotter agreed and immediately began evacuating citizens with ComStar's help. Over the course of that fateful May, the future of Rsalhague was rewritten with the surprising Victory of the Com Guards help. In less than two years, the Republic had gone from eighty-four worlds to a mere seven, from 206 regiments in the KungsArme to twenty-six. If he wished to defend what he still had when the Truce of Tukayyid ended, Magnusson had to allow ComStar, which was looking for a base to defend Terra from the Clans, to station its military in the Republic.

Following the loss of Terra to the Word of Blake, ComStar based all its forces out of Free Rsalhague; indeed, Tukayyid is garrisoned entirely by the Com Guards, though this may soon change as more and more Republic citizens return there following the Great Refusal. Some citizens fear that ComStar intends to absorb what remains of the Republic, an idea that has sparked several angry demonstrations and some vandalizing of the HPG stations. Though not serious, the problem could get worse if allowed to continue.

The size of the KungsArme was reduced even more with the invasion of Clan Smoke Jaguar holdings by the new Star League. The Third Drakons helped reclaim Inner Sphere territory but emerged relatively whole. Not all KungsArme units were so lucky, however. The Republic sent the Fourth Drakons to Huntress, where they were so damaged they had to be disbanded.

A New Leader

Immediately following the election of Theodore Kurita to First Lord of the Star League in November 3061, Haakon Magnusson resigned the post of Elected Prince. Magnusson had remained beyond his limit of two ten-year terms due to the Clan Threat, but with the Great Refusal he could no longer justify his continued rule. The Republic held new elections immediately, with an amazing result, though he was not nominated, and technically was not even eligible, and an incredible ninety-three percent of the Republic Parliament voted for the captured Ragnar Magnusson! Since his capture, Ragnar had risen to the rank of Star Captain in the Wolf Clan, and had since been taken by Clan Ghost Bear. In an emergency meeting, the Parliament or Riksdag, decided that Ragnar was their duly Elected Prince and that they would hold another election to see who would act as regent until his return, if he ever returned.

The winner of that second election was General Mansdotter. The Riksdag awarded him the title of Elected Prince Regent, though he much prefers his military rank of Overbefalhavare, and gave him all powers of the Elected Prince until Ragnar returns to claim his position. Mansdotter has concentrated on increasing the size of the military and reviving the First Tyr regiment, creating a visible symbol of the Republic's imports and exports somewhat, dealing more with the Lyran Alliance and less with the Draconis Combine. Politically, however, the Overbefalhavare's most popular move has been the abolition of "mercenary reservations" and an easing of the regulations for dealing with mercenaries. The reservations, instituted in the wake of the Ronin Wars, restricted mercenaries to closely guarded sections of each city to ensure the mercenaries did not mix with Republic citizens or cause trouble. Whether this is simply meant to increase Mansdotter's popularity outside the Republic stems

from gratitude to the Wolf's Dragoons who recured him is hotly debated among political analysts.

Writing Credits:

Boy F. Peterson, Jr (20 year Update)

Dan "Flake" Grendell (FM: ComStar; Free Rasalhague Republic)



ComStar

Introduction

ComStar is dedicated to fulfilling a single, divine mission: to preserve the glorious Star League's technological legacy in order to prevent a new Dark Age. Founded in 2788 by the Blessed Jerome Blake, ComStar guards and maintains the hyperpulse generator communications network and other valuable technologies developed during humanity's golden age, knowledge that might have been lost forever were it not for the foresight of our Blessed Founder.

Blake recognized two great responsibilities in the wake of the collapse of the Star League: preserving as much of the currently available technological knowledge as possible, and preventing the Successor States from seizing the interstellar communications network and misusing it to destroy each other.

In 2788, Blake took control of Terra and declared it a neutral world. He offered secure interstellar communication to all Successor States that would pledge to respect the neutrality of the hyperpulse generator stations and personnel. The Inner Sphere leaders recognized that open communications were crucial to their survival, agreed to Blake's demands, and the blessed Order of ComStar was born.

Blake created a rigid religious hierarchy, which he headed in the capacity of Primus, along with the First Circuit Precentors to administer ComStar's affairs, and a secret brotherhood among ComStar's members in order to keep the secrets of the Star League safe from outside harm. Realizing that the Department of Communications was no longer a suitable name for the new organization, Blake chose to adopt the name of ComStar, a blend of Communications Enterprises Inc. and Starlight Broadcasting Ltd., which had formerly sold their services to the Star League.

Blake's Vision

Jerome Blake's leadership of ComStar lasted 31 years. During that time he laid the groundwork that would define the philosophy, operations, and structure of ComStar for centuries to come. One of his deepest beliefs was that ComStar must retain its purity by remaining somewhat isolated from the "outside world", and he used the organization's hierarchy and technology to accomplish that goal. Any member who discussed even the most mundane technology with outsiders was severely punished and could be expelled from the organization. Blake believed that the decline of civilization was a form of punishment that humanity was suffering for its sins.

It was also obvious by this time that the scope of the destruction of the wars being fought around him would eventually destroy civilization completely unless some individual or group undertook to guard precious technological and scientific knowledge. This Jerome Blake considered to be ComStar's highest purpose: the maintenance and preservation of human knowledge at all costs. Thus, ComStar has become a haven for all manner of technicians, prospering while the rest of interstellar society is tearing itself to shreds.

Under Blake's leadership, the First Circuit, now the absolute governing body of ComStar, barred all but its own members from its meetings and established the strong, secret brotherhood among members of the Order. An internal security force known as ROM was formed in 2811 to help prevent leakage of technological information to the outside and to help thwart defection of ComStar personnel to the Successor States. ROM quickly became respected and feared throughout ComStar.

One of the longest-lasting branches of service Blake founded was the Mercenary Review Board. (available in more detail in a separate section.) Developed as a means to monitor and control mercenary contracts, the project might have seemed beyond the traditional scope of ComStar at the time, but each of the House Lords responded with enthusiasm to Blake's proposal for such a board.

Jerome Blake, meanwhile, continued to be visionary. The war raged around him and his world, a conflagration that Blake foresaw would continue for several generations and that would destroy most of the high technology perfected in the golden age of the Star League. In Blake's own words, "ComStar is the only hope of preserving the future of human beings in the Inner Sphere."

Early Primuses

After Blake's death in 2819, Conrad Toyama of Dieron succeeded Blake as Primus of ComStar. He helped to further solidify and bind the Order together as one. During this time rituals were adopted for operation of the vast HyperPulse Generators and other technological wonders, to help remind each and every Acolyte and Precentor of their sacred duty to humanity as a member of ComStar. In addition, the belief was fostered and spread outside the Order, reinforcing the fact that the sacred magic of HPG transmissions could only be wielded by ComStar adepts, and ensuring that no Successor State would attempt to take control of the Star League's technological legacy.

Primus Toyama's handpicked successor, Raymond Karpov, took over as Primus in 2837 when Toyama suffered a massive stroke. Primus Karpov continued Toyama's

work to strengthen Blake's vision for ComStar. Though many of his enhancements were minor, they have endured for over centuries and have had a powerful symbolic impact. Karpov suggested, for instance, that all members of ComStar wear white robes instead of the gray jumpsuits used by techs since the Blake era. In his own words, "white represents the purity of Blake's vision and of ComStar's intent." Often, the robes are adorned with mathematical symbols taken from the holy scriptures of an ancient science journal or technical readout.

Other subtle additions included the establishment of nightly indoctrination sessions at each HPG to discuss the theology of ComStar and its role in the fate of the Inner Sphere. Raymond Karpov stepped down as Primus in 2875, due to his failing health, but remained semi-active within our blessed Order, administering the Blake Medical Center in Europe, until his death in 2880.

The Office of Primus

Including Blake and his two immediate successors, there has been a total of 14 Primuses:

Name	Previous Position	Time Served
Jerome Blake	Minister of Communications	2788 - 2819
Conrad Toyama	Precentor Dieron	2819 - 2837
Raymond Karpov	Precentor Alpha C	2837 - 2875
Andrea Marteen	Precentor Arcturus	2875 - 2901
Dwight Kurstin	Precentor Caph	2901 - 2902
Gregori Hartford	Precentor Procyon	2902 - 2910
Kari Marie Marshall	Precentor Procyon	2910 - 2930
Hollings York	Precentor New Earth	2930 - 2947
Adrienne Sims	Precentor Oriente	2947 - 2979
Yin Takami	Precentor New Earth	2979 - 2994
Allen Rusenstein	Precentor Alpha C	2994 - 3006
Julian Tiepolo	Precentor Atreus	3006 - 3029
Myndo Waterly	Precentor Dieron	3029 - 3052
Sharilar Mori	Precentor Dieron	3052 - present

Summary

Each Primus has made his or her own contributions to the office and to the Order. The early Primuses were responsible for laying the groundwork for the heavy burden ComStar carries for the fate of humanity.

Jerome Blake single-handedly saved the Inner Sphere from complete and utter destruction after the Aramis Coup and Kerensky's Exodus, by restoring and taking command of the vast HPG network that the Star League Department of Communications had built throughout known space. His Proclamation to the House Lords of ComStar's neutrality set the stage for the Order to accomplish its sacred mission. Blake showed tremendous talent in technology, foresight, political savvy, economic planning, and leadership. In all these areas Blake achieved absolutely incredible feats during ComStar's foundation.

Primuses Toyama and Karpov continued Blake's work, drawing strength from his divine vision for the Order, to build ComStar into the sacred and benevolent institution it is today. Of significant note in later years, Primus York was responsible for the formation of our very own standing military, the ComStar Guards and Militia; and Primus Sims initiated the Explorer Corps, founded to scout out and map the

worlds beyond the Periphery. The background of each of these is detailed in a its own section.

ComStar Logo

The design for the famous symbol of ComStar, a circle star with two downward-pointing beams, was commissioned by Primus Conrad Toyama in 2823. Knowing the value of a visual symbol to unify any organization, he announced a competition to choose an emblem for ComStar. More than 800 entries were submitted, and the Primus judged each one personally.

The winning entry was submitted by Adept Stanfield K'wani. In his own words, the dark outer circle represents the dark times prophesied by Jerome Blake. The original drawing showed a star within the dark circle but the Primus modified it, removing all but two star points, leaving the rest as spokes circled in black. According to Toyama the star represents the light of mankind - technology and the enlightenment of Blake's words. Once the prophesies of Blake had been fulfilled the image would reclaim its star points.

The most striking aspect of the ComStar logo are the two star points. On the original design these were as they are now, elongated and pointing downward. According to designer Adept K'wani, "the point on the right of the image represents communications and the other represents technology, the two bases of ComStar's true source of power in the Inner Sphere."

Comstar Mercenary Review Board

The Mercenary Review Board allowed ComStar agents to serve as brokers for all mercenaries and their employers in the Inner Sphere. After negotiating a contract, an employer would turn over the full amount of money (plus a 5 percent handling fee) to local ComStar authorities. ComStar, in turn, advanced as much of the payment as it saw fit to the mercenary unit for necessary purchases and operating capital. Upon successful completion of their contract, the mercenaries collected the balance (less a second 5 percent handling charge).

Arbitration of contracts by the Mercenary Review Board proved a valuable safeguard on both sides. Any unit failing to perform contracted services after taking an advance found itself unable to evade ComStar's almost universal reach. ComStar informed other potential employers of a rogue unit's actions, and had the power to threaten an Interdiction against any House employing such a unit. ComStar returned the money to the original employer when a unit skipped on a contract, and in the interim, used the money for profitable investments.

To ensure fair dealings on the part of employers as well as those they hire, Blake provided for a panel of ComStar administrators to hear claims concerning breaches of faith and to judge the veracity of complaints. Upon reaching a verdict, the panel broadcasted its findings throughout the Inner Sphere. As the reputations of mercenary units and their employers have a bearing on subsequent negotiations involving other units or Houses, violating contractual terms offered little profit to any concerned.

Through the Mercenary Review Board's variety of activities, ComStar has functioned not only as a communications service, but also as a mercenary guild, an inter-League criminal extradition service, and a banking house, all of which has added considerably through the centuries to ComStar's power and prestige.

Due to ComStar's dealing with the Clans before Tukayyid, however, most if not all of the Houses no longer trusted the Order as an impartial arbitrator of mercenary contracts. So, during the peace summit Primus Mori held on Terra in the spring of 3052, Precentor Martial Focht proposed to abandon control. The Houses agreed to have the Board re-form as a jointly administered committee made up of representatives from each government, also allowing ComStar to maintain an active seat on the board, as a legitimate employer of mercenary forces. Outreach, the home of Wolf's Dragoons, was chosen as the official seat of the new Mercenary Review and Bonding Commission. This marked the end of ComStar's centuries-old control over mercenary contracts.

ROM

ComStar knows all. - Anastasius Focht

Jerome Blake formed ROM in 2811 after Chancellor Ilsa Liao attempted to bribe ComStar technicians to defect, and then sent a terrorist group in an attack against the HPG station on Nanking. He proposed the immediate creation of a covert security force to protect ComStar's precious HPG network from both external and internal threats. According to Blake's proposal, operatives would work as undercover agents within the ranks of ComStar's technicians, as well as posing as citizens. This secret intelligence network would locate threats to ComStar and eliminate them before any damage was done. ROM reported directly to the Prime Administrator.

Command Structure

Assisting the Precentor ROM are the State Administrators, one for each of the six Successor States and the four territories currently occupied by the Clans. Each of these ten administrators oversees operations within his or her respective jurisdiction and keeps the Precentor informed of foreign agents' activities within each region. The administrators also enforce official policies to ensure the continued security of the service in each region, including the recently enacted mandate that all Word of Blake agents discovered within ROM suffer immediate execution. Many ComStar members consider this policy unnecessarily harsh, but most ROM agents believe that only such drastic measures can ensure the protection of ComStar as a whole.

Each world still containing an operational, ComStar-administered HPG facility maintains a ROM base, normally located within the HPG facility. Under the command of an administrator, ROM personnel assigned to these bases protect the families from enemy agents and carry out all intelligence operations on the planet. To support these planetary ROM operations, Precentor Parrdeau maintains a standing core of fast-response groups who, with the aid of a fleet of JumpShips, can respond immediately to any crisis situation.

Rank Structure

ROM ranks its members according to a system similar to that of the ComGuards, using classifications based upon the Greek alphabet to identify ROM's various divisions. Each of the branches listed below also shows its operatives' standard classification.

ROM Branches

Counterintelligence (mu/delta)
Diplomatic Operations (rho/gamma)
Covert Operations (rho/rho)
Information and Analysis (mu/mu)
Clan Liaison (rho/chi)
Special Services (delta/epsilon, delta/xi)
Security (mu/iota)

The First Circuit

In 2784, three days after Kerensky's legendary exodus, Jerome Blake had reestablished the Prime, or First Circuit of the former SLCOMNET. The planets of New Earth, Barnard, Alpha C, Bryant, Procyon, and Dieron became the new First Circuit.

By the late 2850's, ComStar's efforts to strengthen and expand the vast communications network had succeeded too well. Increased communications had dramatically slowed transmission time. To decrease the load, Primus Karpov increased the First Circuit to ten stations in 2857. The newest members were Precentors Arcturus, Oriente, Altair, and Capella.

High Command

Victor Ian Steiner-Davion
Sharilar Mori
Victoria Pardeau
First Circuit Members
Primus Sharilar Mori
Precentor New Earth
Precentor Sirius
Precentor Dieron
Precentor Bryant
Precentor Procyon
Precentor CaphM
Precentor Barnard
Precentor Alpha C

The Primus makes all decisions, which can be overridden by a majority vote of the First Circuit. The Primus can also be removed by a unanimous vote of the First Circuit. Since the Primus votes in all decisions, removal is very unlikely. Currently, Sharilar Mori serves as the Primus, with the First Circuit being composed of Precentors New Earth, Sirius, Bryant, Dieron, Procyon, Caph, Barnard, and Alpha C.

Precentor Atreus Demona Aziz is still officially a member of the First Circuit, but due to her involvement in the Toyama sect of the Word of Blake splinter group, she does not attend meetings or vote on matters.

The ComStar command hierarchy underwent great changes in the Reformation. For nearly 300 years, under the leadership of the primacy, the First Circuit held sole responsibility for administrating the ComStar communications network. The ranking Precentors of the First Circuit maintained ComStar's religious status among the citizens and turned the writings of Jerome Blake into gospel.

In the new Order, the First Circuit can no longer function simply as the cloistered leaders of a quasi-religion. The Precentors must often travel far from the marble halls of Hilton Head to serve as much-needed administrators, diplomats, and ComStar liaisons.

For centuries, misguided leaders of ComStar used the communications network and their exclusive control of the technology to manipulate events in the Inner Sphere to their own ends. A particularly costly abuse of this power occurred during the Clan war, when Capellan Chancellor Romano Liao used interstellar communications to send assassins against Justin Allard, husband of the St. Ives Compact's Duchess Candace Liao. The First Circuit knew the content of her communications but failed to prevent her instructions from being carried out. The Inner Sphere lost a valuable life through their inaction.

ComStar's new policy of openness extends to the First Circuit's administration of all communications. The Free Worlds League has unfortunately chosen not to benefit from the new democracy in ComStar, and though the First Circuit maintains the seat of Precentor Atreus, representative of the League, that Precentor has not appeared at any meetings since Primus Mori took office.

ComStar Law

When Jerome Blake reestablished the First Circuit of HPG's, he also established a corresponding First Circuit of advisors. Administratively, the First Circuit was a small group made up of the chief administrators, or Precentors, of the HPG transmitters on the former Hegemony worlds. Jerome Blake drafted a simple, two-page set of parliamentary rules and procedures for running the First Circuit meetings. His document called for a Prime Administrator, or Primus, to act as chair and president, but gave the First Circuit the power to veto the primus' decisions by a majority vote. Blake's short memo eventually would become part of the Articles of ComStar, the basis of our blessed Order's law.

Primus Karpov formalized some of the organizational structure in the Doctrinal Edict of 2861. The process of naming a Primus was set down officially, in which the current Primus would choose his or her successor, who would then be confirmed by the First Circuit. The only formal organization recognized below the Primus was the position of Precentor of each world's HPG station. The Precentor controlled the ranks of the adepts, the working technicians. Finally at the lowest level of the hierarchy are the acolytes. Though this three-tiered structure already existed in most of the HPG

stations, established during the time of Blake and Toyama, the Doctrinal Edict made it official.

Additionally, Primus Hartford passed several reforms during his tenure that permitted the First Circuit to name a successor to the Primus or to remove a Primus from power on a full vote of all Precentors. The measures also called for at least three members of the First Circuit to be informed in writing of all major ROM operations.

In 2988, Primus Takami further revised the First Circuit. Until Takami's reign, the First Circuit had always been composed of the Precentors of the first communications circuit of HPG transmitters in the Inner Sphere. Primus Takami believed that the First Circuit members had become more like politicians than technocrats, which was no longer faithful to Jerome Blake's original vision.

Primus Takami decided to name four new members to that governing body, one for each of the capital worlds of the House governments not already represented. These Advocate-Precentors were to speak for all the ComStar installations within their given realms. The added positions were Precentor Tharkad for the Lyran Commonwealth, Precentor Sian for the Capellan Confederation, Precentor Atreus for the Free Worlds League, and Precentor New Avalon for the Federated Suns. Precentor Dieron was made the advocate of the Draconis Combine.

Com Guards

You have to understand the code of duty and honor that rules those who pilot these engines of destruction. Placing such an awesome weapon in the hands of an individual implies a similar gesture of trust. - Anastasius Focht

During a meeting with the First Circuit in 2933 Primus York proposed the formation of a standing military for ComStar. This military, to be called the ComStar Guards and Militia, would be a rapid-deployment, light infantry force constantly on call for emergencies such as the abduction of prominent ComStar personnel. ComStar would have the ability to respond quickly with some degree of military force in times of need. Fifty years later, building from this foundation, the reigning Primus and First Circuit began an ambitious MechWarrior training program.

The original proposal called for the creation of eight regiments of full-time troops, but the Primus settled for five regiments as a compromise with a liberal faction of the First Circuit. The ComStar Guards and Militia would be based in the Sol system and would remain under the combined control of the Primus and the First Circuit. To fund the creation of a standing military, Primus York tapped the vast resources of ROM, arguing that ROM would have less need for the money now that ComStar would have a military force.

The core of the Guards and Militia was the former mercenary Bandersnatches. Their contract was dissolved and they accepted full-time permanent employment with ComStar. The Guards and Militia would have the best equipment possible, vintage Star League Defense Forces gear left behind after the Exodus.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the formation of the ComStar Guards and Militia was the revitalization of the Sandhurst Royal Military College in Berkshire, England. The site had originally served as a training school for ROM. York convinced the First Circuit to relocate the ROM training center and to approve millions of C-bills for Sandhurst's renovation. The old military academy was converted into a modern military complex, complete with BattleMech and aerospace fighter facilities and training grounds.

Primus York knew that the creation of a military force by the neutral ComStar would stun the leaders of the Inner Sphere. In his messages announcing the formation of the ComStar Guards and Militia, he told the leaders that these troops were strictly for the defense of Terra and would train only in defensive operations.

Current Organization

ComStar suffered many heavy losses in the Clan war, both to Clan weapons and in defections to the Word of Blake splinter group. In order to preserve the Com Guard structure as much as possible, the Precentor Martial kept the thirteen armies but reduced each army to four divisions, down from six prior to Tukayyid, resulting in 52 divisions, 2 of those belonging to Brion's Legion, a mercenary group working for our Holy Order.

The basic ComStar military unit is the division, roughly parallel to the Regimental Combat Team (RCT) common in the Federated Commonwealth.



Word of Blake

Introduction

Our most recent intelligence regarding the activities of the reactionary element known as the Word of Blake is provided here. Though smaller in number than our brotherhood, the Word of Blake must not be taken lightly. Despite ComStar's massive losses of personnel and equipment on Tukayyid, the Word of Blake still fields impressive military strength, numbering just over four divisions in size. Their military might and close ties to former Precentor Thomas Marik, currently Captain-General of the Free Worlds League, gives them considerable power in the Inner Sphere's political arena. The Word of Blake currently operates in the Free Worlds League; these reactionaries bear careful watching lest their influence spread out of control. Detailed

reports on each section are available through ROM officers with Alpha Level Security Clearance.

The Renegades

ComStar defeated the Clans on Tukayyid, but the victory was bittersweet. ComStar had negotiated for an end to all offensive action aimed at striking further through the Inner Sphere toward Terra for fifteen years if the Clans lost, offering Terra's subjugation to the Clans if the Clans won. However, this agreement only bound the Clans to cease advancing toward Terra; they considered the rest of the Inner Sphere fair game. As long as it lay "spinward" from Terra, the Clans could assault any world within their reach, honing their tactics and wearing down the Successor States little by little. ComStar had gained a brief breathing space for the Inner Sphere; in less than two decades, mortal battle would once more be joined.

The action on Tukayyid and events following spelled the downfall of the old ComStar. When Precentor Martial Focht returned to Terra after Tukayyid, he confronted Primus Waterly about Operation Scorpion, her futile effort to take over the Inner Sphere by staging revolts to sabotage the Clans' administration of conquered worlds and placing all Inner Sphere HPGs under Interdiction. Though the details of the meeting remain unknown, Precentor Focht convinced Myndo Waterly to abdicate the primacy. One week later, the First Circuit elected Sharilar Mori, Precentor Dieron, as Primus. Together, Primus Mori and Precentor Martial Focht embarked on a series of far-reaching reforms.

Demona Aziz, Precentor of Atreus and a member of the First Circuit during Operation Scorpion, held strictly to the rigid, conservative interpretation of the works of Jerome Blake, and blindly followed Primus Waterly. Precentor Aziz wrongly assumed that Primus Mori's accession and her internal reforms resulted from an illegal coup d'etat by the Precentor Martial. Though the other First Circuit members saw the wisdom of Precentor Martial Focht's actions, Precentor Aziz took her staff and bolted from Terra, traveling to Atreus to meet with Captain-General Thomas Marik. Upon arriving, she informed the Captain-General that the ComStar he once served was under attack from within. Demona Aziz petitioned Thomas Marik for sanctuary within the Free Worlds League for herself and any other members of ComStar who might share her fears and follow her. Captain-General Marik granted her request.

Ignorant of the full scope of the Reformation, Precentor Aziz failed to reveal the true nature and extent of the changes in ComStar to Captain-General Marik, and the eventual depth of response to his offer of sanctuary astounded him. When Aziz fled, Primus Mori had yet to initiate most of the Reformation Acts; ComStar's internal struggle had not yet spread beyond the First Circuit. Judging Primus Mori and Precentor Focht by her own narrow standards of conduct, Aziz mistook the rebirth of ComStar for no more than another round of petty political maneuvering.

Using ROM agents loyal to her, Precentor Aziz sent messages to every HPG station across the Inner Sphere, inviting all ComStar members who rejected the new ways in favor of the old to join her in exile. As Precentor Aziz's call went out, Primus Mori passed the first of the Reformation Acts and began to uproot some of the Order's underlying misconceptions. The situation could easily have erupted into violent

internal conflict, but Aziz's rebellion provided an easy way out for those unwilling to accept change. Primus Mori wisely showed great patience by allowing the conservative members of the Order to make their choice and leave unopposed, keeping turmoil to a minimum in the divided brotherhood.

Within months, Aziz's initial handful of followers became a flood of more than two thousand refugees, most arriving in the Free Worlds League with only the robes on their backs. Some of the most fanatical members of the Com Guards managed to smuggle out their BattleMechs, or carried their personal tools and weapons with them. The defectors formed a loose organization, still led unofficially by Precentor Aziz, and adopted the name Word of Blake.

The Word of Blake accepted as members all those who subscribed to ComStar's traditional operating procedure and faith, wrongly believed to be the teachings, writings, and methodologies of the sainted Jerome Blake. While the Reformation Acts unfolded within ComStar, changing almost every aspect of the old Order, members of the Word of Blake held true to the monolithic, repressive ComStar they had always known.

Some remaining traditions are superficial. For example, unlike the new ComStar, Word of Blake followers still wear the white robes of the old Order. More seriously, they continue to recite prayers to the technological devices under their control, praising them for their continued, smooth operation. The reformed ComStar no longer retains this unnecessary and superstitious practice. To an untrained outsider, acts of techno-worship performed by Word of Blake members appear to be nothing more than harmless, quasireligious chanting. The danger lies in the Word of Blake's sincere but ignorant belief that without prayers, the machinery will not function. They claim that operating an HPG merges technology and mankind, and their prayers both thank and supplicate the machines. By their example, they teach others to emulate superstitious flummery, arming them against any efforts to teach independent thought.

The Marik Alliance

Caught off guard by the sheer numbers of ComStar followers switching their allegiance to the Word of Blake, Captain-General Marik arranged to meet with several of the defecting Precentors that he knew personally to determine the best course of action. Already, each Precentor represented an individual faction of refugees seeking sanctuary within the Free Worlds League borders. Precentor Blane of Gibson, a long-time friend and ally of the Captain-General, led the delegation. Blane offered a more moderate, less overtly reactionary style of leadership, providing a marked contrast to the often-combative Aziz. Thomas Marik's open support for Precentor Blane as the ad hoc leader among the Precentors infuriated Demona Aziz, and still provokes controversy within the Word of Blake administration. Believing that her former rank on the First Circuit entitled her to prominence among the renegades, Precentor Aziz resented her fall in status from founder to leader of a minority faction in the group she helped to forge. She could do little about it, however, except seethe inwardly under a barely civil exterior and bide her time.

The meeting yielded two accords. Thomas Marik agreed to relocate the arriving members of the newly created Word of Blake to the planet Gibson, granting them a

landhold there. In return, the Word of Blake signed a contract to service the HPGs the League had gained in the aftermath of Operation Scorpion. Precentor Blane and the other gathered leaders willingly drafted the contract, aware that they would need the resulting income to support the ever-growing number of ComStar refugees.

The HPG service contract between the Free Worlds League and the Word of Blake benefited both parties equally. It provided the Word of Blake with a substantial, steady source of income that their new Order desperately needed. It also placed a formidable political and military tool in Thomas Marik's hands. Knowing that Marik supported their cause, the Word of Blake in return pledged him their aid should the need arise. Should House Marik's upcoming marital alliance with House Liao prove shaky, the Captain-General may use his newfound allies to shore it up. In the meantime, the Word of Blake's trained MechWarriors and skilled, ruthless ROM operatives add considerably to Thomas Marik's personal power. Time alone will show what use he plans to make of them, and how large a threat they pose to ComStar.

Fortunately, even as ComStar struggles through changes, the Word of Blake is also suffering upheaval. Where the ComStar Reformation has the advantage of a clear vision and a strong leader, the Word of Blake has yet to define its true direction and goals. As yet, only blind rejection of Primus Mori's reforms binds them together. Each subgroup within the Word of Blake proposes a different direction for their organization to take, and the sect's leaders lack sufficient control over their members to prevent each faction from acting on its own.

All factions agree on a few points. They decry our blessed Order and its members as heretics for defying the ancient doctrines falsely claimed to be the writings of Jerome Blake. They denounce as forgeries the recently discovered, true writings of our blessed founder on which Primus Mori and Precentor Martial Focht have based the Reformation. They mourn ComStar as lost, destroyed from inside, and claim that salvation is possible only by fleeing from our Order's so-called corrupted vision and joining the Word of Blake. Beyond such narrow-minded hatred, they hold little in common.

Precentor Aziz recently deepened the tension between ComStar and the Word of Blake by unveiling her logo for the growing organization. Wisely declining to widen the schism with a show of anger, neither Primus Mori nor Precentor Martial Focht have publicly commented on the logo. However, Precentor Aziz's act of petty defiance can only dim hopes for an eventual reconciliation.

The logo of the Word of Blake consists of a massive broadsword thrust downward, its hilt decorated with the ComStar insignia surrounded by six concentric rings. According to Aziz, the sword represents the Word of Blake's iron determination to establish what they call the true faith, and their willingness to use force to fulfill their version of Jerome Blake's prophecies and visions. The six concentric rings surrounding the ComStar insignia represent the original seats of the First Circuit during Blake's time. By invoking the Order's earliest days, Precentor Aziz seeks to legitimize centuries of creeping revisionism and false doctrine as the gospel of Jerome Blake.

Currently, ComStar has more pressing concerns than these empty gestures. Former Primus Waterly's influence remains straining within the ranks of the Word of Blake, and some factions call for the death of "the heretic Primus," Sharilar Mori. Most

factions also consider the Primus and Precentor Martial to be evil demons who destroyed ComStar and betrayed Blake's work. Their hysterical rhetoric might seem comic, were its potential consequences not so grave. The Order has taken steps to provide protection for the Primus and Precentor Martial. Though the murder of either leader would create temporary chaos, ComStar would survive such a trauma. Destroying our leaders will not destroy our faith or our work. The Word of Blake's most fanatical members pose a danger beyond their threat to ComStar, however. Those who call Myndo Waterly a saint point accusing fingers at the Federated Commonwealth, calling it evil and advocating its destruction. Allied with the Free Worlds League, the Word of Blake may poison relations between these two states beyond repair, possibly even touching off another Inner Sphere-wide war.

Monkey Warfare

If guerilla warfare is defined as perpetrating clandestine attacks on the opposition in order to wear them down, in "monkey" warfare, both sides wage a conflict of escalating, annoying pranks that, though expensive and time-consuming, cost no lives. Petty harassment of ComStar by Word of Blake members of the Free Worlds League and the Federated Commonwealth has forced our Order to retaliate in an ongoing war of one-upmanship.

As a gesture of respect for their misguided brethren, ComStar allows the Word of Blake to use the ComStar HPG network, requiring no modifications for alternate methods of transmission or additional security measures. Because ComStar hold a one-year service contract with the Free Worlds League, we also transmit through the HPG stations held by the Word of Blake. However, ComStar has only minimal control over those stations as its personnel are gradually replaced by Word of Blake technicians (as agreed in that contract), and therefore cannot guarantee that the messages sent through them will arrive at their destination unmolested. Mounting evidence suggests that Word of Blake technicians frequently tamper with ComStar message packets sent through their Class A HPGs.

Word of Blake technicians also delight in adding entire, unrelated messages to transmissions. Frequently, they insert recruitment information into private communiques. ComStar internal documents bear the brunt of this abuse, often appearing at their destination padded by pages of ranting commentary from the Word of Blake renegades. Though this tampering has a fleeting impact, ComStar loses time and money when forced to re-transmit messages, sometimes several times, to ensure that at least one copy makes it through unaltered.

A more serious interception involved former Primus Myndo Waterly's body, which disappeared from Terra prior to its scheduled cremation. Primus Mori declared the theft a "morbid, callous, and heinous act against the dead." Precentor Martial Focht privately fears that the body of the former Primus may be used as a symbol of worship to enshrine Waterly as a martyr. As of this writing, no group claims responsibility for the theft, but evidence points strongly to the Word of Blake's role in the desecration.

Organization

The Word of Blake retains much of the organizational structure used by ComStar prior to the Reformation. The three-tiered ranking of acolyte, adept, and Precentor remains the same, and each division's function uses the standard Greek-letter classifications. The Word of Blake has kept the Omicron designation, which represents ROM's internal security and doctrinal purity function.

Repudiating the First Circuit as a corrupt body, the Precentors leading the Word of Blake rejected that portion of ComStar's command structure; yet each are leery of relinquishing personal power and so they formed a loose tribunal, currently led by Precentor Blane of Gibson. One Precentor represents each faction of the Word of Blake, with Blane arbitrating all disputes. As of this writing, no one faction controls the tribunal, and the Word of Blake remains in constant flux.

Splinter Groups

Part of the reason no one faction can gain control of the tribunal lies in the widely diverse interpretations of the writings and will of Jerome Blake held by the various factions. Though outwardly committed to a single "true vision" they claim to possess, few within the Word of Blake agree on even the smallest doctrinal point. Each faction boasts a certain number of supporters, often centered around a specific person, geographic area, or unique view of Blake's vision. These factions often break down into smaller splinter groups, each of which endorses yet another specific viewpoint or ideology. Precentor Demona Aziz leads the most radical faction, a group known as the Toyama, named for Primus Conrad Toyama, who first turned ComStar from humanity's guardians to humanity's oppressors. The Toyama group militantly follows their namesake's gospel, convinced it is Blake's philosophy, and believes that the Word of Blake should build a large enough army to seize Terra from our Order and reimpose the suffocating religion of the old ComStar throughout the Inner Sphere. The Toyama have made several assassination attempts against our Primus and Precentor Martial, and have launched several terrorist attacks against ComStar HPGs in the Federated Commonwealth.

Even within the Toyama, more extreme splinter groups call for the assassination of all the Successor State House Lords. Though these murderous reactionaries represent only a small fraction of the total group, the lack of centralized control within the Word of Blake makes it impossible to check the movements of each faction or individual. Still other minor contingents lobby for attacks against the Wolf Pack, formerly Wolf's Dragoons, in retaliation for their decades-old ties to the Clans. We of ComStar must not be misled by their small size into underestimating the danger these groups pose. As history has demonstrated time and again, the act of a single zealot can plunge worlds into the flames of chaos.

Precentor Blane leads the moderate True Believers faction, who resort to violence only when diplomacy fails. Precentor Blane considers reconciliation between ComStar and the Word of Blake possible, but only at the cost of extreme sacrifice on both sides. Given the recalcitrance of Blane's fellow Precentors, reunification seems unlikely. In accordance with his hopes, however slim, Blane plays the role of middleman in the struggle within the Word of Blake, balancing the violent factions against those who view ComStar strictly as a religious calling.

The Counter-Reformists, led by Precentor Willima Willis, maintain that the Word of Blake should review the writings and teachings of Jerome Blake and revise them where necessary. Though they disagree with the reforms enacted by Primus Mori and Precentor Focht, they admit that Blake's philosophy may have been tainted since ComStar's founding. They believe that the only proper response to past treachery is to use the past as a building block for the future, reevaluating the existing interpretations of Blake's vision to discover where ComStar went wrong and to avoid making those same mistakes. Predictably, this faction has already been branded heretical by the majority of the Word of Blake. Though its hot-tempered Precentor boasts a number of followers, this faction also lacks a definitive direction or plan.

Reconciliation, if it occurs, will probably come from within the Counter-Reformists or the True Believers. Some minor splinter groups under Precentor Blane see reconciliation as the only way to deal with ComStar, and advocate extending diplomatic ties to our Order as a way to begin healing the breach between the two groups.

The Shunners faction has not splintered, and in fact, seems to be growing in power. Shunners believe that Jerome Blake's prophesied destruction of the Inner Sphere draws near, and that the Word of Blake's only hope for survival is to isolate itself and weather the coming storm. They consider the current contract with the Free Worlds League a mistake, a blatant disregard of Blake's warnings about allying with one of the Successor States. In their own way, the Shunners are as radical as the Toyama group. Though they disagree about how to act on their theology, they will fight for their right to exist. Precentor Curtis Byrd, former Precentor of Florida in the Federated Commonwealth, currently leads the Shunners, the least vocal of but most steadfast of the current factions.

Further splinter groups may exist of which we remain ignorant, making our analysis of the balance of power within the Word of Blake precarious, at best.

ROM

The Word of Blake retained the name of ROM for its internal security organization. They consider themselves to be the true ComStar, and aside from jettisoning the First Circuit, have made a point of retaining the Order's outward trappings, including the Greek-letter function identification for all military and other rank structures. Along with its structure, the Word of Blake ROM also retained its traditional watchdog role. ROM agents infiltrate every level of the Word of Blake, seeking out ComStar agents and punishing any converts tempted to rethink their loyalties. Most of ROM defected to the Word of Blake in the early days of the Reformation, bringing with them considerable skill in espionage as well as rigid conservative influences. Lacking control by a central authority, they frequently overstep the bounds of their position and of common decency.

ROM agents associated with the Toyama faction recently attempted to bomb Hilton Head Island. One of the few ComStar ROM agents to successfully infiltrate the Word of Blake ROM sent a warning which foiled the attack. If successful, the attack would have killed the Primus, the First Circuit, and the Precentor Martial at one stroke. Instead, the incident only served to further escalate the tensions between our blessed Order and the renegade Word of Blake.

Thankfully, only sixteen altercations between the ROM forces of ComStar and the Word of Blake have degenerated into fatal violence, mainly in the Federated Commonwealth, where the more bloodthirsty factions attempted to punish those individuals who defied Primus Waterly's orders during Operation Scorpion. Given the scope of changes going on elsewhere, our Order views these distressing incidents as minor by comparison.

The News Bureau

The ComStar News Bureau lost several key reporters in the early stages of the Reformation. Those who chose to join the ranks of the Word of Blake have set up a rival news service.

Callin their creation the Blake News, these reporters originated a series of programs purportedly illuminating the teachings of Jerome Blake. As with their parent, the Word of Blake, the Blake News cannot agree on one way to interpret the work of ComStar's founder; that they managed to produce this program at all is astonishing. As might be expected, the final version sparked immediate controversy. Mirroring the internal struggle taking place within the larger organization, fights sometimes break out during live broadcasts between rival factions and splinter groups. The actual reporting of news unfortunately receives short shrift.

Blake Guard/Word of Blake Militia

Of the thousands of ComStar members who fled to the Free Worlds League, one of the most notable and potentially dangerous refugees is Precentor Trent Arian of the Com Guards. During the battle of Tukayyid, he fought against Clan Diamond Shark, earning several commendations for his bravery and leadership, including the Precentor's Sword. Upon returning to Terra with his unit for refit, he learned of Primus Mori's Reformation Acts. He promptly took more than thirty MechWarriors and their equipment back off-planet and headed for the Free Worlds League. Precentor Arian met with Precentor Blane on Gibson and pledged his loyalty to the Word of Blake. Precentor Blane, realizing that the number of refugees coming from the ranks of the Com Guards made a Precentor Martial necessary for the organization, appointed Precentor Arian to that position.

Precentor Martial Arian faced the challenge of forging viable military units from the hodgepodge of BattleMechs and personnel that left ComStar to join the Word of Blake. Captain-General Marik provided the assistance of the Free Worlds League Ministry of Defense, and with their help Arian shaped his army around the traditional Com Guard unit structure. The Free Worlds League advisors suggested establishing two primary military bases on Gibson, and remained there as technical consultants. Their true function may be to act as Thomas Marik's eyes and ears, attempting to ensure that the Word of Blake military acts in accordance with Marik's designs and goals.

Despite their philosophical differences, all Word of Blake factions agree that to ensure their survival, they must directly control military assets. The tribunal allocated funding to Precentor Martial Arian with instructions to replenish and increase his forces with new BattleMechs and equipment. He issued an immediate appeal to all

ComStar refugees, calling for engineers to design a new generation of 'Mechs for his troops, variously known as the Blake Guard or the Word of Blake Militia. To his delight, many ComStar engineers had joined the Word of Blake and eagerly tackled this new assignment.

Once the engineers had several designs underway, Arian negotiated a production contract with the Free Worlds Defense Industries' Gibson BattleMech factory. The Word of Blake underwrote the loan needed to expand the facility and fund the development of the new BattleMechs, using the proceeds of their HPG service contract with the Free Worlds League. By the spring of 3055, the Blake Guard received its first fresh-off-the-line shipments of Grand Crusader and Pit Viper 'Mechs. Precentor Martial Arian gave several of these 'Mechs to the Free Worlds League to express his appreciation for Captain-General Marik's support. Our ROM agents in the Capellan Confederation report that Sun-Tzu Liao also received at least one Grand Crusader for his technicians to study, possibly from Marik as a wedding gift. If so, Thomas Marik may one day regret that act of dubious generosity.

The Blake Guards currently field slightly more than four divisions of troops, roughly equivalent to three and a half BattleMech regiments. Though slow to arrive, the new BattleMechs have already bolstered the renegade forces. All units use the standard Com Guard numbering and configuration, and are currently stationed on Gibson. Precentor Martial Arian so far has refused to commit his troops to any action until the Word of Blake agrees on a unified theology and a firm direction for its future. Given the reactionaries' fragmented state, Precentor Martial Focht expects no belligerence from them for some time. As of this writing, our Com Guards may turn all their attention to preparing for the coming battle with the Clans with no concerns for an attack from this quarter.

Current Doctrine

The various factions of the Word of Blake have so far been able to agree on only one point: that the blessed Order of ComStar has been taken over by "heretics." Nearly every faction believes that the tainted writings that masqueraded as the philosophy of Jerome Blake prior to the Reformation remain valid and offer a clear direction for their organization. They also believe that the dark age Blake predicted approaches, and that his believers must save knowledge and lead humanity out of its benighted era. In truth, our blessed Order has not forsaken our belief in the need to save technology in order to preserve civilization. We have come to realize, however, that we can best save knowledge by sharing it, not by denying it to others. The new dark age that Blake predicted began in the misguided actions of the old ComStar. Unless the Inner Sphere stands together against them, the Clans will make that dark age permanent.

The original version of The Word of Blake, written and published by Primus Conrad Toyama, is required reading for all True Believers. Depending on their factional affiliation, some members must also be familiar with Primus Rusenstein's Blessed Destiny. Though ComStar no longer publishes either work, the Word of Blake still produces them through several presses operating on Gibson. When and if the organization reaches theological consensus, their pretender Primus may simply add a chapter containing these interpretations to The Word of Blake.

The Word of Blake believes that ComStar's corruption grew like a cancer for centuries, ultimately manifesting itself in Precentor Martial Focht and Primus Mori, who they claim conspired against Blake's teachings and killed Myndo Waterly. They insist that her death allowed Operation Scorpion to fail, a conclusion they reach only by ignoring the fact that Waterly still held power when the Clans fought off the takeover attempts, and that Precentor Martial Focht graciously allowed her to retire in peace despite her crimes against Blake's vision. Precentor Aziz has successfully managed to gloss over ComStar's initial support for the Clans, revising history to show their support as a ploy to lull the Clans into complacency.

Other skewed versions of events have begun to surface. Because neither Jerome Blake nor his successors foresaw the role that the survivors of Kerensky's Exodus would play in the drama of life in the Inner Sphere, the Word of Blake continues to consider the Successor Lords a greater threat to the Inner Sphere than the Clans. Despite the Clans' and ComStar's common background, the dissenters view the Clans as misguided and barbaric. Following the pattern of many religions, the Word of Blake has rewritten their own history, calling their one-time hero Aleksandr Kerensky "the greatest betrayer of mankind" for his "single-handed, self-centered blow to the Star League."

Politics

With his moderate views, Precentor Blane clearly enjoys the support of much of the Word of Blake's rank and file, and seeks compromise from the extremists. Precentor Blane's call to develop a unified theology that all members can support encouraged many members to suggest that he assume the primacy.

Having received ComStar training and served as a Precentor before he was recalled to lead the Free Worlds League when Janos Marik suffered his stroke in 3031, Thomas Marik easily won the hearts and loyalties of ComStar adepts. When the Reformation turned their ordered world upside down, he offered those same adepts shelter, support, and acceptance for their unwavering faith. Because they also trust Precentor Blane, who fully backs Captain-General Thomas Marik, Marik's eventual election as Primus for the Word of Blake seems a foregone conclusion.

The Word of Blake appears to solidly support Marik for leadership, but some express doubts about his fitness for the primacy because he has so far refused to push for a unified theology. Publicly, he maintains that his current role as benefactor to all factions prevents him from offering an opinion on the direction the movement's theology should take. We believe that Marik is simply biding his time, waiting to gain the formal title of Primus before turning the Word of Blake to his purposes. Thomas Marik's political position as Primus-in-exile affords him an obvious opportunity to use the Word of Blake as a buffer against his future son-in-law, Sun-Tzu Liao. Regardless of Chancellor Liao's true intentions in marrying Isis Marik, second in the Free Worlds line of succession to rule, the additional military force and fanatical devotion the Word of Blake offers to Marik will serve to keep Sun-Tzu in check. Rumors of several new Free Worlds League 'Mech bases being built within the turbulent Duchy of Andurien indicate that Thomas Marik may plan to shift the Word of Blake Militia to the Duchy, both to better keep Andurien under his control and to

position the Blake Guards on the doorstep of the Capellan Confederation. This is, of course, only speculation on our part, but these conclusions are logical based on the evidence at hand.

Chancellor Liao has not acknowledged the Word of Blake other than to send relief supplies and foodstuffs to Gibson. This single gesture is apparently intended to demonstrate the Chancellor's good will toward the Captain-General, but other signs indicate that Sun-Tzu may be playing a far more devious game. In what may be an effort to try and buy their loyalty away from Thomas Marik, Sun-Tzu has dropped hints that he is willing to provide military equipment and spare parts to the Word of Blake. Continuing the complex political dance between Liao and Marik, Sun-Tzu has reportedly asked the Word of Blake to bid on a service contract for his own HPGs, as his agreement with our Blessed Order expires next year.

Recruitment for the Word of Blake has surpassed that of our blessed Order. During the Clan war, enormous numbers of refugees fled from the path of the advancing enemy. Though in the past, refugees gladly joined ComStar, Myndo Waterly's Operation Scorpion debacle has tainted the Order's image among civilians. Despite ComStar's sincere desire to aid humankind and make reparation for past mistakes, we have yet to overcome the widespread mistrust caused by those mistakes. By contrast, the Word of Blake's rigid religious trappings and righteous mentality attract those driven from their homeworlds. Desperate for certainty in the midst of chaos, many refugees have joined the Word of Blake to find refuge from hardship and responsibility. The number of new recruits joining the Word of Blake has risen even as ComStar's recruitment declines.

Word of Blake 3058 Update

The Liao-Marik invasion brought Word of Blake loyalists to the Sarna March in droves, either following in the wake of invading troops or taking advantage of insurrections to overthrow ComStar administration of HPG stations on disputed worlds. On worlds conquered by Marik forces, Word of Blake acolytes immediately displaced ComStar personnel at all HPG facilities. Those ComStar personnel who did not escape the Word of Blake have been forcibly relocated somewhere deep within the League, possibly on the Word of Blake's stronghold on Gibson. The fate of ComStar personnel on Liao-controlled worlds is in question, though the Word of Blake does not seem to be moving onto those worlds en masse.

Of the newly formed minor powers within the March, only the Terracap Confederation has allowed the Word of Blake to take control of its HPG stations. As far as can be confirmed, ComStar retains its ownership of the HPG stations in the Sarna Supremacy, the Styk Commonality, and the Saiph Triumvirate. At this point, no one knows for certain who controls the HPG facilities within the Sirian Holds.

On several of the Chaos March's independent worlds, ComStar and the Word of Blake are engaged in running conflicts, with forces from one side or the other taking a facility one week and then losing it to their opponents the next. This low-level warfare has severely disrupted offworld communications on these planets, further isolating them from outside influences. Offworld communications from these disrupted worlds, when such communication exists at all, functions through a "pony express" system in

which a JumpShip collects messages and then jumps to the nearest star system with a stable HPG facility. This facility then transmits the messages to their destinations.

Of particular interest to mercenary commanders looking for a berth, reliable rumor has stated the Brion's Legion recently left Comstar's employ on Terra to accept a rather lucrative contract on the planet Pleione and become one of the key units in the Tikonov Reaches. Of all these events occurring in the late 3050s, this was the one which led most directly to the Word of Blake conquest of Terra.

After skirmishing with the Second FedCom Regimental Combat Team on Hsien, the 21st Centauri Lancers seemed to need a chance to rest and recover from that bloody battle. After recruiting new personnel to fill their losses and arriving on Terra, the Lancers drilled with ComStar's Terran Defense Force. Impressing Precentor Lisa Koenigs-Cober, charged with the defense of Terra, as being more skilled than the new recruits would have suggested, the stage was set for the Word of Blake's conquest as the new recruits proved to be Word of Blake agents.

On February 28, 3058, the Word of Blake struck. The day was a rather symbolic one, being the 276th anniversary of Jerome Blake being given control of Terra and what would become ComStar. It was also the 38th month since the official naming of Sharilar Mori, and Jerome Blake had a 38-year reign, a terribly complicated matter and bound up in the malignant theology of the Word of Blake terrorists. The Word of Blake and 21st Centauri Lancer forces attacked and destroyed Hilton Head and the Sandhurst Royal Military Academy, inflicting considerable losses on the ComGuard 201st Division. As the attack continued, Precentor Koenigs-Cober destroyed everything of value which could not be taken and retreated offworld with Primus Mori, the First Circuit, and remaining ComGuard forces.

As the news reached Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht as he was on his way to a strategy session with the St. Ives Compact, Federated Commonwealth, and Draconis Combine on Tukayyid, it was decided not to contest the Word of Blake conquest at that time, leaving them the trouble of defending Terra should the Clans break the truce. With three Word of Blake regiments burning in to bolster their forces on Terra, the decision seemed a wise one, especially in light of rumors that the Word of Blake is in the process of hiring mercenaries to further strengthen their garrison force. With this conquest of Terra, ComStar has moved its base of operations to the Free Rasalhague Republic world of Tukayyid, where it prepares to once again defend the Inner Sphere when the Clans continue their invasion.

While ComStar continues to defend the Inner Sphere, the Word of Blake further entrenches its forces, waiting for the ComStar counterattack that could very well never come. With the Word of Blake in control of the cradle of humanity, the entire Inner Sphere has cause to worry, as the old ComStar is back and its name is the Word of Blake. With the Blakist terrorists in control of Terra, the Successor States can once again expect the frequency of terrorist bombings, assassinations, and technological thefts common in the old days of ComStar to increase, as the Word of Blake concentrates on its own twisted view of the writings of the blessed Jerome Blake instead of the greater threat known as the Clan invasion.



The Kell Hounds

Defenders of Freedom

speacer

History:

The story of the Kell Hounds seems straight out of a holovid-two young MechWarriors, scions of a noble family and fresh out of military school, inherit a pile of money from a benevolent cousin and decide to start their own mercenary unit. Ridiculed by the grizzled old mercenaries as two dilettantes playing at MechWarrior, the two dashing young heroes become the targets of further scorn when they receive a plum contract from a ruling House. Scorn, however, turns to praise when the duo and their unit prove themselves on the field of battle, earning the undying gratitude of their employer and the respect of the most cynical old merc.

Despite the holovid aspects of the unit's founding, anyone who has ever seen or met the Hounds in action knows these mercenaries are anything but fictional. Destroyed three times, once from within and twice from without, the Kell Hounds have reemerged stronger with each rebirth. Lacking the resources of larger mercenary units, the Hounds became a feared and respected unit and a major player in the Inner Sphere the old-fashioned way, using strategy, shrewd planning, and knowledge of their opponents. The unit's role in the Clan defeats on Luthien and Arc-Royal and the elevation of one of its own from bondsman to the rank of Khan in the Clan Wolf form an eloquent testimony to the Kell Hounds' fighting prowess.

Origins:

When Morgan and Patrick Kell arrived on Galatea in 3010 to recruit MechWarriors for their new mercenary unit, the locals characterized them in a harsh but accurate assessment as "two rich boys coming to play soldier." Although both Kells had completed training at the Nagelring Military Academy and had posted high test scores, only Morgan had successfully completed a full hitch with a Commonwealth unit. Neither brother had served all the military obligations the Commonwealth military imposed on all Nagelring graduates. Katrina Steiner, Archon and widow of the Kells' cousin Arthur Luvon, had excused them from those obligations so that they could recruit for the Kell Hounds, an action that reinforced the image of two spoiled nobles out to buy themselves a unit and rank they would never have attained through hard work.

The Kells first proved that they were more than dilettantes when they shrewdly wooed many of the best techs away from other units, even before they started recruiting MechWarriors. By this action they created the solid technical support base that has given the Hounds one of the lowest downtime ratios in the Inner Sphere. Bolstering the unit's support base, the Kell-owned Eire BattleMech Company on Arc-Royal provides the Hounds with a steady supply of spare parts.

By November of 3010 the Kell Hounds boasted a light regiment composed of two 'Mech battalions, an aerospace battalion, and a jump infantry battalion. The unit possessed one Overlord class Dropship and held contracts with other ship owners that provided them transportation to battle theaters. Most observers scoffed at the high price the new unit demanded for its services, but few people were surprised when the Kells received their unit's first contract from their cousin-in-law, Archon Katrina Steiner.

The Hounds saw their first duty on the Commonwealth capital of Tharkad, a plum assignment most units would have killed for. The Kell brothers soon grew impatient with the uneventful garrison routine, however, and with Katrina's blessing arranged a raid on the Marik world of Castor in the company of Cranston Snord's Irregulars. Underestimating the Hounds, Colonel Ruger Nage of the 13th Marik Militia did not request additional troops to respond to the Snord/Kell assault.

During the fighting on Castor, the Hounds executed a complex battle plan full of demanding maneuvers requiring speed and precision. They anticipated Nage's likely responses and used Snord's Irregulars to exploit them, becoming one of the few units that recognized and capitalized on the Irregulars' unique talents. The Hounds' discipline and expertise rivaled that of elite regular army units and the effective, complex planning they displayed in the Castor campaign would soon become a hallmark of Hound operations.

Despite their impressive performance, charges of nepotism swirled through Tharkad in the fall of 3012 as the Estates General discussed renewal of the Hounds' contract. The Archon's political enemies minimized the Castor success, putting down to luck rather than skill, and publicly criticized the Hounds as overpaid incompetents. To save Katrina Steiner potential political embarrassment, Morgan Kell accepted a contract with the Federated Suns. Prince Ian Davion, by design or chance, took pressure off Katrina by offering the Kell Hounds a four year contract and a 15 percent increase in pay. This surprising move prompted some analysts to ponder what the First Prince saw in the largely unproven Kell Hounds. Several concluded that by awarding the contract, Ian Davion hoped to embarrass the Lyran Estates General by making the representatives think they had passed on a bargain.

In Service to Davion:

Davion assigned the Kell Hounds to the planet Mara, and in May the Draconis Combine dropped the Ninth Sun Zhang Academy Cadre on the agricultural world in what Davion interpreted as a full-scale invasion. The Kurita troops initially met no resistance and within a week had grown contemptuous of the mercenaries who refused to fight. Cleverly exploiting the Kurita forces' scorn for "mere" mercenaries, the crew of the Kell Hound DropShip Tsume, claiming they had mutinied and

offering the unit's DropShips to the Cadre in return for safe passage to Galatea. The Kurita students saw this surrender as a golden opportunity to cover themselves in battlefield glory, and radioed their companions on the ground with the news. Eager to capture the remaining Hounds, the Cadre ground units split into 3 battalions and went hunting.

The First Cadre Battalion pursued a Kell Hound company straight into a trap, falling like cut grain under the mercenaries' close assaults and devastating missile barrages. The defeat infuriated the two remaining Kurita battalions, who consoled themselves with the news that the Lugh was docking with their JumpShip Tsume.

The Sun Zhang Cadre units had hoped to salvage some respect from the Lugh's surrender, but were doomed to disappointment. After their Lugh docked with the Tsume, the Hound crew overrode a control circuit in the airlock between the ships and filled it with pressurized anesthetic gas. Most of the Tsume's crew, on hand to accept the surrender, succumbed to the gas and the Hounds secured the ship. The Kurita effort to retake the Tsume nearly stranded the remaining Sun Zhang 'Mech battalions in space and marked the beginning of a deep enmity between the Combine and the Kell Hounds.

The unit next saw action on Mallory's World, aiding Prince Ian Davion and the Fourth Davion Guards against Kurita raiders in October 3013. Prince Ian lifted the siege of Colteville, then moved the Fourth Guards to aid the besieged Seventeenth Avalon Hussars. The Combine's Twenty-fourth Dieron Rangers mauled the Seventeenth, throwing the defenders into a retreat leaving Prince Ian's flank open. The Prince refused to call up his reserves, but at his brother Hanse's urging ordered the Kell Hounds to Mallory's World to strengthen the Davion contingent.

The ten days it took for the Kell Hounds to arrive proved a disaster. Ian Davion, trapped in the desert with his regiment, died fighting a rearguard action against Yorinaga Kurita's Second Sword of Light regiment. The Kell Hounds arrived in time to prevent the Kurita troops from capturing the Prince's body, but could do little more than retreat to Colteville and accept the stalemate on Mallory's World. The Kell Hounds clung to the Davion foothold on Mallory's World for the next three years, broken only by a single Kell battalion's raid on Murchison in 3014 that netted cache of priceless, Star Leaque-era books.

In 3016 Yorinaga Kurita decided to end the stalemate by destroying the Kell Hounds. After using his forces to pin down most of Mallory's defenders, Yorinaga sent his entire Second Sword of Light regiment against the Kell Hounds' First 'Mech Battalion. Before the Kurita forces could strike, however, Morgan Kell stepped forward in his Archer and offered Yorinaga Kurita single combat. Though reports of the combat differ wildly, all accounts agree that Morgan Kell defeated Yorinaga Kurita, saving the Kell Hounds from certain destruction.

Defection:

Morgan's actions following the battle continue to mystify historians. During the period that the Hounds called "the Defection," Morgan Kell broke the regiment down to a single battalion, placed his brother Patrick in charge, and exiled himself to St.

Marinus House on Zaniah, a religious retreat for ex-MechWarriors. Patrick Kell sank into depression, and only the efforts of Kell Hound officers Daniel Allard, Seamus Fitzpatrick, and Richard O'Ciern kept the unit alive.

From 3016 to 3027 Patrick Kell accepted a number of unusual assignments for the unit, in the process building them into the best battalion-size unit in the Inner Sphere. Despite the subordinate role he had performed under his brother, Patrick Kell proved an able and inventive commander. In 3019, fresh from pirate hunting in the Free Worlds League, the Hounds took a post with the Lyran Commonwealth defending against Kurita raids. Four years later the unit moved to the Federated Suns, reconfigured to mimic a Draconis Combine raider unit for a series of military exercises to train Davion militia units.

Tiring of the grueling schedule the exercises had put them through, the Kell Hounds signed a new contract with the Lyran Commonwealth in 3026. Garrison duty on the backwater world of Pacifica should have qualified as easy duty, but Yorinaga Kurita's recall from disgrace turned peaceful Pacifica into a danger zone. After repelling an assault by Combine Internal Security Force Commandos on Pacifica, the Hounds fled that world and shook pursuit by jumping into Combine Space. Discovering Archon-Designate Melissa Steiner stranded on the Draconis world of Styx, the Hounds held off Yorinaga's new elite unit, the Genyosha, long enough for Melissa to exscape. During the fierce fighting Yorinaga targeted Patrick Kell, who ignored Yorinaga's assaults and destroyed the other Genyosha on the way to a Hound victory before paying with his life.

Patrick Kell's death prompted Morgan Kell to return from exile. Just before leaving the monastery, he summoned all the MechWarriors who had once been Kell Hounds to rejoin the unit. Those who could answered the call; others sent their children, and some returnees brought with them portions of the units in which they had served since the Defection. By the time of the wedding of Hanse Davion and Melissa Steiner, the Kell Hounds were back up to regimental strength and ready for the Fourth Succession War.

Rebirth:

During the 4th Succession War, the Kell Hounds fought a major battle against Yorinaga Kurita and his new Genyosha regiment. In a virtual replay of the battle that had been fought on Mallory's World 13 years earlier, Morgan Kell defeated Yorinaga Kurita a second time. Yorinaga performed seppuku, and his son, Akira Brahe, resigned from the Genyosha and joined the Kell Hounds with a portion of the Genyosha.

3030 to 3032 were blessed years for the Kell Hounds as well. In 3030, Morgan Kell and Salome were married, and in two years, the couple had had two children, Phelan Patrick Kell and Caitlin Ward Kell. In 3038, the Kell Hounds made a contract with the Free Worlds League, and were stationed near the Capellan border. Because Daniel Allard was the brother of Justin Allard, the man who had married her sister Candance and humiliated the Confederation during the 4th Succession War, Daniel Allard became the target of Romano's rage. Romano sent an assassin to wipe out the Allards,

but the assassin attacked Morgan Kell's house by mistake and was killed by Phelan Kell's dog, Grinner.

When Katrina Steiner died in 3040, Morgan Kell received a substantial legacy from his royal cousin. He used the money to expand the Kell Hounds to two full regiments, promoting Daniel Allard and Scott Bradley to the ranks of Lieutenant Colonel and giving them regimental commands. Akira Brahe was then promoted to the rank of Major, receiving command of the First Regiment's First 'Mech Battalion.

New Generation:

The Steiner legacy and the expansion seemed to guarantee a bright future for the Kell Hounds. Phelan and Caitlin both entered prestigious military academies that would equip them to provide future leadership for the Hounds. Allard and Bradley proved to be able commanders more than capable of working on their own, which freed Morgan to develop educational and other facilities for the Hounds' dependents. Fulfilling a long-held dream, the unit formed a permanent base on the Commonwealth world of Arc-Royal, within the city of Old Connaught. Throughout the 3040s, Morgan worked to make it a suitable place for families to remain when the regiments were stationed elsewhere.

In 3042, a 16-year-old youth calling himself Christian Kell appeared on the world Arboris, and presented himself to Morgan Kell as the son of his late Patrick and his mistress Takara. Morgan took him to Outreach to be trained by Wolf's Dragoons, which led to another promotion for Dan Allard. He now commanded the entire unit. Akira Brahe then took over the 1st Regiment.

In a battle in the St. Ives Compact, Christian Kell and the remains of his unit received the St. Ives Order of Heroism from the planet Ambergrist. He then was promoted to command of the 1st Battalion. In contrast to Christian Kell's performance in 3048, Phelan Kell was expelled from the Nagelring. The Honour Board at Nagelring dismissed him for stealing a 'Mech, noting that the theft capped a year of increasingly serious problems following the death of his friend D.J. Conner in action on the Marik border. Phelan joined up with the Kell Hounds and went to fight bandits in the periphery. Neither Phelan Kell nor anyone else in the Inner Sphere suspected that an apparent increase in bandit raids signaled the opening offensive in an intergalactic war.

Clan Onslaught:

In August of 3049, Phelan Kell was captured by Clan Wolf while hunting bandits in the periphery. Most people had believed him dead, but when he fought as a Star Commander in the Clan Wolf's 13th Wolf Guards, the truth became apparent.

There are three major actions the Kell Hounds fought in during the Clan War. At Twycross, Luthien, and Arc-Royal, the Kell Hounds defeated the Clan juggernaut. The battle at Twycross involved the Tenth Lyran Guards, the Ninth Federated Commonwealth RCT, and the Kell Hounds. Losses were high, but a year-long break in the war allowed the Kell Hounds to rebuild to their pre-war strength, and gave them the time to analyse Clan tactics.

At Luthien, the Kell Hounds fought along side the Wolf's Dragoons and several elite Combine units. Forces from Clan Smoke Jaguar, and Clan Nova Cat attempted to seize the planet, but thanks to the Kell Hounds and Wolf's Dragoons, they were unsuccessful. War Lord Theodore Kurita allowed the two mercenaries the first pick of salvage from the battle, so the units could rebuild.

In one of the saddest events in Kell Hound history, on June 19, 3055, Archon Melissa Stiener-Davion, and Salome Ward died at the hands of an assassins bomb that Kathriene Steiner, Mellisa's daughter, had helped form. The last major battle that the Kell Hounds had a part in so far in the Clan War, was at the Kell Hounds' home of Arc-Royal. A renegade Clan bandit force was lured to Arc-Royal by Clan Wolf and the Kell Hounds, and was destroyed. This proved to the citizens of Arc-Royal that if Phelan ever left the Clans, he would have a place in the leadership of the Kell Hounds.

The Inner Sphere Fights Back:

The Kell Hounds participated in Operation: Bulldog, winning back several Kurita worlds for the Combine people. Where they proved once again why they along with the Dragoons, that they are one of the elite mercenary unit in the Inner Sphere.



Clan Wolf-in-Exile

Introduction

The exiled Wolves arrived in Lyran Alliance space on 20 November 3057, in the Morges system. The planetary defense had been turned over to the Kell Hounds, which saved the forces the necessity of fighting our way in. The wolves defeated the pursuing Jade Falcons with help from the Kell Hounds, and in late December joined the strength to theirs when Morgan Kell formed the ARDC. The ARDC has become our home, and everyone of us will fight to the death to defend it.

Wardens of the Inner Sphere

The Wolves (in exile) spent most of 3058 recovering from the Refusal War and beginning to put down roots on Arc-Royal. In his capacity as Arc-Royal's Grand Duke, he granted the Wolves a virtually uninhabited continent on the planet, where the civilian castes immediately set about building a Clan Society.

In mid-3058, Star Captain Ragnar (formerly Prince Ragnar Magunsson of the Free Rasalhague Republic) was our Clan's contribution to Prince Victor Steiner-Davion's Coventry attack force. Ragnar's understanding of Clan ways provided the crucial information that allowed the Falcons to accept hegira from Prince Victor and withdraw from Coventry without loss of honor. Meanwhile Khan Kell and his wolves accompanied Kell Hound units on tours of the ARDC, sometimes clashing with Jade Falcon units that had slipped out of the occupation zone. What they lacked in numbers, the Wolves (in exile) made up for ferocious combat, proving that they had lost none of their fighting edge.

Later that same year, Khan Kell participated in the military planning sessions against Clan Smoke Jaguar at the first Whitting Conference, and in 3059 led three Clusters against the Sixth Jaguar Dragoons on Labrea as part of Operation Bulldog. Fighting under the banner of the Star League, the Fourth Wolf Guards, First Wolf Legion and the First Wolf Strike Grenadiers defeated the Dragoons and took the survivors as bondsman. Two additional Wolf Clusters also participated in the assault on the Smoke Jaguar OZ, defeating Jaguar forces on six other worlds and playing an instrumental role in clean-up operations.

Our clear willingness to shed Wolf blood in the Inner Sphere's defense went a long way toward earning us acceptance from our neighbors, though a few conflicts with Inner Sphere extremists continue to plague the Wolves. Most of these have so far been attributed to Ragnarok terrorists opposed to the Wolf capture of Prince Ragnar Magunsson, though suspicion of the Wolves (in exile) likely still lingers among some populations in or near the ARDC. The people of Arc-Royal, following their Grand Duke's example, seem largely content to live and let live.

Military Assets

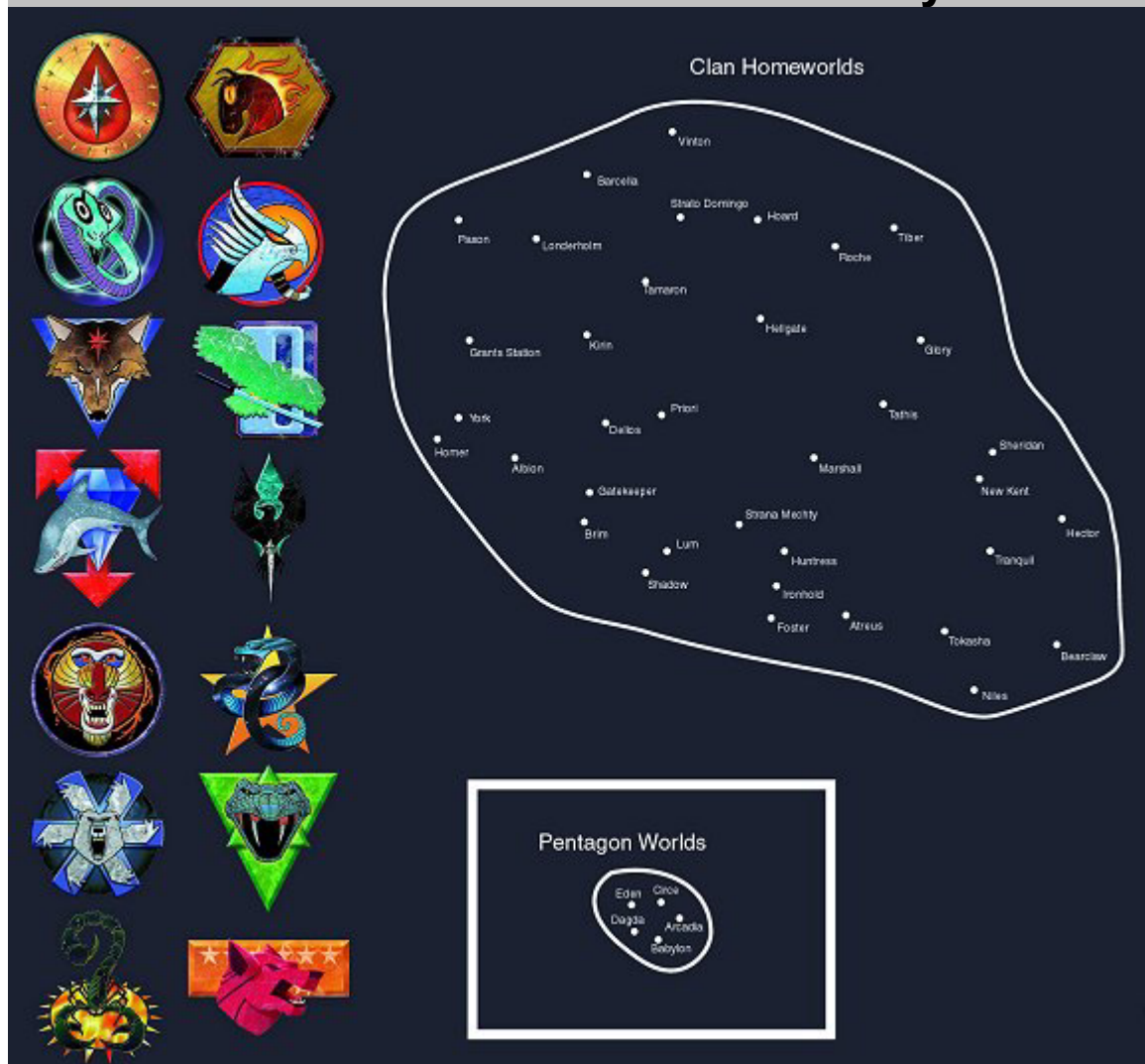
The Sixth Jaguar Dragoons, capture nearly intact, have added significantly to the still under strength Wolf (in exile) Touman. With the addition of the Sixth, Alpha Galaxy is close to full strength. Epsilon Garrison Galaxy is the most under strengthened, containing only three trinaries per Cluster, as opposed to the five per Cluster deployed prior to the Battle of Tukayyid. The oldest of the sibko cadets who accompanied us into exile have recently come of age, and stand to make promising warriors. Two of Omega Galaxy's Clusters are permanently stationed on Arc-Royal to protect the Wolf (in exile) stronghold against attack by other Clans, especially those with forces in Inner Sphere occupation zones. Given that most other Clans regard the Wolves (in exile) as abomination, cadets placed in Omega are likely to receive more combat experience than they might wish for. In the meantime, their own superiors and the Kell Hounds are providing excellent training, and Khan Kell is confident that his Clan will be able to fulfill its obligations to the Inner Sphere.

With regard to equipment, the first of the exiled Wolves' new 'Mech designs entered service in 3060, and the trade agreements with the Kell Hounds have netted the Wolves (in exile) much needed machines and supplies. In addition, Wolf scientists and technicians working in tandem with the Kell Hounds recently produced a new OmniMech based on Inner Sphere technology. So versatile is this 'Mech that some Wolf garrison warriors have traded their Clan BattleMechs for it.

The Wolves (in exile) action against Clan Ghost Bear on Utrecht in late 3060 gained for them badly needed material and resources with which to continue rebuilding, while costing them few casualties. The First Wolf Guards challenged the Bears for the contents of a newly arrived "ark" ship, a new Leviathan-Class WarShip, among those contents prefab buildings and equipment for building factory complexes. The Ghost Bears accepted the challenge and allowed the Wolves (in exile) safcon, which contributed greatly to the low casualty rate. On significant loss, however, was the capture of Star Captain Ragnar by the Third Bear Guard. His skill and insight will be sorely missed among the exiled Wolf Clan.

Given sufficient time, the Wolf Clan can easily accomplish the daunting but necessary task of rebuilding both their society and their military. Unfortunately, the Crusader Clans are unlikely to let too much time go by before pressing their own objectives. The clock is running, and time is against the Wolf Clan. The breaking of the Truce may occur any day, and then all the invading Clans will once again swarm into the Inner Sphere. The exiles of Clan Wolf must somehow be ready to meet the challenge; otherwise, the Crusaders will destroy not only the Inner Sphere, but the true heart of Clan Wolf as well.

The Clans: Warriors of Kerensky



spacer

Nicholas Kerensky named the original Clans after beasts, entities, or attributes he felt would inspire his warriors. Each exemplifies some worthy feature that he wished his warriors to reflect. Wolves, for example, were admired for their cunning and stealth.

Fourteen Clans remain of the original 20. Three of the missing Clans were absorbed by Clans through trails and Grand Council rulings. Two were annihilated, one by the Clans and one by the New Star League Defense Force. And finally, one Clan had been abjured. Following is a list of all the remaining clans in one form or the other.

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Political Division of the Clans

The Clans after the death of ilKan Nicholas Kerensky went through some major changes over the years. One of them was concerning the return to Inner Sphere. Some of the clans interpreted Kerensky's teaching that they should return to the Inner Sphere as a conquering army coming back to reclaim the throne of the Star League and re-establishing it in the image of the clans.

The others, interpreted his words as they should return to the Inner Sphere as protectors and to teach them Kerensky way and his visions. The Clans became somewhat evenly divided in this philosophy. Those who supported a return as a conquering army were called "Crusaders", and the others who supported the clans being as protectors were called "Wardens". Many a trial was fought within each of the clans because of the conflicting views. Nevertheless, the clans have

returned to conquer the Inner Sphere in one form or fashion, but as it is today, two of the clans have crossed over the truce line to become members of the new Star League and are fulfilling their visions of wardens. The others are contemplating their actions.

Below list which clan is a "Crusader" and which clan is a "Warden". Note, one of the clans has been split because of these views and because of the Refusal War they fought. As of this date, no other home clan has joined the Invader Clans to replace those lost do to joining the Star League or being defeated by the Star League forces.

Kerensky's Clans

Crusader Clans

Clan Blood Spirit
Clan Jade Falcon
Clan Wolf
Clan Hell's Horses
Clan Ice Hellion
Clan Star Adder
Clan Fire Mandrill

Warden Clans

Clan Coyote
Clan Steel Viper
Clan Ghost Bear
Clan Goliath Scorpion
Clan Snow Raven
Clan Cloud Cobra
Clan Diamond Shark

acer

Writing Credits:

The Clans: Warriors of Kerensky Source Book
Chris Hartford

Clan Blood Spirits



speaker
The Grand Council, in arrogance, gave their decree: Blood Spirit, you must conform to the Way of the Clans. You have strayed from the Path; we will lead you back. The flash of the blade, the striking knife, the traitor's stab! On the Path our step is true, while the other Clans falter.

We held out our hands, in the spirit of Kerensky's Dream, And our brethren chose to treat the gesture as folly. Isolation's embrace, we forsake all and live for the future.

-The Remembrance (Clan Blood Spirit) Passage: 42, Verse 7, Lines 5-12

speaker

Clan Blood Spirit

Named for the esprit-de-corps that bound the original 800 Clan warriors, ironically, the Blood Spirits are the most isolationist and bitter of the Clans. They believe that the other Clans have

abandoned the way set down by Nicholas Kerensky, little caring that they too are guilty of abandoning Kerensky's visions.

Blood Spirit Demographics

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: York

Population (Clan Space): 65,714,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 1.9 percent (61/42)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 100 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Karianna Schmitt

saKhan: Troy Boques

Loremaster: Bayle Campbell

Scientist-General: Peterson (Le Duc)

Merchant Factor: Yasia

Master Technician: Soon

Senior Laborer: Margaretha

Military:

Clusters: 27

WarShips: 4

Clan Space Worlds:

York (100 percent)

"For the first and only time, the Blood Spirits here bare their souls to the rest of the Clans. All know why we have kept ourselves apart from those who betrayed the Kerensky's vision. Here, amid the pages of history, military practices and a listing of our current strengths and weaknesses, you will discover why we have removed our shell, if only briefly." - Bayle Campbell, Loremaster, Clan Blood Spirit.

History

Founded by Colleen Schmitt, the Blood Spirits set about living up to their name by creating the post of ilChi, ambassador/messengers assigned to each of the other Clans to smooth communications and foster good will. Their dream did not live long. The Blood Spirits had expressed some sympathy for Clan Wolverine, and the Burrocks called for the Spirit's annihilation, too. The motion foundered but it was the start of a long feud.

The other Clans, predominantly the Burrocks and Mongoose, targeted the Spirits with near constant raids, and the Spirits eventually lost their holdings on Albion and Homer. Abandoned by the other Clans, the Blood Spirits chose to abandon their former comrades. The ilChis were withdrawn and over the years the sense of brotherhood was replaced by hatred.

Years of fighting had shattered the Spirits, but their isolation, small size and lack of any resources worth fighting over probably saved them from Absorption. They were surprised in the middle of the Golden Century when the Fire Mandrill Kindraa Smythe-Jewell approached them, offering OmniMech technology in exchange for land. Though wary, the spirits took the deal and made a similar arrangement with the Snow Ravens a century later, trading a number of their little used WarShips for the bulk of the Snow Raven's second-line BattleMechs.

Although the Blood Spirits participated in the bidding for Operation Revival, they did so in a lackluster manner that ensured their failure to win a place in the trials, let alone the invasion force. Though they followed the Crusader philosophy, the Blood Spirits did not think the time was right for an invasion of the Inner Sphere. they derived some measure of satisfaction and vindication when the invaders faltered at Tukayyid.

In early 3059, the Spirits' long-time foe, Clan Burrock, became the target of a Trial of Absorption, and the Blood Spirit Khans made a rare appearance at the Grand Council to support the measure. The Spirits were horrified when the honor of Absorption went to the Star Adders and decided to take unilateral action; they launched their own attacks against the Burrock enclaves on Priori and Albion.

However, the Spirits underestimated the Adder and Burrock response. Though locked in a trial over the Grand Council's decision, the two Clans worked together to counter the

interlopers. The Blood Spirits lost five Galaxies in the assault and gained nothing. They returned to the isolation, emerging only for the Great Refusal a year later.

Society

The Blood Spirits believe that everyone is important to society and there is little of the inter-caste bickering found in other Clans. All the castes are bound by common training, re-creating the sense of brotherhood the Clan once had with the others. However, this does not prevent the ubiquitous trueborn-over-freeborn bias, although if a freeborn warrior can prove his worth to society the Clan does not place additional obstacles in his way.

To describe the Blood Spirits as insular would be a major understatement. They rarely take bondsmen, and often attempt bondsref rather than be taken in by other Clans. Those few taken by other Clans rival the Fire Mandrills in their lack of cooperation.

Their isolation restricts the Blood Spirits' access to modern technology, and what technology they have obtained has been acquired through a circuitous route. This hardly bothers them, because they see technology as a means to an end. They believe that their abilities alone are sufficient, without the need for a technological "crutch." In a similar vein, they shun the use of cybernetics and related systems. They believe such systems detract from the warrior's spirit, and while a few individuals have cybernetic prostheses, no Blood Spirit warrior had enhanced imaging (EI) implants (a neural network implanted in a MechWarrior that, along with a computer, provides the warrior with a virtual battlefield that can be viewed from any angle) prior to the Absorption War. Since then, a small number of more aggressive warriors have made use of the system.

Though they work together, all members of Clan Blood Spirit are protective of their privacy. Most have some form of hobby, often artistic, that they use as a distraction from the routine of their lives. The Khans and the caste heads have encouraged the practice, and it appears that by granting time to "be themselves" they have strengthened the Clan's internal bonds. Knowing the Clan respects them and their ideas, the individual Blood Spirits do their utmost to further the goals of the Clan.

And yet things appear to be changing in the Blood Spirits. Staunch believers in tradition, their actions in the Absorption War (as they call the action against the Burrocks and Star Adders) flew in the face of tradition and many have questioned Khan Schmitt's judgment. Furthermore, the Clan's defeat at the hands of the Genyosha in the Great Refusal on Strana Mechty has exacerbated their intense dislike of the Inner Sphere. What were once regarded as "uncouth barbarians" are now viewed as "rabid despoilers."

Further, the Spirits are horrified that the Inner Sphere has attained near parity with their Clan in technology, and may in fact be ahead in some areas. They cite the carelessness of the other Clans for this state of affairs, blaming them for the loss of the Great Refusal on Strana Mechty. The Spirits intend to exploit the potential of the ProtoMech, which they gained in a Trial of Possession on Huntress following the Great Refusal, as their best chance of fielding advanced technology with their limited resources.

Military

The Blood Spirits continue to follow the organizational doctrine laid down by Nicholas Kerensky (three 'Mech trinaries, on infantry trinary and on vehicle trinary per cluster) rather than the modified form used by most other clans. They deploy aerospace assets from the naval reserve as needed. Only Clan Hell's Horses makes such widespread use of conventional troops.

Training for Blood Spirit warriors is perhaps the toughest in the Clans, making up for the small number of graduates with their quality. However, while individual warriors are unparalleled in their abilities, Blood Spirit units suffer from lack of initiative. Star Captains and Star Colonels

are too accustomed to acting on the orders of their superiors, leading to a rigidity that a wily foe can exploit.

The Clan has taken the unusual step of training all its personnel in basic combat techniques. This gives the Spirits a massive, if low skilled, reserve to fall back upon in the event of an attack on their capital (which, with the exception of their Strana Mechty enclave, is now their only territory). The reserve also serve to bind the civilian and warrior castes together, the bond of common training creating the esprit-de-corps they no longer have with the other Clans.

Allies and Enemies

The Blood Spirits have no official alliances with other Clans, but the continued posting of ilChis to Clans Fire Mandrill and Snow Raven forges a bond and makes those Clans *de facto* allies. In addition, the Blood Spirits have a tacit relationship with the Diamond Shark, using them as brokers and suppliers.

The Spirits regard most of the other Clans with disdain or hatred, but they single out three for particular attention. Clans Hell's Horses and Coyote are regarded as treacherous for their joint assault that destroyed the Fire Mandrill Kindraa Smythe-Jewel, the association that gave the Spirits OmniMech technology. However, even this hatred pales into insignificance when compared to that they have for the Star Adders. The Adders absorbed Clan Burrock largely intact, and the Spirits have transferred their feud with that Clan to the Adders.

Possessions

Worlds: 1 (1 exclusive)

The Blood Spirits have never held significant territory. At their greatest extent the spanned five worlds, and for much of their history they have had only their enclaves on Arcadia and Strana Mechty, as well as dominant (but not absolute) control of York. Since the Absorption War, they have enacted a deliberate policy of isolation, taking the extreme step of withdrawing their people from Arcadia to York. Furthermore, they seized complete control of their capital, forcibly ejecting the Jade Falcons and persuading Clan Snow Raven to withdraw.

On Strana Mechty, their holdings have always been distinct from those of other Clans, isolated by distance from their neighbors. Since the Absorption War, the Spirits have enacted strict controls on passage through their territory, further reducing the already minimal contacts.

End Data Transmission.

Clan Cloud Cobra



Named for the species of snake that developed from Terran cobras released onto Arcadia, Clan Cloud Cobra is a study in contrasts. They are the most religious of the Clans, paying homage to a concept they call The Way that enshrines aspects of all religions. And yet they are also one of the most devious and political of Clans, equating The Way with in the Warden cause, while seeking to further their own agenda.

Clan Cloud Cobra

Cloud Cobra Demographics

Affiliation: Warden

Capital: Homer

Population (Clan Space): 58,374,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.2 percent (68/46)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 87 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Din Steiner

saKhan: Kieran Telinov

LOremaster: Eleni Riaz

Scientist-Gneral: Goran (Pasteur)

Merchant Factor: Joshua

Master Technician: Franco

Senior Laborer: Yuu

Military:

Clusters: 22

WarShips: 15

spacer

History

Shrouded in mysticism, parable and dogma, the history of Clan Cloud Cobra reflects the Clan's founding by Windham Katib, a SLDF chaplain. Together with his saKhan, Vice Admiral Rafe Kardaam, Katib forged the Clan into a solid unit. Although ostensibly putting cultural differences aside, Katib fostered a number of debates to encourage understanding among his troops of different religions and ethnic backgrounds. Together the Cobras forged a new philosophy, comparable to the Inner Sphere "Unfinished Book" movement, which sought the common ground between all religions. Katib called this non-denominational system "The Way," and it would form a fundamental part of the Clan's existence.

Though badly bloodied on Babylon, the Clan fulfilled its objectives during the liberation of the Pentagon. However, an ambush by rebel forces cost the Clan almost half its number leaving aerospace forces in the ascendant. The Clan sustained further damage in the internal strife that followed Operation Klondike. The Cloud Cobras avoided the fate of the Wolverines, but their internal fighting further weakened them. This prompted many raids against them for their most valuable commodity: technological expertise. The most prominent raiders were Clan Coyote, and counter-raids and captured Coyotes eventually netted OmniMech technology for the Cobras.

Clan Space Worlds:

Babylon (26 percent)

Brim (54 percent)

Homer (85 percent)

Tanite Worlds:

Tanis

Alexandria

Stacha

When a large number of civilians and warriors belonging to Clan Burrock defected to the Bandit Caste, the Cobras accompanied the loyal Burrocks on a mission to return their wayward kin to the Clan fold. The Burrocks claimed to have punished the transgressors, a story accepted until Clan Star Adder proved it a lie in 3058.

In 2935, the Cobras were honored when their Khan, Tobias Katib, was selected as ilKhan. He ruled for more than a decade, doing much to advance the cause of the Cloud Cobras. However, Katib's indictment in 2947 tarnished the gains. Katib was found guilty of murdering his predecessor, and the Grand Council stripped him of his office and executed him. Suspicions of a wider conspiracy were never proven.

As the Clans chose sides in what would become the Cruaser-Warden debate, other divisions within the Cobras came to the forefront. Predominantly religious in nature, these divisions led to a fractionalization of Cobra society akin to that which consumed the Fire Mandrills. The Cobras divided into groups known as Cloisters, some of which supported the Warden and others the Crusaders. However, The Way ensured that as a whole the Clan supported the protectionist policies of the Wardens. When the Outbound Light triggered a call for invasion, the Cloud Cobra Khans voted to attack, but lacking the strength to prosecute the war, the Cobras withdrew from the bidding, angering several pro-crusader Cloisters and triggering dissention.

When Clan Star Adder uncovered details of the Burrock deception regarding their lost members and ongoing dealings with the Dark Caste, the Cloud Cobras were among the most vociferous in calling for the Burrock's absorption. The venom of their call lead many to suspect a hidden cause for their actions, perhaps associated with the Burrocks' crime, but possibly the Cobras' revulsion at the treachery of their former allies.

Society

Cloud Cobra society centers around the Cloisters and the religions of The Way. Their warriors serve also as priests and teachers, requiring a higher degree of philosophical and theological awareness than is found in other Clans. While the Cloisters are divided in the interpretations of The Way, the common devotion to it also serves to limit their divisiveness. The result is greater internal cohesion than is found in other splintered Clans such as the Fire Mandrills.

The Cloud Cobras accept bondsmen, but those taken by the Clan often have difficulty adapting to the theological debates that are part of everyday life. Cloud Cobras taken as isorla by other Clans rarely abandon their faith, therefore enclaves of belief in They Way exist in many other Clans.

Cobra civilians, through the Cloisters, have a limited say in the governance of the Clan. In addition to warriors, each Cloister contains ordained ministers of the civilian castes, who (in theory) advocate the interest of the people. And yet the Cloisters are elitist institutions, with menial work beneath their members, which reinforces the caste divisions. In fact, many regard the Cloisters as political rather than spiritual organizations, used by opportunists to further their own goals.

Most Cloud Cobras are pragmatic, realizing that many of their goals (largely unknown to the rest of the Clans) cannot be easily achieved and they are willing to take the long-term view. This may be one of the strengths of the Cloisters. While most Clansmen plan for now, or at best a few years into the future, the Cobras appear to plan generations in advance. Each Cloister, headed by an eckKhan, takes a proactive role towards attaining its goals, building or breaking alliances as needed.

Cobra technological expertise is among the best in the Clans. Although Clan Diamond Shark claims the credit for developing the current Iron Womb technology, much of the expertise in genetic engineering stems from the Cobras. Their military technology is similarly well developed, although much of their work is refinement of existing systems rather than new developments.

Military

The Cloud Cobras have a relatively small Touman, a result of a series of catastrophic events in their history. They emphasize aerospace, as a result of the major losses suffered on Babylon, leading to their focusing on what assets remained.

The aerospace bias has colored their tactics, with aircraft used to "soften up" targets in advance of a ground assault. However, their small ground force means that the Cobras are prepared to be very patient, allowing the air arm to complete their task rather than the ground forces being goaded into action.

The number of places in front-line units is strictly limited, and only the best go straight into such units. Most new graduates join one of a series of reserve units attached to each Galaxy. These serve as a trained pool of troops ready to make up losses in the principal units.

The Clan follows a combined arms doctrine, making use of conventional infantry and vehicles. However, many units are not well rounded, being dominated by BattleMechs or aerospace fighters. Cobra Elemental forces are surprisingly weak.

Allies and Enemies

The Cloud Cobras have few real enemies. Their belief in The Way makes them natural allies of the Warden faction, but also allows individual Cloisters the freedom to espouse Crusader views. The Cobras regard even die-hard Crusaders such as the Jade Falcons as simply "misguided." Only the Coyotes are their enemies.

However, this also means the Clan has few staunch allies. They worked with Clan Burrock for many years, sharing mutual interest such as the Tanite worlds. And this relationship has transferred to Clan Star Adder. While many in the Clan regard the partnership with Clan Star Adder to be a new move for the Clan, there are suggestions of decades-old deals between the two.

Clans Diamond Shark and Clan Snow Raven are also peripheral allies of the Cobras. The former provides useful mercantile contacts, allowing the Cobras to prosper. Clan Snow Raven espouses similar military principals and the two-share information and technology.

Least known are the Cobra's tacit alliances with the Nova Cats and Wolves (in Exile). The Cobras applauded our willingness to do what conscience and visions dictated. To them the true mark of The Way is firm belief in a cause.

Possessions

Worlds: 6 (All shared)

The Cloud Cobras appear to have extensive possessions, but the only three of their six worlds fall inside the accepted bounds of "Clan Space." The other three, the so-called Tanite Worlds, form a distinct body outside the Kerensky Cluster or the Pentagon. Discovered in 2965, these worlds, a former Star League colony, were forcibly absorbed. This stretched the Cobra Touman to its limit, prompting the Cobras to contract with Burrock (and later Star Adder) forces to help garrison them in exchange for mineral rights.

In the wake of the Great Refusal, the Cobras have moved to consolidate their position. They gained numerous assets from Clan Nova Cat, though in many cases what the Nova Cats expected to be Cobra support for their withdrawal became an occupying force instead. The Cobras justify their actions, the most significant of which took place on Brim, as necessary to forestall an attack by Clan Coyote.

Clan Coyote

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Master of man and machine, servitor to none, The Coyote awaits. skilled and tenacious, a predator without peer, The Coyote strikes; Fear in the hearts of its enemies, Pain at the sides, Death at their throats. -The Remembrance (Clan Coyote) Passage 44, Verse 2, Lines 25-31

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Clan Coyote

spacer

The Strana Mechty coyote, a descendant of the Terran mammal, can be found on just about every inhabited world in the Clan sphere of influence, a fact directly attributable to Clan Coyote's one time presence on each of those planets. Sitting at the top of the food chain, the packs of coyotes have nonetheless slowly thinned over the last several decades, a fact that like wise describes the Clan.

Coyote Demographics

Affiliation: Warden

Capital: Tamaron

Population (Clan Space): 73,360,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 1.9 percent (60/41)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 91 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Sullivan Koga

saKhan: Silas Kufahl

Loremaster: Clarissa Jerricho

Scientist-Gneral: Ricarda (Remer)

Merchant Factor: Kavindra

Master Technician: Onyda

Senior Laborer: Hillard

Military:

Clusters: 35

WarShips: 12

Clan Space Worlds:

Babylon (27 percent)

Delios (36 percent)

Foster (40 percent)

Londerholm (32 percent)

Hoard (39 percent)

New Kent (19 percent)

Tamaron (100 percent)

History

Founded by Dana Kufahl, a close friend of the Kerensky family and, indeed, Andery Kerensky's love, the Coyotes have from their inception practiced a number of mystical rituals. From their first days, they have maintained a close association with the chosen Clan of Kerensky's, Clan Wolf.

After a number of successes in Operation Klondike, in which they began the widespread use of zellbrigen (one-on-one engagements) even as they clashed with Clan Sea Fox over those same tactical doctrines, the Coyotes quickly jumped ahead of the other Clans in economic and industrial potential. The Golden Century was exceptionally generous to the Coyotes, who, in pursuit of ever bigger and better weapons, developed the OmniMech and so became

the preeminent military power in the Clan sphere of influence. The Coyotes were second only to the Wolves in absolute population and territorial holdings. Together these two Clans formed a political bloc in the Grand Council that none could hope to stand against successfully.

As the Coyotes grew in strength during the Golden Century, they butted heads with a number of other Clans. In 2742 they entered an alliance with Clan Hell's Horses to destroy the Fire Mandrill Kindraa Smythe-Jewell, who had used what has been called "dubious bidding practices" against both Clans. Six years later the Khans of Clan Snow Raven uncovered incontrovertible evidence that iKhan Tobias Katib, of the Cloud Cobras had engineered the death of the Coyote's iKhan Corian Tchernovkov some years earlier. The Coyotes embarked on a campaign designed to severely punish the Cobras for the actions of their former Khan. After twenty months of heavy action, in which they inflicted severe losses on the Cobras but at the same time lost control of a number of worlds, the Coyotes scale back their operations.

As the Warden and Crusader factions grew within all the Clans, the Coyotes experienced a deep division that could have brought about their Absorption by another Clan. Eight entire Bloodname Houses were eliminated because of that strife, later known as the Blood Scandal, but the Coyotes emerged seemingly stronger than ever and devoted to the Warden cause. Members of Clan Star Adder were implicated in this plot to challenge the Coyotes' legitimate authority, leading to yet another of Clan Coyote's long-time feuds.

But cracks began to develop in the Coyote's foundation. Already deeply enmeshed in their existing feuds, the Coyotes became a prime target for Crusader Clans looking to crush Clans to weaken the Warden resolve. By the time the Outbound Light made its appearance, the Coyotes laid claim to a mere quarter of the holdings they had boasted half a century previous. Led now by a Khan who recognizes the perils facing her Clan, the Coyote Touman has recently undergone a radical reorganization, aimed at streamlining the organization and turning the Clan around again. Only time will tell if these changes will make a true difference.

Society

The Coyotes have perhaps the most conservative mindset of the Warden Clans. The warrior caste commands, while the civilian castes are expected to serve their every whim. While not particularly unusual for a Clan, this situation has nevertheless led to some inter-caste strife, especially in the past several years, though nothing nearly as extreme as Clan Smoke Jaguar's actions against its civilian castes during the famine on Londerholm in 2912. Reports of warriors harshly punishing members of lower castes for real or imagined wrongdoing are not uncommon. Due to the successes they have experienced in the past, the scientist and technician castes enjoy a certain amount of freedom from supervision in accomplishing their tasks; but the punishments for failure are also accordingly severe.

Freeborns hold little standing or regard within the Clan. That trend is slowly changing, however, as the number of freeborns successfully serving in the Touman has increased, and several Coyote Council members have taken up their cause. On the other hand, Coyote Warriors are quite accepting of bondsmen, provided the bondsmen prove themselves capable and willing to serve.

Several of the mystical rites that Dana Kufahl taught her Clan in the early years are still practiced, but primarily by members of the warrior caste. Vision quests and other rites used by Native American tribes to better foster an understanding of nature have evolved more into celebratory practices, at least for the majority of coyote warriors. A vocal minority in the Clan, however, still hold strictly to the spirit of the teachings of Kufahl's native tribe on Terra.

All members of the Clan have access to any number of diversions in their free time. The most popular are arena sporting events that pit combatants, both warriors and the occasional volunteer from the lower castes, against some of the more dangerous creatures to be found in the Cluster, or even other participants, in deadly combat. Such so-called blood

sports are held at least weekly in every major Coyote city, and usually more often in the largest of population centers.

These are not the only diversions practiced by Clan Coyote's members. The coyotes have a highly developed artistic bent, especially in holography and laser sculpture, but this is found mostly in the civilian castes. Though widely regarded among connoisseurs of such art among all the Clans, most Coyote warriors shun or even deride this "pedestrian" fare.

Military

The Coyotes developed the OmniMech, and naturally, OmniMech units form the basis of the Clan's Touman. Omnis are often found even in their garrison Clusters, giving the Coyote garrison units far more flexibility and firepower than similar units in the other Clans. Following standard tactical doctrine (as much as possible in the Clans), the coyotes deploy more the adequate Elemental and aerospace fighter forces in their combined-arms Clusters. Conventional vehicles and infantry, which are rare, are deployed on in solahma units.

The Coyote Touman has just finished nearly eight years of extensive reorganization under the guidance of Khan Sullivan Koga. Her plan did not advance without problems, as quite a few of her senior commanders objected strenuously to it. She continued on, however, dealing with those who stood in her course along the way. The Coyote Galaxies are now efficient fighting organizations, led for the most part by those who chose to back Khan Kufahl. Training levels still fall somewhat below Clan standard, however.

Allies and Enemies

A leader in the Grand Council for decades, the Coyotes have gained a number of perfunctory allies and enemies over the years, though few that could be called strong. Their primary ally was the Wolves until the Refusal War sundered that Clan. Following that action, the Coyotes severed nearly all ties to Vlad's Crusader Wolves. The Coyotes have grown increasingly cold toward the Wolves (in Exile), though that is surely due mostly to distance and the political realities of the Council.

Clans Cloud Cobra and Star Adder share the dubious honor of being the Coyote's most hated opponents, though those feuds have gone on for years with little intensity. The Coyotes also share bad blood with the Fire Mandrills and Blood Spirits over events surrounding the destruction of the Kindraa Smythe-Jewel so many years ago.

The only real alliances the Coyotes still enjoy are with Clans Diamond Shark and Hell's Horses. The relationship with the Diamond Sharks started on shaky ground, but ever since they cooperated in the development of the OmniMech, the two Clans have remained friendly, though recent clashes on Delios have somewhat soured the relationship. The Alliance with the Horses has waxed and waned, depending upon the tides in the Grand Council.

Possessions

Worlds: 6 (5 shared, 1 exclusive)

Though they once dominated the Clan sphere of influence, the Coyotes have suffered a number of losses over the years, reducing them to a mere quarter of what they once held. Though Tamaron was once considered only marginally habitable, the Coyotes have overcome its ecosystem and built a thriving culture there. They have held on jealously to the planet since its discovery and colonization more than two centuries ago, allowing no other Clan to lay claim there.

Clan Diamond Shark



Clan Diamond Shark

Diamond Shark Demographics

Affiliation: Warden

Capital: Strana Mechty

Population (Clan Space): 67,859,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.8 percent (67/39)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 88 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Barbara Sennet

saKhan: Angus Labov

Loremaster: Semi Kalasa

Scientist-Gneral: Trudy (Bland)

Merchant Factor: Lorenzo

Master Technician: Warren

Senior Laborer: Vaslav

Military:

Clusters: 33

WarShips: 18

spacer

The foundation of Clan Diamond Shark is shrouded in controversy. Originally named Clan Sea Fox for the reptile like, amphibian predator native to Strana Mechty (3), they were renamed in 2985 following the diamond shark's introduction to Strana Mechty, supplanting the sea fox in the food chain.

History

The only Clan not to underestimate the defenders of Babylon, the Sea Foxes emerged from the Pentagon Campaign with the respect of their peers. The Sea Fox Khan's early initiatives to promote material prosperity and the strength of the Clan's economy soon paid off. The Clan pioneered developments in the artificial womb technology, and worked with the Cloud Cobras on genetic engineering techniques. However, it was in trade - both material goods and information - that Clan Sea Fox made its reputation. They prospered for more than a century.

However, jealousy of the Sea Fox's success festered among the other Clans. Following a humiliating defeat in a trial of possession - and the Sea Fox's bragging about their victory on the Chatterweb - the Khan of Clan Snow Raven took extraordinary measures. Releasing a genetically engineered breed of shark into Strana Mechty's oceans, he sought to destroy his enemy's totem animal. Although one colony of sea foxes remained, the success of the diamond shark led to the Clan petitioning for a name change. Viewed as near heretical - casting off the name given them by Nicholas Kerensky - they were nevertheless allowed to do so after winning a Trial of Refusal. On September 30, 2985 Clan Sea Fox was renamed Clan Diamond Shark.

For many years the Clan attempted to keep out of politics - after all political disputes were bad for business - but eventually succumbed to the Great Debate. Although predominantly Wardens, their desire to return to the Inner Sphere lead them to support the Crusader cause, as much to limit the brutality of Clans Jade Falcon and Smoke Jaguar as to exploit Inner Sphere resources.

When the call for invasion went out in 3048, the Diamond Sharks failed to win a primary place in the invasion, but were designated third reserve after the Steel Vipers and Nova Cats. To further improve his Clan's position Khan Ian Hawker entered into an alliance with the Jade Falcons. As the invasion progressed, the Diamond Shark observers attached to the invasion force traveled among the fleet and occupied worlds, identifying the goods the Invaders needed. They passed this information to the Clan's merchants who made considerable profits. However, the situation soured when an arms transport fell into the hands of Kuritan rebels (4), who used the captured arms against Clan Smoke Jaguar. The merchants were expelled.

When the Clan was finally activated after the death of ilKhan Showers they were forced to fight the Ghost Bears for a base world, and looked set to share their invasion corridor. However, before the situation the arrangement was formalized the Battle of Tukayyid shattered the Shark Touman and they retreated in disarray. The Ghost Bears soon recaptured Nyserta and the Diamond Sharks had little option but to return to Clan Space.

With the warrior caste in disarray, the Clan's merchant caste became ascendant, in effect determining Clan policy. Angus Labov, a retired warrior and head of the merchants, became de facto leader of the Clan and worked hard to rebuild his Clan. The merchants established trade links with the other Clans and the Inner Sphere powers, always with an eye to strengthening their position. By the time of the Harvest Trials the Clan had returned to its former strength, and in the aftermath of the "Great Refusal", Khan Ian Hawker resigned.

Society

Unlike other Clans, the Diamond Sharks view the civilian castes as supporting the Clan rather than just the warrior caste (5), allowing them to flourish. The Diamond Shark economy is the strongest in the Clans, attributed to the strong bonds between the castes. This has resulted in disparaging comments from the other Clans (the Coyotes have a saying "when there are fins in the water, don't go swimming"), especially after the disaster of Tukayyid, but has allowed the Clan to rebuild quickly. Doing so forced the warriors to make concessions to the merchant caste, a matter than has only recently been resolved.

The Diamond Sharks take Bondsmen wherever possible to quote one Star Colonel "Bondsmen are a simple by product of another action - one we can exploit". It is not unknown for the Diamond Sharks to return bondsmen to their original Clan in exchange for some form of concessions. This allows them to repatriate any troublesome elements and still make a 'profit' on the situation.

The Diamond Sharks understand honor, but their own application of it is somewhat flexible. They understand the need to display an honorable countenance to smooth dealings with other Clans, but believe strict adherence to the Honor Road is detrimental to the Clans best interests. To do so would cut the Clan off from many opportunities, something even the warrior caste is loathe to do.

Similarly, the Clan is not overly political. Their viewpoint wanders between the Crusader and Warden philosophies. Since Tukayyid and their ejection they have espoused the Warden cause but generally prefer to remain apolitical, again because favoring one camp too strongly would be bad for business.

The primary reason for supporting the Crusader faction in the invasion was to gain access to Inner Sphere markets, which they regard as largely untapped. They fully intend to take up Prince Victor's call for stronger ties with the Inner Sphere, and rumors already circulate that they have established relations with Inner Sphere trading cartels. (5a)

Military

Although they fought in the Inner Sphere, most other Clans look on the Diamond Shark military with disdain. Guttled on Tukayyid, the Diamond Shark Touman has rebuilt in the eight years since with the assistance of the merchant caste. The Sharks rarely resort to violence, preferring to get their way through mercantile means. However, interference with their commercial operations frequently elicits a devastating response.

Like most Clans, the Diamond Sharks discriminate against freeborn warriors. However, the need to guard their territory and merchant vessels means the Clan cannot be too picky, and thus does use such troops, mainly in a second line militia. Many train to fight as marines aboard ship, or to act as compound guards.

Unusually, many Shark warriors retire from active service and take up positions in lower castes. Little stigma is attached to such actions, and Bloodnamed retirees may retain their warrior qualification by passing an annual Trial of Position. Because of this policy, the Diamond Sharks have few Solahma units.

Over the years the Diamond Sharks have developed a reputation as sharp bidders (6), forcing opponents to miscalculate and lose more frequently than would be expected. Although such tactics have offended the other Clans, the Sharks view them simply as an extension of the standard 'efficiency' measures.

Allies and Enemies

The Diamond Sharks know that building strong relationships with particular Clans - adversarial or otherwise - could harm their relationships with others. Consequently, they have steered a path of neutrality with most Clans. However, there are some notable exceptions.

The closest the Sharks have to allies are the Blood Spirits and Fire Mandrills, for whom they serve as intermediaries to the other Clans. They have also had historically good relationships with Clan Wolf. Although relationships with the Wolves under Vlad Ward have cooled, they still maintain limited covert contacts with the Wolves in the ARDC. Similarly, the Ghost Bears respected the Sharks sufficiently to grant them territories when they withdrew.

The only Clan the Diamond Sharks despise are the Snow Ravens, who instigated the series of events that lead to the renaming. They have taken every opportunity to slight the Ravens in business, and the Ravens have been atypically passive in their response.

Possessions

Worlds: 10 (9 shared, 1 exclusive)

Although always maintaining wide-ranging possessions, the recent Trials of Possession have benefited the Diamond Sharks considerably. Clan Ghost Bear gifted them their enclaves on Tokasha and Paxon, but though Diamond Shark forces landed on Tokasha, the Khans viewed holding their enclave as "not cost-effective" and withdrew after blooding Gamma Galaxy, choosing instead to consolidate their grip on Paxon. However, in exchange for military and logistical support in their withdrawal, they gained much of the Nova Cat's Barcella enclave, although a number of trials continue on that world against the Jade Falcons and Ice Hellions. However, the Clan's greatest gain came against the Smoke Jaguars. The world of Vinton had long been a source of friction and preparations were underway for a Trial of Possession even before the SLDF attack on Huntress. Within two weeks of the Great Refusal, the Diamond Sharks occupied Vinton, their first exclusive possession.

Clan Fire Mandrill



Clan Fire Mandrill

A member of the genus *mandrillus sphinx*, the Kerensky Exiles introduced the fire mandrill to Eden where it thrived. Named for its fire-red coat, the fire mandrill earned respect for its aggressiveness and loyalty to the pack, making it an ideal 'totem animal' for one of the new Clans. It seems appropriate, therefore, that the rivalry and aggression between fire mandrill packs should also be reflected in their namesake Clan. The Fire Mandrills are a microcosm of the Clans, broken into a number of factions each maintaining their own traditions, philosophies and methods.

Fire Mandrill Demographics

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Shadow

Population (Clan Space): 81,719,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.3 percent

Self-Sufficiency Index: 96 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Amanda Carrol

saKhan: Garret Sainze

Loremaster: Drew Tanaga

Scientist-General: Arkady (Crick)

Merchant Factor: Bianca

Master Technician: Lom

Senior Laborer: Todd

Military:

Clusters: 30

WarShips: 7

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History

Since their earliest days the Fire Mandrills have fought among themselves. This fractiousness began during Operation Klondike, when each warrior sought to demonstrate their prowess and thus the strength of their bloodline. The relationship between Bloodname houses was difficult but several banded together to share resources and to advance their own cause on the Clan council. These groupings were known as 'Kindred Associations' or Kindrasc, although later this would be shortened to Kindraa. Politics between the associations was fraught and reached boiling point when the Kindraa Sainze claimed sections of the Widowmaker enclave on Dagda for their own. Recognizing the benefits this would give the Sainze, the rest of Clan Fire Mandrill sought to join one or other faction, leading to a virtual collapse of Clan organization.

The system remained stable for many years until the Kindraa Smythe-Jewell sought to strengthen their position. The Fire Mandrills had obtained OmniMechs from Clan Coyote through what the Coyotes described as "dubious practices", and the Kindraa Smyth-Jewell gained immeasurably when they traded the system to the Blood Spirits in exchange for territory on Foster. Furthermore, they sought to enhance their power by using the Kindraa Payne as pawns in a raid on the Hell's Horses. This would prove their undoing as together with Clan Coyote, the Horses - allegedly aided by the Kindraa Payne - shattered the Smyth-Jewell association. This provided ample demonstration that while each Kindraa could be likened to a Clan in miniature, they lacked the resources to face another Clan alone. The net result was an increase in the power of the Khan and saKhan - posts decided by Trials of possession rather than election - although this had little effect.

Having fought among themselves for years the Fire Mandrill warriors were honed to a fine edge and should by rights have won a place in the Operation Revival. However, their factional politics lead to a series of internal trials over who should represent the Clan in the inter-trials for the open slots in the invasion force. These battles shattered the Mandrill Touman leaving them in a poor position and resulting in their exclusion from the Invasion.

Further losses to the Ice Hellions in the 'fury' campaign, and to Clan Burrock on Dagda, convinced the Clan that something needed to be done and they set about a slow rebuilding. Although Kindraa rivalry remains a focus of Mandrill life, the Clan sees the need for a unified front. Over the last decade the Kindraa have put aside some of their rivalries and have begun to work together. This has allowed them to retake much of their Dagda enclave from Clan Burrock, as well as capturing large swathes of the former Jaguar enclave on Atreus. However, the internal divisions reemerged in the force selected to represent the Clan in the Trial of Refusal on Strana Mechty, resulting in their defeat by the Capellan Red Lancers.

Society

To the Fire Mandrills, the Kindraa - and thus the Bloodname House - is the center of their existence. Each contains elements of every caste (but not always a full range of sub-castes) and is largely self-sufficient and Kindraa rulers have powers akin to a Khan over their people. However, each Kindraa believes in its own superiority and rarely if ever takes genetic material from others. Although genetic engineering prevents the usual perils of interbreeding, this lack of diversity has resulted in the stagnation of the lines. It is rumored that to (literally) inject new blood into these Kindraa a few have incorporated freeborn DNA into the breeding program.

The Fire Mandrill attitude to Bondsmen is mixed. They are leery of outsiders and thus regard those they take with suspicion. However, they do not wish to waste 'resources' and although few warriors can expect adoption into the warrior caste, use of such personnel in civilian castes is as prevalent as in other Clans. Furthermore, the Mandrill's insular and fractious nature makes them bad Bondsmen - as the Jade Falcons, among others, recently discovered - and any taken in by other Clans, irrespective of caste, will be disruptive. I understand the members of the Kindraa Sainze routinely enact Bondsref.

The Clan's civilian castes are well rounded, but while capable of supporting their Kindraa, the lack of overall cohesion limits their potential. For example the scientist caste lacks the pooling of resources that has allowed other Clans to make technological leaps, thus forcing the Mandrills to acquire technology from outside the Clan. To this end the Clan's merchants - the least fractious of the castes - have achieved some prominence, frequently working with the Clan Diamond Shark. The Shark merchants act as middlemen and mediators, minimizing the Mandrill's contact with other Clans. However, there is no doubt that the warriors rule.

In most cases the honor of the Kindraa is placed above that of the individual and this leads to surprisingly good relations between the castes. Most warriors are willing to help out with any work that needs to be done, strengthening the bonds between them and the civilians. The notable exception is Kindraa Sainze, who value individual honor and consequently have a poorer relationship with non-warrior members.

While the Mandrills are a Crusader Clan, many of the Kindraa hold to Warden principals. The current Khans are from the Crusader Kindraa Mattila-Carol and Sainze and have worked for the Crusader cause. However, historically the Clan has been more neutral in its politics, dominated by the pro-Warden Kindraa Payne and the pro-Crusader Sainze. With the Clan's defeat on Strana Mechty, their politics look set to return to the middle ground.

Military

Overall the Mandrill Touman is well rounded, but the composition of units varies by Kindraa. For example, Kindraa Payne is staunchly pro-MechWarrior to the exclusion of other branches, while Kindraa Beyl-Grant and Kindraa Mick-Kreese have a pro-aerospace bias. Vehicles and conventional infantry are represented in the Clan, but only in Kindraas Payne and Kline. Each Kindraa fields the equivalent of a Galaxy of troops, each comprising between three and five Clusters with associated support services.

Allies and Enemies

The Mandrill's nature means that they have great difficulty accepting outsiders as allies and over the years since the Founding only two Clans - the Blood Spirits and Diamond Sharks - have had anything like good relationships. Most other Clans are simply regarded as outsiders, whom are held in contempt irrespective of whether they are members of another Kindraa or another Clan. However, the constant raiding by Clans Burrock and Smoke Jaguar earned them the status of traditional enemies and the Star Adders have inherited the Mandrill-Burrock feud.

Since invasion of the Inner Sphere, the Mandrill's relationship with Clan Steel Viper, hitherto regarded as little more than an annoyance on the shared world of Marshall, has deteriorated. Following their activation, the Vipers denigrated the Mandrill's performance in the pre-Invasion trials, prompting a number of Trials of Grievance that have spilled over into a general Mandrill-Viper feud.

Clan Coyote have long been viewed with disdain. Unlike the Hells Horses, whom the Mandrills had just cause for attacking the Kindraa Smythe-Jewel, the Mandrills view the Coyotes as opportunists and remain vigilant for some weakness in the Coyote's defense.

Possessions

Worlds: 6 (1 exclusive, 5 shared)

The holdings of Clan Fire Mandrill are surprisingly compact, with the exception of Dagda being located within two jumps of Strana Mechty. Their failure to expand beyond these, the oldest of the colony worlds, is symptomatic of the Clan's internal divisions, but that they held the territory is also a testament to their prowess.

In the last few years the Clan has retaken much of the territory it lost to Clan Burrock on Dagda, and has solidified its hold on Atreus. However, having withdrawn once again after their defeat on Strana Mechty they have failed to exploit the ongoing 'land grab'. Since the SLDF withdrawal, the Mandrill Kindraa Matilla-Carrol occupied the Pahn City on Huntress but are locked in clashes with Clan Star Adder.

Clan Ghost Bear

speaker



speaker

Drawing strength from each other, they survived; Tseng and Jorgensson emerged from the snow,

And forged a Clan in the ghost bear's mold; Unity of purpose and strength of spirit, No task undertaken lightly or left half done. To these ideals we hold true until we all shall fall.

-The Remembrance (Clan Ghost Bear), Passage 45, Verse 6, Lines 13-18

speaker

Clan Ghost Bear

The Strana Mechty ghost bear is a patient predator that waits hours, even days, buried in the snow, for its prey to come into view. When the moment is right, the massive animal strikes with such lightning speed and strength that the naked eye can barely see the ghost bear at all. The surface of the snow settles again with only a faint bloodstain as evidence of the fierce and deadly battle.

Like its namesake, Clan Ghost Bear is a conservative hunter. Never hasty, the prevailing Ghost Bear ethos is "wait and see." When the Bear finally moves, the results are swift and often extreme. Once the Bear has chosen its target, nothing can stand in its way. Such is the Way of our Clan.

Ghost Bear Demographics

Affiliation: Warden

Capital: Alshain (IS)

Population (Clan Space): 24,294,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.1 percent (43/22)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 99 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Bjorn Jorgensson

saKhan: Aletha Kabrinski

Foremaster: Laurie Tseng

Scientist-General: Jorge (Agassiz)

Merchant Factor: Werner

Master Technician: Alejandro

Senior Laborer: Alia

Military:

Clusters: 58

WarShips: 14

Clan Space Worlds:

Arcadia (25 percent)

"This report contains the true account of the Ghost Bears' long journey, from strength to strength despite the constant predation of our neighbors. Following in the footsteps of our founders, our Clan has stayed its course, and despite temporary setbacks, none can dispute our success. May the following words be received by our enemies and allies alike in the spirit intended. In the future, perhaps other Clans will learn to practice the wise teachings of Tseng and

History

The Ghost Bears are the only Clan to be founded by a married couple, and it almost did not happen. Hans Jorgensson and Sandra Tseng were valued advisors to Nicholas Kerensky. Although they were married, Nicholas had decided to place each of them in separate Clans to make best use of his most valuable people. Tseng and Jorgensson agreed that they would rather die together than live apart, and so they set out on a journey into the antarctic of Strana Mechty.

Their journey became the stuff of legends when a family of ghost bears reportedly saved them from death by starvation and exposure. Regaining their strength, they returned to the Clans. The solidarity shown by Tseng and Jorgensson so impressed Nicholas that he let them stay together as Khans of the Ghost Bear Clan.

The Ghost Bears thrived in the Golden Century, but their cautious attitudes kept them from standing out. The Clan's main advancements were industrial; the asteroid-mining techniques they developed during this time gave them a distinct edge in production.

When Operation Revival began, the Ghost Bears earned a place in the initial invasion force, attacking the Draconis Combine and Free Rasalhague Republic corridor. Easy victories in the Periphery and early encounters with Rasalhague troops lulled the Bear Khan into a false sense of security. Together with a lack of sufficient supplies, this resulted in a poor showing for the Bears through the first two waves of the operation.

The turning pint was the death of Khan Theresa DeVillar. The Clan's dynamic Oathmaster, Aletha Kabrinski, succeeded her and immediately called for the removal of the Clan's other Khan, citing poor performance in the invasion to date. Kabrinski nominated Bjorn Jorgensson, who handily defeated the sitting Khan to take over command of the Clan. Jorgensson and Kabrinski immediately initiated sweeping reforms, putting the Clan back on track, and their performance in the later stages of the invasion was impressive. On Tukayyid, they managed to take on of their objectives, while all other Clans but Wolf and Jade Falcon failed to achieve any sort of victory.

In the years following Tukayyid, the Bears moved to solidify their position in the Inner Sphere. Known for treating their civilians well, the Bears continued that course, working closely with local governments to keep the population as content as possible under their new leadership. Ambitious industrial expansion projects were wide spread, keeping employment rates up and enhancing the Bear Touman in the process.

The Ghost Bears were so successful in the Occupation Zone that Khan Jorgensson proposed a bold plan: to move the entire Clan permanently into the Inner Sphere, streamlining supply and manufacturing and strengthening the Clan. Putting the matter to a vote of the entire Warrior caste, as are all important matters that concern all Ghost Bear castes, the Clan voted to move. Although relocating from Clan space was not in violation of any Clan laws or traditions, the move was conducted in secrecy to prevent undue predation against Ghost Bear holdings or vessels during the relocation.

The capture and adoption by Clan Ghost Bear of Ragnar Magnusson, Prince of Rasalhague and former warrior of Clan Wolf, put the seal on the Ghost Bears' relocation. Currently a Star Colonel in the Bear Touman, his presence legitimizes the Bears' claim to their Inner Sphere possessions, and it seems likely that Ragnar will eventually be elevated to a high position within the Clan.

Society

Hard work and dedication are cornerstones of Ghost Bear daily life. Though these value are

typical of the Clans, family has a unique meaning to this Clan founded by a married couple. In their years as the Ghost Bears' first Khans, Tseng and Jorgensson imparted to their initial forty warriors a sense of camaraderie and fellowship. To them, the Clan was a family, and the father of that family was the Khan.

As the years passed, those first warriors passed this sense of pride and belonging to those under their command. The intensity of the relationship faded as the Clan grew, but the general sense remained. Ghost Bear warriors maintain tight bonds with their trothkin and starmates. True friendship among them is widespread, and some even say love is common among the ranks (although the Bears deny this).

In the civilian castes, where families are common in other Clans, the concept is far closer to the Inner Sphere norm than in other Clans. Children generally stay with their parents rather than being raised in community crèches. In most cases, this means the crèches are more like day care than permanent homes for the children, and the parents take care of their own children as much as they can while still performing their duties for the Clan.

Military

The Ghost Bear Touman centers on strength and speed, employing 'Mechs with powerful arrays of weapons, often to the point where armor and heat sinks are compromised. The use of fast 'Mechs such as Fire Moth to deploy their significant force of Elementals, the largest of any Clan. In fact, the Ghost Bears have deployed an entire Galaxy consisting solely of Elementals. Generally, Ghost Bear clusters consist of two trinaries of 'Mechs, one trinary of Elementals and a mixed Nova or either 'Mechs and Elementals or 'Mechs and AeroSpace fighters.

Ghost Bear training is harsh and especially physical. All warriors undergo personal combat training, and it is interesting to note that Clan Ghost Bear never adopted the aerospace pilot genotype for its pilots, instead using what other Clans would consider MechWarrior stock for that role. Many suspect the Bears made this move not only because of their famous reluctance to adopt new methods, but also because the pilot genotype makes for poor hand-to-hand combatants.

Allies and Enemies

The Bears are a powerful but moderate Clan, and as such offend few and have worked alongside almost every Clan over the years. However, the only Clan that could be termed a true ally is Snow Raven, who have worked with the Ghost Bears periodically for the last hundred years. The Ghost Bears' comparatively weak aerospace force is complemented nicely by the Ravens, who benefit from the Bear's exceptional Elemental force in battles where the two work together.

A powerful Clan always attracts rivals, and the Ghost Bears are no exception. Topping the list are the Hell's Horses, who have had a long running border dispute with the Ghost Bears. One such conflict in the Golden Century resulted in the death of Kilbourne Jorgensson, arguably the most popular Ghost Bear Khan in history. The Ghost Bears have held a simmering hatred of the Horses ever since.

Also on less than sterling terms with the Bears are the Steel Vipers, with whom they just never got along, and Clan Wolf. The Wolf Clan enmity dates back to the Annihilation of Clan Wolverine and the fact that the Ghost Bears were denied the right to participate in the trial. The Bears let a Wolverine unit slip past them in spite, and have regretted it ever since. The scar of that incident is borne to this date by all Ghost Bear warriors, who also harbor a long standing grudge against the Wolf Clan for failing in the honor of fully destroying the Wolverines when they had the chance.

Possessions

Worlds: 43 (Clan space: 1 shared world. Inner Sphere: 42)

Before their relocation to the Inner Sphere, the Ghost Bears held considerable territory in Clan space. However, they now maintain only their enclave on Arcadia and the traditional posting at Strana Mechty; their remaining holdings were ceded to allies or lost to Trials of Possessions. All other Ghost Bear troops and civilians have been relocated to their Inner Sphere occupation zone, which has been named the Ghost Bear Dominion. The Ghost Bears recently captured the Inner Sphere worlds of Leoben, Skandia and Radstadt in Trials of Possession against Clan Wolf.



Goliath Scorpion Demographics

Affiliation: Warden

Capital: Roche

Population (Clan Space): 67,238,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.4 percent (84/60)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 91 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Ariel Suvovrov

saKhan: Nelson Elam

Loremaster: Kyrie Ben-Shimon

Scientist-Gneral: Germon (Wilkinson)

Merchant Factor: Palos

Master Technician: Noam

Senior Laborer: Suu

Military:

Clusters: 24

WarShips: 17

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The Babylonian goliath scorpion is renowned for their suicidal defense of nests and their lethal venom. Many have adopted some part of their totem animal into their lifestyle, but none so literally as the Scorpions. The giant arthropod's venom forms an important part of rituals, earning the Clan's members equal measures of respect and disdain.

History

The Scorpion's founder, Cyrus Elam, was not typical of those of other Clans. He was a

combat engineer, specializing in bridging and demolitions whose skills proved vital in the advance on Dagda. His saKhan - Jenna Scott - was equally unusual, an intelligence officer who led to the Scorpion's specialization in information gathering. The Clan's third - and unofficial - founder was Ethan Moreau, a member of the SLDF who rejected Nicholas' call for Exodus and remained in the Pentagon. Surviving to the liberation, he underwent Thamzing and Nicholas was so impressed with his genuine contrition that he created the "Rite of Forgiveness", surkai. Moreau was allowed into the Clan, but was denied a Bloodname (and thus a place in the eugenics program) as he was not of the original 800.

As the Golden Century dawned, a flood of new warriors quickly outstripping the available machines in the Scorpion Touman. In an effort to 'weed-out' the lesser warriors, a coming-of-age ritual was created that required a new warrior to subject himself to the sting of a goliath scorpion. However, as the deaths mounted due to the venous sting, the genetic stability of the Scorpion Bloodlines became endangered, forcing a halt to this practice. However, Khan Shandra Dinour tasked the scientist caste with finding an alternative that maintained the ritual's spirit without destroying the valuable visionary effects imparted by the scorpion's sting. Two years later, Necrosia, a derivative of the scorpion venom, was introduced. It quickly became a part of almost every cadets introduction into the warrior caste.

When the OmniMech was introduced, the poor showing of the Scorpion military in their attempts to capture the new technology, embarrassed the entire Clan. In an effort to increase the martial skills of her warriors, Khan Dinour created a series of tournaments, based on the Matrial Olympiad of the former Star League, which would become known as the Circle of Honor. This gladiatorial tradition exists to this day.

As the Golden Century progressed the members of the Clan placed increasing emphasis on glory seeking, using the Necrosia-induced "vision quests" to direct their search for relics of the past. The warriors claim the lethal cocktail allows them to see beyond the mundane world, making connections between the items of the past and events yet to happen. The Scorpions became nomads within their enclaves, and thus lack the cohesion of the other Clans. The actions of these "seekers" lead the Clan into skirmishes with other Clans, their only official contact with outsiders for much of their history. More often than not the small groups of Scorpions fell prey to their better organized and equipped neighbors, hampering their development.

However, in recent years the Khans of Clan Goliath Scorpion have recognized their weakness and have undertaken steps to regain their former glory. They have entered into negotiations with Clan Snow Raven, offering to trade their military backing in some future enterprise for equipment (mainly fighters) and Raven tactical advisors. The Ravens have been bargaining hard, but a deal looks imminent.

The success of Khan Ariel Suvorov's reforms have been amply demonstrated in recent months by the Clan's victories in the Trial of Possession on Tokasha.

Society

Goliath Scorpion Society is less disdainful of freeborns than other Clans, having been forced to rely on them to bulk out the Touman because of the fatalities that result from the use of scorpion venom in vision quests. Trueborns maintain their mystique, but within the Clan they are seen more as 'celebrities' than the pinnacle of evolution. This attitude, together with the Clan's attitude towards Bloodnames (who, like trueborns in general, are not "placed on a pedestal") is tied into the Scorpion's "living heraldry" system.

Living heraldry seeks to turn the history of the Clan and its members into works of art that outlive them. Individual warriors use the living heraldry as a sort of visible codex, announcing their abilities and the history of their bloodline. However, rather than the coats of arms of the medieval age, "living heraldry" involves collecting people, animals and objects. Together with their vision quests, the Scorpions regard the living heraldry as 'practical mysticism', allowing them to honor the past - particularly the Star League - and to reassemble it with relics.

Bondsmen are closely associated with their Bondholder, regarded as 'living trophies' and serving as squires. As with so much of Scorpion society, they form part of the "living heraldry", providing a tangible demonstration of the warrior's abilities. Members of the technician caste serve as de-facto bondsmen to the warrior they serve, remaining with an individual warrior throughout their career rather than remaining with the unit. Other Clans generally refrain from taking Goliath Scorpions as Bondsmen. Many only consider adopting Bloodnamed warriors, and as many Scorpion warriors are physically and psychologically addicted to scorpion venom, they consider them a waste of effort.

The Clans nomadic lifestyle has hampered their technological and economic development, and consequently the Scorpions are considered 'backward' by the other Clans. Furthermore, their un-Clanlike belief in putting individuals before the Clan - vision quests are considered more important than the Clan's military goals - has led to their being shunned. However, this very absence of a rigid infrastructure and resources has spared them the raiding suffered by the other weak Clans.

The Scorpions are staunch Wardens, but as with everything else about their society their interpretation of the philosophy deviates from the norm. Like other Wardens they do not believe the Star League should be reborn through conquest, but they do believe it should be recreated - but through rediscovery of the past rather than violence. They view Spheroids as misguided, to be brought back onto the true path by education.

Military

The Goliath Scorpion Touman (such as it is) is built around mixed Trinaries. (10) These are tailored to the needs of the unit and the situation, allowing Scorpion forces considerable flexibility to meet any opposition. However, most units are over-specialized in ground forces (historically the Scorpions have had little need for fighters), a fact the Khans recognize and are addressing. However, many of their new pilots are more versed in ground support missions than dog fighting and air superiority tasks.

Small-unit actions and night engagements typify Scorpion tactics, but as with the incorporation of aerospace assets, the Clan is expanding its repertoire of skills so as to be less predictable on the battlefield.

Unusual, units have mascot animals, reflecting the Clans fondness for pets.

Allies and Enemies

Their isolationism - and tendency to stay out of disputes - means the Scorpions have few enemies or allies. Politically they have followed the lead of Clan Wolf, regarding themselves in debt to the Clan of Kerensky for Ethan Moreau's redemption. However, this 'alliance' is somewhat one-sided, the Wolves barely acknowledging the Scorpion's existence.

The Clan's only real enemies are the Ice Hellions with whom they have clashed for many years.

Possessions

Worlds: 5 (all shared)

Until recently the amount of Goliath Scorpion territory had remained constant, all of it underdeveloped by Clan Standards. Their recent expansion on Tokasha, claiming part of the former Ghost Bear holdings in the face of similar moves by Clans Jade Falcon and Hell's Horses, is the first sizeable growth since the early years of the Golden Century. The move netted them many heavy industrial sites. However, it remains to be seen if they can retain possession in the face of more experienced enemies. The Clan has also taken control of the Abyssmal continent on Huntress.

Clan Hell's Horses



From the fires of Eden came John Fletcher, A true warrior, leader of men, not of machine, His wisdom became that of a new Clan that challenged even the mightiest of 'Mechs,
-The Remembrance (Clan Hell's Horses) Passage 13, Verse 1, Lines 1 - 4

Clan Hell's Horses

Attempts to adapt horses to the deserts of Circe resulted in a carnivorous beast uncontrollable through conventional taming methods. Scheduled for termination, these animals were released by a sympathetic soldier, and have since thrived on Circe. Respected for its tenacity and unadulterated aggressiveness, the hell's horses made an ideal Clan totem.

Hell's Horses Demographics

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Niles

Population (Clan Space): 95,317,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.1 percent (71/50)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 93 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Malavai Fletcher

saKhan: Tanya DeLaurel

LOremaster: Helena Fletcher

Scientist-Gneral: Mohamed (Kepler)

Merchant Factor: Sonja

Master Technician: Amanda

Senior Laborer: Jan

Military:

Clusters: 37

WarShips: 10

Clan Space Worlds:

Bearclaw (30 percent)

Eden (31 percent)

Hoard (10 percent)

Kirin (100 percent)

Niles (100 percent)

Strato Domingo (35 percent)

Tiber (50 percent)

Tokasha (13 percent)

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"Warriors, not war machines, are the backbone of the Hell's Horses. While others worship the BattleMech as the ultimate weapon, the men and women of this Clan see even this awesome piece of technology as the tool it is. We have held to this philosophy since the days of our first Khan, who knew that the value of the common soldier far outstripped the brute force of the BattleMech. It is one reason our Clan possesses fewer 'mechs than most, and has led many to underestimate our fierceness and courage. Our survival against all challengers when others have fallen proves the folly of such arrogance, and testifies to the wisdom of our founders."

- saKhan Tanya DeLaurel, to warriors undergoing the Branding ritual, 3059

History

Founded by the commander of the SLDF's Thirty-Fifth Infantry Division, Clan Hell's Horses has believed in combined-arms operations since its inception. The Clan served in a support role during the campaign to liberate Eden, which earned its members less prestige than the other Clans but also meant proportionally fewer casualties. This gave the Hell's Horses an advantage during the post-war era.

For many years, the Clan focused on colonization, expansion and self-improvement. In expanding the boundaries of Clan space, the Hell's Horses took a major risk that the increased freedom necessary for successful colonization might result in open revolt against the strictures of ordinary Clan society. Other Clans tightly controlled exploration and colonization for exactly that reason. Whether through careful planning or good luck, however, the Horses avoided any major incidents.

Apolitical for many years, they remained in the background, sparring with their neighbors only for resources or new technology. Many Hell's Horses encounters resulted in negotiated settlements - most notably the deal with the Wolf Clan for Elemental suits, which colored the relationship between the two Clans until the present day.

The turning point in the relationship of the Hell's Horses with the other Clans came when the Horses developed the genetic enhancement techniques used to create the Elemental phenotype. This innovation forced the other Clans to reevaluate the Horses. A series of Trials for the techniques and genetic material ensued, including a treacherous assault by the Fire Mandrill Kindraa Smythe-Jewell, in which Kindraa Payne unwittingly served as a diversion while the Smythe-Jewell forces took their objectives. Disgusted by these un-Clanlike tactics, the Horses called for a Trial of Annihilation against the Mandrills, but were refused. Soon afterward, they allied with Clan Coyote and in 2872 crushed the offending Kindraa. This action earned the Horses the respect of other Clans and demonstrated the benefits of inter-Clan cooperation.

In 2921, battles against the Ghost Bears for control of Tokasha escalated out of hand. The bitter fighting involved atypically large forces, with each side fielding an entire Galaxy. The Hell's Horses had the upper hand for much of the battle, until Bear Khan Kilbourne Jorgensson was killed and the Bears went into a frenzy. The maddened Bears shattered Horse units, forcing them to withdraw. Both Clans have nursed a feud ever since - The Horses for their manufacturing facilities on Tokasha, and the Bears for the death of their Khan.

During the early thirty-first century, the Horses shifted drastically from political neutrality to clear support of the Crusader cause. They participated enthusiastically in the Trials of Possession held for positions in the Inner Sphere invasion force, but failed to win a place. The failure angered many in the Clan, and after Tukayyid they supported every initiative to resume the invasion.

Clan Hell's Horses fought in the Great Refusal on Strana Mechty in defense of the invasion, and were horrified by the ease with which Free Rasalhague's Third Drakons defeated them. In the months that followed, they took out their frustration on their own to seize former Ghost Bear assets on Bearclaw and to reclaim their old possessions on Tokasha.

Clan Hell's Horses seems to be facing a brighter future; they recently took three Inner Sphere worlds from Clan Wolf. It remains to be seen whether they can capitalize on this de facto occupation zone.

Society

The Hell's Horses believe that everyone has his or her place. The Clan's castes cooperate with each other, enjoying generally good relations. The warrior caste remains dominant, but its members listen to and the opinions of the civilian castes. However, the Horses' relative lack of aggressiveness and absence of major politicking has led other Clans to hold them in

low esteem until their recent successes in the Trials of Possession for former Ghost Bear assets. Despite these gains, however, the Hell's Horses clearly remain followers rather than leaders. On many issues they still defer to their "brothers" in the Wolf Clan, and rumors of Khan Fletcher's mental instability have not helped their cause.

The Hell's Horses refuse to take bondsmen from sources they consider dishonorable, including bandits and Clan Fire Mandrills (except for Kindraa Payne). their ongoing feud with Clan Ghost Bear has not kept them from attempting to capture Ghost Bear bondsmen, whom they regard as living trophies. Many such prisoners are humiliated and abused, but not to the extent that the Smoke Jaguars used to abuse their prisoners. The Ghost Bears have begun reciprocating, and so the two Clans have little expectation of leniency when they clash.

While respecting the benefits of technology, the Horses regard it as a means to an end. New technologies allow them to work better, especially warriors who would otherwise be retired because of injury. Khan Malavai Fletcher is a staunch proponent of cybernetics, understandable, if one believes the allegations that cybernetic parts have replaced half of the unstable Khan' body.

Politically, the Hell's Horses are somewhat unusual. The Clan's rank and file are Wardens, but to avoid friction with the other Crusader Clans, Khan Fletcher has ensured that Crusaders hold all senior posts. In general, the Horses see the Inner Sphere as a lost cause in need of redemption, not territory to be conquered and rules.

Honor and tradition bind this clan together, as expressed in its unique rituals. Most notable is the Branding, in which a team of warriors hunt and capture a Circian hell's horse to brand it. Those who succeed without losing any team members in the process are awarded the prestigious Mark of the Horse.

Military

The Hell's Horses have a bias toward infantry and vehicles, reversing standard Clan doctrine by regarding 'Mechs and fighters as support troops. This combat philosophy often limits their flexibility, and ultimately proved their undoing in the Great Refusal. Aside from that setback, however, the Horses appear to have suffered few adverse results from their unusual emphasis on conventional forces. One reasons for this is the size of their touman, which is unusually large for a Home Clan. The Horses have historically beefed up their forces by allowing failed warriors a second Trial of Position. If a warrior fails to qualify for his or her primary warrior sub-caste, that warrior may undertake a second Trial for assignment to a lower sub-caste: for example, Mechwarriors to vehicle crews, Elementals to conventional infantry, or aerospace pilots to ship crews.

The Horses have also formalized several ranks that other Clans consider junior or senior postings within the same rank. Nova Commander denotes command of two stars, a Nova or Binary and falls between Star Commander and Star Captain in seniority. Nova Captain denotes command of four Stars, two Novas or Binaries, and falls between Star Captain and Star Colonel.

Allies and Enemies

Since the long-ago battle for Tokasha, the Hell's Horses have hated the Ghost Bears. The Bears return this enmity in full, and the Horses were furious to learn of their relocation to the Inner Sphere. To a lesser extent, the Horses dislike the Fire Mandrills, though this grudge stems from the actions of the defunct Kindraa Smythe-Jewell and therefore carries less weight. The Horses have a grudging respect for Kindraa Payne, whose members they regard as the only honorable fire Mandrills.

The schism within the Wolf Clan confused the Horses, who historically considered themselves Wolf allies. The number of Warden-leaning officers within the Horses does not help the

Clan's relations with the new Crusader Wolves, but the two Clans recently undertook a joint military venture on Hoard in spite of their political differences. In addition, Hell's Horses is currently waiting for the Wolf reaction to the Horses' occupation of three of their Inner Sphere worlds. Though not formally allied with them, the Horses respect the Coyotes, Steel Vipers, Snow Ravens and Jade Falcons, all of whom they believe have demonstrated admirable traits and abilities over the years.


Possessions

Worlds: 8 (Clan space: 8 worlds; 6 shared, 2 exclusive.)

The Horse Touman has performed well in recent months, successfully opposing the Jade Falcons and Ice Hellions to recapture some of the assets they lost to the Ghost Bears in 2921. They also managed to capture parts of the Bear capital on Bearclaw, along with sections of the Nova Cat enclave on the same world. They prepared for a major conflict with the Snow Ravens, to whom the Bears have given most of the world, but managed to reach a compromise that kept fighting to a minimum. On Kirin, they took advantage of the Smoke Jaguars' weakness to regain exclusive control of the colony world, returning it to the status quo of half a century ago.

Working under contract to the Wolves, the Twelfth Mechanized Cluster attacked the former Nova Cat world of Hoard. Originally slated to aid the Wolves in a renewed invasion of the Inner Sphere, the unit instead seized a foothold on the planet for the Wolves. However, Khan Vlad Ward was obliged to grant the Horses half the gains of the campaign; each Clan now controls roughly 10 percent of the planet, and the fighting continues. the Clan also now possesses the formerly Wolf worlds of Engadin, Stanzach and Vorarlberg in the Inner Sphere.

Clan Ice Hellion



In Turn they tested each Clan namesake in that against the Ice Hellions mettle. Each chased the ice hellion, hunting it down. All failed to match the predator's speed and grace. Khan Cage smiled and said, "And that is how we shall be." - The Remembrance (Clan ice Hellion)
Passage: 5, Verse 3, Lines 1 - 5

Clan Ice Hellion

Clan Ice Hellion. To the rest of the Clans, these words conjure many images. Some see a Clan that attempts to emulate its namesake to a fault. Others see a group of soldiers without

a sense for tactics or the ability to construct a balanced army. Some even think of us as honorless warriors who refuse to follow respected Clan tradition. To them we are more hungry for conquest of our fellow Clans than committed to the vision set forth by Nicholas Kerensky. These perceptions are inaccurate, but understandable in light of our Clan's often unstable and inconsistent history. Our present strength, however, balances the less fortunate episodes in our past, and, as this page will show, we have always acted with true honor even when others did not see it.

Ice Hellion Demographics

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Hector

Population (Clan Space): 101,309,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 3.1 percent (82/51)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 91 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Asa Taney

saKhan: Sellen Cage

Loremaster: Jonas Cage

Scientist-Gneral: Ken (Pascal)

Merchant Factor: Martine

Master Technician: Lukas

Senior Laborer: Lew

Military:

Clusters: 21

WarShips: 13

Clan Space Worlds:

Atreus (35 percent)

Babylon (23 percent)

Barcella (38 percent)

Foster (30 percent)

Hector (100 percent)

Hoard (40 percent)

Huntress (8 percent)

Londerholm (68 percent)

Marshall (9 percent)

New Kent (6 percent)

Tathis (30 percent)

History

The founders of Clan Ice Hellion chose to mimic their totem animal's speed and pack mentality. Using light and medium 'Mechs and aerospace fighters, they served as scouts in Operation Klondike. This role led to some friction with Nicholas Kerensky, as the Hellions felt he had denied them the fights they deserved. The Clan still bears this proverbial chip on the shoulder, aggressively defending its martial abilities.

Light but powerful, the Ice Hellions did well in the early years after the Pentagon campaign, using their speed to devastating effect in various conflicts with other Clans. The other Clans soon developed effective counter-tactics, however, and the Hellions found themselves assailed from all sides. For a time, Hellion saKhan Lucius Moore was a hero to his Clan for his seeming ability to win in hopeless situations. Then senior Khan Cage discovered that Moore was using drugs to enhance his troops' abilities. Enraged at what he took as a grievous slight against the Clan eugenics program, Cage brought charges before the Grand Council and called for a Trial of Grievance against Moore. The fighting that followed was essentially a civil war within the Hellions, costing them 60 percent of their strength but freeing them of the taint of saKhan Moore's dishonorable actions. Other Clans probed the Hellions' weakness, but the Hellions fended them off. To compensate for their lower numbers, they developed several new technologies, including the enhanced formula endo steel and ferro fibrous armor used in modern OmniMechs.

In the debate over whether or not to invade the Inner Sphere, the Ice Hellions were avid Crusaders. When the Grand Council agreed to the Warden sponsored Dragoon Compromise in the year 3000, Hellion Khan Jena Norizuchi was outraged. Going against the Grand Council's decision, she prepared to launch a pre-emptive invasion of the Inner Sphere. SaKhan Ernest Wick declared a secret Trial of Grievance against her for going against the Council's mandate, and once again the Ice Hellions found themselves fighting a civil war. The details of this so-called secret Trial did not emerge until recently, save that saKhan Wick won and the Hellions kept faith with the Grand Council.

When the call finally went out for the Invasion in 3048, the Hellions fared poorly in the Trials for inclusion in the invasion force. Outraged, many Hellion warriors vented their frustration in the "Hellion's Fury" campaign. These series of raids throughout Clan space netted the Hellions many resources and much territory, but also alienated them from many of their fellow Home Clans.

In recent years, Khan Asa Taney has attempted to use the dissatisfaction among the Home Clans to form a coalition that would elect him ilKhan and elevate the Hellions to Invading Clan status. Even after the Khans of the Invading Clans destroyed his power base, Taney remained close to the centers of power, and was one of the four Khans who accompanied the ilKhan when they met with Victor Steiner-Davion to negotiate the Great Refusal. During that Trial, the Hellions met the Nova Cats and were shattered. Khan Taney was badly injured by Nova Cat Khan Severen Leroux, and only returned to active duty in November of 3060.

Society

Ice Hellion society follows Clan traditions, with warriors regarded as clearly superior to the civilian castes. Inter-caste relations remain generally even, though the warriors distrust the merchant caste. Believing merchant ways inherently corrupt, the Clan Council assigns troops to escort and keep watch over all merchant vessels.

The people of Clan Ice Hellions are hard working, thriving on the marginal worlds that the Clan claim as their own. This work ethic has forged strong bonds within the technician and laborer castes. Both know that the other castes undervalue them, and are thus very supportive of each other. Family units show similarly strong ties, as do work groups and military units. Appreciation of others' abilities within the family or unit is a natural extension of the bond within Hellion "packs" (as they frequently term their various subgroups), and this willingness to recognize the talents of others has made performance arts a common pastime.

Bondsman are a feature of Hellion life, particularly civilians taken in raids or when acquiring territory. Expansionistic and belligerent, the Hellions know that bondsmen are living evidence of their military strength. However, few captured warriors are allowed to become abtakha, principally because of problems adapting to the Hellions emphasis on speed and other unique battle tactics.

The idealization of speed colors all aspects of Ice Hellion life. The Hellions place considerable emphasis on first impressions and snap judgments rather than long term contemplation and its associated second guessing. Such an attitude often works well in combat, where swift reaction time can mean the difference between life and death; in politics or business, however, it can pose major problems. The Hellion's do not think things through, which has hurt their mercantile concerns as well as their leaders' political ambitions.

Almost all members of this Clan are strong believers in technology, but none more so than the warriors. Anything that enhances their machines' speed or a warrior's reaction time, more powerful engines, lighter components or EI implants, is much prized in Clan Ice Hellion.

Military

The Hellions despise the necessity of including freeborns in their combat units, but the small size of their touman compared with the size of their territories requires this practice. Trueborn and Freeborn warriors rarely mix, forming their own units and serving distinct roles. The Hellions even train their freeborns in separate camps from trueborn warriors. Most freeborns serve in flurry units, militias that contain regular armor and infantry and that bulk out the Hellion Touman. The Hellions acquired Elementals and battle armor late, and so have a poor opinion of them.

The Hellions place less emphasis on sibkos than other Clans, breaking them up during training to foster self reliance among the troops. They believe that by weakening the links to the sibko, a new warrior will develop stronger ties to his or her new unit.

Aside from their penchant for speed, Hellion warriors are best known (and much derided) for their ability to "talk a good fight." The Wolves take particular enjoyment in baiting the Hellions for this habit.

Allies and Enemies

The Ice Hellions believe so much in their own strength that they see little need to develop alliances with other Clans. They occasionally form alliances of convenience, but nothing that lasts beyond a single campaign or event.

Despite the Hellion's Fury campaign, the Clan has no real enemies. They share a mutual antipathy with the Wolves, who regard the Hellions as ineffectual and who often refer to them as "rime-stoast" (a type of weasel). The Hellions understandably dislike the Wolves for this attitude, and also for Khan Vlad Ward's dismissal of Asa Taney's efforts to advance the Hellion cause. Despite Taney's incapacity after the Great Refusal, this antipathy looks set to develop into a full blown feud.

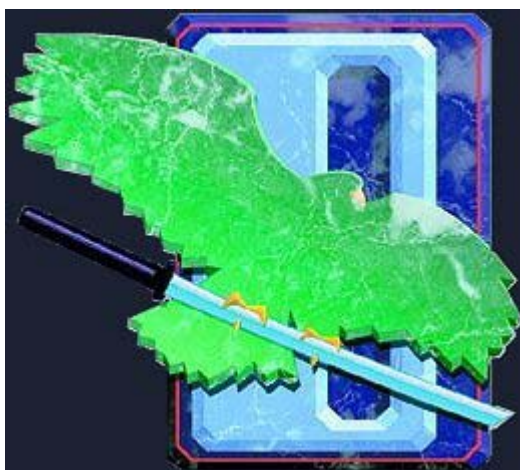
Possessions

Worlds: 11 (10 shared, 1 exclusive)

The Hellions made extensive gains in the Hellion's Fury campaign, particularly in the area spinward of Strana Mechty. They have added these gains in the recent Trials of Possessions for Ghost Bear, Smoke Jaguar and Nova Cat holdings, taking sections of Barcella, Hoard, Atreus, Londerholm, and Huntress. However, all five worlds remain contested. With the Hellion Touman stretched to its limit, the Clan may have to abandon some of its new gains.

Clan Jade Falcon

speaker



speaker

With Falcon sight we choose our foes. On Falcon wings we harry them. With Falcon claws we smite our foes. And with Falcon tenacity we win. - The Remembrance (Clan Jade Falcon)

Passage: 97, Verse 7, Lines 6-9

speaker

Clan Jade Falcon

Named for a genetically engineered Eden predator, Clan Jade Falcon has historically ranked among the most powerful and active Clans. Aggressive and tenacious, this Clan constantly strives to advance its own agenda without losing sight of Nicholas Kerensky's teachings (as the Falcons interpret them). Staunch traditionalists, the Falcons were the driving force behind the development of the Crusader philosophy.

Jade Falcon Demographics

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Ironhold

Population (Clan Space): 116,264,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.6 percent (72/46)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 93 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Marthe Pryde

saKhan: Samantha Clees

LoRemaster: Kael Pershaw

Scientist-Gneral: Etienne (Balzac)

Merchant Factor: Moriz

Master Technician: Sanders

Senior Laborer: Tae

Military:

Clusters: 47

WarShips: 23

Clan Space Worlds:

Barcella (15 percent)

Dagda (9 percent)

Eden (34 percent)

GateKeeper (100 percent)

Glory (45 percent)

Huntress (42 percent)

Ironhold (100 percent)

Marshall (6 percent)

tokasha (64 percent)

"Listen fledgling, to tales of glory, to the rise of a Clan from the ashes of empires, the honor of resilience and victory against the odds. This is the tale of the Jade Falcons."

- Samantha Clees, saKhan, Clan Jade Falcons, 1 December 3059

History

After the war against the Usurper Amaris and the treachery of the House Lords who destroyed the Star League, the Great Father Aleksandr Kerensky led the survivors of the Star League Defense Force out of the corrupt Inner Sphere in search of sanctuary. He sought to save his people from the divisiveness and ambition sweeping the Inner Sphere, and for many years after our ancestors arrived at the Pentagon worlds, Arcadia, Babylon, Circe, Dagda and Eden, his dream was a reality. In 2801, however the horrors of the past came back to haunt us all.

The Exodus and Aleksandr's reforms had not purged the Star League in Exile of its baser instincts, only forced them below the surface where they festered. The Pentagon erupted in violence, and the Great Father died before he could return order to the shattered society. Responsibility for the people fell to Aleksandr's son, Nicholas, who led his loyal followers to safety in the stars known as the Kerensky Cluster.

As war raged in the Pentagon, Nicholas showed the courage of his convictions and set about remodeling society to avoid a repeat of the chaos that had engulfed the Inner Sphere and the Pentagon Worlds. He created the caste system and divided the people into twenty Clans, each centered around a core of forty warriors, all loyal to his vision. The members of one such Clan were our forefathers, the Jade Falcons.

The Falcons performed admirably in the liberation of the Pentagon worlds, but fell short of Nicholas Kerensky's expectations. His decision to join the [Wolf Clan](#) gave rise to a bitter feud between the two Clans that continues to this day. After shaking off the near fatal malaise that had gripped them in the wake of Kerensky's choice, the Falcons transformed their Clan into one of the foremost advocates of the Founder's ideals.

Viewed as hidebound by some other Clans, the Falcons developed mercantile and military interests simultaneously. Taking a slower approach than other Clans brought them

sustainable growth with appropriate support from the civilian castes, and the Falcons ended the Golden Century as one of the most powerful Clans.

The Falcons led the Crusader movement to invade the Inner Sphere, and continued to push for invasion despite the Wolf Clan's blocking tactics. Their efforts ultimately won them a place in Operation Revival, and Falcon Khan Elias Crichell became one of ilKhan Leo Showers' most trusted advisors. The Falcons did not perform as well as expected, however, and so ilKhan Ulric Kerensky paired them with the Steel Vipers, one of their bitterest rivals, after ilKhan Shower's death. Achieving a draw against the Com Guards on Tukayyid restored some of the Falcons' prestige, but they chafed under the truce signed by ilKhan Kerensky. They undertook several schemes to abrogate it, the last of which resulted in the removal of the Warden ilKhan and the shattering of the Wolf Clan. Their own Clan suffered as greatly, however, leaving the Falcons to weak to exploit their victory politically. Lincoln Osis of the Smoke Jaguars, rather than a Falcon Khan, became the new ilKhan.

With the Smoke Jaguars gone, the Falcons are once more on the ascendant. They repulsed a recent attack by Clan Steel Viper, in the process strengthening their Inner Sphere holdings. In addition, backed by the volume of resources only available to the Invading Clans, the Falcons have rebuilt their military in record time.

Society

The Falcons believe wholeheartedly in the right of the warrior caste to rule. Trueborn warriors look down on freeborns, and all warriors look down on the other castes. Unlike the extremist Smoke Jaguars, however, the Falcons recognize the importance of the civilian castes to the war effort. While often brusque in the dealings with civilians, Falcon warriors recognize that the Touman would suffer without their efforts. Falcon civilians therefore enjoy a standard of living above the average for the Clan worlds, in recognition of their contribution to society.

Given their martial bent, the Falcons have a unusually large mercantile network, second only to that of the business minded Diamond Sharks. Without the materials to fight, warriors are nothing; because the merchant caste provides those materials, its members receive considerable support. Similarly, members of the scientist caste command considerable respect for their wide ranging work on behalf of the Clan. However, this respect does not translate into much personal freedom; the Falcons have always crushed rebellion without mercy. such a hard line approach works well with Clansmen, who know what to expect, but has caused problems with the Falcons' Inner Sphere populations. Clan wolf exploited Falcon heavy handedness during the Refusal War, as did Archon Princess Katherine Steiner-Davion more recently when she sent agents to incite unrest on Falcon held worlds.

The Falcons frequently take bondsmen. though a bondsman is often harshly treated while wearing the bondcord, little stigma is attached to those accepted into the Clan. The sole exceptions are Fire Mandrill warriors taken as isorla during the recent Harvest Trials, largely because they have refused to integrate with the Falcons, a situation that leaves the proud Falcons completely mystified.

Historically, the Jade Falcons preferred deeds over words, but recent years have seen a number of politically astute Khans. After the political power games of Khan Elias Crichell brought the Falcons to the brink of destruction, his successor, Marthe Pryde, immediately returned to the Clan's more action oriented tradition and launched an invasion of the Lyran Alliance to prove her Clan's strength. The events of the past few years, however, have convinced Khan Pryde not to neglect politics completely. In recent months, she shook the foundations of Clan society when she allowed a freeborn, albeit one born of two trueborns to compete in Trials for the Pryde Bloodname.

Military

Despite being badly bloodied during the Refusal War, the Falcon military remains strong.

Upon taking office, Khan Pryde took a number of actions to rebuild her forces, including an invasion of the Lyran Alliance to blood new recruits. though under strength on paper, the Falcons remain more than a match for most of the home Clans, and demonstrated their potency against Clan Steel Viper.

Historically, the Falcon Touman contained a broad mix of troops, with no one branch dominant. Since the Refusal War, the Touman has been forced to rely more on second line equipment, though this will likely change as the Clan continues to rebuild. Falcon front line Clusters comprise of five Trinaries, usually three of OmniMechs, one of Elementals and one of AeroSpace fighters. Second line Clusters contain between two and four Trinaries.

Allies and Enemies

As staunch Crusaders and often boastful advocates of their own strength, the Falcons frequently enrage the other Clans. However, they have collected a surprisingly small number of long term enemies. For many years, Clan Wolf was the Falcons' primary foe, though the ascension of Marthe Pryde and Vlad Ward to the Clans' respective Khanships has led to a degree of rapprochement. However, the odds of a lasting alliance seem slim. The Falcons also nurse a long running feud with the Steel Vipers. After suffering multiple humiliations at Viper hands in the years following the Battle of Tukayyid, Khan Pryde finally solved "the Viper problem" by handing them a stunning defeat in the summer of 3061. The Falcons' troubles with Clan Snow Raven are more recent vintage, resulting from the latter's political and territorial machinations. Since they trounced the Vipers, however, the Ravens have attempted to resume friendly contact with the Falcons.

The Falcons have no firm allies, save their fellow Crusaders, and even those ties are not strong. The relationship between the Falcons and the equally Crusader minded Smoke Jaguars soon soured, and the Falcons do not mourn the Jaguars' passing. Similarly the adversarial relationship between Home and Invading Clans has prompted the Falcons to distance themselves from the Home Clan Crusaders.

Possessions

Worlds: 62 (Clan Space: 9 worlds; 2 exclusive, 7 shared. Inner Sphere: 53)

Despite their losses in the Refusal War, the Jade Falcons remain one of the most powerful Clans. In addition to the fifty three worlds they hold in the Inner Sphere, fourteen recently taken from Clan Steel Viper, they have enclaves on nine Clan worlds. Ironhold, which the Falcons hold outright, is the Clan's capital and the location of its primary training facility. The planet serves as the Clan's administrative capital, though the Khans usually work from either Strana Mechty or the new Inner Sphere "provincial capital" on Sudeten.

The Falcon Clan increased its holdings in the shakeup that followed the elimination of Clans Smoke Jaguar and Nova Cat, and the Ghost Bears' virtual departure from the homeworlds. The Falcons' most significant and infamous gain is Huntress, formerly the Smoke Jaguar capital, where Falcon forces occupy almost half of the Jaguar Prime continent. Less well known is the Jade Falcons' loss of their possessions on York when the Blood Spirits went into isolation. The Clan has similarly downplayed the losses sustained at the hands of the Diamond Sharks on Tokasha.

Clan Snow Raven



Clan Snow Raven

Snow Raven Demographics

Affiliation: Warden (nominal)

Capital: Lum

Population (Clan Space): 94,199,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.2 percent (49/27)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 96 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Lynn Mckenna

saKhan: Bryn Cooper

Loremaster: Klaus Harper

Scientist-Gneral: Charlotte (von Braun)

Merchant Factor: Louis

Master Technician: Mattias

Senior Laborer: Emili

Military:

Clusters: 26

WarShips: 40

spacer

The snow-white ravens of Strana Mechty's southern tundra are respected for their unwillingness to waste anything. The Clan that shares their name - Snow Raven - shows a similar lack of willingness to waste any resources, or any opportunity. They are scavengers and politicians par-excellence.

History

The early years of Clan Snow Raven were harsh. They were the last Clan certified combat ready and were ill prepared for the challenges of Circe. They took massive losses storming rebel compounds and barely survived the campaign. However, worse was to come when Clan Wolverine rebelled against the Grand Council. The small Raven force moved against the Wolverines but was beaten back and the Raven capital of Dehra Dun, together with its genetic repository, was destroyed with a nuclear device. The repository was later rebuilt and the samples it contained replaced from the master site on Strana Mechty, but deep emotional scars remained.

The Ravens vowed never to allow such an event to happen again and set about becoming masters of their own destiny. Overtly they developed their navy and expanded their holdings, making themselves indispensable as explorers, escorts, and manufacturers of components for DropShips, JumpShips and WarShips. Covertly they sought to become master purveyors of information and manipulators par-excellence.

In 2947, the Ravens brought before the Grand Council details of ilKhan Tobias Katib's

complicity in the death of his predecessor, Corian Tchernovkov. Katib was impeached, found guilty and executed for his crimes. Suggestions that the Ravens had also been involved in the Tchenovkov affair were never proven, but their sudden betrayal of a former ally smacks of their political games.

More often, they seem to prefer more subtle manipulations, making Khan Howell's admission of guilt in releasing the diamond shark into the oceans of Strana Mechty even more unusual. The Raven saKhan challenged Howell to a Trial of Grievance, killing him. Officially, this was because he had disgraced the Clan. More likely it was because he was stupid and got caught.

The Snow Ravens fought hard to join the Invasion force in the late 3040s, but took too many losses before the trials and were denied a place. However, the Ravens did gain from the operation: they contracted out almost a third of their fleet to Clan Jade Falcon to serve as escorts, and arrangement recognized by a formal alliance during the 'Year of Peace'.

This alliance was doomed from the start, philosophical differences overshadowing their mutual interests. Relations between the two Clans became strained in 3055 over issues relating to events of a Raven Bloodname house. The matter soon escalated into skirmishes, but they soon died down - the Falcons being too engrossed elsewhere to prosecute a homeworlds campaign.

In recent months, the Ravens have sought rapprochement with the Falcons, admitting that they 'overreacted'. At the same time, they have turned their attentions to the worlds of the Kerensky Cluster, making considerable gains in the recent trials.

Society

Snow Raven society is extremely tight-knit and distrusting of strangers, a trait stemming from the trials and tribulations of their formative years when they struggled to survive. They let no one inside their guard, fearing that any associates will turn on them. No member of the Clan does anything without a reason. However, the Raven's Byzantine politics and complex relationships mean that the readily apparent reason is unlikely to be the real one.

Much of the Clan's internal politics centers on the Bloodname houses, frequently referred to as the families and any interference in their business is viewed as a mortal insult. The authority of the House Leaders is seen as absolute, and the leader's will determines how the Bloodnamed vote. However, cutthroat internal politics determine the position of house leader and only the most politically astute remain in power for more than a few years.

The Snow Ravens take Bondsmen from other Clans but most wear the Bondcord for many years before being accepted. Very few warriors are ever adopted into the Clan, and those few that are find themselves banned from rising above the rank of Star Colonel. The Snow Raven distrust of outsiders means those taken as bondsmen often have difficulty integrating.

Caste divisions are readily apparent in Snow Raven society, as are the sub-groups within each. Individuals rarely mingle outside their immediate circle, enhancing the 'us against them' attitude that pervades the Clan. There is a measure of mutual respect, accompanied at the same time by distrust. Competition for promotion is fierce, and friends may soon find themselves competing.

Snow Raven technology is tightly focussed on aerospace and naval systems. They have the largest fleet in Clan Space and control most of the shipyards and repair stations. The other Clans are obliged to seek them out for maintenance, either trading for the use of the facilities or else staging Trials of Position (for which the Ravens demand collateral, and win often enough to remain profitable).

The well developed Raven merchant marine supports the Clan by trading and contracting to other Clans. The Ravens made considerable profit by supplying the Invading Clans with transport assets and escorts, enhancing their status among the Home Clans.

Military

The major losses on Circe and to the Wolverines almost destroyed the Ravens, and needing to strengthen his Clan quickly Khan McKenna, himself a pilot, chose to strengthen the Raven aerospace arm with fighters and ships from orbiting Brian caches. No other Clan objected to McKenna's action, and by the time the other Clans seriously thought about the matter, the Ravens dominated the field and jealously guarded their advantage.

However, this aerospace bias has resulted in them having the smallest BattleMech contingent of any Clan. Their ground forces offset this by forming combined arms Trinaries known as triads, comprising a star of 'Mechs, a star of Elementals, and a star of fighters. Although ideally suited to defensive operations, these have only limited offensive capabilities.

Allies and Enemies

The Raven paranoia leads them to believe that anyone outside their Clan is not to be trusted, although they have managed to avoid making any real enemies. The most prominent of their foes are the Steel Vipers, with whom the Ravens have feuded since 2897.

The severing of ties over the House McKenna incident lead to conflict with Clan Jade Falcon, prompting mutual recriminations and several engagements. However, the Ravens have recently contacted the Falcons with a view to normalizing relations. The Falcon response to this attempt at rapprochement is unknown.

Clan Diamond Shark has maintained an adversarial relationship with the Snow Ravens since the diamond shark incident. However, rather than taking up arms, the Sharks have waged a war of words and assets. Strangely the Ravens appear to just sit by and accept the Sharks actions, enacting no reprisals and still allowing them access to their shipyards.

Only three Clans come close to being regarded as allies of the Ravens. The first are the Blood Spirits with whom they had an alliance half a century ago regarding war material and with whom they retain contact through the ilChis. These are closely followed by the Cloud Cobras, who as well as being of similar military disposition, share the Ravens Machiavellian politics. Lastly are the Ghost Bears. The complimentary nature of their totems has applied to the two Clans, and they have oft traded technology and expertise. Indeed, the massive arc-ships used by the Bears in their Exodus to the Inner Sphere were probably designed and built with Snow Raven help, or at least tacit support. The Raven's acquisition of Bear assets would tend to support some form of deal-making.

Possessions

Worlds: 6 (1 exclusive)

Until recently, the Snow Ravens had few assets, but in the last year their holdings have almost doubled. The Ghost Bears granted them their asteroid mining sites and their enclave on Bearclaw. The Ravens were further able to negotiate control of the remainder of the world with the Nova Cats when they withdrew, but the intervention of Clan's Hell's Horses reduced Raven control to two-thirds of the world.

They also consolidated their hold on Circe, staging a blitzkrieg that secured them much of the Jaguar and (with their permission) Nova Cat enclaves. However, that brought them into conflict with Clan Wolf, a matter that has yet to be fully resolved. They also 'negotiated' with Clan Cloud Cobra for a small enclave on Homer (part of the former Jaguar holdings) from which they have been pressuring their enemies in Clan Steel Viper.

Clan Star Adder



Go, Star Adder You are the stalker, the hunter, the killer. Your prey stands before; Show them the way Of the True Warrior.-The Remembrance (Clan Star Adder) Passage: 5, Verse 17, Lines 20 - 24

Clan Star Adder

The star adder, native to the world of Arcadia, is a pure predator. The genetically engineered star adder is one of the most merciless predators in the Pentagon worlds. Unrelentingly aggressive, it punishes those who stray into its territory or whom it views as a threat. The same is true of Clan Star Adder, one of the strongest Clans and arguably the dominant force in the homeworlds.

Star Adder Demographics

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Sheridan

Population (Clan Space): 108,695,000 (3060)

Population growth rate: 2.4 percent (62/38)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 94 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Cassius N'Buta

saKhan: Tabitha Paik

LoRemaster: Dagmar Lahiri

Scientist-General: Bas (Meitner)

Merchant Factor: Sylvian

Master Technician: Armand

Senior Laborer: Francis

Military:

Clusters: 52

WarShips: 28

Clan Space Worlds:

Albion (100 percent)

Arcadia (38 percent)

Brim (27 percent)

Dagda (22 percent)

Hoard (39 percent)

Huntress (16 percent)

Marshall (13 percent)

Priori (48 percent)

Sheridan (100 percent)

Tathis (20 percent)

"Clan Star Adder. The mere mention of our name evokes differing emotions in different individuals across the Kerensky Cluster. Some hear it as an epithet, a stain on Nicholas Kerensky's dream. Others see us as wayward children who must be shown the light. We know the truth. We see beyond the illusions of others. When Nicholas Kerensky founded the Clans, he entrusted each of us with the future, including the reunification of the Inner Sphere under the banner of the Star League. Before that can happen, however, we of the Clans must come together."

"The star adder, native to the world of Arcadia, is a pure predator. So are we, unhindered by the external influences that have corrupted not only the Inner Sphere, but also our brother Clans. Throughout the two and half centuries of our existence, we have heard our fellow Clans' taunts and accusations, and gone on in spite of them. We have outlived our mortal enemies and moved against those who threatened the fabric of our civilization. Above all, we have survived. That more than anything proves our worth." - Loremaster Dagmar Lahiri, 26 July 3059

History

Absalom Truscott, commander of the 149th BattleMech division, was one of the few of his rank to stand with Nicholas Kerensky following Aleksandr Kerensky's death, and was rewarded with command of one of Nicholas's new Clans. A friend of Nicholas Kerensky's for many years, Truscott was also allowed to select his own warriors. Truscott's command surveyed the Pentagon in advance of the Clan assault, and planned the mission later known as Operation Klondike.

The Wolverine and Widowmaker treacheries reinforced this Clan's belief in presenting a united front, but the steady growth that resulted from the Star Adder's unity provoked jealousy in other Clans. Perceived as a threat, they came under attack, most notably by Clan Mongoose. The attacks led to an escalating feud that hit infrastructure as well as the Clan military.

In a foreshadowing of the situation between the Adders, Burrocks and Blood Spirits in 3059, the Adders supported moves calling for the Absorption of Clan Mongoose, and were outraged when the right of Absorption went to Clan Smoke Jaguar. As the Blood Spirits would do centuries hence, the Adders launched pre-emptive assaults to regain lost territory. Adder successes sparked enmity with the Jaguars, who regarded the lost assets as theirs.

The Adders sought to strengthen their position by entering into a pact with Clan Burrock. Like the Nova Cats and Diamond Sharks, they took part in futures speculation during the Golden Century, underwriting and supporting Burrock exploration in exchange for a share of the profits (which proved extremely lucrative).

When the Clans split into Warden and Crusader camps over the question of invading the Inner Sphere, the Adders stood solidly in the Crusader camp. Their belief in cooperation with other Clans made them stand out from the other Crusaders, but vast numbers of them favored a swift return to the Inner Sphere. However, they held themselves aloof from the petty squabbles of the two competing philosophies, preferring to focus on preparing for the invasion. Their decision to bid conservatively in the invasion Trials stemmed from their recognition that the fighting would be bloody; eventually, they reasoned, the Invading Clans would need to call for additional support, and the Adders would get their chance. In the meantime, they set about making themselves the dominant Clan space power.

In 3058, the Adders discovered that their erstwhile allies in Clan Burrock had maintained links with the Dark Caste. They brought the matter before the Grand Council, calling for the Burrocks' Absorption. As the Clan responsible for bringing the matter to the Council's attention, they were granted the right to carry out the task. Dismayed at their own leader's perfidy, many Burrock units came over to the Star Adder after only token engagements, including many that did not fight alongside the Adders when Clan Blood Spirit attempted to intervene in the Absorption battles. Though the Trial of Absorption cost the Adders dearly, they suffered far fewer losses than the Blood Spirits, and the Burrock isorla allowed the Adders to rebuild quickly.

In the Great Refusal on Strana Mechty, the Adders were one of the only two Clans to defeat their Inner Sphere opponents, further enhancing the Clan's prestige. However, the need to consolidate their Burrock holdings limited their gains in the Trials of Possession that followed.

Society

Relationships between castes in Clan Star Adder stem from mutual understanding that allows the Clan to present a truly unified front. The civilians know they need the warriors to prosper, and the warriors appreciate that without the civilians, their fighting abilities would be seriously impaired. The civilian castes have no say in government, but the warriors listen to and take note of their views. An individual known as the Clan Adjutant serves as the de facto leader of the civilian population and reports to the Khans, fostering a strong bond among the people.

However, warriors still regard themselves as superior to civilians; they steadfastly avoid menial work, and assignments to aid civilian caste workers are a favorite form of punishment.

The Adders see bondsmen as a way of enhancing their strength, and accept them as part of the Clan from the outset. Captured warriors who demonstrate fidelity to their new Clan can expect adoption with little fuss.

Like many Clans, the Star Adders claim to dislike politics, but are nonetheless adept at such maneuverings. They regard politics as a necessary evil, without which their Clan would be at a major disadvantage. The Adders' internal politics are almost as complex as those of the Fire Mandrills or Snow Ravens, with loyalties first to the unit and the House, and then to the entire Clan. However, though they jockey hard for position, no Star Adder will do anything that threatens the future of his or her Clan.

The Star Adders are notable for their attitude toward Nicholas and Aleksandr Kerensky. Unlike most of the other Clans, the Adders regard them simply as superb leaders and warriors rather than demigods. In this the Adders are perhaps the most pragmatic Clan, and therefore one of the most dangerous.

Military

The Star Adder Touman follows the "total force" paradigm, with no service dominating. The Clan's only weakness is its infantry, with notable small numbers of Elementals and conventional troops. However, more and more Elementals are being assigned to front-line units and naval vessels. The Adder navy is the second strongest in the Clans, having recently inherited several Burrock ships.

The primary task of the surprisingly well respected second-line units is to guard the Clan's extensive assets. Heavy BattleMechs form the mainstay of such units, but Elementals, fighters and even conventional infantry and vehicles are also common. The Adders' Kappa Galaxy is unique among the Clans as an "OpFor" unit, trained to fight using the doctrine and tactics of enemy units. Kappa's warriors have carried out this task for forty years, and over the past decade have demonstrated the quirks of Inner Sphere style combat to their fellows.

The only real problem facing the Adder Touman is the integration of so many Burrock units. The Touman is still struggling to adapt, though the abtakha warriors appear to fit in well.

Allies and Enemies

The Star Adders have long sought neutrality toward the other Clans, but their generally apolitical stance and alleged coddling of their civilians has earned them the disdain of many outsiders. The Blood Spirits' intervention in the Absorption war against the Burrocks, in addition to the losses the Spirits inflicted on the Adders, has turned the Adders' historical ambivalence toward the Blood Spirits into bitter hatred. The Adders' once excellent relations with the Snow Ravens has cooled following the growth of the Adder Fleet, which the Ravens see as a threat to their naval superiority. The Adder naval adjutant, himself of Raven genetic stock, believes relations between the two will soon normalize, however.

The Star Adders' closest allies are the Cloud Cobras. Since the Absorption of the Burrocks, the Adders have chosen to honor the Burrock-Cobra contract to garrison the Tanite worlds, further strengthening relations between the two Clans.

Possessions

Worlds: 10 (8 shared, 2 exclusive)

The Adders made major advances by Absorbing the Burrocks, gaining complete control of the Burrock capital of Albion, as well as sizable enclaves on Dagda, Hoard and Priori. Though limited by the need to restructure their Touman in wake of the Absorption, the Adders managed to expand their holdings on Hoard in the recent Trials of Possession. the ongoing battle on Hoard currently involves the Ice Hellions, Wolves and Hell's Horses.

The Adders also expanded their holdings on Brim by seizing parts of the former Nova Cat enclave, a negotiated settlement with the Cloud Cobras that minimized the number of Trials between the two Clans. However Clan Snow Raven has threatened action against the Adders from its own enclave on Brim, "to secure Snow Raven interests."

Clan Steel Viper



With the truth of Kerensky's visions, Khan Mercer brought harmony from discord, And as the Founder had done before, Sought isolation to bring forth victory. - The Remembrance (Clan Steel Viper) Passage: 171, Verse 27, Lines 16 - 19

Clan Steel Viper

The Arcadian steel viper is one of the deadliest creatures in Clan space. Its namesake Clan has done everything within its power to mimic the lethality of its totem beast. Introverted almost to the point of complete isolationism, the Vipers believe that they alone know Kerensky's true vision: the creation of a New Star League through cooperation.

Steel Viper Demographics

Affiliation: Warden
Capital: New Kent
Population (Clan Space): 57,275,000 (3060)
Population growth rate: 1.8 percent (72/54)
Self-Sufficiency Index: 91 percent
Leaders:
 Khan: Perigard Zalman
 saKhan: Brett Andrews
 Loremaster: Arthur Stoklas
 Scientist-Gneral: Gunther (Kuroda)
 Merchant Factor: Turhan
 Master Technician: Dor

Clan Space Worlds:
 Arcadia (37 percent)
 Grant's Station (55 percent)
 Homer (15 percent)
 Marshall (15 percent)
 New Kent (66 percent)

Senior Laborer: Alberto
Military:
Clusters: 39
WarShips: 15

We are named for the Arcadian steel viper, a swift and terrible predator that coils around its prey and paralyzes it with strong venom. It is a hunter without peer, and Nicholas Kerensky deemed it an ideal Clan totem. We Vipers embody the strength of our namesake, which enable our Clan to rise above a disaster in its early years that would have destroyed a lesser breed.

History

The early years of Clan Steel Viper were troubled. Though the Clan performed well in the liberation of the Pentagon worlds, the descent into madness of Khan Ellie Kinnison and her attempt to assassinate Nicholas Kerensky's wife led to a long period of instability, which was finally resolved with the ascension of Khan Sanra Mercer in 2860. Claiming to know of meetings between Nicholas and Viper Khan Steven Breen shortly after Operation Klondike, Mercer won control of the Clan and instigated sweeping changes.

Her most significant action was to isolate the Vipers from the other Clans, calling the others a divisive influence. Already sharply focused on martial prowess, the Clan's warriors set about improving themselves further in order to fulfill Khan Mercer's vision: that the Vipers would one day lead all the Clans back to the Inner Sphere. Despite this goal, the Vipers were never staunch supporters of the Crusader cause; instead, neither Warden nor Crusader, they went their own way. This position, combined with their self-serving and seemingly erratic voting in the Grand Council, earned the Vipers the enmity of the Jade Falcons.

Though the Vipers secured a place in the Inner Sphere invasion force, they were initially unhappy at being relegated to reserve status. How could they fulfill their grand ambition to lead if they could not fight? When the death of ilKhan Showers forced the Invading Clans to return to Strana Mechy, Viper Khans Breen and Zalman petition the new ilKhan to make the Vipers a full partner in the invasion. Ilkhan Ulric Kerensky agreed, but forced them to work alongside the hated Jade Falcons.

On Tukayyid, the Vipers were forced to withdraw just short of their objectives. However, the withdrawal enabled them to preserve much of their forces and take the fewest casualties of any Clan involved in the battle. Their relative strength left them in a good position to exploit the enforced truce, most notably in seizing nine worlds from the Jade Falcons in the Falcon/Viper occupation zone. Internal disputes, however kept them from similarly exploiting Falcon weakness in the aftermath of the Refusal War. In 3061 they launched a major operation against the Jade Falcon occupation zone, gaining more than a dozen worlds, but an unexpected Falcon counterattack reversed these gains and resulted in the Vipers being forced from the Inner Sphere completely.

Society

Since the days of Sanra Mercer, Viper society has been tightly controlled. While other Clans allow limited mingling between members of their civilian castes and those of other Clans, Viper society prohibits such fraternization. Aside from a few commonsense exceptions, such as the merchant caste, who must by definition deal with outsiders, all such meetings are closely monitored, and unnecessary contacts punished with death.

The Vipers' ultra strenuous warrior training program results in an above average level of dropouts and a proportionately higher number of trueborn personnel in their civilian castes. With a success rate of only two percent, little stigma is attached to failure. Failed trueborn warriors often serve as rulers of their new castes, forming a bridge between the warriors and freeborn civilians. This practice strengthens ties within the Clan, enhancing overall good.

The insular Vipers generally have trouble accepting strangers, but those taken as bondsmen are welcomed as foundlings who have "come home" to Kerensky's true vision. The Vipers believe that, once taken into the Clan, outsiders can be shown the error of their ways and the superiority of the Viper view. This works well with other Clansmen, who are culturally conditioned to accept such transfers of allegiance, but was less effective in the Inner Sphere occupation zone. The Vipers' increasingly tense relation with their Spheroid citizens led to paramilitary police cracking down on frequent unrest. The Vipers' drift toward harder line policies prompted a split within the warrior caste. Many feel the Khans have moved away from Sanra Mercer's teachings, and without the vision of Kerensky to guide them, they fear the Clan will flounder.

Ostensibly a defeat for the Clan, a few Wardens have cited the Vipers' ejection from the Inner Sphere as "a victory for the Clans as a whole." This strange assertion originates with Perigard Zalman's defeat at the hands of a freeborn warrior on Waldorff. Though angry that his Clan was defeated, Zalman is pragmatic about his personal loss; reports suggest he acknowledges that this staunch anti-freeborn stance weakened his Clan. In further support of this theory, the Viper Khan has ordered the training facilities on Arcadia and New Kent to include a limited number of freeborn warriors in the next intake of cadets. Apparently, however, saKhan Andrews has contested this order and may attempt to reverse the decision. Indeed, on the journey back to the homeworlds, Zalman defeated three challenges to his leadership.

Military

Despite their long tradition of martial excellence, many consider the Vipers to be the weakest of the Invading Clans. Even at full strength, the Viper Touman is seven Clusters smaller than that of the Jade Falcons. Much of this can be attributed to the Viper training program, which graduates fewer warriors, and the Clans' former insistence on using only trueborns. The Vipers fared badly in the recent Harvest Trials, making negligible gains and losing several Crusader-minded Clusters to the Wolf Clan via pre-emptive batchalls. The Clan's recent defeat at the hands of the Jade Falcons, however, should not be taken as a sign of weakness. They remain strong and may yet prove their strength in the homeworlds. Indeed, Zalman's liberalization of recruitment may bring the Clan more solidly into the Warden fold.

The Vipers do not favor any combat arm, but make extensive use of conventional infantry garrison Clusters. Front-line forces normally comprise forty-five OmniMechs and seventy-five Elementals. Viper tactical doctrine places less emphasis on aerospace support, and so only fifteen OmniFighters are assigned to each Cluster. More fighters are assigned to support Viper naval vessels, a sensible precaution given the Clan's on-again, off-again hostilities with Clans Jade Falcon and Snow Raven. This practice also represents an exploitable weakness in the Viper Touman. Though Clan Jade Falcon managed to take brutal advantage of this predictability in their recent conflict, resulting in major Viper losses, Clan Steel Viper seems unlikely to change this strategy in the near future.

Allies and Enemies

Being neither Crusaders nor Wardens, the Vipers have earned a measure of distrust from many other Clans on both sides of the political divide. The Vipers' self-serving actions have long since alienated Clan Jade Falcon, and their military conquests during the Golden Century, particularly the conquest of Hellgate, earned them the hatred of Clan Snow Raven. Though the Vipers' ground troops are more than a match for the puny Raven force, the Ravens dominate aerospace and naval warfare, and are consummate political manipulators. Both of these strengths make them a bad enemy.

More recently, the Vipers have alienated the Fire Mandrills, a Clan with whom they share the world of Marshall. When the Vipers were chosen for Operation Revival, they made sure their neighbors knew that they would prove the worth of Sanra Mercer's visions and return to rule all the Clans. The Mandrills, never on particularly good terms with the Vipers, strenuously

objected to such arrogance, and the two Clans have nursed a low-level feud for the past thirteen years.

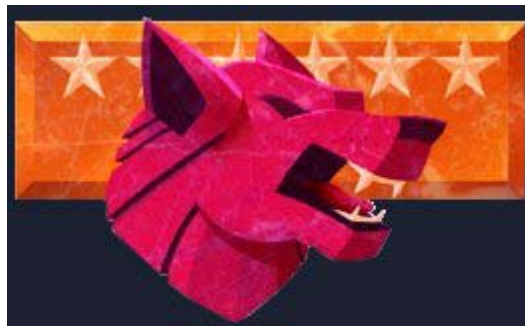
Possessions

Worlds: 5 (all shared)

With the second smallest Clan space population, the Vipers' status as an invading Clan gives them access to a wide range of resources. However, their dream of cooperation with a subdued Inner Sphere never became a reality. Though courageous, and offering huge potential gain, their attack on the Jade Falcon occupation zone was ultimately futile. For the Clans, victory is everything and, far from winning, the Vipers were forced to accept hegira and withdraw entirely from the Inner Sphere.

During the recent redistribution of territories in Clan space, the Vipers attempted to expand their holdings on Homer, but were rebuffed by the Cloud Cobras and found themselves in conflict with the Snow Ravens. The struggle lasted for nearly eighteen months, but was resolved in favor of the Vipers. New Kent serves as the nominal Viper capital, even though the Vipers share the world with three other Clans, making this world a likely first battleground in Khan Zalman's attempts to prove his Clan's potency.

Clan Wolf



speaker

From a 'mech grave he rose, snarling Ready to do battle for his vanquished Clan Stalking the Falcon Khans, who would remake us His actions, the Wolf incarnate.

- The Remembrance (Clan Wolf) Passage: 412, Verse 10, Lines 9-12

speaker

Clan Wolf

Unique among the Clans, the Wolves have and yet do not have a long and glorious history. They are Crusaders and Wardens. They are the oldest Clan, and the newest. Shattered in the Aftermath of the Refusal War, the Clan exist as two separate entities: the Crusaders under Khan Vladimir Ward and saKhan Marialle Radick, and the Wardens under Khan Phelan Kell and saKhan Marco Hall. The dual nature of Clan Wolf makes the following historical biography update somewhat different from those that have been put forward. The two Wolf Clans share a common history, but are strangely different. This story is about the Crusader Wolves.

Wolf Demographics

Affiliation: Crusader

Capital: Strana Mechty

Population (Clan Space): 101,849,000 (3060)

Clan Space Worlds:

Circe (30 percent)

Dagda (14 percent)

Population growth rate: 2.3 percent (56/33)

Self-Sufficiency Index: 87 percent

Leaders:

Khan: Vlad Ward

saKhan: Marialle Radick

Loremaster: Katya Kerensky

Scientist-General: Rudi (Sinclair)

Merchant Factor: Michael

Master Technician: Nymar

Senior Laborer: Bork

Military:

Clusters: 24

WarShips: 13

Eden (35 percent)

Grant's Station (45 percent)

Glory (55 percent)

Hoard (11 percent)

Paxon (38 percent)

Roche (17 percent)

Tiber (50 percent)

Tranquil (100 percent)

On the world of Wotan, 10 December 3057, the long and remarkable history of Clan Wolf seemed to have come to an end. Charged with genocide by the Clans' Grand Council for agreeing to the Truce of Tukayyid, the Wolves had fought the bitter Refusal War against Clan Jade Falcon and lost. Their leaders were dead, Ulric Kerensky, once ilKhan and commander of the Inner Sphere invasion, and Khan Natasha Kerensky, the famed Black Widow, who fell in combat on Twycross. Following Ulric's last orders, saKhan Phelan Ward led Clan Wolf's surviving Warden faction to sanctuary in the Inner Sphere. In response, Jade Falcon Khan Elias Crichton laid claim to all Clan Wolf assets. He called for a Trial of Absorption; the victorious Falcons would absorb the remnants of Clan Wolf, in accordance with Clan Tradition. No one disputed the claim... until 14 December 3057, when Star Captain Vladimir Ward of the Wolves challenged the Falcon leaders to defend it in combat. This is the story of our Clan and its resurrection. - Katya Kerensky, Loremaster of Clan Wolf, 3 December 3059.

History

Here, with the Strana Mechty wolf, we see what may be the epitome of a warrior, cunning matched with instinct and stealth, joined with a final, terrifying attack. For this mighty creature, I name you. You are Clan Wolf. - Nicholas Kerensky, 2810

Founded by Jerome Winson, Nicholas Kerensky's brother-in-law, Clan Wolf was the first of the twenty Clans and always seemed destined for greatness. It is little surprise that Nicholas chose to join the Wolves after their performance in Operation Klondike. The Wolves were Nicholas's right hand, dispensing the Grand Council's justice to Clan Wolverine and exacting revenge on Clan Widowmaker after warriors of the Clan murdered Nicholas Kerensky. Though the fighting against the Widowmakers left Clan Wolf bloodied and weak, their Absorption of Widowmaker assets and the election of Jerome Winson as ilKhan enable the Wolves to rebuild their strength.

A staunchly Warden Clan, the Wolves blocked moves by the Falcon led Crusaders to launch an invasion of the Inner Sphere, staving off the most serious call with a plan later known as the "Dragoon Compromise." Wolf Khan Kerlin Ward proposed sending a reconnaissance force to gather intelligence. This force, composed of Wolf Clan freeborn warriors, would serve as mercenary troops with every one of the Inner Sphere militaries and send data back to the Clan homeworlds. From this scheme was born Wolf's Dragoons, one of the Inner Sphere's most famous merc units. Knowing that the Crusaders could not be forestalled forever, Khan Ward eventually ordered the Dragoons to remain in the Inner Sphere and prepare the Successor States to withstand the Clan Juggernaut.

Selected for the invasion force as punishment for daring to vote against the Grand Council, the Wolves decided to beat the Crusaders at their own game. They sought to capture the largest amount of territory with the least impact on the existing population. This prompted the other Clans to accelerate their attack schedules, often with disastrous results. The Wolves were the undoubted leaders of the invasion, and the selection of their Khan as ilKhan after the death of Leo Showers was judged only fitting. In fact, it was an attempt to manipulate the Clan into the Crusader camp that misfired badly. The Wolf ilKhan, Ulric Kerensky, agreed to the proxy battle for Terra on Tukayyid, leading to the treaty that halted the invasion. The other Clans protested at the enforced fifteen year peace, but eventually ratified the agreement.

In 3057, the Jade Falcons sought to remove Ulric and continue the invasion. In so doing, the plunged the Wolves and Falcons into war. After the Council tried Ulric for treason and voted him out of office, the Wolf Clan stood with him in this Trial of Refusal against the verdict. Knowing that the chance of victory was slim, Ulric, Natasha Kerensky and Phelan Ward moved to ensure that the Wolves would not be the only Clan to fall. War raged throughout the Falcon occupation zone as the Wolves pushed the Falcon forces back. To ensure the Clan's survival, Ulric ordered Khan Ward to take a contingent of warriors and a cross-section of the other castes to the Inner Sphere while he and Natasha sought to break the Falcons.

They came close to achieving their goal, but eventually the Falcons slew them both. Their deaths ended the Refusal War, after which the Falcon Khans moved to Absorb the Wolves who remained in the occupation zone and to Abjure those who had found a haven in the Inner Sphere. The Absorbed Wolves eventually won their freedom, first as the Jade Wolves and later as a "new" Wolf Clan. Under Clan law, this Crusader dominated group was an entirely new Clan, free of the guilt, and history of their forebears.

Ever since then, the two halves of what was once a single Wolf Clan have lived separate lives. The Crusader Wolves sought to regain their strength, raiding the Smoke Jaguars and staging the so-called Harvest Trials in Clan space to rebuild their Touman. Vlad Ward entered into a short-term alliance with Falcon Khan Marthe Pryde to ensure the survival of both Clans. During the Trial of Great Refusal, Clan Wolf fought along side of the surviving Smoke Jaguars, gaining a draw against the St. Ives Lancers.

Society

The warrior caste still dominates, but Wolf society is more open and egalitarian than most Clans. Personal freedoms form a major part of Wolf Clan life for every member, warrior or civilian. Each individual holds his or her own political views and attitude to religion, for example, and may express himself (artistically or otherwise) as he or she chooses. The "conformist culture" believed by outsiders to be typical of all the Clans is at its weakest among the Wolves; however all individuals are expected to follow the orders of their superiors and to work for the good of the Clan.

In shaping the Crusader Wolves, Khan Vlad Ward has adopted a more authoritarian stance, and his forcible recruitment of civilians as freeborn warriors to bulk out the Wolf Touman has strained inter-caste relations.

The Wolves have always been consummate politicians, and both factions are adept at wars of words. Vlad Ward of the Crusaders has displayed a ruthlessness that allowed him to rebuild his Clan as well as shatter the ambitions of the Jade Falcons and Ice Hellions. Though his hard line policies have earned him few friends and cost the Wolves several allies, his staunch Crusader viewpoint allowed him to remain at the heart of Clan politics despite being head of the newest Clan. The Wolves have always believed in allowing bondsmen the opportunity to demonstrate their worth and earn adoption into the Clan. This practice formed the core of the Harvest Trials, which allowed the Crusader Wolves to skim warriors and other martial assets from other Clans.

The Wolves respect technology as a tool that allows warriors to achieve their maximum potential. Genetics is the most respected brand of the sciences because it enhances the Clan's gene pool; cybernetics, by contrast, are reviled for seeking to turn individuals into something they are not. Few Wolf warriors use cybernetics, preferring vat grown replacement limbs. Many Crusader Wolves use enhanced imaging technology, however.

Military

With the devastating losses of the Refusal War, Wolf Khan Vladimir Ward has been forced to take extreme measures to ensure the survival of his Clan.

His first and most ambitious decision was to rebuild all four Wolf front-line Galaxies at once. After refuting the attempted Absorption of the Wolves by Clan Jade Falcon, the Wolves reclaimed all salvage taken up to the battle on Wotan. As Wolf warriors and OmniMechs came back into service, Khan Ward identified a small, elite core of warriors around whom three Galaxies could be re-formed. To these he added upper quality garrison troops, providing them with OmniMechs when possible and giving them the best possible BattleMechs when not. To create the fourth front line Galaxy, he gave the unprecedented order that one full garrison Galaxy would be integrated with front line forces under a new Galaxy Commander. Currently, this new Delta Galaxy is considered somewhere between second line and front line troops in quality, but Galaxy Commander Katya Kerensky has wrought astounding improvements.

With troops being shifted to form four front line Galaxies, filling in all the ranks left vacant posed a formidable challenge. The reorganization left the garrison Clusters in shambles, and still Khan Ward did not have enough warriors qualified for front line duty. To address these pressing problems, the Khan recruited from lower castes for the garrison Clusters, putting them through Trials of Position against garrison level troops. The warrior who passed the Trials will server in garrison units until they can pass another Trial of Position against front line warriors. For the front line Galaxies, the Harvest Trials rounded out front line Clusters while serving Khan Ward's political agenda.

The average Clan Wolf Cluster currently includes a command Trinary or Supernova, on 'Mech Trinary, on Fighter Binary or Trinary and one Elemental Trinary, organized according to variety of schemes. A common variation includes mixing 'Mechs with the Elemental Trinary. The Wolf Clan also fields an abundance of aerospace fighters; as the Refusal War was fought primarily on the ground, aerospace assets suffered markedly fewer losses than ground units.

Allies and Enemies

The philosophical switch of the "official" Wolves to the Crusader camp has caused relations with the Clan's pro Warden allies, most notably Clan Coyote and Goliath Scorpion, to cool somewhat. However, it has also allowed a degree of cooperation with long time enemies like the Jade Falcons. Though little more than an alliance of convenience, Khan Vlad Ward and Khan Marthe Pryde of the Falcons have managed to put aside their differences for mutual gain during the crises of the past three years. Khan Vlad Ward's actions to stall the ambitions of Khan Asa Taney and his Ice Hellions have earned the Wolves the hatred of that Clan, and a feud is brewing.

Surprisingly, ties between the Warden and Crusader Wolves remain strong. Unofficial channels have allowed individuals to communicate, and at least one high ranking member of the Crusader Wolves is a Warden sympathizer who has done much to aid the Warden cause. It is believed that Khan Ward knows of this individual's actions but chooses to allow them to continue, providing a semi-official channel between the two groups and leaving the door open for future rapprochement.

Possessions

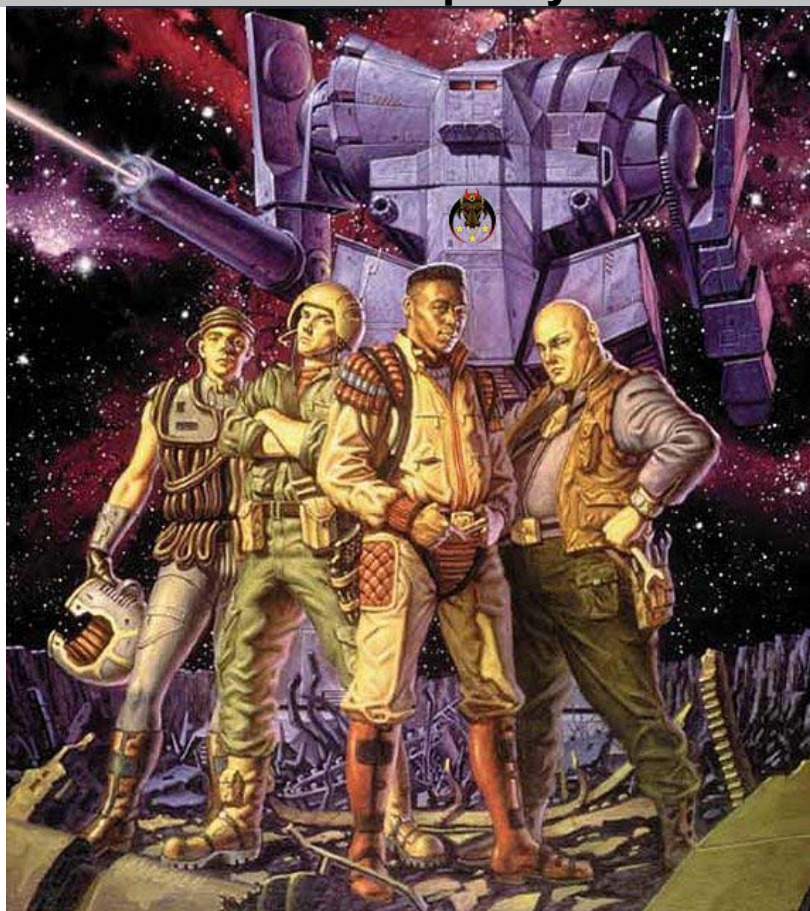
Worlds: 93 (Clan Space: 10; 9 shared, 1 exclusive. Inner Sphere: 83)

The Crusader Wolves have the largest number of assets in the Clans, holding the bulk of the Free Rasalhague Republic as well as a then strip of the Federated Commonwealth. They also have one of the largest holdings in Clan Space. Though they remain militarily weak, their Inner Sphere holdings seem relatively safe. The Jade Falcons are weak as well, and must pay considerable attention to their other neighbors: the Lyrans Alliance and the ARDC.

Clan Wolf's other main rivals, the Ghost Bears, seem content with their own occupation zone. Consequently, Khan Ward had been able to devote considerable resources to maintaining and expanding his Wolves Clan space holdings. On Eden and Circe, Clan Wolf seized

sections of the Smoke Jaguar enclaves, as well as taking complete control of the world of Tranquil. In partnership with the Hell's Horses, Khan Ward has even challenged for former Nova Cat assets on Hoard, as much to annoy the Ice Helliions as for practical gain. The Wolves and Horses have so far each occupied roughly 10 percent of the planet. The Ghost Bears seized three Wolf worlds in 3061, perhaps an indication that they are no longer content to occupy only their current holdings, possibly a precursor to an invasion into wolf occupation zone, or maybe simply a warning to Khan Vlad Ward. Khan Ward's reaction was somewhat surprising; he allowed Clan Hell's Horses to bid for possession of three Wolf worlds on the border of the Ghost Bear dominion, effectively giving them an occupation zone of their one and clearly hoping that the Horses will curb Bear adventurism.

The Periphery



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Outside Looking In

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Very few people within the "civilized" nations of the Inner Sphere ever spare anything more than a thought for the so-called Periphery, considering it a home for pirates, smugglers and the dregs of humanity. Prejudice and an almost endemic revulsion of anything uncultured temper the perception of even the few "enlightened" individuals in the Inner Sphere. That is hardly surprising, though. During the height of the Golden Era of the Star League - during those decades of unsurpassed détente and cooperation - the attitudes displayed by the citizens of the Star League differed little. Historical evidence suggests that attitudes were even worse, prejudiced by the years of unremitting violence and the millions of casualties suffered during the Reunification War.

The truth is, of course, far different.

Today, the Periphery boasts three major industrialized nations that each have histories as long and distinguished as any Inner Sphere nation, boasting militaries that are certainly as strong as those fielded by either the Free Rasalhague Republic or the former St. Ives Compact. Sociologists throughout the Inner Sphere - at least those who have taken the effort to educate themselves fully - often place the highly developed culture of the Magistracy of Canopus ahead of both the Capellan Confederation and the Draconis Combine. At the same time, the Taurian Concordat has consistently maintained the highest literacy rate of any nation within the Human Sphere.

On the other hand, life in the Periphery is by no means easy. With its thousands of unclaimed and uncharted systems, it is home to countless bands of rogues and brigands who prey, often mercilessly, upon their fellow man. Outside of the "core" systems of the major nations, denizens of the Periphery are ten times more likely to die from disease or malnutrition and sixty times more likely to succumb to injuries suffered in battle than the average Inner Sphere native. But in truth, it is this precarious existence that provides the Periphery nations, both legitimate and otherwise, the fortitude needed to survive and, as in the case of the one-time bandit Marian Hegemony, to

claw its way to legitimacy and even thrive.

Magistracy of Canopus

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Confidential: Eyes Only
From: Precentor ROM Alexander Kernoff
To: Precentor Martial Cameron St. Jamais

Greetings Brother,

In compliance with your directive, I have personally supervised and aided in the compilation of this comprehensive report detailing the Magistracy of Canopus and focusing specifically on the Magistracy Armed Forces. The different sections of this report were actually compiled by various sources both in and out of the MAF, which provides additional authenticity to the document. Where such information was not readily available, my own agents have generated appropriate text. I pray that with the Blessed Blake's vision, we the Conclave will use this information wisely.

[I am fully aware that this report will be made available to all on the Ruling Conclave, as it should be. However, there are several sections that include clarifications by my own hand, elucidations that the Conclave has no need of at this time. Therefore, my additional commentary can easily be deleted from this document. Now, before I continue I must say that you and I have never minced words, so I will be blunt-I was distraught when I originally received your mandate. I deemed this report a mission unworthy of my attention, a charge that any Adept would adequately accomplish. It was only after the work on this project was underway, did the true scope of what you are obviously already aware of began to unfold before my vision. And for this, I feel only shame. While you wield the sacred sword, the Master has entrusted me to be his eyes to the universe and I failed to see the true threat the Trinity Alliance poses for us. And the keystone to this alliance is none other than the Magistracy of Canopus. The bitterest irony would be to fail because of the blundering moves of a pleasure addicted, matriarchal power from the fringes of humanity; a power and alliance that we ourselves helped to forge. Nevertheless, my eyes have become unsealed and the threat is plain before me. This report will aid us in understanding where the Magistracy has been, where they are now and where our best analysts place them in the future, thus enabling us to safeguard and prepare the way for the fulfillment of the Prophecy so close at hand. -AK]

History Of The Matriarchs

"What does he offer us for the "privilege" of joining his Star League? What can he offer us that we cannot already buy?" -Magestrix Crystalla Centrella, October 7, 2576

Though this quote refers specifically to the refusal of the Magistracy to join the Star League, it typifies the general view-especially by Canopian nobles and the Magestrix herself-that everything has a price. This view and all it entails has remained strong almost since the founding the Magistracy itself.

Kossandra Centrella founded the Magistracy of Canopus in 2530; a captain in the Free Worlds League's Defenders of Andurien, fleeing what she felt was unpunished incompetence on the part of her superiors. Knowing she had to grow quickly or face annihilation from nearby Houses Marik and Liao, she made contact with dissident leaders within the League and with the Capellan Confederation. She negotiated several deals that enabled her to secure additional planets. Only twenty years after landing on Canopus IV, Kossandra ruled a nation of thirty-six star systems. As

the decades rolled by and additional Magestrix ruled, they continued to expand and stabilize the nation Kossandra had forged.

When Magestrix Floral Centrella came to power, she enacted the reforms and legislation that turned the Magistracy into what it is today. With a charter in place that mandated both political and social freedom, the Magistracy officially endorsed an entertainment industry where anything goes. From drugs to sex, gladiatorial arenas to hunts for rare and exotic animals-the Magistracy catered to all. This brought in billions that was wisely invested back into the industry that had generated it, giving Canopus the most lucrative entertainment business in all of known space and an economy to match.

A Pyrrhic Star League

Though Floral Centrella believed this "neutral stance through entertainment" would allow the Magistracy to side-step all conflict, she did not reckon on the Star League, nor with Ian Cameron's megalomaniac view which could not conceive of any human worlds not under his control. The Star League stood adamant on forcing the Periphery realms to join "for their own good," despite the Periphery's refusal to join. As the League prosecuted its war across four different realms, the SLDF Seventh Corps and twelve Marik regiments began a war against the Magistracy of Canopus in 2577 that they believed would be over in less than a year.

However, the vaunted Star League had forgotten the very reason the people of the Periphery had left the Great Houses behind. With such dedication to the ideals of freedom and the hardness of a people raised on the fringes of human occupied space, the Periphery dealt the League a Pyrrhic victory, which required over two decades and millions of lives to accomplish.

As the Reunification War ended, Melissa Humphreys of Andurien was posted as the military governor of the Magistracy. Humphreys soon demonstrated her benevolent rule-she truly believed in the ideals of the Star League-by pouring massive amounts of League funds into completely restoring the Magistracy. After regaining home rule from Humphreys, the Magistracy enjoyed a golden age along with all of humanity as the Star League brought unheralded wealth and achievements to all.

In 2722 this era came to an end as the Star League Council Lords forgot or chose to ignore the ideals of the League. They began enacting legislation that raped the Periphery realms through unfair taxations in an effort to bolster their own economies and militaries. It was only a matter of time before the entire Periphery began bucking a system they had never wanted that had again become a yoke of slavery. That moment came in the infamous New Vandenberg revolt of 2765, sparking a conflagration that spread like wildfire through the entire Periphery and led to the annihilation of more than fifty Star League Defense Force Divisions before the year was over.

The SLDF geared up for a massive retaliatory strike in 2766 that never came as Richard Cameron and the entire Cameron line was murdered by the Usurper Stefan Amaris. The Magistracy, along with the rest of the Periphery, breathed a collective sigh of relief as the mighty arm of General Kerensky turned inward to deal with the Amaris Crisis, beginning the final death throes of the League.

Wars of Succession

As the Great Houses of the Inner Sphere began their endless centuries of war to reclaim the title of First Lord, the Periphery realms suffered as well, though little combat occurred inside their borders. With war occurring on an unprecedented scale; trade routes, supply and communication lines were sundered and once again the Periphery was required to live or die by their own deeds as they had done centuries before. This brought great hardship, especially to the Magistracy who had invested heavily in a tourist entertainment industry that was now almost defunct. Still, the peoples of the Periphery survived and began to prosper once more. Having thrown off the yoke they wore for centuries, they again began to forge their own destiny.

Though the Magistracy had to deal with a handful of excursions into their territory, such with as the Concordat in 2813, it remained relatively stable while the Great Houses continued their relentless drive to subjugate each other. It was not until 3030, after the end of the Fourth

Succession War, that the Magistracy attempted a large-scale invasion of an Inner Sphere power for the first time.

With the Capellan Confederation left in shambles by the juggernaut of House Davion and more than half of their worlds lost, Kyalla Centrella believed that the Magistracy's chance to vanquish a long-time enemy and increase her realm beyond measure had come. Allied with the always-rebellious Duchy of Andurien of the Free World's League, the two launched an offensive that was wildly successful at first. However, the Magistracy experienced what the Star League of five centuries before had learned-those defending their homeland fight most savagely. Backed into a corner, the Capellan Confederation exploded into action, relentlessly driving the Canopian-Andurian forces off their worlds and laying the ground work for the removal of Kyalla from the throne.

A New Era

The current Magestrix is Kyalla's daughter, Emma Centrella, who came to power shortly after the end of the Canopus-Andurien War. Embittered by her failure and jealous of the popularity of her daughter-who had been vehemently against the war from the beginning-Kyalla ordered her daughter assassinated in 3039. The assassin failed. Using the support she had gained in both the military and the general populace, Emma deposed her mother in May 3040 and took her place.

As her reign began, few realized that she would alter the course of her realm more than any ruler before her. The people quickly saw a foreshadowing of her capabilities when she immediately smoothed relations with the Free Worlds League, which was even then re-conquering the Duchy of Andurien. Next, she poured most of her personal fortune into the industry that had made the Magistracy rich and stable during its formation: the pleasure industry. With the revival of the Pleasure Circuses and peace reigning, the money soon began to flow-straight into the economy of the Magistracy. By 3050 and with the invasion of the Inner Sphere by the Clans, the Magistracy became the dominate economic power that it had been in the past, allowing the Magestrix to begin the next phase of her plans.

Through six years of the careful negotiations and political backroom dealings that have become her hallmark, the Magestrix forged the Treaty of Taurus in 3056. One of her greatest triumphs, this treaty formally allied the Periphery's two largest powers in mutual defense, open trade and cultural and scientific exchanges, which included an invigorated joint-colonization project. These advances increased the prosperity and military might of the Magistracy.

At this point alone, Emma could have been lauded as one of the greatest Magestrix to hold the throne, but she was not finished. Further demonstrating the grand scope of her desires, the Magestrix forged an alliance with an Inner Sphere power for the first time in history: the Capellan Confederation. Many detractors of this alliance pointed out that it would require sons and daughters of Canopians to travel to Capellan worlds to help fight their war of aggression against the St. Ives Compact. The money and resources that began to flood into the Magistracy, however, soon silenced those outspoken voices. After the death of Jeffrey Calderon, the historic Trinity Alliance was signed, uniting the Magistracy of Canopus, Taurian Concordat and Capellan Confederation in an alliance which rivaled the size of some Inner Sphere Great Houses.

The Magistracy of Canopus is currently experiencing a golden age of prosperity and power greater than any other time in its history. Whether this is simply the precipice before the fall or the foothills leading to a new high remains to be seen. However, Emma Centrella has shown that she is the most adept and influential Magestrix to ever come to power and her actions have only benefited the people of this great nation.

Magistracy Armed Forces

As with all major military organizations found in the vast expanse of the Periphery, the MAF has struggled through five centuries of conflict to safeguard the Magistracy against forces much larger than itself. Because of the recent Trinity Alliance, the MAF finds itself in the unique position of being the largest standing military organization in the Periphery. The following section details the organization of the MAF, along with a description of the duties of each department within the

MAF.

Command Structure

For centuries, the small size of the Magistracy Armed Forces allowed for a streamlined command, with few distinctions between branches. The Trinity Alliance demands that multiple aspects of the MAF work along side their counterparts in both the Taurian Concordat and the Capellan Confederation. This, combined with the overall growth of the MAF, had expanded this streamlined organization. Such expansions have been gradual, however, and actions have been taken with the full realization that a military which has worked for half a millennium should not be radically altered over night.

Magestrix Command Center

The heart, mind and soul of the MAF, the Magestrix Command Center (MCC) is responsible for all strategic planning as well as defense initiatives. It answers directly to the Magestrix. Originally, the MCC consisted of three senior colonels and two rear admirals. Currently, the following officers now make-up the MCC: Senior General Hadji Doru; General Vernyce Alkobar of the Magistracy Royal Guards; General Cynthia Evans of the Chasseurs á Cheval; General Sandra Aupriz of the Canopian Fusiliers; General Oscar Long of the Canopian Highlanders; General Mavis Cooper of the Raventhir Cuirassiers; and Admirals James Smithington and Karla Boeteshia-who jointly command the Magistracy Navy. As part of the articles of the Trinity Alliance, Jiang-jun Elliot Knight, the Capellan attaché to the MAF and coordinator of all Capellan military forces operating in the Magistracy, is attached directly to the MCC. This arrangement has caused considerable grumbling among MCC members.

Magistracy Army

All ground forces of the MAF-'Mech, infantry and armor-fall under the authority of the Magistracy Army. Though little distinction between each branch was emphasized in the past, with the growth of the current MAF these differences have become more pronounced. Senior General Hadji Doru directly commands the Magistracy Army and by extension, the entire MAF.

BattleMech Assets

Since the invention of the BattleMech in 2439 by the Terran Hegemony, it has been the core unit of almost every political power to arise in the subsequent half-millennia. Matters in the Magistracy are no different. As in all other Periphery realms, the MAF treats its BattleMechs as if they were more precious than gold. Still the hammer of the MAF, 'Mechs nevertheless were generally held in reserve while the cheaper and more readily available vehicles and infantry were thrown carelessly at an enemy to wear them down before the MAF's 'Mech units were unleashed. Though wasteful, it did allow the MAF to retain the second largest 'Mech force in the Periphery for centuries.

More importantly, with the renaissance of technology sweeping the Inner Sphere and the Magistracy's direct ties to an Inner Sphere power, the MAF has been the recipient of much of that new technology. This has allowed it to rise to a level of technology-at least in the military-never before achieved. Though not all units in the MAF have been upgraded to new technology, more than twenty-five percent of the 'Mechs deployed in the Magistracy are either new designs or have received upgrades.

BattleMech deployment in the MAF follows a standard organization, with command lances attached to each regiment and a command company acting as the personal unit of the General of each MAF Combat Formation.

Armor Assets

Every regiment in the MAF has at least one supporting armor battalion permanently attached. Many of these vehicles are older models that have survived hundreds of years and are being held together with spit and bailing wire. Additionally, several premier units, such as the Magistracy Royal Guards and the Chasseurs á Cheval, have recently received a second battalion

of new designs, like the Heavy LRM Carrier, the Light SRM Carrier and even the Confederation's much-vaunted Regulator Hovertank.

Infantry Assets

For most of the MAF's history, infantry units have varied wildly in composition, size and task. Platoons often varied in size from 30 to 50 men. Companies range from 120 to 180 men. Great efforts have been made to organize MAF infantry assets along more standardized lines, following the standard set by the Capellan Confederation as well as other Inner Sphere powers.

Though still very rare, battle armor units purchased at great expense from the Capellan Confederation have begun to appear in the Magistracy Armed Forces. Like the MAF's aerospace assets, battle armor assets are grouped into a special branch of the Magistracy Army, under the direct command of Senior General Doru. When an operation warrants their inclusion, platoons are temporarily attached to the appropriate unit.

Magistracy Navy

As with most military organizations in the Periphery, the Magistracy's navy is very small, necessitating the collation of all naval assets into a single organization. No regiments have permanently assigned DropShips, much less JumpShips. With less than seven score of DropShips and JumpShips-complimented with half again as many merchant vessels that can be dragooned into service at any time-the Magistracy Navy is continually pressed to protect Canopian borders. Admirals James Smithington and Karla Boeteshia jointly command the Magistracy Navy.

Aerospace Fighters

Just over 100 aerospace fighters serve in the Magistracy Armed Forces, most of which are light or medium craft. Because of the scarcity of fighters, this allows operational command to be centered within the navy, with individual fighters assigned as needed to one of the two Canopian fleets or attached directly to a line regiment. The only exception to this rule is the Magistracy Royal Guards, who have permanent Air Lances assigned to them. Now that the MAF has amassed the largest standing ground force in the Periphery, there is no doubt that Senior General Doru will make the aerospace arm of the MAF his next priority for expansion.

DropShips and JumpShips

Divided into two fleets, with two squadrons of two flotillas each, the fleets serve specific functions. The Canopian Battle Fleet is charged with the defense of targets that are likely to be invaded first and will require the largest movement of troops. The Canopian Reserve Fleet is stationed in the Canopus IV system at all times, allowing for rapid deployment in response to any breach of Canopian space.

WarShips

The Magestrix recently received a report commissioned by the MCC in early 3062 looking into the feasibility of a MAF WarShip program. After more than a year, the commission's findings concur with what the MCC had originally stated-a WarShip program is not feasible now or in the near future without massive funding from outside sources. The Capellan Confederation is the only outside source likely to provide such expertise and funding. Unfortunately, the Confederation owes their WarShip fleet to deals struck with the Word of Blake and the Free Worlds League.

[Funding I believe we will come to regret. -AK] As such, the probability of receiving such aid is so low as to be negligible.

Militia Defense Corps

The newest corps within the MAF, the Militia Defense Battalions were originally a division within the Magistracy Army. Under the direction of Senior General Doru, it has been separated into its own corps, answering directly to the MCC. The Militia Defense Corps is composed of around twelve militia battalions, though the number fluctuates from year to year. Composed of reservists,

the militia battalions represent both a last ditch and first line defense for most border worlds in the Magistracy that do not warrant a front-line unit. Fielding only conventional armor and infantry with minimal training, the militia battalions cannot hope to stand up against regular line units, though they do stand a chance of bogging down an enemy long enough for reinforcements to arrive. The militia battalions also serve a second important role-citizens fulfilling their compulsory military service are assigned to a militia battalion. Those who show promise in their years of service are given the opportunity to fully join the MAF and an assignment either to an academy, front-line unit or most prestigious of all, given the chance to attend the Canopian Institute of War. General Cara Damion commands the Militia Defense Corps.

Magistracy Medical Corps

The pride of the MAF, the Magistracy Medical Corps is where Canopians surpass even the vaunted militaries of the mightiest Inner Sphere Houses. Having established a firm belief that each and every Canopian warrior is worth saving, the Medical Corps has a well-deserved reputation as the finest medical service in any military in space.

Though the Medical Corps is filled with extremely talented and dedicated troops, part of their fabulous success is derived from the abundant financing of the corps by the MCC. This financing allows a ratio of roughly one medical specialist for every seven fighting troops within the MAF, as opposed to a ratio of about one to twenty in other militaries both in and out of the Inner Sphere. General Virgil Lewis commands the Magistracy Medical Corps.

Magistracy Support Corps

A catch-all division, the Magistracy Support Corps is tasked with the administrative, quartermaster, supply and personnel related functions of the entire MAF. The Corps is responsible for the training of all new recruits, as well as advanced officer training. All mercenary contracts, assignments and organization also fall within the authority of this Corps.

The final responsibility of the Support Corps is R&D. They have coordinated with the Capellan Confederation Research and Development Department and the Taurian Concordat's Ministry of Defense in the acquisition of new technologies-primarily from the Confederation. The Corps also coordinates the development of new technologies, which are even now beginning to roll off the production lines on Detroit. General Karla Jacobite commands the Magistracy Support Corps.

Magistracy Alliance Liaison

Though not the newest organization within the MAF-that distinction is reserved for the Militia Defense Corps-the Magistracy Alliance Liaison (MAL) is the smallest. Nonetheless, it could eventually grow to become the most important organization in the MAF, with the potential to impact the entirety of the Magistracy of Canopus.

After the signing of the Trinity Alliance, the first Magistracy and Taurian Concordant troops began to rotate into the Capellan Confederation and into each other's realms. As this led to the eventual garrisoning of Confederation troops on Periphery worlds, it became apparent to the MCC that a division dedicated to managing all Alliance troop movements was needed. The Liaison serves as an oversight commission on the assignment, movement and actions of all Alliance troops-both in and outside Canopian borders.

The MAL receives reports from each of the alliance's military coordinators: the Canopian Military Coordinator to the Confederation, Major Naomi Centrella and the Canopian Military Coordinator to the Concordat, Major Sariah Slavak. Because of Major Centrella's unique position as heir apparent, command channels are not always observed, causing stress in a new department given a monumental task. Though not required, the Concordat's Military Coordinator, Colonel William Heise passes regular status reports through this office as well. The current commander of the Magistracy Alliance Liaison is General Jordette Galvanston.

Magistracy Intelligence Ministry

[Obviously, it would be difficult to obtain an internal document concerning the actions of the Periphery's most adept

intelligence agency. Below you will find ROM's finest analysis of this small, yet dangerous organization. The length of the report is testament enough to their danger. They are no MIIO, but SAFE would actually become an intelligence agency if they mirrored the MIM. I feel only funds restrict them from true greatness; funds that they are beginning to receiving in spades from the Confederation. -AKJ

The Magistracy Intelligence Ministry (MIM), though technically a part of the MAF, stands apart and answers directly to the Magestrix. Though the Magestrix has agreed to almost all of Senior General Doru's suggestions regarding the reorganization of the MAF, she has once again proven that she is a leader to be feared with her refusal to allow the MIM to answer to any but herself.

Originally a small but competent agency, the past twenty years have seen the MIM blossom into a powerful adversary that far outstrips every other agency in the Periphery. In the last handful of years, it has managed in some ways to eclipse even Inner Sphere agencies. The fact that MIM agents were found in '57 to be operating in both the Lyran Alliance and the Draconis Combine-operations that ROM only stumbled upon by sheer accident-is ample evidence of the increasing acumen of the MIM. Though substantial increases in funding over the last two decades can account for some of this growth, there are still lingering doubts as to whether the MIM has received outside help to achieve its current status. We have been unable to track down any information that might confirm or deny this possibility.

Regardless, ROM should consider the MIM extremely dangerous as we continue to work in the Periphery. The conflict raging with our lost brethren can only have opened a breach in our ranks that the MIM may already have taken advantage of. General Jenni Elliot is the current commander of the MIM.

Uniforms

As the Magistracy has for centuries relied upon the strength of the services it provides instead of its armed forces, the uniforms of the MAF have always been simple and straightforward.

MechWarrior battle dress, with the exception of a slightly larger, out-of-date neurohelmet, resembles almost any other MechWarrior across the Inner Sphere. However, a significant number of more compact, higher-grade neurohelmets have begun to appear within the ranks of the MAF, thanks to the Trinity Alliance.

Aerospace pilots and naval personnel wear turquoise helmets and simple black jumpsuits. As a result of the MAF's dedication to saving the lives of its warriors, all jumpsuits worn by naval personnel contain displays that contain emergency circuitry systems and life-sign monitors.

The standard uniform for all Canopian ground forces, worn in the field and for day to-day duties are bullet-resistant black tunics, helmets, boots and gloves over tight-fitting turquoise bodysuits. Naval personnel wear black bodysuits with turquoise accessories. Support personnel, including technicians, administration and special services functionaries, wear the standard uniforms of their line regiment counterparts, except for blue piping to denote their status. In all cases, camouflage fatigues are available when necessary.

The dress uniform adheres to the turquoise and black color scheme of the standard uniform but is loose fitting and constructed of a lightweight material. In addition, officers' dress uniforms feature silver piping on the trouser legs and cuffs.

MAF Ranking Conventions

With the exception of the changes instigated within the past year, the ranking conventions of the Magistracy Armed Forces have remained unchanged since its inception.

Enlisted Ranks

Since the beginning of the MAF, its enlisted ranks have remained unchanged, filling positions found in almost every other military force in known space.

Volunteer

The Magistracy of Canopus is relatively unique in that all citizens are required to serve the military for three years-though aristocrats can quietly find themselves exempt through the means of hiring a stand-in. All new recruits wear the rank of volunteer and sport a green diamond-shaped pin with silver edges on their lapels and cuffs.

First Ranker

Unless a volunteer receives disciplinary action during basic training, he will automatically be promoted to first ranker upon graduation. From here, first rankers are thrown into advance training in an attempt to find a field of expertise in which they can excel. Unless a first ranker has the drive, desire and ambition to stay in the military, no further advancement is possible. The rank insignia of a first ranker is identical to the volunteer but with a second silver-edged diamond nestled in the first.

Lance Corporal

Roughly equivalent to a sergeant in other militaries, a lance corporal is expected to lead a squad or more of men in battle. More importantly, he also acts as a field instructor for all first rankers who show a disposition to stay in the MAF. The rank insignia of the lance corporal is identical to the first ranker but with a third silver-edged diamond nestled inside the second.

Star Corporal

Serving in a variety of leadership roles, the star corporal is the core of the enlisted ranks. She is expected to lead in the absence of a more senior ranking officer. In general, a star corporal in the MAF leads a full platoon of men. The rank insignia of the star corporal is identical to the volunteer but with a silver diamond in the center.

Command Sergeant

Usually serving on the staff of a senior officer, the command sergeant is analogous to a sergeant major or another senior non-commissioned officer. The rank insignia of the command sergeant is identical to the volunteer but is completely silver.

Banner Sergeant

Though they currently fill senior staff and field command billets, the banner sergeant's origins stem from the days when personnel of this rank were responsible for a unit's regimental colors-an honor still observed when a unit is in full-dress uniform. The rank insignia of the banner sergeant is two small versions of the command sergeant rank, one diamond placed directly above the other.

Officer Ranks

The officer ranks of the Magistracy Armed Forces are unique among all military services in or out of the Inner Sphere in the way they are officially awarded: they are purchased. While bizarre, this tradition has remained unchanged for four centuries and does not appear to hamper the MAF in any way. It is important to note that any rank of major or higher must be approved by the Magestrix herself. Traditionally, the approval is only a rubber stamp. The Magestrix, however, is frequently forced to use her veto power to prevent the promotion of incompetent or otherwise undeserving officers. With the increased size of the MAF, one can only assume that if she is as intelligent as she appears, her continued personal scrutiny of the MAF officer corps will continue.

In general, because of the nature of the units, ranks within either the Magistracy Royal Guards or the Chasseurs á Cheval regiments cost 10,000 to 15,000 C-bills more than other MAF regiments.

Ensign

In the MAF, an ensign is rarely assigned a specific number of troops. Instead, depending on the circumstances and the experience of the ensign, an ensign can find herself in command of as few as ten men or as many as a hundred. The rank of ensign is found within both the army and

the Canopian navy. It typically requires a tribute of 10,000 to 25,000 C-bills. The rank insignia of an ensign is identical to that of a volunteer-a green silver-edged diamond-with the silver replaced with gold.

Commander

A commander heads up a company and, occasionally, a battalion. With the increased size of the MAF and the recent creation of additional ranks, however, this practice has almost ceased to exist. Within the navy, a commander serves as a department head. A commander will generally pay 16,000 to 35,000 C-bills for their rank, depending upon the exact duties involved. The insignia of a commander is similar to that of an ensign, except with a second gold-edged diamond nestled inside the first.

Major

Until only a few years ago, majors within the Magistracy Armed Forces were almost always employed as brevet majors, in command of regiments while commanders headed up the battalions and colonels sat as commanders of entire regimental formations. Those days are gone forever. With the massive increase in the size of the MAF in the last decade, the officer corps has had to grow with it. As such, majors now solely commands battalion-sized formations. Within the Canopian navy, a major is known as a comcapt-a commodore-captain commands a single vessel. Before the reorganization, a comcapt was in charge of a flotilla of ships. A price tag of 24,000 to 45,000 C-bills is attached to this position. The rank insignia of a major is a large gold diamond. A gold wreath below the diamond denotes a comcapt.

Force Major

Roughly equivalent to a lieutenant colonel in other militaries, the rank of force major was created as a way to recognize majors who held a great deal of prestige and influence within the new military order. There is no equivalent rank within the Canopian navy. The rank insignia of a force major is identical to that of a major, with a large green star in the center.

Colonel

Just as majors held more sway than originally intended prior to its reorganization, colonels often did not simply command regiments, but had responsibility for entire unit formations such as the Magistracy Royal Guards or the Canopian Fusiliers. Today a colonel commands only a regiment, a major command or division within the MAF's bureaucracy. In the Canopian navy, a colonel is known as a rearad-rear admiral-and commands three to six vessels. Colonels pay anywhere from 33,000 to more than 50,000 C-bills for their rank. Two small gold diamonds denotes a colonel; a gold wreath below the bottom diamond indicates a rearad.

General

The second of three new ranks created by the MCC, generals command each of the five combat formations within the MAF: Magistracy Royal Guards, Chasseurs á Cheval, Canopian Fusiliers, Magistracy Highlanders and the Raventhir Cuirassiers. Known as an admiral in the navy, two admirals command the entirety of the Canopian Navy fleets. All seven of these officers, as well as the senior general, staff the Magestrix Command Center. The rank of general is also assigned to the various Corps department heads within the MAF, though they do not hold a seat on the MCC. Anywhere from 60,000 to more than 75,000 C-bills are required to purchase a general's position. Additionally, though the Magestrix has the right of veto against all officer ranks, an individual seeking a general's rank is subject to a deep investigation by the MIM. [Ah, the paranoia of the Capellans is saturating the Trinity Alliance already.-AK] Three small, gold diamonds denotes a general; a gold wreath below the stars denotes an admiral.

Senior General

The third and final new rank within the MAF, the senior general is the supreme commander of the Magestrix Armed Forces, answering directly to the Magestrix herself. Unlike analogs in other militaries, the rank of senior general does not convey any right of rulership should the Magestrix meet an untimely end. The rank of senior general cannot be purchased, but instead is awarded

by the Magestrix herself. A unanimous vote of the MCC can overturn a Magestrix's appointment. Four small gold diamonds denotes a senior general.

Combat Formations

As with most militaries in the Inner Sphere, the majority of the regiments that constitute the MAF belong to a larger organization. However, unlike other similar organizations such as the Davion Brigade of Guards, which at its inception acted outside of the normal chain of command, the Combat Formations of the MAF have always been kept on a tight leash. With the increasing size of the MAF, more and more authority is being delegated to combat formation commanders, authority which none of the generals have shied away from exercising.

Magistracy Royal Guards

Formed from units destroyed during the early years of the Reunification War, the Magistracy Royal Guards-currently consisting of Raventhir's Iron Hand and the First and Second Canopian Cuirassiers-have played a pivotal role in the safeguarding of the Canopian state. Having fielded but two regiments for centuries, the last three decades of prosperity have allowed for the raising of a third regiment.

The insignia of the Magistracy Royal Guards is an amazon warrior trampling a snake.

Chasseurs á Cheval

The senior brigade of the MAF, the Chasseurs á Cheval was formed in 2531, a year after the formation of the Magistracy itself, for the express purpose of safeguarding Canopus IV. Originally composed of four "light horse" regiments, the unit has long stated that the Star League's Regimental Combat Teams was a carbon copy of their organization. Even so, the Chasseurs lost two regiments during the Reunification War. Only in the last decade has the Magistracy had the revenue to rebuild one of those regiments. The Cheval is the senior unit of the MAF. This has been the cause of some tension, as the Magistracy continues to raise several new regiments before rebuilding the Fourth Canopian Light Horse. The Chasseurs currently field the First, Second and Third Canopian Light Horse Regiments.

A woman bearing a lance and clothed in a red and green cloak while riding a horse bareback is the Cheval's insignia.

Canopian Fusiliers

Annihilated during the Reunification War, the unit was reconstituted during the Amaris Crisis and has since grown to consist of the First, Second and Third Canopian Fusiliers. The Fusiliers regiments have seen more combat than any other Canopian unit, though they lack the seniority of the Cheval or the notoriety of the Royal Guards. Though this makes the Fusiliers the most elite unit in the MAF, the unit is perpetually short on supplies and replacements because of their lack of status.

The insignia of the Canopian Fusiliers is three gold diamonds above a bloodstained saber.

Magistracy Highlanders

The Magistracy Highlanders, which fields the First and Second Magistracy Highlander regiments, is the second newest combat formation created by the MCC. It was officially commissioned in late June of 3059 and has caused more discord and dissent throughout the MAF than any other combat formation. Raised in secret from a core of mercenaries, the Highlanders were the center of an uproar within the MAF.

Originally formed around a core of refugees from the Rim Worlds Republic at the end of the Reunification War, the Canopian Highlanders have served the Magistracy longer than many mercenary units have been in existence. With such long-standing and sterling service, the unit was a natural choice for Emma Centrella's secret plan to help bolster her military.

With raids by the Marian Hegemony on the rise and the need to meet the Concordat on an equal

footing militarily, Emma contacted Colonel Oscar Long in early 3057 concerning a clandestine build-up of the Canopian Highlanders. This build-up would eventually lead to the integration of the Canopian Highlanders into the MAF.

Long's counter-proposal suggested that his three battalions be secretly built into three regiments, with two of those regiments formally recognized as the Magistracy Highlanders in the MAF in June of 3059. This left the mercenary Canopian Highlanders with a single regiment upgraded with the latest technology available to Canopus and still completely dedicated to the safeguarding of the Magistracy. The Magestrix agreed to the plan, which very closely paralleled Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao's plan to form his CCAF's Capellan Brigade.

Though the Magestrix and the MAF are exceptionally pleased with the Magistracy Highlanders, there has not been universal acceptance. The other members of the Trinity Alliance, as well as units within in the MAF, are unhappy at the apparent distrust this move demonstrates. The Chasseurs á Cheval, especially, have voiced displeasure at the apparent favoritism shown for "upstart mercenary units." Whether this will result in any lasting damage is not yet apparent. This move has made the Magistracy the Periphery's largest military power-a fact that no other Periphery power will soon likely let them forget.

To maintain their ties to the Canopian Highlanders regiment, the insignia of the Magistracy Highlanders is a tam-o'-shanter cap atop Canopus IV-changed from the stylized world of the original unit.

Raventhir Cuirassiers

This formation was originally known as the Raventhir (in honor of the Raventhiri noble line) Footmen-at the time of their formation in late 3056 they consisted solely of infantry. In early 3063. the unit was officially christened the Raventhir Cuirassiers, consisting of the First and Second Raventhir Cuirassiers regiments. During the official renaming ceremony, the Magestrix declared that the name was a celebration of the Trinity Alliance and the Cuirassiers. With the Magistracy Cavaliers, the Cuirassiers would be a sister regiment to the Taurian's Concordat Cuirassiers and the Confederation's Seventh Confederation Reserve Cavalry respectively.

Despite this effort, the Magestrix was still unable to dissipate tension created by the formation of the Magistracy Highlanders. Many now see the creation of the Raventhir Footmen as a rouse to divert attention away from the Highlanders. Only time will tell whether Emma is sincere with these "sister" regiments. Regardless, both regiments are taking their new duties very seriously.

The Raventhir Cuirassiers sport an insignia depicting a savage, unkempt-bearded warrior with a mane of wild, flying hair, encased in a pristine white cuirass.

Awards and Decorations

In a military as uncouth as the MAF, spawned in such a unique and nontraditional nation as the Magistracy of Canopus, it is not surprising that their awards would be few and as unique as the nation they represent. As most recognition and notoriety is a purchased commodity-in the same way that officer ranks are purchased-awards in general do not have the same eminence that is garnered in other nations. However, over the centuries, three awards have come to represent excellence and above standard loyalty. They merit respect throughout all of the Magistracy.

The Canopus Cluster

A unique award, the Canopus Cluster is partly purchased, but can only be received through an act that spares the Magistracy harm. It is also the only MAF decoration that can be awarded for acts of heroism, in either military service or other arenas such as politics or economics.

Demonstrating the strong female bias that has always pervaded the Magistracy, the Canopus Cluster takes the form of an earring, molded in a unique twisting pattern and worn on the upper portion of the left ear. A platinum band is awarded for military service, gold for merchant and bronze for political and brass for all other service. Once a recipient has been announced, he may make a one-time upgrade of the award by a sizable "donation," which will add a single precious stone to the design: 10,000 C-bills (lapis lazuli); 25,000 C-bills (emerald); 50,000 C-bills

(diamond); 100,000 C-bills (ruby).

Fist of Raventhir

This award was created in 2997 to celebrate the unwavering loyalty of the Raventhiri bloodline, which has provided centuries of unflinching service to the Magistracy of Canopus. Each year a single vote is cast by every commissioned officer for the soldier he thinks best exemplifies such dedication. The Magestrix then deliberates for a month over each candidate's records before making her final decision and presenting the award to a single recipient.

The Fist is a titanium medallion showing an armored fist protectively clenching the crest of the Magistracy, suspended from a red-silk ribbon.

Ribbon of the Magestrix

A new and somewhat controversial award, the Ribbon of the Magestrix is awarded for any unit that has served and fought on a non-Magistracy world. Though specifically created to honor those units that participated in the Capellan-St. Ives War, it has also been applied to those units that have gone on bandit-hunting raids.

The ribbon is a black or white circular "battle banner" with a stylized Canopus logo in the center, the different styles representing the type of mission completed. The second part of the award has caused some consternation, as the individual members of honored units are encouraged to weave small black or white ribbons into their hair when entering battle. Senior General Doru has argued that this lends an air of non-professionalism to the MAF, but the Magestrix has overruled his concern and continues to promote its use.

Academies

Until the ascension of Emma Centrella as Magestrix, there was not a single premier school of combat to be found within the borders of the Magistracy. Instead, every world contained a provincial academy, which was required to teach every specialty from armor to aerospace, JumpShip to MechWarrior, technician to officer. It was an altogether impossible task. Due to the disdain that the Magistracy's people held for its standing military, the government never felt the need to burden itself with such a money pit. It instead relied on each individual world to train, staff and support their own academies. Though the MAF was highly motivated and willing to endure considerable sacrifice for their beloved Magistracy, it could not compensate for the general lack of training within its soldiery.

That all changed when Emma came to power. She quickly realized that with such rapacious neighbors as the Marian Hegemony, it was no longer possible to rely only on the Magistracy's legendary ability to seduce an opponent with the pleasure industry and commerce. Therefore, she initiated several legislative measures that began to seed federal Magistracy money into the provincial academies, allowing them to expand and upgrade their facilities.

Canopian Institute of War

At the same time that she initiated federal academy funding, the Magestrix initiated plans to open a massive training center, patterned after the prestigious Sun Zhang MechWarrior Academy, on Canopus IV itself: the Canopian Institute of War (CIW). In addition to providing the finest facilities and training, it gave a boost of morale across the MAF. Though highly motivated, the MAF has always been burdened with the knowledge that many in the government they had protected through hundreds of years considered them a necessary evil. With the inauguration of the CIW, the MAF felt acceptance for the first time in centuries.

Enrollment

Admittance into the CIW is determined by two main factors: service and, to a much lesser degree, education. Because the school is so new, as each school year approaches every colonel within the MAF is required to forward the names of the most promising individuals under their command, regardless of age or years of service, who have petitioned their superior officers for the right to enter the CIW. The first two years of students were determined in this fashion, with

about five percent being drawn from the Militia Defense Battalions. In 3059, following an extensive review by the MCC on the progression of the provincial academies under their new reforms, the top one percent of each graduating class was given permission to apply to the CIW. Of this one percent, only half passed the grueling entrance tests put into place specifically to weed them out. Each year the percentage of allowed applicants and passing students from the provincial academies has increased. Unlike ranks, entrance into the school cannot be purchased.

Beginning in 3062, select individuals from the Taurian Concordat have been allowed to enter the CIW.

Curriculum

The Curriculum and training of the CIW is patterned after the Sun Zhang MechWarrior Academy (SZMA), except that most courses are longer.

Basic training is six months long. Though not as severe as at the SZMA, it is still designed to shock the new student out of all previous conception of the MAF. More importantly, such harshness allows veteran warriors of ten years of combat to realize that they are no better than a new graduate while at the CIW.

After basic training, there are two MOS currently offered, each running four years: MechWarrior and aerospace pilot. The armored infantry MOS was not included in the curriculum when the school opened since MAF did not have any battle armor available at the time. Their recent addition to the MAF roster has caused the school to consider adding it to the curriculum. Again, like the SZMA, the CIW offers extensive courses usually found only at a university.

Originally staffed exclusively with MAF personnel, several retired CCAF officers began teaching select courses at the CIW in 3062. As of 3063 there has been demand to expand the number of students allowed in the courses as not all who wish to attend are admitted.

Atmosphere

Though nowhere near the SZMA in intensity, many students in the CIW realize that they have earned the right to attend the finest academy in all of the Periphery, one that has begun to eclipse some of the lesser Inner Sphere schools. This intensity, combined with some acts of hazing that occurred between provincial graduates and those who have already survived for years in the MAF, have caused many to drop out of the CIW. It is a testament to the improved provincial academies that the drop out rate of the provincial graduates was less than that from veteran troops in 3062.

Graduation

The colors of the school are gold, silver and lavender. Every graduate receives a half cape- outside silver, inside lavender, trimmed in gold-to wear with their dress uniforms. In the field, graduates are allowed to display the three colors of the school in any practical form that does not endanger them or their fellow soldiers.

The Magistracy Royal Guards, Chasseurs á Cheval and Canopian Fusiliers are allowed their pick of the graduates from each class. Though only a handful were chosen from the first class of 3062, the graduates' performance in the Third Canopian Fusiliers on St. Ives was so impressive that all three combat formations drew heavily from the class of 3063.

Personalities

Without exception, the following personalities' fortunes are intrinsically entwined with the Magistracy. Their rise or fall will elevate or abase this Periphery realm in equal measure.

[You will, no doubt, be interested in knowing that the information on Emma and Naomi is less than a year old-it has been updated appropriately-and was originally prepared by Jerrard Cranston himself for review by the puppet Martial. Though we were unable to decode the majority of the information originally appended to this text, I felt it appropriate for you to know that our hand has begun to reach even the most secure hives of our enemies. -AK]

Emma Centrella

At 54 years of age, Emma Centrella retains much of the beauty and charm that helped make her one of the most talented diplomats among Periphery state leaders. Highly intelligent and completely committed to the good of her realm, the Magestrix must be counted among Sun-Tzu Liao's most valuable allies. Emma's stormy relationship with her mother, Magestrix Kyalla Centrella, taught her the game of politics and court intrigue: these skills thwarted Kyalla Centrella's attempt to assassinate her in 3039. By 3040, Emma had built a sufficient power base to take the Canopian throne away from her unstable parent. She has since led the Magistracy to a position of unprecedented prosperity and influence, exemplified by the historic alliance with the Taurian Concordat. This, combined with her alliance with House Liao, best represents the bold gambles for which she is renowned.

The Magestrix appears to have taken the recent death of her eldest daughter in stride. Unlike most other Periphery rulers, Emma recognized the threat posed by the Clans and tried to do something about it. She does not appear to blame the Star League or the Inner Sphere for Danai's loss, but has instead turned her energies toward grooming Naomi Centrella to step into the heir's role.

Naomi Centrella

Recently celebrating her twenty-fourth birthday on Sian, Naomi Centrella never expected to become the likely heir to the Magistracy of Canopus. Since being thrust into the spotlight, Naomi has handled herself with poise and grace unusual in someone so young. Gifted with her mother's charm and diplomatic instincts, Naomi Centrella is likely to make a worthy successor.

Though widely regarded as a less skilled MechWarrior than her late sister Danai, Naomi has still shown considerable ability as a military leader during the past few years. She currently serves as overall commander of the MAF units stationed in Capellan space and, by all accounts, is doing a masterful job.

She appears to have high personal regard for Sun-Tzu and the rumor mill is running overtime with speculation that Naomi Centrella will soon replace Isis Marik in Sun-Tzu's affections. I'm not certain how much credence to give this, but the two of them have been spending more time together lately. Naomi Centrella's feelings for Sun-Tzu appear to be genuine; whether he returns them remains to be seen. How Magestrix Emma might react to such relations between Sun-Tzu and Naomi is anyone's guess.

[It would appear that Cranston was simply being cautious, though you can read between the lines to see his take on this situation. Needless to say, his veiled speculation was on target, as Isis was ejected off Sian and out of the Confederation in April of 3062, not four months after this report. Considering that Sun-Tzu personally hosted Naomi's birthday celebration, even the most dull-witted can see the path this relationship is taking. Whether true feelings exist is irrelevant, as Sun-Tzu has shown that no attachments come without political strings; strings that he weaves into threads of ambition to further the aims of the Confederation. -AK]

Erde Centrella

Erde is the only daughter Emma allowed her husband, Nicholas Ramilie, to name. He bestowed a name tied into his German ancestry and a dream that he knows will never be realized; "Erde" is German for Terra.

Though not the militarist her eldest sister was, nor as politically suave as Naomi, Erde has always exhibited a deep intelligence and a love for people, which translated into a vibrant, fun-loving personality. This love led her to a career in medical school, which she entered at the age of fifteen. Upon graduation in 3060 at the age of eighteen, she joined the MAF's Medical Corps specifically attached to colonization efforts in the New Colony Region.

As it was never expected that she would be close to the throne, Emma allowed Erde-along with her other two younger sisters-the freedoms that Danai and Naomi by birthright were denied. Though Emma had no choice but to make Erde the second in line for the Magestrix upon learning of Danai's death in early 3061, she recalled her daughter to Canopus only after she was wounded in a pirate attack in the New Colony Region near the Concordat border.

Since then, Erde has been grooming to be Magestrix should tragedy strike Naomi. As it has always been the case in the Magistracy, no effort has been made to investigate the paternity of her pregnancy.

[A very interesting turn of events.-AK]

Hadji Doru

Hadji Doru's supreme competence and unwavering loyalty has caused him to make a number of hard decisions in his nearly four decades of military service. Such capability led him to the position of the Marshal of the Taurian Guard in the Taurian Concordat, where he served faithfully for years before being forced to choose between his nation and the Proctorship. He chose the greater good of the Concordat and helped to remove Thomas Calderon from power in 3055. However, to prevent any political group from using him against Jeffrey Calderon, he resigned his commission and boarded a JumpShip headed for the Inner Sphere.

His name became lost to history among the peoples of the Periphery until Danai Centrella encountered him during Operation Bulldog in 3059. Unable to resist the military life he had known for so long, he petitioned and was accepted into the Second Donegal Guards RCT, the unit which ended Wave Four of the operation on Wolcott in preparation for moving into the Periphery to clean up the Jaguar remnants. After Wave Four, the First Canopian Cuirassiers-led by Danai-moved to Wolcott in preparation to depart for the Clan home worlds. It was there she encountered Doru and convinced him to resign from the Second and sign on with the Cuirassiers.

Over the course of the six-month journey to Strana Mechty, Danai came to realize that the MAF desperately needed a military mind such as Doru and attempted to convince him of that fact. Though her arguments were sound and Doru came to respect Danai, he continued to refuse until her death at the hands of the Jaguars. Humbled by her willingness to sacrifice herself for her homeland, Doru made a promise to himself to journey to Canopus and let the cards lay where they may. Once there, he found that Danai had invested her own money in purchasing the rank of colonel for Doru. Following a year of careful negotiation, Doru became the first Senior General in the history of the MAF.

[This is a very dangerous situation, as demonstrated by his reformation of the MAF. Having such a brilliant military leader at the helm of the largest Periphery military, while tied with an Inner Sphere power could wreck havoc on our plans. Our best course of action will be to foster the distrust this has caused on the Concordat side into a paranoia we can use. -AK]

Writing Credits:

Field Manual Periphery: Magistracy of Canopus
Randall N. Bills

Taurian Concordat



speaker

To: Lord Grover Shrapnel, Protector

You will find the requested files attached to this message. All told, they compile an accurate historical account and current readiness report on the Taurian Defense Force. Detailed regimental descriptions are also included so that you may better know the men and women you now command.

You will forgive me for saying so, but it might have been better to review such information before committing the Concordat to diplomatic talks, an alliance and a war.

Yes, we struck back at House Davion, repaying them for many earlier debts whether or not they were involved in the death of Protector Jeffrey Calderon. Yes, the new technology that is finally trickling into the Concordat improves our overall readiness. But as you will see, our military forces have suffered greatly in the recent hostilities, a fact which must negate such lackluster gains. Despite your assurances that taking the "long view" will result in a stronger Concordat, it is a vision I do not-cannot-share.

For such reasons, including your continued reluctance to name Jeffrey's young son as heir to the Protectorship, this must be my last official act as Marshal of the Taurian Guard and Acting-Senior Marshal of the Taurian Defense Force. The storm clouds are gathering on the horizon. While I will not allow my distant ties to the Protector's line to be used to split the Concordat, I cannot support your ambitions any longer. Accept this as my official resignation.

-Marshal Brenda Calderon, Retired, 4 July 3063

The Final Frontier

In 2253, Samantha Calderon's fleet of JumpShips discovered and settled the Hyades Cluster. The mineral-rich worlds of the Cluster gave settlers access to incredible amounts of resources, allowing them to form the strong nucleus of a new realm. Calling themselves the Taurians, the settlers also identified and claimed nearby resource-rich planets to serve as strong colonial possessions.

The refugees, driven out by the "consolidation conflicts" that formed the five Great Houses, continued to flee rimward from the Inner Sphere and contributed to a population boom that swelled the region to over a billion people scattered among a few dozen worlds. The Concordat began as a loose association of these independent worlds, each pledging itself to the mutual defense of the others. The Taurian Defense Force, activated in 2360, was designed to answer the menace posed by nearby House Davion. Though they remained unnoticed by the Federated Suns, the Calderon family knew they could escape notice only so long.

Coming of Age

In 2368, fighting between the Davions and House Liao spilled over into Concordat space, bringing the Federated Suns into direct conflict with the Taurians. Though ill equipped to take on the full might of a Great House, the Taurian Navy acquitted itself admirably in this skirmish by employing more maneuverable corvettes against heavier Davion vessels. Destroying two warships and capturing a third, the Concordat's Defense Force claimed an astounding victory

from its first real military engagement.

For two years following the battle, the Federated Suns forced the Taurians into a series of costly naval battles, although House Davion thought they fought only an "organized band of pirates." When Reynard Davion finally left off pursuit of the Taurians to refocus on House Liao, the knowledge of having been discovered by the Federated Suns continued to spike fear of a coming invasion throughout the Concordat. The next battle, however, found the Taurian Defense Force fighting against House Liao, not the Davions.

As House Liao fought to expand the Capellan realm, they looked upon the planets that made up the Concordat as easy prey, discounting the Taurian Defense Force as they tried to push the local defenders aside. Brutal battles ensued, both in space and on the ground, which introduced the Taurians to a new level of savagery in warfare. Cruelty to Taurian prisoners-of-war and massacres of the civilian population were but a few of the harsh punishments visited upon the Concordat by the Capellans. Rather than lose heart, however, the Taurians pitched back with greater resistance and forced a Pyrrhic victory onto the Confederation.

Martial Maturity

A century and a half of peaceful coexistence followed these early military encounters, during which time the Taurian Defense Force entered the modern age of warfare. BattleMech designs proliferated throughout the Inner Sphere. In order to attain these designs, the Concordat played on its neutrality, offering a safe haven to Capellan and Free Worlds League dissidents who paid their way with stolen blueprints. While far from an elegant solution, it did solve the problem.

Unfortunately, it only fueled the avarice of House Davion, who was waiting for a chance to take advantage of the weaker Periphery states. That opportunity came in 2573, when a squadron of Taurian warships mistakenly strayed into a neutral system jointly administered by the Federated Suns and the Concordat. The Davions responded to the trespass with an assault that all but destroyed the squadron. The Federated Suns clung to the incident despite attempts by the Protector to explain and even make amends, promoting it as one of the fundamental arguments for the Star League's Pollux Proclamation.

[This tendency to assign the Federated Suns the most malicious intentions is an example of the "Davion bogeyman complex" I've warned you about. I've shown some of your top aides long-buried evidence that the navigation error may have been deliberate, to gauge Davion resolve. If so, we almost handed them the instrument of our own destruction. -BC]

All Grown Up

Morals are one thing. Survival is everything.
-Samantha Calderon, October 2252, Modern Explorers

In the two years leading up to the Pollux Proclamation, the Star League tried first to woo the Concordat with empty bribes and then to punish them into submission with trade sanctions. Neither tactic was effective, prompting the suggestion that the Star League had finally made up its mind to handle the "Periphery mess." When the First Lord announced that the independent states would be brought into the Star League "despite their reluctance, for the good of all," Protector Mitchell Calderon calmly prepared his nation for war.

Clearly outmatched in raw strength, the Taurian Defense Force launched Case Amber in 2577 as a preemptive strike against the building Star League invasion force. Designed to buy time for the TDF, it also landed a telling blow right in the lap of House Davion.

Following the strike, the Taurians faked the withdrawal of their ships. Fooled by this tactic, the Federated Suns launched an early strike and found their main fleet cut off by a Taurian blockade. Trapped and outgunned, the Davions fought several desperate battles in an attempt to regain their own space. In the end, Case Amber cost the Federated Suns over two dozen warships either destroyed or captured in battle, versus only three Concordat ships damaged.

The Taurian Defense Force kept up this kind of resistive effort throughout the war. While they occasionally won a battle, their goal was to make every Star League victory a costly one. With Case Amber keeping the Davion war fleet busy, Star League forces had a harder fight on their

way into every major planetary system.

The Taurians, however, didn't restrict their resistance to the skies. Once on the ground, the invaders met fanatical defenders who fought to their dying breaths to take a few more League regulars with them. This fanaticism was the legacy of battles fought with House Liao, and now served to imbue the TDF with a stamina and dedication that the Star League was hard pressed to match. In a Concordat counter-assault aimed at retaking the world Diefenbaker, the largest 'Mech-vs.-Mech battle of the entire war unfolded. In the end, though the Taurian Defense Force was left with only fifty functioning BattleMechs, the Star League lost over three hundred of their war machines, gutting the once-mighty Terran Third Corps.

Still, by 2590 the Taurian Defense Force had no more reserves to draw upon, despite their spirited and brutal defensive machinations. They were forced to retreat into the nebula that hid the Hyades Cluster. It took the Star League another six years to pierce this final defense, with the Cluster's protective asteroid field stringing broken ships and bodies through the void. Rather than face annihilation from a bitter military opponent, the Concordat delivered its fate into the hands of the Star League politicians by surrendering on 22 September 2596. What had been predicted as a six-month campaign had taken nearly twenty years and cost more in machines and lives than anyone had possibly foreseen.

Succession Wars

Though the Taurian Concordat did not directly participate, the Succession Wars still left their mark on the Periphery realm and its fighting force. As the Inner Sphere turned its attention away from the outlying states, the Concordat and Magistracy of Canopus broke away from the old Star League-era treaty and solved their border disputes in the old-fashioned way-War. What became known as the "nineteen-days war" commenced, so-called because the actual time in combat was measured out to nineteen days. Other popular monikers are the "two hundred hours war" (though there was actually only one hundred eighty two hours of combat) and the "shoving-match war." After only three poorly executed maneuvers, both sides settled on a new treaty identical in all respects to the old one.

This initial incompetence-understandable, after so long at peace-would not hold sway forever. The Fourth Succession War provided a much-needed temporary boon to the Defense Force. Already worried about Davion aggression, the Federated Suns' near-conquest of House Liao turned Protector Thomas Calderon's fear of the Davions into paranoia. [Though it was imprudent to suggest that such was the case until Jeffrey's ascension to the Protectorship, I have to wonder why it has grown impolitic again since your ascension. -BC] Hampering other sectors of Concordat life, including the long-standing Taurian emphasis on colonial expansion, alerts and constant-training maneuvers sharpened the Concordat's military skill sets. The monies poured into defense also brought about an expansion in material readiness that proved to serve the Concordat well.

Marching in Place

Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. -Ancient Terran Proverb; quoted by Marshal Hadji Doru, 24 April 3055, in his address backing the early ascension of Jeffrey Calderon to the role of Protector

It seems destined that all major conflicts with the Federated Suns are birthed from a mistake. In 3047, a freighter registered in the Federated Commonwealth (née Suns) misjumped into Concordat space. Defense Force pilots, fearing a Davion reconnaissance mission, destroyed the freighter before the truth could be learned. Convinced that it was a precursor to invasion, Protector Thomas Calderon placed the Taurian Defense Force on an alert that would remain for eight long years. In that time the heightened status of the military provoked several skirmishes with the Steiner-Davion AFFC, though the feared invasion never materialized.

Marshal Hadji Doru, commander of the Taurian Guard, was forced to declare Thomas Calderon unfit to rule in 3055 and helped install Thomas' son, Jeffrey, as Protector. This was the Marshal's last act, as he voluntarily exiled himself from the Concordat rather than taint Jeffrey Calderon's early rule with allusions to a military coup.

[Despite Marshal Doru's fine example of personal honor and dedication to the Concordat state, his reappearance in the

Magistracy of Canopus as a military advisor, a position the late Danai Centrella shamed him into accepting, must be viewed with some worry. He knows much of the Taurian Defense Force's operating procedures and his personal honor will not allow him to do less than his best for the MAF. He should be considered a security breach. -BC]

Attention to Detail

Since the Clan invasion did not directly impact the Taurian Defense Force, Protector Jeffrey Calderon was able to invest more time and energy into streamlining the Concordat military. Wasteful expenditures begun in his father's time were redirected into better training facilities and production of war materials. His motto for this period was, "Men and machines. Anything else is wasteful." These efforts included the acquisition of new design concepts and technology from the larger Inner Sphere realms whenever possible, though many of the coveted most-advanced materials remained unavailable until recently.

Despite the expectations of many, a large upsizing in military forces was not seen. This was mainly due to the Protector's other interest: the budding Taurian-Magistracy alliance. Under the terms, the two nations settled several new colonies while providing for their defense. In this manner, the Colonial Marshals were formed. The Marshals themselves would come out of the Canopian Institute of War, while the Concordat provided 'Mechs and armored vehicles and other material concerns. It harnessed the strengths of both nations while promoting several years of close ties and the hope of a strong future alliance.

Changing of the Guard

House Liao awarded favored status to the Magistracy of Canopus in 3058, trading valuable resources and technology for limited military support and thereby eclipsing Concordat efforts. When the Capellans advanced tentative offers toward the Concordat while seeking assistance in fighting their war with the St. Ives Compact, the Protector stood adamantly against extending strong diplomatic ties any further than the Magistracy. Plans for the New Colony Region moved forward, working with the Canopians and, when necessary, House Liao, but the Concordat [then] wanted no part in a new Inner Sphere struggle.

After Sherman Maltin's failed uprising in the New Colony Region and Protector Calderon's untimely death, the reins of state fell into the hands of Lord Grover Shraplen. Early [circumstantial] evidence pointing to Davion involvement rallied a majority of the Taurian Defense Force behind Protector Shraplen, who expelled the Federated Suns' ambassador and entered into negotiations with House Liao. In August 3062, The Taurian Concordat entered into a three-way alliance with the Capellan Confederation and Magistracy of Canopus.

Costs and Commitments

The immediate cost of the so-called 'Trinity Alliance' was support for the Capellan war against the St. Ives Compact. The Taurian Velites and Concordat Jaegers were committed to the struggle immediately, seeing battle in September and finding themselves in almost non-stop fighting until the cease-fire in June 3062. The Concordat Cuirassiers and mercenary Longwood's Bluecoats were added during the last four months fighting. The Bluecoats were eventually pulled back to garrison Taurian interests at the Liao-Concordat border. The Cuirassiers never made it back.

Though they paid a high price for admission, the Protector expects many advantages through the Concordat alliances with House Liao and the Magistracy of Canopus. The situation in the long run promises favorable trade status, access to higher levels of technology and an upgraded military, one on par with any Successor State army. For some, this cannot happen soon enough. Others, while hopeful, doubt it will ever happen at all. Regardless, the Concordat has committed itself and, as it has proven throughout its history, Taurians will see their commitments through to the end.

Taurian Defense Force

The Taurian Defense Force is, arguably, the best-trained and most experienced military in the Periphery. The Canopian MAF may show stronger numbers, but it still runs a close second. The Taurian citizens invest a great deal of pride in their military, an honor earned by the men and

women who serve the Concordat.

The Protectorship

The single most important person related to the Taurian Defense Force is without doubt the Protector, who is commander-in-chief and usually serves as Senior Marshal of the armies. Lord Shraplen, however, assigns the military duties to his chief marshal, as he is a political leader, not a soldier, by nature.

Lord Shraplen's assumption of the Protectorship has been controversial. An outspoken critic of Jeffrey Calderon, he has reversed several standing policies-most notably, those dealing with House Liao-which does not sit well with many senior officers. His obvious fear of House Davion is also reminiscent of Thomas Calderon and reminds everyone of the excesses taken during the military's eight year standing alert.

There is the matter of the three possible Calderon heirs to the position. The first is Thomas Calderon's sister, Janice, who removed herself from the line of succession once before because she was too physically ill to rule (though rumors have been circulating that the Federated Suns have discovered a possible cure for Brisbane Virus). The second is Jeffrey's illegitimate son, Erik, born to a senior officer of the mercenary Prey's Divisional. Though only five years of age, Lord Shraplen could have named him regent.

The third heir was discovered after Jeffrey's death. Richard Calderon, the son of Felix Calderon, was born on an outpost colony the deep Periphery. Felix was thought lost during a star-mapping mission in 3046. The only sister of Magestrix Emma Centrella found Richard and prevailed upon him to return to the Concordat. Tragically, a pirate attack just short of Concordat space claimed the life of both Richard Calderon and Lorelei Centrella. Though foul play is not even remotely suspected, it still leaves a stain upon Protector Grover Shraplen that there may be other close relations to Jeffrey Calderon rightfully inline for the Protectorship.

Military-Industrial Complex

Since the end of hostilities between the Capellan Confederation and St. Ives Commonality, new technologies have slowly begun to trickle into the Taurian Concordat, along with the engineers and instructors to make them lasting developments.

Though materials and weapons may also be requisitioned from the production site developed on Detroit by House Liao and the Magistracy of Canopus, the Concordat's late entry into the alliance places it at a lower priority than the other members. At this time, it is still simpler to purchase excess production from the Liao factories on Victoria, thereby giving the TDF access to technology that even the Magistracy has not yet fielded, even though it also means hiring in extra technical support from House Liao. The cost of upgrading is not cheap, but the Defense Force has forever been maintained as the leading Periphery military. That is not a title it wishes to relinquish.

Esprit De Corps

Always thought of as a strong and cohesive force, recent trials have forced fracture lines into the Taurian military. Much of this originates from the controversy surrounding the new Protector, but other pressures at work include mistrust of House Liao and even of the Magistracy.

The Taurian Guard

Always considered the showcase corps of the TDF, the Taurian Guard's primary ward is the Hyades Cluster itself. The Guard rotates up to two battalions out at a time for patrols or pirate hunting duty, though with the loss of the Taurian Velites that rotation has been scaled back to a single battalion.

[While I understand that my resignation will likely have some effect of the official loyalty ratings of the unit, I will go so far as to remind you that their loyalty will remain yours so long as you do not force them to choose otherwise. -BC]

I CORPS

Typically, I Corps fields one regiment to each active border with a third available for troubleshooting. Senior Marshal Brenda Calderon folded what was left of the Taurian Velites into the wounded Concordat Jaegers, giving I Corps one of the most experienced regiments within the entire Defense Force. Reposting both TDF regiments to the New Colony Region border, the mercenary Gordon's Armored Cavalry remains at large for most of the wider-ranging patrols. The Armored Cavalry is well suited as roving problem-solvers, with their hard-hitting style feared by many lighter units.

II CORPS

Usually a steadfast and reliable corps, the regular regiments traditionally guarded a large part of the border between the Concordat and Federated Suns. II Corps relies on the old code of "Unit, Corps, God, Country," spelling out their ultimate loyalties and resolving potential conflicts. They are good soldiers to have behind you.

Unfortunately, the Concordat Cuirassiers were lost to the Capellan civil war, leaving a large hole in Concordat defenses. In addition, the mercenary Longwood's Bluecoats have never been the most reliable troops-some believe that House Liao may be attempting to woo the Bluecoats over by tempting them with technology upgrades.

III CORPS

With long-standing ties to Protector Shraplen and his supporters, III Corps has recently shifted to a 'Fanatical' loyalty rating. Protector Shraplen has the mercenary Bannockburn's Bandits holding his personal fief of MacLeod's Land, while the regular regiments are placed as a shield between the Hyades Cluster and House Davion. In this position, they also hold open the "bottleneck" linking the Hyades Cluster with House Liao. A new mercenary regiment, Olson's Rangers, was picked up because they have worked well with House Liao for many years and came highly recommended.

IV CORPS

With the Taurian Velites smashed in the Capellan conflict and the Jaegers recalled by Brenda Calderon, Protector Shraplen designated IV Corps as the Concordat's military aide to House Liao. Both regiments of IV Corps are on extended maneuvers within the Confederation, enjoying technology upgrades and acquiring much-needed experience to bring back to the Taurian Defense Force.

V CORPS

The newly raised Third Taurian Lancers was added to V Corps to augment what had, until now, been a purely mercenary corps. A fierce rivalry has sparked between the Third and mercenary Vandelay's Valkyries. This is a potential problem, as V Corps anchors the Concordat's far border where Davion treachery and pirate activity are both strong possibilities. Fortunately, the mercenary regiment Summer's Storm is keeping its mind on business.

VI CORPS

Originally designated as a 'catch-all' special-operating corps, VI Corps divided its forces between colonial outposts and border duty. Always loyal to the Protector, people have underestimated how much of that loyalty was pledged directly to Jeffrey Calderon. With Grover Shraplen ascending to the Protectorship and ignoring Jeffrey Calderon's son, VI Corps abandoned their original duty assignments and pulled back into the furthest reaches of the Concordat. Now they are in borderline rebellion, refusing to answer orders to relocate and claiming they will continue to act in the Concordat's best interests.

Mercenaries

With the painful losses of two line regiments, the Taurian Defense Force has come to rely heavily on mercenary units to augment their rosters. Hiring mercenaries on long-term contracts has

always been an accepted substitute in the Concordat, with each regiment traditionally assigned to a corps with the exception of the Taurian Guard (as noted above). Unfortunately, the cost may soon become prohibitive if any more units are hired.

Colonial Marshals

Despite their first failed bid for independence, the New Colony Region has continued to agitate for recognition as a free state. Most analysts call it a foolhardy notion, since the NCR is so dependent on outside support. With the Canopians now making noises of supporting at least a trial period of independence for the region, however, the idea is looking more likely. Since the majority of the Colonial Marshals are Canopian-born and trained, their ultimate outlook will certainly reflect Magistracy sentiments.

In token protest of the move, the Concordat has since cut off any further military support to the Colonial Marshals. With functioning 'Mech factories on Detroit, courtesy of House Liao and the Magistracy, it is uncertain how much that protest will be felt. Economic aid will continue to be provided until such time that the New Colony Region officially cuts ties to the Concordat.

Organizational Doctrine

The Taurian Defense Force does not follow a true combined-arms approach to warfare. This is due to the thin-spread and often-rotating nature of their BattleMech and Aerospace assets. Supporting forces must always be ready to act on their own, with little or no relief forthcoming. Only the infantry and armor corps work together seamlessly, and in such cases the TDF owns a serious advantage. Any efforts of unit coordination involving BattleMechs and Aerospace assets are almost solely dependent on the individual MechWarrior or pilot.

Warriors

Perhaps the Taurian Defense Force's greatest asset is the average soldier's pride in their military. Known as fanatical defenders, few militaries that know their history would not shudder at the idea of taking a Concordat world. While never condoning atrocities in an offensive strategy, in the Reunification War the Taurians were known to employ more liberal definitions in the defense of their homeland. The few times surrenders were offered to the Taurians, they were not always accepted. "Headhunting" tactics were common, and if a JumpShip could be destroyed before it had a chance to disgorge the traveling army, so much the better. Those who demanded the Defense Force fight by the invader's rules always forgot a very important fact: the Taurians never signed the Ares Conventions.

The reasons behind such a lack of conventional military deportment and the near-fanatical resistance traditionally displayed by the TDF are covered extensively in the Concordat's military history. No excuses are offered-no dirty trick excepted. For this reason, every TDF soldier also gets an extensive education on the Defense Force's heritage.

Concordat Constabulary

A paramilitary force normally used for internal security purposes, the Constabulary is one step above the local police but not quite a professional military group. These troubleshooters still receive some battlefield training and can be mobilized in a time of war. Typically, the constabulary is trained in guerilla tactics, organizing irregulars and developing planetary resistance for an invasion. Their successes are well documented from the Reunification War, and their ability to turn average people into a military nuisance makes counting their numbers nearly impossible.

BattleMech Assets

What do you mean, the infantry aren't pulling their weight? Who's the one out here wearing a metal suit worth a hundred million C-Bills?

-Brigadier Michael Rock, First Taurian Lancers, 14 May 3059, during training maneuvers

The Taurian Defense Force currently lists twelve regular line regiments of BattleMechs. These units follow a typical organizational structure with four 'Mechs to a lance and three lances to a company. They deviate from this model in placing four companies in a battalion. Independent command units are not employed as a rule, except at regimental and corps level. A regimental commander typically fields an independent lance meant for protection duties as much as combat. A corps marshal often fields a mixed company of 'Mechs and armor, employing the armor only for scouting purposes.

While typically the TDF relies on medium weight BattleMechs, light and heavy 'Mechs are fairly common. Assault machines are rare and valued far above their nominal worth. The Defense Force has always preferred the more robust designs when possible, but this old stand-by is being largely ignored as the military upgrades with new technology. In battle, the MechWarriors work themselves into positions where support forces grant them the biggest advantage and where they can also look after their weaker cousins. Here their extensive training pays off, often granting them the limited advantage of a combined arms unit.

Aerospace Assets

If the Concordat military has a weakness, it is in their routine aerospace forces. Good fighter pilots are hard to find and harder still to train to any degree of ability. Traditionally, the Defense Force has contracted with outside advisors such as the Outworlds Alliance to bring in excellent instructors. This has created a situation where pilots tend to be very good, very expensive and always lacking in numbers.

The average weight class of TDF aerospace fighters has crept up over the centuries, until lightweight fighters are practically non-existent and heavy fightercraft are the norm. This has been done specifically to better to protect the pilot, since it is almost easier to replace the fighter than the warrior inside. Aerospace fighters are receiving very little attention in the way of offensive upgrades at this time, though any good defensive option would likely be instituted at once. Aerospace fighters are organized two to an air lance, two lances to a flight, two flights to a wing and either two or three wings to an air division, the largest organization. In a combined-arms situation, pilots have less to worry about, as they rarely require ground-based combat support. They can then concentrate on where to best deliver their firepower.

WarShip and Conventional Fleet Support

The Defense Force conventional navy is actually considered the Concordat's first line of defense. Standard strategic doctrine demands that the fleet forces engage the enemy as far forward as possible, sacrificing themselves if necessary to blunt any invasion and turn the attackers away from the Hyades Cluster. Enemy JumpShips, when part of an invading force, are considered viable targets.

Perhaps the greatest military treasure saved from the Concordat's past is the TCW Vandenberg, a Vincent-Class Corvette. Missed in the final assault on the Hyades Cluster, the Vandenberg has since been kept hidden inside the nebula. Barely operable and in no way battle worthy, the recent alliance with House Liao has made it possible to begin restoring this ancient vessel. However, the high cost of the small amount of repairs and refurbishment already done to the Vandenberg has already become a serious drain on the budget. Though Liao engineers remain optimistic that she will see service again once the brittle, irradiated armor is replaced, the drive overhauled, weapons upgraded and the entire vessel rewired, many in the navy are already referring to it as the "TCW Albatross."

Armor Assets

Every Concordat world, including colony worlds, is assigned at least one armor battalion for defense. Any important world is going to boast one or more armored regiments. Because of their cheaper production and maintenance costs, the armor corps saw upgrades in technology long before TDF BattleMechs. In fact, a few Concordat-produced vehicles are in high demand by Inner Sphere mercenaries and some House units. The TDF employs armored vehicles ranging from light to heavy weight-class, with a preference for hovercraft-equipped vehicles. Tanks greater

than seventy tons are very rare and likely to be found in garrison on heavily populated worlds.

Armor is organized with two tanks to a maniple, three maniples to a lance, three lances to a company and three companies to a battalion. To promote an edge in survivability, regimental commanders do not employ a separate command unit. Instead, they hide among the rank and file, acting like a regular line unit in all aspects.

When fighting alongside infantry, the tank crews enjoy being the anchor points for the battle. This shifts radically when BattleMechs take the field however, as crews are expected to sacrifice their own vehicles if it means saving a 'Mech.

Infantry Assets

The Concordat's military has not forgotten the heroic sacrifices made by the infantry during the Reunification War, nor do they allow the common soldier to forget. Their reputation for fanatical defenses, spending themselves to the last man if necessary, is what made them such a feared fighting force. Whether or not that is true today remains to be tested.

The regular infantry is organized with maniples of five soldiers, two maniples in a squad, three squads in a platoon and three platoons to a company. This regularly escalates to regiments of over eight hundred fighting men and women. Since infantry forces rarely rotate off world, they are most often trained as specialists. Each battalion claims an advantage in certain terrain types or in tactical maneuvers. Anti-Mech training is included in every unit at battalion strength or greater. Regiments always possess a commando platoon trained in anti-terrorism, sniping, demolitions and infiltration techniques.

Special Forces

Beyond the regular infantry, even beyond the occasional commando platoon, the TDF employs two types of special infantry. The first is the Taurian Special Asteroid Support Forces, or SASF. This five thousand-man volunteer force is trained and deployed on zero-G assault platforms stationed throughout the Hyades Cluster's vast asteroid field. Any invading force trying to work through this protective shell will have to clear the SASF in personal (often hand-to-hand) combat or else suffer an intense system of hit-and-fade strikes that could cripple even a WarShip.

The second special force is new to the Periphery but not the Inner Sphere. These are the power-armor warriors, introduced by the Clans and proven effective even against BattleMechs. The Concordat is years away from developing and producing their own line of battlesuits, and so relies on the generosity of the Capellan Confederation which sells its older suits as military surplus. Battlesuit squads of four soldiers are not unknown among the more high-profile infantry regiments, but only infantry regiments currently working with BattleMech forces in a combat zone can expect to ever see a platoon of sixteen battlesuit soldiers.

Uniforms, Insignia and Decorations

The Taurian Defense Force authorizes three uniforms: standard, dress and field fatigues. Utility uniforms, also called "undress blues" or "military undress," are not standardized and can range from overalls to clean-pressed dungarees. Local resources dictate the type of utility uniform worn. Differences between officer and enlisted uniforms are also purposefully subtle, making the uniforms easier to procure.

Standard uniforms consist of a colored tunic with silver buttons and trim for enlisted, gold for officers. The tunic may be red (ground forces) or navy blue (aerospace). Officers tuck black trousers into calf-high boots-female officers are allowed high-heeled boots at social functions. Enlisted personnel wear industrial safety-shoe footwear. Most soldiers wear field caps (or forage caps) also colored to match the tunic. Officers, including all MechWarriors and Special Forces, are allowed black berets. Rank insignia is worn on the lapel. Decorations are not worn with the standard uniform.

A properly cleaned and pressed standard uniform is modified for dress uniform occasions, again for the ease of procurement. All personnel are allowed black berets, though the forage cap is not

considered inappropriate. Officers wear white gloves and add a gold sash to their tunic. Enlisted personnel wear white leggings and a silver-colored sash, similar to the officers' sashes but slightly thinner. Marshals of the TDF also wear gold aiguillettes on both shoulders. All awards and decorations are displayed on the sash.

Field uniforms for enlisted and officers are camouflage fatigues with rank insignia worn on the lapel. They vary in design and coloration depending on local climate and terrain. The standard field uniform for the TDF is burgundy fatigues, good for most occasions and climates.

Battle Gear

Designs for personal battle gear, such as flight suits, neurohelmets and tank crew uniforms are based on older Liao or Davion designs. They vary slightly from unit to unit, depending on the local resources available. The only real standard that is maintained in this gear is red for ground forces and blue for aerospace.

TDF Rank Structure and Insignia

In the entries that follow, the second title corresponds to the equivalent rank in aerospace forces. If there is no second title, the rank structure is the same. The rank of marshal is the exception, as an admiralty commodore answers directly to a corps marshal.

Enlisted Ranks

Recruit

By law, all men and women of the Concordat must serve two years in the TDF beginning at age eighteen. These recruits receive basic training and are assigned to provisional training battalions, which are really little more than enforced public service, where litter patrol is more likely than field patrol. Those who wish to enter the military proper are separated and given eighteen weeks of basic training before being assigned to a regular-line field unit. Recruits wear a single silver ring as their rank insignia.

Corporal

Corporals lead five-man infantry units' known as maniples or serve as tank crew commanders. This rank also denotes junior-grade levels of specialist positions (as techs, corpsmen, etc.). Corporals wear a silver ring with a red center.

Section Leader

This rank is awarded to commanders of infantry squads, tank maniples and non-com senior specialist positions. The insignia for this rank is a single horn attached to a hollow ring.

Force Sergeant

Force sergeants command infantry platoons and armor lances. It is also awarded to junior aerospace pilots and designates low-level management in support branches. The insignia for a force sergeant is the same as for the section leader, only with a red center for the ring.

Lance Sergeant

Lance sergeants have the same command duties as a force sergeant but also serve as assistant company commanders. This rank also denotes an air lance leader. Support branches award this rank to their workhorse management positions. MechWarriors in training are given the honorary rank of lance sergeant. The insignia is a plain silver ring with two horns.

Battalion Chief-Sergeant/Air Chief

The battalion chief-sergeant is the senior NCO in any Taurian unit, ground, naval, or support branch. Duties follow in line with force sergeant, but with more administrative responsibilities. For

combat aerospace, an air chief commands a flight of two air lances. MechWarriors are promoted to battalion chief-sergeant on graduation. This rank's insignia is the same as for the lance sergeant, only with a red center in the ring.

Officer Ranks

Cornet/Ensign

Typically serving as company commander inside infantry and tank units, this rank is also attained automatically by a trained MechWarrior. In support branches or aboard ship, they serve as assistant department heads. In the navy's aerospace arm this rank serves as wing commander over two flights. Cornets wear a single gold ring as a rank identifier.

Subaltern/Air Master, Junior Grade

The subalterns serve as battalion commanders in conventional ground forces, company commanders among BattleMech contingents and department heads within support branches. Air masters, junior grade act as department heads aboard naval vessels, while in aerospace combat they serve as assistant commanders of air divisions. The insignia for subalterns is a single gold ring with a red center.

Brigadier/Air Master, Senior Grade

The rank of brigadier denotes executive officers within ground-based conventional regiments and support branches and battalion commanders within 'Mech units. Since most 'Mech regiments spread themselves around in battalion size, this rank is considered the workhorse officer of the MechWarrior military branch. In the naval forces, a senior grade air master might serve as a ship's executive officer or command an air division. Brigadiers wear an insignia pin of single gold ring with one horn.

Colonel/Space Master

Colonels are regimental commanders among BattleMech and conventional forces. Space master denotes a ship's captain who would also have authority over any aerospace officers. Colonels wear the same insignia as the brigadier, only with a red center in the ring.

Comptroller/Commodore

Largely an organizational rank among the conventional forces of infantry and armor, a comptroller is usually responsible for large, multi-world military districts. In BattleMech forces, a comptroller may command a full regiment with permanently attached support forces or serve as an administrative aide to the corps marshal. Commodores are responsible for demi-squadrons of naval vessels, the exact composition of which depends on the purpose. Commodores report directly to the local marshal. Comptrollers wear a plain gold ring with two horns.

Marshal

Each military corps is commanded by one of the seven marshals. The Taurian Guard Corps is commanded by the senior marshal (traditionally, though not currently, the Protector) who is also overall commander of the armed forces. The insignia for the marshal adds a red center to the comptroller's ring and horns. The Concordat's senior marshal wears a stylized bull's head in gold.

Awards and Decorations

The Taurian Defense Force has never been much on empty pomp and circumstance. Campaign and special-achievement ribbons are commonplace and treated as such. Awards are rare and confer upon the recipient recognition for a valuable level of accomplishment. All awards are presented in the presence of the corps marshal, though one demands the presence of the Protector.

The Taurian Brand

This is based on a long-established tradition in which soldiers are allowed to use body art to signify a great event. Older even than the Concordat and thought to have its origins in the 'Native American' ethnic group from Terra, it was first introduced as a military tradition during the Taurians' first run-in with House Davion. During that battle, a popular naval commander was scarred by laser fire across his brow, the burn creating a mask-like scar and robbing him of his sight. To honor their commander and commemorate the event, many survivors tattooed a red mask around their eyes.

When a regiment or special command has performed a feat or been involved in an action that confers on them the instant acclaim of the Taurian people, this privilege must be requested by a regimental commander. The Senior Marshal awards it to the entire unit, though recipients must also have the permission of their battalion commander. One direct, name bearing descendent per generation may take the Brand. MechWarriors are also allowed to paint the Brand on their machines.

The Hyades Heart

This decoration is given to individuals who have undergone great personal sacrifice in defending the Concordat. In the name of valiant final stands, it is often awarded posthumously. The few living recipients range from those left scarred and disabled to one soldier who was forced to lead a fight through his village, and who has to live with the fact that he was responsible for sacrificing his family and most of his friends.

The award is a white heart trimmed in gold leaf, dangling from a gold and blood red ribbon.

The Standard of Taurus

For those who somehow epitomize a standard to which all Taurian soldiers might hope to aspire, this award may be given. Extreme bravery, proven dedication, exceptional talent, an unimpeachable moral code; these are all possible inspirations for the award. Indeed, a Standard of Taurus has been won for each of them several times over.

The senior marshal or a corps marshal hands out the award. It is the Concordat emblem hanging from a gold bar.

Concordat Sunburst

Awarded to an individual or dedicated to a group who managed to win an awe-inspiring victory for the Concordat. Such a victory is usually in the face of seemingly impossible odds, nearly thwarted by unforeseen conditions, or otherwise of such a magnitude of success that it demands attention. A request for the Taurian Brand often follows the reception of this award.

The sunburst is a gold disk with eight gold tines radiating outward (total diameter, ten centimeters). The tines are edged in red enamel. In the center of the disk is the emblem of the Taurian Concordat. The Protector presents this award.

The Taurian Military Academy

The Concordat maintains a military academy on every major world for use in training conventional garrison troops and their support forces. For more advanced training, the TDF has concentrated its resources into three distinct schools: the École Militaire for army, the Naval Institute and the Concordat Aerospace Flight School. While not quite so specialized as the new Canopian Institute of War, the Taurian academies provide a higher level of training than the average Periphery soldier would receive. As the exchange-student program with the Magistracy and Capellan Confederation improves, this should give Taurian officers the chance for even better training.

Enrollment

All three are large academies, able to take upwards of five hundred personnel each. Initial

requirements demand at least average physical health and mental faculties. The academies take foreign student applications as a means of generating extra operating capital. Concordat applicants are given a slight boost to their chances for admission, though at least ten percent of enrolled students will be foreigners. At the Aerospace School, the percentage runs closer to forty percent foreigners, as the Concordat cannot find enough good pilot trainees.

Taurians do not have to pay for their schooling. However, a healthy 'endowment' to the academy will purchase points for any applicant toward admission. This legal bribery is a necessary feature to keep the academies operating at such a high level of effectiveness. Since it is accepted that such events would happen regardless, it is considered to be better to channel the funds into the school budgets rather than the pockets of corrupt administrators.

Curriculum

The military academies possess well-developed military training programs to accommodate any specialty. As with Inner Sphere schools, the recruit starts with basic training. However, more emphasis is placed on this area here than in most academies, improving the recruit's knowledge of military history and allowing for a few martial electives.

Following basic training, a student must choose from among the military occupations. In all likelihood, this choice was made during the application process and decided by aptitude, though a student can always change his or her mind so long as they meet the requirements. Exceptional students may be offered special training or even Officer Candidate School. MechWarriors are assured an automatic commission. Gifted MechWarriors may be offered OCS anyway, to improve their command ability. All other specialties must be chosen for such an honor.

Instructors are Taurians when possible, though the Naval and Aerospace schools have a large number of instructors leased from the Outworlds Alliance.

Atmosphere

Though the pressures of military training were always thought to be average among academies, those few students who have gone on to attend a Liao academy and returned report that the Taurian schools are far less stressful. The trade off seems to be that the Capellan schools demand a much higher level of personal investment, but burn out far too many potential soldiers for such tactics to be efficient in the Periphery.

Graduation

From training, most soldiers enter the military keeping their rank of "recruit." Aerospace pilots are promoted directly to corporal, MechWarriors to cornet. Of the few Liao and Magistracy soldiers who have trained in the Concordat, some are offered positions within the Taurian Defense Force. This is to help promote the alliance and to bring into the TDF new skills and different visions. The occasional Magistracy soldier has accepted, though so far none have from the Confederation.

Special Notes

Anyone who qualifies for a Taurian military academy may request transfer into one of the Capellan schools open to Taurians. Of those chosen, most are selected after basic training but repeat the Capellan basics anyway. Though it means several years away from the Concordat, such outside experience is considered a benefit when it comes time for promotion within the TDF.

Personalities

Grover Shraplen

Long-standing ruler of the planet MacLeod's Land and an outspoken critic of Jeffrey Calderon, Lord Shraplen assumed the Protectorship on Calderon's death. Though he never sought the position, he has actively campaigned against Jeffrey's policies. That he did not take a regency for Jeffrey's son, Erik, also leaves open some speculation to Protector Shraplen's ambitions.

An eloquent speaker, Protector Shraplen is known and respected by a large portion of the Concordat nobility and commoners alike. His stand on personal freedoms is as well known as his deep-seated fear of House Davion. Akin to the paranoia that drove Thomas Calderon to military excesses, Grover Shraplen's paranoia seems more rooted in his desire to protect the lifestyle and freedom of his people-first those on MacLeod's Land, now, of the people of the entire Concordat.

Brenda Calderon

Distant kin to Jeffrey Calderon, Brenda's lineage has never been considered in line for the Protectorship. If her name has earned her anything, it has been a reasonable amount of distrust that her accomplishments and advancements are from favoritism. In fact, this is far from the case. Brenda Calderon has overcome much in the way of prejudice due to her family name, earning the position of corps marshal at the youngest age ever.

Well into her retirement years, Brenda Calderon held onto her position as senior marshal at Jeffrey's request. Known to disagree with Protector Grover Shraplen and fearing that traditionalists might try to champion her as a replacement, Brenda Calderon has resigned her position and established herself on her well-earned New Vandenberg estates. Her position there, surrounded by I Corps, causes Protector Shraplen some concern.

Janice Calderon

Once the heir to the Concordat, Janice Calderon contracted Brisbane Virus, a degenerative nerve disease, when she was eighteen. Despite being confined to a wheelchair, she continued to fight the disease while acting as senior advisor to her brother Jeffrey. In 3055, she traveled to the Magistracy of Canopus to undertake a promising experimental treatment. The procedure has helped somewhat, but requires constant re-treatments that have forced her to remain on Canopus.

Rumors have circulated lately that the Federated Suns NAIS University has found not only a cure for Brisbane Virus, but also a procedure for reversing damage to the nerves. This might enable Janice, now only forty-four, to recover some of her strength and retake the Protectorship. Unfortunately, relations between the Canopians and House Davion are strained by their alliance with the Capellan Confederation. Protector Shraplen has so far refused to readmit the Federated Suns ambassador.

Marshal (Baron) Cham Kithrong

An important man in the concordat, Baron Cham Kithrong oversees a large portion of Taurian space and serves as one of the seven marshals. A fanatical supporter of Jeffrey Calderon, he was the first to publicly disapprove of Grover Shraplen's actions in accepting the Protectorship.

Marshal Kithrong has since accepted the title of regent to Erik Martens (Calderon) pending an official investigation into the child's parentage. Despite waiting for the formalities, Cham Kithrong has made his personal belief clear. "I knew of Jeffrey's relationship with Talia Martens as well as his plans to eventually adopt Erik and recognize him as his heir once the lad was older. Until this is resolved, VI Corps will keep Erik Martens (Calderon) in its care."spacer

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Writing Credits:

Field Manual Periphery: Taurian Concordat

Loren L. Coleman

Outworlds Alliance

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A minor power to be sure, especially when compared to its two neighbors, the Outworlds Alliance may nevertheless prove quite useful to our Blessed Order. Its respective borders are lightly guarded and patrolled by the Federated Suns and Draconis Combine, making infiltration by agents and whatever else is deemed necessary much easier than attempts made from within the Inner Sphere. ComStar has quite an established foothold here and most of the natives have publicly rebuffed our Order's attempts to establish our selves in the Alliance. This is actually very much to our advantage allowing those natives who have accepted us to perform their tasks with relative impunity, as most of the Alliance thinks us gone. I think it highly likely that our Order will be able to begin larger operations in the Alliance within the next year or two.

-Richard Kurtin, Adept XII-mu
22 September 3063

Historical Overview

Once the least prosperous and influential of the large Periphery realms, the Outworlds Alliance has begun an economic recovery based on the success of the recently instituted Long Road program. One small but important piece of this program is the expansion and improvement of Alliance ground forces, a dramatic reform for this highly peace-minded nation.

An accidental Beginning

Unlike every other state currently in existence, the Outworlds Alliance wasn't initially intended to be a lasting political power. Appalled by the state of war among the Inner Sphere powers, Admiral Julius Santiago Avellar, a minor naval official, decided in 2413 to retire to the backwater world of Alpheratz, planning to spend the rest of his life writing tracts decrying the warlike mentality of those in power. These tracts changed Avellar's life in a completely unexpected way. Readers of Avellar's philosophies formed a sect called the Omniss, which rejected all technology that was not used for the preservation of life. Omniss members and other radicals then began descending on Avellar's Alpheratz home in incredible numbers. Despite all attempts to drive them away, the near-hermit Avellar's small colony became a haven for political and social dissidents.

As the number of Avellar's supporters continued to grow, quickly reaching the tens of thousands, they began to leave the now-crowded area of Avellar's home. Some moved farther out onto the surface of Alpheratz, but the majority began colonizing the worlds nearby. After several more years, Avellar came to a conclusion-the people surrounding him who had given up their former lives to follow his teachings, were suffering due to the anarchy of their existence. Avellar resolved to do what he hated most: to form a government to care for his unwanted followers. In 2417, the Alliance Charter was ratified, forming the basis for the government of a new state: the Outworlds Alliance. Avellar's attempt to withdraw from the universe and decry war had, amazingly, resulted in the formation of a new government.

The end result of the Alliance Charter was a government that barely functioned, leaving most of the power in the hands of the people, instead of a single ruler. While this fit in perfectly with what Julius Avellar desired, by organizing his nascent government this way he handicapped his new realm for centuries to come. The Alliance is only now beginning to come into its own as a

Periphery power, and there is still a long way to go, as the current President Mitchell Avellar was well aware when he named his reform program the "Long Road."

Enter the Star League

The agrarian Alliance nation existed peacefully for over a century, slowly expanding and relying on volunteer soldiers to protect its members from bandit activity—a standing military was declared too warlike. This peace lasted until the newly formed Star League turned its attentions to the Periphery. In 2572, the Alliance was forced to accept Star League "garrisons" of Draconis and Hegemony troops, ostensibly to protect them from bandits. The peaceful Alliance could do little but comply. Though the Hegemony troops were circumspect in their search for BattleMechs rumored to be there, the Draconis Seventeenth Galedon Regulars forces assigned to the world of Santiago destroyed buildings and ruined businesses in the capital of Santiago City.

These actions angered the populace, who soon made a game of throwing things at the lumbering BattleMechs as they passed. This led to an explosion of temper by one MechWarrior on 14 December 2572, who sprayed a rock-throwing child with coolant. Nearby citizens rioted and attacked the 'Mech. Twenty-seven civilians were killed when the pilot opened fire. This incident, known as the Santiago Massacre, triggered anti-Star League riots on dozens of worlds throughout the Periphery and was a major factor in inciting the Reunification War.

In 2575, the Star League issued its Pollux Proclamation, an ultimatum to which the Periphery powers responded poorly. This gave the Star League the excuse it needed to attack the Periphery, thus beginning the Reunification War. The Alliance still managed to avoid conflict until 2581, when Star League and auxiliary Draconis troops began lining up across the border. Then-President Grigori Avellar, in a desperate move, sought help in an unlikely place. He approached House Davion through the Prince's son, offering "Protectorship" of twelve rich Alliance border worlds in exchange for overt and covert help. Davion agreed, sending three regiments of his Household Guard under the name of the "Pitcairn Legion," to interfere with Star League actions in the Alliance.

The Pitcairn Legion trained Alliance troops and engaged Star League forces; doing considerable damage to each unit they came across before disappearing to strike somewhere else. They were re-supplied by House Davion and proved a constant threat to the invaders. At the same time, the Federated Suns began occupying those worlds and causing problems for the Star League once again as many of those planets were intended to be re-supply worlds for the attacking force. In many cases, House Davion refused to even allow the Draconis troops to land on these worlds, tying them up with paperwork and bureaucracy when they did.

It was after a defeat by the Pitcairn Legion on the world of Budigen that the Fourth Rasalhague Brigade went berserk in early 2582, destroying buildings and massacring civilians. General Forlough, the brutal commander of the Star League troops, responded to the Brigade's defeat as well. On at least twelve worlds, he ordered the deaths of ten percent of the civilian population as a message to the Alliance. Enraged Outworlders poured into recruitment centers by the thousands, becoming a major opposition to the Star League troops after training with Pitcairn Legion members. In 2585, after the war had bogged down, the Alliance and the Star League signed the Peace of Cerberus, which allowed the Alliance to govern itself under Star League supervision. The war was over for the Alliance.

Following the Reunification War the Alliance prospered, making use of the League's advanced technology. By playing the Davion and Kurita leaders against each other, the Outworlders were able to remain largely uninvolved in the Succession Wars that followed the collapse of the Star League, though a standing military was organized in the mid-2800. Discontent with the Avellar leadership began to grow, however, as poor leadership took its toll.

Discontent and ComStar

With the rise of Neil Avellar to the presidency in 3015, conditions in the Alliance began to decline. Neil was a reluctant president, and though he attempted to rule the Alliance well he simply did not have the skill for it. Planets began to seriously consider secession from the Alliance. His only real aid came in the form of deals made with the Draconis Combine and Federated Suns, as well as

the entrance of ComStar, who began opening schools to increase literacy and building HPG stations on various Alliance worlds, providing work for needy Alliance citizens. This was ComStar's attempt to form a lasting bond with the Alliance, an attempt that succeeded as the Alliance opinion of ComStar rose and record numbers of citizens began to join. This remains true even now, with few Alliance citizens willing to join the ranks of our Order instead.

Neil helped increase the literacy rate of his state even more when he began an Educational Exchange program with the Federated Suns, a program which brought numerous Davion teachers and educational specialists into the Alliance. Neil's wife, Rebecca DeSanders, made this program possible. She was a Federated Suns diplomat with close ties to the Davion family, and she was able to use her connections to bring this program about.

The combination of ComStar's efforts and the work of the Davion teachers brought the level of literacy in the Alliance back up to a point it had not reached since the time of the Star League. Even so, Neil's trade negotiations and plans to increase Alliance prosperity failed for the most part, giving most citizens the impression of a particularly ineffective president. The help from ComStar bandaged the Alliance's wound, but did not cure it. Indeed, the increased communication provided by the HPGs made organizing calls for Neil Avellar's resignation easier and more prevalent than before.

With the onset of the Clan invasion, what little help the Alliance was receiving from Houses Davion and Kurita dried up. This was balanced by a large drop in bandit activity, as the bandits took advantage of the distracted Houses to raid the wealthier Inner Sphere realms instead. So while the Alliance's prospects remained poor, they did not become non-existent. Even following the Truce of Tukayyid, Davion and Kurita were distracted from their economic initiatives in the Alliance by the seemingly permanent presence of the Clans.

A New Era

In March of 3056, Neil Avellar declared that he felt his son was ready to succeed him and retired. His successor, Mitchell, quickly secluded himself with his advisors, emerging with a new plan. He began a series of governmental initiatives and trade packages he called the Long Road program. The convoluted nature of the Alliance government has made enacting this program a slow job, but it has begun paying off more quickly than anyone imagined. The Alliance economy has rebounded to a near-prosperous level. An order for expansion of the military has provided results as well, bringing the Alliance ground forces up to the approximate size of the Aerospace Arm.

Mitchell has expanded upon the two most successful ventures his father made. The first, a deal with the Davions to allow them to mine certain areas in Alliance space in exchange for a share of the profits and a promise to use Alliance workers, was expanded by Mitchell during talks with Victor Steiner-Davion before the Archon-Prince left for Clan space. Recent governmental changes in the Federated Commonwealth have not really affected this agreement, and it is still quite profitable for both powers.

The second, an agreement with the Kuritans to allow the construction of several aerospace production facilities in Alliance space in exchange for a percentage of all craft produced and a promise of jobs for Alliance citizens has also been expanded. Thus, the Alliance is now receiving aerospace-related Star League technology from the Draconis Combine as well. In a goodwill effort, the Combine has also begun subsidizing Alliance-run aerospace factories. This agreement shows the Outworlders' realistic viewpoint-despite several past atrocities committed by Kurita troops, the Alliance needs the help and business the Combine provides and is willing to put aside any past differences in the name of survival.

Mitchell has also been in talks with the other two major Periphery realms since the Canopian-Taurian Concordat Alliance. This has resulted in military aid and some Star League-era technology from the Concordat, in exchange for allowing Alliance citizens to work in the colony regions of the Periphery. Though technological aid was delayed for quite some time, Mitchell was finally able to pressure the heads of the two Periphery realms to follow through on their promises and bits of information began arriving in 3062. Thus far, little of the technology has been military, which suits the Alliance just fine as the technical and medical advances being delivered will see more use among Outworlders than weapons.

Mitchell's only real opposition has been from Barnabas Huard, chairman of the Baliggora Planetary Parliament and leader of the Separatist movement. The Separatists feel that the Alliance should no longer exist as a cohesive state. Instead they advocate the dissolution of the Outworlds Alliance, allowing the settled worlds to succeed or fail on their own. The success of the Long Road program has silenced the Separatists somewhat, but they continue to cause problems for the reforming President.

Organization

Organized differently from any other military in existence, the Alliance Military Corps has developed haphazardly over the years since it was created. Many of the tasks performed by high-ranking officers in other militaries are instead the responsibility of the Military Review Board and other political groups; as a result, a basic understanding of the Alliance political structure is required to comprehend how the AMC functions.

Political Knots

The Alliance government relies heavily on the voice of the people to function. The Executive Parliament, which is the chief governmental body for the Alliance as a whole and is responsible for all foreign and internal affairs, is made up of one representative for every full ten inhabited worlds within the Alliance. These representatives are chosen by the various Courts of Appeal from names put forth by each Planetary Parliament. The Parliamentary President, who heads the Executive Parliament, is always a member of the Avellar family and is the closest thing to an official leader that the Alliance has. Anything put before the Executive Parliament must pass unanimously or it is not enacted, making the creation of new legislation a long and arduous process.

In addition, each planet has its own Planetary Parliament, with one member per ten thousand inhabitants. These representatives are chosen annually by popular vote and have full authority to pass any legislation required to govern their worlds. Because of this, they are only nominally subject to the Executive Parliament in many areas. Similarly, several Courts of Appeal exist on each planet, with one five-member Court for every five thousand inhabitants. These Courts have the power to declare even Executive directives unconstitutional and therefore null and void in that Court's jurisdiction. What this means to the average traveler is that checking the laws for each area before visiting is a must, as they are likely to differ from planet to planet and even on different areas of the same world.

The final part of the convoluted Alliance government is the Military Review Board, a body added to the Charter in mid-2800 when it was decided that a standing military was required. Until this point, the only defensive organization was a strictly volunteer corps, with little or no military organization within the Alliance. The Board is made up of four members, chosen from each of the Alliance's provincial capitals and ratified by representatives of the Courts of Appeal. It is responsible for reviewing the organization and deployment of Alliance military forces and has the power to veto Executive Parliament decisions regarding any use of the military in order to prevent a military dictator from arising. The only exception to this veto power is during an Executive-declared Alliance-wide emergency.

Structure of the Corps

The Alliance Military Corps is divided into three distinct branches. Duties normally performed by other branches in Inner Sphere militaries are the responsibility of political groups in the Alliance and so further subdivisions are unnecessary. The nominal head of the AMC is the President, but his aide and second-in-command manages matters. That aide is Senior Chairman Maurice Avellar, Mitchell Avellar's second cousin and one-time commander of the Avellar Guards.

Entry into the AMC is determined by lotteries held on each planet. It is the duty of every able-bodied citizen to serve four years in the military if his number is chosen. Volunteers are also welcome, and citizens who choose to serve longer may do so. Officer ranks often denote administrative duties, with officers serving for a minimum of five years. All promotions to an officer rank require a nomination from a commanding officer or Planetary Parliament and must be

ratified by the Military Review Board.

Alliance Aerospace Arm

Unlike in most militaries, the Alliance Aerospace Arm (AAA) is considered to be the most important part of the AMC. When the AMC was first established, citizens voted to include large numbers of aerospace assets in the Corps, under the mistaken impression that the purchase and care of aerospace fighters was cheaper than that of BattleMechs. This became the basis for the current AAA, which is responsible for being the Alliance's first line of defense. The Aerospace Arm has long received the lion's share of AMC funding, and only recently has the Ground Defense Arm begun to even come close to matching that budget.

Unlike the conventional troops and MechWarriors of the Corps, pilots in the AAA are some of the best-trained and highly skilled known to man. Indeed, other Periphery realms often request permission to borrow AAA officers to improve their own aerospace effectiveness. Retired officers are in high demand at military colleges throughout the Inner Sphere and Periphery. Most Alliance citizens think of BattleMechs as "Inner Sphere tools of hate," an opinion left over from the mass destruction of the Reunification War. They give aerospace pilots the same respect and admiration that other states grant to MechWarriors.

A reflection of this preference for aerospace fighters over ground units is the odd relationship between units. Unlike standard doctrine, units from the AAA are given most assignments. Units from the Ground Defense Arm are attached to them for support instead of the other way around. This works very well for defense but is a strategically poor organization for offense, a policy that fits the Alliance mentality of peace unless attacked.

The AAA is composed of five wings, each of which is made up of three regiments of three squadrons each and a command squadron. It should be noted that the Alliance diverges from the standard, in that the traditional composition of wings and regiments is reversed. This appears to have been a calculated decision, possibly intended to confuse enemies that may have intercepted military communiqués. This puts each wing at sixty fighters, with the entire AAA at a nominal strength of three hundred active fighters, an incredible number for a Periphery state.

Though some of these craft are salvaged, many are at most a generation old and a good twenty percent of them use Star League technology obtained from House Kurita. Many of the fighters in service are Kurita designs, but there are also quite a few Davion-made designs in use in the AAA.

A relatively small fleet of JumpShips and DropShips, including two highly prized Vengeance-class vessels, provides transport for the large quantities of fighters. These ships provide transport for the Alliance Mechanized Corps in addition to the AAA.

The current head of the AAA is Chairman Paul Murphy, a one-time banker who joined the AMC to help protect the Alliance from bandits and ended up making a career of it. His experience in the world of finance has helped immeasurably when dealing with budgetary issues, and his kind demeanor and natural talent for flying has made him quite popular among his subordinates as well.

Alliance Ground Defense Arm

Until recently, this arm of the AMC was given little funding or support. It languished as a poorly equipped and often derided part of the Corps. This began to change with Mitchell Avellar's Long Road program.

Not only did the program call for improved equipment and training for the AGDA, but it also contained plans for expansion. The Alliance Mechanized Corps, the main branch of the AGDA, was only three regiments in size when the program was begun; it has now grown to full five regiments of BattleMechs, vehicles and infantry. These two new regiments, named the First and Second Long Road Legions after the program that brought them into existence, were formed around mercenary units.

Although the Alliance Charter specifically prohibits the use of mercenaries by anyone within Alliance space. Mitchell Avellar pushed through legislation that would suspend that restriction temporarily. He hired several small mercenary units, looking for the best he could find who would be willing to become part of the AMC permanently and then evaluated their performance. Of the ones he hired, only Bammer's Bunch, Thermo Police and Simpson's Sisters were chosen. The first two became the heart of the First Long Road Legion, with Simpson's Sisters becoming the foundation for the Second. The mercenary restriction has since gone back into effect.

The other branch of the AGDA that is even larger in sheer numbers than the Mechanized Corps is the Planetary Militia. On every world in the Alliance, except the Omniss homeworld of Dante, there is an active militia unit ranging in size from two to four battalions of troops; many worlds also have a number of reserve units as well. These are citizen militias consisting only of vehicles and infantry, designated strictly for home defense. Their job is not to defend the world, but to stall invaders until reinforcements can arrive.

The biggest problem facing the AGDA currently is the low level of morale found in nearly every unit. Many AGDA soldiers joined only because they could not meet the high testing standards of the AAA. There is a widespread opinion among the units that ground forces are inferior and, in a philosophical way, more barbarous, than their aerospace pilot brethren. This has led to a high level of self-degradation which impedes the AGDA's performance overall. The President has begun attaching psychologists to the various ground forces, but little change has been seen as yet.

Chairman Rumiko Nitta is an oddity in her position as head of the AGDA, not because she is female but because she was born in the Draconis Combine. Her family moved to the Alliance when she was a child to run one of the Combine's aerospace facilities and she became a citizen. After twenty years in the Mechanized Corps, first as an infantryman and later as part of a vehicle crew, Rumiko knows the ways of ground warfare well. Even more importantly, she knows how to keep aerospace and ground missions coordinated so that they all run smoothly.

Alliance Service Arm

The final part of the triad that makes up the AMC, the Alliance Service Arm, includes all of the noncombatant services found within standard militaries, including quartermaster services, training, research and intelligence. The Medical Corps receives the bulk of the ASA's funding currently, due to recent changes originating with the Long Road program. The Medical Corps also provides civilian medical services for the worlds on which they are stationed, in an effort to lighten the load on strained civilian doctors.

The ASA has its own small fleet for transportation, made up of three JumpShips and seven DropShips. While the AAA fleet carries various units' supplies, everything else involving the ASA travels on these ships.

The head of the ASA is Chairman Vasily DeMille, a medical doctor born in the Federated Suns who obtained his degree from the celebrated NAIS University. He has since sponsored several promising members of the ASA for membership at the NAIS, and the information and training they brought back have helped immeasurably.

AMC Rank System

Unlike the vast majority of militaries in existence, the Alliance Military Corps has only eight standard ranks—four enlisted and four officers. Those high officer ranks normally found in standard militaries are made unnecessary by the responsibilities taken on by the Military Review Board, the President and his aide.

Enlisted Ranks

Defender

Each inductee into the AMC is given the title of "Defender of the State" no matter what his duties—unlike standard militaries, aerospace pilots begin at this rank as well and are not granted

automatic officer rank. This rank is roughly equivalent to that of private in the new Star League system. Defenders wear a single green circle on each lapel of their uniform.

Protector

Enlisted personnel who have served at least one year of active duty and have a clean record are promoted to the rank of protector, or officially "Protector of the Homeland." This is equivalent to the Star League rank of corporal. Two green circles on each lapel are the symbols of this rank.

Guardian

Guardians, or more properly "Guardians of the State," have completed a minimum of two active years within the AMC and have a clean record. Guardians are the equivalent of sergeants in the Star League. A green circle with a smaller brown circle centered on it is worn on the lapel to indicate this rank.

Preceptor

The rank of preceptor is awarded after a minimum of three years of active duty and a clean record. The rank is equivalent to the Star League's master sergeant, though a preceptor typically has fewer responsibilities due to the small size of the AMC. Preceptors wear two green circles on their lapel, with a smaller brown circle centered over each one.

Officer Ranks

Supervisor

The first officer rank in the AMC, supervisors tend to command platoons of infantry, vehicles and lances of BattleMechs or aerospace fighters. The Star League rank of lieutenant roughly corresponds to supervisor. Soldiers of this rank wear a single green horizontal bar on their lapels.

Section Leader

Section leaders typically command a company of BattleMechs, vehicles, infantry, or a squadron of aerospace fighters. They are the officer rank most likely to be encountered on the front lines of a battle and roughly correspond with the Star League rank of captain. Section leaders wear two horizontal green bars, one atop the other, on each lapel.

Director

Staff planners or senior commander in the field, directors are typically in charge of battalions of infantry, vehicles, BattleMechs or a regiment of aerospace fighters. Directors are equivalent to Star League majors. They are recognizable by the single horizontal brown bar on each lapel.

Chairman

Officers with this rank serve several functions within the AMC. Often used as senior staff and strategy specialists, they can also command a full regiment of BattleMechs, vehicles, infantry or a wing of aerospace fighters in the field. The chairman is similar to the Star League rank of colonel. Chairman-ranked officers wear two horizontal brown bars, one atop the other, on each lapel.

The chairman is the highest rank in the AMC, except for two honorary ranks. The president is known simply by that rank in his capacity as head of the AMC. His aide is addressed as senior chairman to show his status among chairman-ranked officers.

Uniforms

Because of the low status of the AMC in the eyes of most Alliance voters and in the eyes of the original creators of the standing military, most of the uniforms are drab and unimpressive.

Ground Forces Uniforms

The members of most AGDA and ASA forces wear the same uniforms-dark green fatigues trimmed with gold piping. MechWarriors are equipped with cooling vests and neurohelmets, often dating back to the early Succession Wars.

Planetary militias are equipped by their Planetary Parliaments and often receive whatever used or surplus equipment and clothing available, as the Parliaments allocate little in the way of funding to militia equipment. This results in a hodgepodge look for the militias, many of who wear and use century-old Davion and Kurita equipment.

Naval Uniforms

The crews of the various DropShips and JumpShips in the AMC have no standard uniform. Instead, the captain of each ship decides for his crew what is acceptable dress. This can range from casual wear to militaristic jumpsuits, though true uniforms are rare.

Aerospace Uniforms

As befits the most honored branch of the AMC, aerospace pilots are issued higher quality uniforms than anyone else. During flight operations, they wear olive green flight suits, complete with G-tolerance equipment and a green and gold helmet. Outside their fighter, the pilots wear white blouses trimmed with gold piping and dark green trousers. In colder climes, this is augmented by a brown leather jacket, which heralds back to an ancient Terran tradition. These jackets are often adorned with patches indicating where a pilot has served, what type of fighter he flies, his rank and the symbols of his wing, regiment and squadron.

Awards

The strongly pacifist mindset of the people of the Alliance has also affected the recognition that soldiers are given within the AMC. There are only two awards granted by the AMC, as voters have long felt that rewarding people for actions while fighting conveys the wrong message to the soldiers. Because of this, both awards are given for sacrifice or the saving of lives, instead of number of kills or service in a particular conflict.

Within their own community, however, the pilots of the AAA grant their own award-that of the ace, which is given to pilots who register five or more kills. It has no physical representation but carries with it quite a bit of prestige-in fact, nearly every Chairman in the AAA for the past two centuries has been an ace.

Pitcairn Star

The Pitcairn Star is named for Colonel Elias Pitcairn, who led his Pitcairn Legion bravely into the breach repeatedly to ensure the safety of the Alliance during the Reunification War. Judged by the Military Review Board, the Pitcairn Star is awarded to members of any unit that defies great odds to keep civilians safe. With the constant bandit attacks faced by the Alliance, more than ten of these awards are granted every year; most posthumously.

The Pitcairn Star consists of a blue-steel disc an inch in diameter, with half-inch silver points extending from it in the eight cardinal directions. The Star hangs from a short white ribbon. Posthumously issued stars have a black central disc and the white ribbon is trimmed in black.

Gallucci Cross

This award is only given to aerospace pilots in the AAA and only one is granted per year. Named for the first ace ever in the AMC, Preceptor Ed Gallucci, the Gallucci Cross is given to the most improved pilot in the AAA for that year. The winner is determined by a vote among all of the aces in the AAA; though the Military Review Board technically grants the Cross, they always comply with whomever the aces have chosen. The Cross carries with it both recognition and a pay increase.

The Gallucci Cross is a brass cross two inches across and two inches in height, which hangs from a green and white striped ribbon. On the ribbon in molded silver is the year the award was

won.

Academies

As a state formed around philosophy, the Alliance abounded with schools of various kinds soon after it was formed. The devastation of the Reunification War changed that drastically, and only a few places of higher learning were rebuilt during the time of the Star League. Most of those were abandoned or closed as literacy rates dropped steadily throughout the centuries of Succession Wars.

By the year 3000, only the University of Alpheratz and a few smaller, private institutions remained. This has begun to change as part of the Long Road program and funding has been allocated to open several new colleges, with ComStar members serving as part-time instructors alongside some of the greatest minds in the Alliance. Plans do not call for these schools to teach military skills at this time. Currently, the only places to get such training are training camps used by planetary militias and the AGDA, technical training offered by the University of Alpheratz and the Columbia Academy.

Training Camps

Located on every planet but Dante, these camps provide basic training for ground troops. Infantry, vehicle crew and vehicle technician training is available at each camp, but basic MechWarrior skills and technical classes are only taught at the Alpheratz, Lushann, Dneiper and Ferris camps. These four camps formerly trained aerospace pilots as well, but all would-be pilots now attend the Columbia Academy.

Columbia Academy

Formed from the ashes of an abandoned academy on Ramora, the Columbia Academy is named for the first spaceship to use a fusion drive. It was created in 3057 as one of the first results of the Long Road program and provides training for all aerospace pilots in the AAA, as well as their technical crews and the crews of JumpShips and DropShips.

Chairman Tricia Lasek is the Commandant of the CA and reports directly to the Military Review Board.

Enrollment

Entry into the CA requires that the applicant be physically and mentally fit, a citizen of the Alliance and have a recommendation from the Planetary Parliament of his home world or from an officer of the AAA. Students from outside the Alliance are also accepted from time to time, so long as they are from a state with Favored Nation Status and have been approved by the Military Review Board. Current Favored Nations are the Taurian Concordat, the Magistracy of Canopus, the Federated Suns, the Draconis Combine and ComStar (despite its lack of status as a actual nation).

Curriculum

All students at CA have their first year dictated for them, when they are taught math and science skills that form the backbone of all of the various fields taught at the Academy. Upon satisfactory completion of the first year, students are allowed to choose which field they will study in depth, though limitations are made on the basis of space, grades and the recommendations of teachers. The advanced fields of study at CA include aerospace pilot, basic and aerospace technician and JumpShip and DropShip crew and piloting.

Atmosphere

CA has a jovial feel to it, and a favorite pastime of students is playing practical jokes. When it comes to their studies, however, the students become quite serious and the level of competition is high in all areas (though normally friendly). Many of the students become self-centered and feel that their status as an Alliance pilot or technician will grant them special privileges once they

graduate. More often than not, they are wrong.

Graduation

Graduation times at CA vary depending on the student's chosen field. Upon graduation, students must join the AMC and serve for at least four years. No graduates, not even the best, are automatically given officer rank-there are no Officer Candidacy Schools in the AMC. Everyone is expected to earn his promotion in the field. Graduates may be assigned to the AAA, but if there is no available posting for them, they may spend several months taking care of paperwork for the AMC until a billet opens up.

University of Alpheratz

The only major university to survive through both the Reunification Wars and the Succession Wars, the University of Alpheratz has hundreds of years of tradition bound up in it. Until recently, it was a philosophy school, teaching only basic math and science. This changed in 3042, when Neil Avellar ordered the state-run university to expand its course load to include more science and technical training. Rather than cut any of its existing courses, the UA expanded, with new buildings erected to house the new branches of study.

The current Headmaster of the UA is Dr. Conner Brandt, a philosopher and chemist whose family has attended UA since it was first opened.

Enrollment

Entry into the UA simply requires citizenship in the Alliance and the money to pay for tuition, though there are several state-funded loan programs to help poorer students attend. Many Planetary Parliaments will also pay the way for promising students from their world.

Curriculum

The UA offers a variety of fields of study, mainly in philosophy but also in science and technical areas. Students are expected to go through a year of required basic courses before they begin focusing on their chosen field.

Atmosphere

A day without a debate is a rarity at the UA. Large numbers of philosophy students make for volatile meetings, though disagreements rarely come to blows. The technical students tend to keep to themselves and are seen by most of the other students as "newcomers" with nothing worthwhile to say. This prejudice is actively discouraged by the faculty, but seems likely to continue nonetheless.

Graduation

Graduation time varies depending on a student's chosen field, but averages around three or four years. There are quite a few job placement programs in place at UA and they work hard to ensure that graduates have some way to make a living with their new skills.

Personalities

With the abundance of Planetary Parliaments and the incredible layers of bureaucracy that seem to fill the Alliance, it is often difficult to determine who is actually important at any given time. The three people I have listed here, however, seem perpetually influential and thus worth noting.

President Mitchell Avellar

The reformer and apparent savior of the Outworlds Alliance, Mitchell became President at the youngest age ever in the Alliance-he was only twenty-one when his father stepped down. Even now at twenty-eight, his age often causes foreigners and even members of his own government

to underestimate him. In reality, Mitchell is a shrewd politician and a patriot, dedicated to doing whatever must be done to ensure the survival of the Alliance. He is a practical man, preferring the blasphemy of ComStar to the truth of our Order, and rarely lets his feelings interfere with his decisions.

Mitchell also possesses a genius-level intelligence and extensive knowledge of both Alliance history and the differing needs of the people on each planet within his realm. These factors have helped him counteract the fact that he is somewhat socially inept, along with his relative inexperience. In an attempt to seem more human to Alliance citizens, Mitchell has become a successful aerospace pilot, a maneuver that has begun to reap benefits across the Alliance.

Mitchell's Long Road program and its overwhelming successes have put the people of the Alliance solidly behind him. After years of inept and incompetent leadership, the Alliance finally has a strong person at the helm and the people are delighted. In the few short years since Mitchell became President, he has already eclipsed everything his father ever accomplished and seems likely to continue on in that fashion for the rest of his life.

Senior Chairman Maurice Avellar

The President's second cousin on his father's side, Maurice, is the latest in a long and well-respected line of military leaders belonging to the Avellar family. He began his military career as the commander of the Avellar Guards regiment—a position he owed to several favors called in by his father. Right away, this alienated him from the soldiers in his unit, who believed him to be a "daddy's boy" politician who would get them all killed. Maurice made it his first priority to prove to his men that he deserved his command, living with them and participating in field exercises. It was in the field that he won his soldiers over, when his natural tactical and strategic talents shone through and impressed even his most ardent detractors.

Maurice went on to command the Avellar Guards for several more years, until his cousin Mitchell became President and named him second in command of the AMC. Once again, he found himself in the position of needing to prove to everyone that he deserved a position that appeared to be the result of nepotism. His biggest detractor was Chairman Paul Murphy, commander of the AAA, who felt that putting a ground pounder in charge of the AMC was a big mistake. Eventually, Maurice won Murphy over and the two have worked well together since.

As a long-time ground trooper, Maurice is keenly aware of the problems the AGDA faces and has made it his priority to fix what he can. He was the most influential voice when it came to the military aspects of his cousin's Long Road program, and it is only because of Maurice that the AGDA was expanded. His current focus is the low morale that permeates the ground forces. In hopes of bolstering morale, he has personally begun visiting each unit in the AGDA. This has had some effect, though not as much as Maurice hoped, forcing him to look for other methods.

Precentor Calvin Greig

Born on the planet Ramora in the Alliance, Calvin learned to read in a ComStar school and made the decision to join ComStar as soon as he was old enough. His natural talents led him to membership in the Com Guards and his inborn prejudices carried him to become an aerospace pilot. He served in that capacity for over a decade, until the Battle of Tukayyid. During combat with Clan Wolf fighters, Calvin took a devastating hit to the cockpit, plunging to the ground below. When he regained consciousness, he was in a ComStar hospital and had suffered neural damage that would prevent him from ever piloting a fighter again.

Instead of transferring to one of the other branches of the Com Guards, Calvin decided that fighting was pointless unless he was flying. He therefore transferred to the diplomatic corps. Seemingly a strange choice for a warrior, it soon became obvious that Calvin saw diplomacy as just another kind of combat, and that he was quite good at it. Following several successes in the Chaos March, Calvin was promoted to Precentor and assigned to Alpheratz as head diplomat to his home state in 3061.

Quickly adjusting to the changed Alliance, Calvin has continued to strengthen the ties between ComStar and the people of the Alliance, ensuring that the goodwill between them will continue.

He is also respected by the military as a one-time pilot and has made several friends within the higher echelons of the AAA. These connections allow him to keep up on the military status of the Alliance. Often, he receives word of any battle there within days of its occurrence-sometimes even before the President hears of it. An astute and well-liked man, Calvin is one of the biggest problems our Order might encounter in the Alliance.

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Writing Credits:

Field Manual Periphery: Outworlds Alliance

Dan "Flake" Grendell

Marian Hegemony



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Confidential: Eyes Only

From: Precentor XII-Rho Ambrose Kelly

To: Precentor VIII-Mu Justin Blackford

Justin,

Here is the report you asked for, as complete a report on the Marian Hegemony as anyone has ever seen. As you well know, I have been away from the Hegemony for a number of years, but there are still those within its political and military structures who are more than happy to talk with their old professor. Those years I spent within the Hegemony have more than paid off. I've given you a complete and objective report, but after all those years in the Hegemony I'd be a damn liar if I said I wasn't glad to see Sean out of the way.

My only fear is that Sean banished me too early-I did not have the time to complete all of young Julius' training. I have no doubt that he can turn the Hegemony into a true power, but I wonder if he will have the strength to survive the inevitable storms he will be forced to endure. He is at least a capable actor, who long ago began cultivating friends and supporters throughout the Hegemony, two facts that will help his transformation into politician and dictator. What remains to be seen, though, is whether the short time I had with him will have been enough for him to rebuild the Hegemony that it can survive the coming years.

NOVA ROMA

The Marian Hegemony is a ruined trading company-turned-bandit-kingdom-turned-legitimate Periphery state. The origins of the Hegemony lie in the demise of the Alphard Trading Corporation, a Periphery firm that had suffered the predations of the Succession Wars. Johann Sebastian O'Reilly was a Periphery native with considerable charms and amazing luck. Searching for the Star League caches that were rumored to have been left behind by the defunct company, he instead found a trove of germanium worth a staggering sum.

Now rich beyond his wildest dreams, the realities of life in the Periphery quickly hit him. Realizing he needed to protect this incredible find, he hired several small mercenary units and quickly built a colony-not only as a place for trade but also as a red herring to keep would-be raiders from his true prize. He named the new colony after Gaius Marius, seven-time consul of ancient Rome, and brought in war refugees from the Inner Sphere-all of whom were looking for a fresh start away from the constant fighting. Considering himself something of a student of history, Johann organized this new society along the lines of the old Roman Republic, with himself as Imperator

and three classes supporting the society-patrician (the upper-class), pleb (the middle and lower classes) and slave.

Even with its financial reserves, the Hegemony was just too small. It could not attract the quality or quantity of defenders it would need without also drawing the attention of the enemies who could destroy her. Thus, it remained little more than a bandit kingdom for more than a century.

The Hegemony hoarded its germanium lode and preyed upon nearby worlds and trade routes to keep the growing Hegemony's economy functioning. Following especially successful raids staged during the Fourth Succession War and later during both the Free Worlds League civil war and the Canopian-Andurien war against the Capellan Confederation, Emperor Marius O'Reilly began to fund civic improvements in the Hegemony. He also built the Collegium Bellorum Imperium-the Imperial War College-bringing a level of professionalism that the Hegemony Armed Forces could never claim. Aside from an ill-advised attempt to take over the world of Astrokaszy in the wake of an assassination attempt, Marius actually brought some measure of respectability to the Hegemony and its people.

The years before the Clan invasion of the Inner Sphere also heralded an era of peaceful Marian expansion through a colonization effort that was headed by Marius' son, Sean. Sean used his position to embezzle funds earmarked for the colonization effort and used the funds to support his many mistresses as well as his gambling problem. The revelation of these activities soon led to Marius' downfall, as Sean became convinced that his father would pass Sean over as heir and instead name Sean's 6 year-old son, Julius, as the next Emperor. Marius O'Reilly died in what was officially determined to be a climbing accident on the Marian colony world of Herculaneum in 3048. Sean returned to Alphard, renaming Herculaneum as Marius' Tears and instituted a ten-day period of mourning for his father amid heavy speculation that he was somehow responsible for his father's death.

At the end of that period, Sean took the Hegemony's reins of leadership, dubbing himself Caesar. With that proclamation, the Caesar proceeded to rebuild the Hegemony's government based heavily on the structure of the ancient Roman Empire and to "lead the Marian people to their true destiny." Some of Marius' social reforms continued, but the new Caesar enacted repressive policies designed to enhance the division between the patrician and pleb social classes and "embrace the virtues of our Roman forefathers." He built his military from one legion to three. He also devoted considerable energy to consolidating his personal power base within the military and increasing his hold on the Marian people. Those that protested the increasingly dictatorial nature of Sean's regime were silenced through promises of great wealth or great force.

His hold on the Hegemony unbreakable, Sean then set his nation on a path of conquest. Privateers and small auxiliary units working for the Caesar made raid after raid on the worlds of the Lothian League to soften it up before Sean launched a full-scale assault in 3054. The conquest of the League took little more than a year, but in the end, the Hegemony crushed the Lothian military and forced the ruling Logan family into hiding. Caesar Sean posted the Second Legion to the League to restore order and to enforce his rule. The Lothian people put up a strong resistance to the Hegemony's occupation, and the Caesar's brutal punishment served only to embitter the Lothians even more, perpetuating an ongoing resistance movement.

Empire Building

The year 3058 heralded a fresh start for the Marian Hegemony as well as the beginning of the end for Sean O'Reilly. The Word of Blake came calling in the latter half of the year, seeking to supplant ComStar in the Hegemony. The Word of Blake made an offer that the Caesar could not refuse: 'Mechs, high-tech weapons and support for his dreams of conquest. The Caesar immediately started a heavy conscription effort and expanded his military to five full BattleMech legions. The Caesar expanded his own personal influence and power for several years, finally expelling ComStar in mid-3061 and officially signing a contract with the Word of Blake to administer communications within the Hegemony.

In mid-3057, Sean chose the world of Astrokaszy-site of his father's earlier defeat-as the springboard for a new round of Marian conquests. With the help of the Word of Blake's Sixth of June Movement, Sean intended to take advantage of a new round of infighting between the planet's various city-states in order to seize it. Only the timely intervention of the Canopian-

backed mercenary unit, Avanti's Angels, prevented the world from falling to the Caesar. Upon his return to Alphard, Sean found his nation on the cusp of a dramatic upsurge in rebel activity in the Lothian worlds. The expansion of the Hegemony military allowed Sean to assign the Third Legion to the Lothian League in order to lend assistance in putting down the rebels. Shortly after posting the Third Legion to the Lothian Worlds, however, Sean O'Reilly discovered a new problem-his son.

A cum laude graduate of the Collegium Bellorum Imperium, Julius had been assigned to command a century in the First Marian Legion. Julius quickly forged many friendships and political alliances not only within the First Legion, but also with members of the Senate and Sean's own bureaucracy. Julius began to attract the notice of groups known to be working against their repressive Caesar. Attempting to secure his own safety by removing his son from that position, Caesar Sean made what would become his fatal blunder-he transferred Julius to Lordinax to serve in the Second Marian Legion. That he was given a promotion to command the Legion's second cohort did little for Julius to ease the sting of his transfer and laid the foundation of what was to come.

The heir to the throne of the Marian Hegemony arrived on Lordinax in June of 3060. Upon his arrival, Julius found himself in a unit that was rapidly becoming demoralized in the wake of repeated attacks from Lothian rebel forces. Julius' unit was sent on a series of punitive raids against several settlements suspected of harboring anti-Marian rebels-the start of a campaign that Sean hoped would either toughen up his son or lead to his removal from the picture altogether. Instead, Julius started to openly question the Marian occupation of the League, a stance that would bring him into conflict with his father.

Peace Through Superior Firepower

Much as his father had done years before, Julius started to covertly build a power base within the Second Legion by promising one very simple thing: an end to the Lothian troubles. Morale within the Legion was at an all-time low following the conquest of the League despite a steady stream of new recruits from the Marian core worlds, due primarily to the rapidly unifying resistance movement. On the other hand, casualties among the League's civilian populations steadily increased as the Caesar ordered more severe and frequent reprisals.

After hunting down and capturing the leader of the Lothian resistance movement, Julius sat down and bargained with her rather than following his orders to execute her. Elena, the skeptical daughter of Dame Lorelei Logan, the League's former leader, eventually saw the light as more and more Hegemony troops poured into the former Lothian League and civilian casualties soared. In exchange for a cessation of reprisals against her people, a voice in the Hegemony Government and a position as an advisor on Julius' personal staff, Elena Logan agreed to cease rebel attacks on Marian assets. Within a year of arriving on Lordinax, Julius had pacified the former Lothian League and was ready to make his next move. In January 3063, Julius O'Reilly led both the Second and the recently arrived Fourth Marian Legions, as well as the Third Legion's First and Third Cohorts, away from Lordinax. That only auxiliaries and the Second Cohort of the Third Marian Legion was left behind to garrison the League was of little concern to Julius-had Elena Logan reneged on her agreement, Julius would have simply returned to Lordinax and leveled every building. With the Lothian Question laid to rest, Julius finally turned his attention toward his father. Before he could lay claim to the entire Hegemony, however, he had to return to Alphard a true conqueror.

At the head of a sizeable task force even by Inner Sphere standards, Julius headed straight into the Illyrian Palatinate. The conquest of the Palatinate lasted only six months, as only the Arms of Thor and the mercenary company Cavanaugh's Cavalry garrisoned the Palatinate. It proved to be far easier and less bloody than ever anticipated. The Marian forces were initially stopped cold by the Arms' spirited and bitter defense. After taking some heavy losses, however, the Legions received an unexpected bit of good fortune. Cavanaugh's Cavalry agreed to Julius' offer to stand down in exchange for a ransom and a place in the Marian Hegemony Armed Forces. Immediately after, the Hegemony forces assaulted Trasjkis and Illyria head-on, using its infantry and other auxiliary units to root the Arms of Thor from their bases before they could bring most of their BattleMech strength to bear. The Hegemony Legions left the Illyrian fields of battle with relatively few casualties and a bevy of salvage.

With the Palatinate in hand and several prominent local citizens left behind to govern the new province along with the elements of the Third Legion and a full auxiliary legion, Julius turned to deal with his final target: Caesar Sean O'Reilly.

Crowing Achievement

Julius arrived on Alphard at the head of the Second and Third Legions and a full-strength auxiliary legion in late July 3063. Leading his legions through the streets of the capital city amid the cheers of Nova Roma's citizens, Julius headed for the royal palace with his Second and auxiliary legions while the Third quietly secured the rest of the city.

Greeted by the Senate at the foot of the palace, Julius and the group of statesmen retired to the Senate chambers with a select retinue of Second Legion soldiers while the rest of the Legions took up positions around the palace. Inside, in an elaborate ceremony broadcast throughout the Hegemony, the Senate presented Julius with the Corona Graminea. The Caesar was nowhere in sight.

After the ceremony was completed, Julius seized the opportunity to finally address all of his people, giving the speech he had been planning for years. Citing the innumerable offenses committed by his father during his reign, including the increasingly bloody oppression of the Lothian worlds and the embezzling of funds from the state treasuries, Julius declared Sean no longer fit to rule the Hegemony, claiming the leadership of the nation for himself. The assembled Senate vocally affirmed the declaration.

Secured inside his palace and surrounded by his own First Legion, Sean responded by claiming that his son had turned traitor to the Hegemony. He ordering the First to put down the rebellion at all costs. Less than half of the First Legion acceded to Sean's order and already surrounded by the Second Legion, they fell almost as quickly as they stepped out of the palace.

Julius marched into the throne room accompanied by the Senate and a half-century of loyal bodyguards. He confronted his father with his misdeeds and offered his father the opportunity to step aside. Instead, the Caesar leapt at Julius, likely as much out of rage as it was to give his son one final test-a test Julius passed. Impaled by Julius' sword, Sean breathed his last on 8 August 3063.

One day later, the Senate inaugurated Julius O'Reilly as the new Caesar of the Marian Hegemony. Upon assuming office, Julius began instituting many military and social reforms. He officially declared both the former Lothian League and the Illyrian Palatinate as united territories within the Hegemony, granting each former nation voices within the Senate. He further granted Lordinax and Lothario to Elena Logan in fief after accepting her as a personal advisor on civil matters. All inhabitants of both former nations were granted Marian citizenship and granted three-year exemptions from conscription.

A keen student of Roman history, Julius also made several changes to make Marian society more "Roman". He created the Plebian Tribune to give the pleb class a voice in government (though plebs are still not allowed to vote except to select the planetary Tribunes).

Legiones Marines

Since its inauspicious start as a group of ragtag mercenary bands, the Marian Hegemony Armed Forces have grown both in size and capability, reaching a level of true professionalism with Imperator Marius' reforms earlier this century. With the expansion of the Hegemony into both the Lothian League and the Illyrian Palatinate, however, the legions may suddenly find themselves outclassed and unable to protect their empire-especially as realms like the Circinus Federation attempt to capitalize on the Hegemony's wealth and constant internal strife.

Caesar's Arms

The Legiones Marianes-the Marian Hegemony Armed Forces, or simply the Marian Legions-are chiefly responsible for the defense of the Hegemony, though the Caesar quite often orders them into action outside of Hegemony space. The Hegemony's military might currently consists of

seven BattleMech-equipped legions, as well as more than three times that number of line auxiliary units. Largely, the Marian Legions retain the same structure they have had for more than a century. With his assumption of the Hegemony's Leadership, Caesar Julius has instituted a number of subtle yet significant changes that invest more trust in his field commanders.

The most basic unit in the Legiones Marianes is the century, comprised of 5 'Mechs or tanks, or 100 infantry troopers (which can be broken down into 10-man squads, or *contubernia*). Two centuries form a maniple, with three maniples forming a cohort and three cohorts, plus attached combat and support units, forming a legion.

Following the conquest of the Lothian League, the Caesar gave each legion and cohort a Latin name and designation, reflecting their primary functions and even approximate raw strength (with the exception, that is, of the Praetorian Guard). *Cataphractii* are made up almost entirely of heavy and assault-class units and are used for planetary assaults. *Comitatensis* units (*Comitati*) are fast, largely medium and light, to be used as rapid-response forces to quell large-scale disturbances or to quickly reinforce other units. *Ripariensis* units (*Riparii*), assigned to frontier duty far from home, are garrison troops drawn from the Hegemony's core systems and are composed of heavy and medium forces. *Limitanei* are also garrison units made up of heavy and medium elements, though its manpower is drawn from the Hegemony's frontier worlds. *Auxilia* these are the conventional forces attached to each legion. *Ala* (wing) are Hegemony's aerospace units.

BattleMech Forces

The BattleMech is the Hegemony's weapon of choice when it comes to arming its legions. Though the Hegemony itself does not yet possess any BattleMech factories, it has been able to build a respectable, if thinly spread, 'Mech corps over the years. In the first days of the Hegemony, the sheer amount of germanium the Hegemony was selling was more than enough to allow it access to the production runs of any of the Successor States. As that supply began to slowly dwindle and the Hegemony turned to piracy as its primary industry, however, the Successor States no longer afforded the Hegemony that same kind of access. By then the Hegemony's raiding missions began to make up for that loss.

Today, with the Word of Blake acting as middlemen, the Hegemony has access to the same advanced technologies as any of the Inner Sphere powers, though at a premium price. As a result, while fielding some of the newest 'Mechs in the Inner Sphere, it still must rely on older designs to make up the backbone of its military, until it can afford to upgrade the majority of its legions.

Aerospace Forces

If the Hegemony military is lacking anywhere, it's in aerospace units. Caesars Marius and Sean concentrated heavily on expanding their BattleMech forces earlier this century, in many cases ignoring the needs of their auxiliary units, forcing their few dedicated fighter units to take responsibility for regions they could never hope to effectively protect. With Julius' ascension, that trend has begun to change, but it could literally be decades before any significant changes can be wrought—the simple fact of the matter is that aerospace fighters are in short supply throughout the Human Sphere.

Conventional Forces

The BattleMech may be the weapon of choice, but without armor and infantry to support them, the 'Mech units would be nothing but fodder. At least one conventional (auxiliary) legion is assigned to support each 'Mech legion, while additional auxiliary legions are raised and equipped to defend the Hegemony's many worlds from the same types of pirates and raiders they themselves once were. The Hegemony is slowly equipping its auxiliaries with new weapons and armored vehicles, but with the added expense of replacing lost equipment and administering the recently conquered Lothian and Illyrian worlds, that effort could take more than a decade.

Marian Leadership

Prior to Julius O'Reilly's ascension to command of the Hegemony, the legions sported a rank

system very similar to that of ancient Rome, though with some significant differences. One of Julius' first acts as Caesar was to adjust his military's structure, both to evoke a more Roman feel as well as to better recognize some of the more important enlisted ranks.

New recruits are given the rank of miles upon enlisting in the Legions. miles who serve at least one full year in the Hegemony military and show some leadership qualities are promoted to miles probatus and often given charge over a contubernium or a work crew. Soldiers are promoted to miles gregarius only if they show outstanding leadership qualities and an utmost loyalty to the Hegemony.

The Hegemony does differentiate between its enlisted and officer corps, but unlike most other major militaries, that division is usually based on social status rather than actual training or capability. All patricians that enter the Legions are given the rank of legionnaire, the most basic of officer ranks. Plebians who distinguish themselves enough to earn a battlefield promotion or the attention of a prominent senior officer can be elevated to the rank of legionnaire, as are graduates of the Marian military academies. Centurions are the next officer rank and command battlefield centuries. A principes commands a maniple, while a legatus leads a cohort and a prefect commands a full legion.

Of the six generals in the Hegemony military, four spend the bulk of their time on Alphard and are given tasks such as directing major campaigns and keeping the military running. The other two are assigned as military governors of the Lothian and Illyrian districts, commanding the forces there and insuring that those recently conquered regions remain stable.

The highest-ranking officer within the Hegemony military is the Imperator, a rank reintroduced along with the Caesar's other reforms. The Imperator is the Caesar's right-hand and commands the entirety of the Marian military. He also has nominal command of I Legio, though the senior prefect within the Legion has day-to-day responsibility for the unit.

Uniforms and Insignia

Due largely to the changes instituted under Sean O'Reilly, the uniforms of the Marian Hegemony Armed Forces have strong Roman elements, though that look is tempered with modern sensibilities and fashion. Indeed, the Hegemony has forged a look unique within the Human Sphere.

Uniforms

The basic field uniform of the Hegemony Armed Forces is a knee-length tunic in field gray that is cinched up by a belt, with a collared shirt worn beneath. This is worn over black trousers with flexible brassy greaves made out of ballistic plate sewn into the shins, all of which is designed to fit over black boots. Atop this, soldiers wear their protective and load-bearing gear. Though the cassis helmet worn by ancient Roman legionaries is standard-issue, most combat troops prefer a more modern design that incorporates vision and hearing enhancements.

The Hegemony's dress uniforms have a less classic design, yet evoke a unique look while still maintaining some practical connections to the Roman uniform of history. A gray tunic, made of ballistic fiber and reinforced in several locations with protective yet subtle plating, is worn over a plain white shirt and gray trousers. On the left shoulder of the tunic is a large epaulet shoulder pad, outlined in piping that denotes branch of service, on which the individual's rank insignia is worn.

Enlisted members wear darker piping over their right shoulders while officers wear elbow-length gauntlet/forearm protectors. All ranks wear a leather belt around the waist as well as a baldric draped from the left shoulder down to the right hip, to which a gladius is commonly attached. The color of the epaulet piping and the baldric denotes the branch in which the wearer serves-silver for MechWarriors, light blue for aerospace forces, white for armor and red for infantry. Additionally, generals wear a bronzed ballistic breastplate over the tunic and spiked shoulder pads in place of epaulets.

Insignia

The uniform of a miles bears no insignia. Just wearing a uniform shows that they passed the basic training camp and are soldiers within the Hegemony military. Miles probati and Miles gregari adorn their uniforms with simple chevrons on the sleeves of the field uniform and the epaulet of the dress uniform.

Officers wear a variety of insignia to denote their rank and station. Legionnaires sport a plain silver triangle with a black center. Centurions wear the same triangle, only with a smaller silver triangle set within the center. Principes wear a plain gold triangle with a black center, with the Legatus adding a smaller golden triangle inside. Prefects wear the same golden triangle, but with a golden eagle in the center. Generals replace the golden eagle with a single gold star. The Imperator wears two gold stars in the center and the Caesar wears three.

Decorations and Medals

The Marian Hegemony Armed Forces awards five decorations. Some are accompanied by financial or social reward, but each carries great deal of prestige. Presented with relative paucity, these awards represent the highest honors a Hegemony citizen could ever hope to receive.

Corona Graminea (Crown of Grass)

The most prestigious award that can be awarded in the MHAF, the Crown of Grass is awarded for a great act of valor, such as single-handedly saving an entire Legio or Cohorts in battle. This award carries with it a land grant and a permanent position within the Senate. This award has been presented only five times in the history of the Hegemony, and has never been given to a plebian. A winner of the Corona Graminea wears a jade medallion styled to look like a blade of grass. The crown itself is woven of grass and is worn only at the ceremony in which it is awarded. Afterwards, the crown is preserved and displayed in a place of honor within the recipient's home.

Corona Aurea (Crown of Gold)

This is awarded for a single-handed combat victory over a superior enemy, or some other great act that results in a spectacular victory for the Hegemony in some way. A winner of the Corona Aurea wears a gold medallion in the shape of a laurel wreath.

Corona Civica (Oak-Leaf Crown)

Awarded for acts of selflessness in service to one's fellow man, winners of this award wear a silver oak-leaf cluster.

Aquilifer

More a position of honor within a unit than an actual military decoration, the Aquilifer is the warrior who carries a unit's aquila, or standard, into battle. He is generally the one to whom the troops will rally in times of trouble. A unit's Aquilifer wears a patch on his uniform depicting an eagle perched atop the unit's colors. Soldiers chosen for this honor must not only be courageous but must exemplify the morals and standards of the professional soldier, holding himself above the failings of human nature. In battle, the Aquilifer flies the unit's standard from his vehicle so that it is visible to all on the field.

Order of Scipio

This award, named for the ancient Roman general, Scipio Africanus, is given to an entire unit in recognition of a great victory on the field of battle, such as taking an enemy capital. All members of the unit are inducted into the Order and wear a pin depicting an eagle perched atop a Roman gladius. This award carries with it a small land grant and pension for each member of the unit.

Ars Militaria

The military is a fact of life in the Marian Hegemony, more so even than in any other legitimate Periphery realm. Looking to boost his lagging military, Sean O'Reilly ordered all able-bodied males conscripted into service starting at the age of seventeen, or upon completion of any higher education. Females are not conscripted but can join the Legions voluntarily. Due to the losses

sustained in the Illyrian campaign as well as the need to garrison a larger territory, Caesar Julius O'Reilly has continued this policy.

All common trainees are routed to one of a dozen training camps located throughout the Hegemony's holdings, where they are schooled in the basic military skills as well as given some training in a specialty field. After this training is completed, the new miles are assigned to one of the auxiliary legions for at least a two-year tour. After this, they have the choice of spending another four years in the regular auxiliary legions or eight to twelve in a home-guard reserve auxiliary legion. Compulsory service is complete after these initial tours.

Collegium Bellorum Imperium

The Collegium Bellorum Imperium on Alphard comes close to its counterparts in the Magistracy of Canopus and the Taurian Concordat in terms of level and quality of training, but its shorter-length programs mean that the quality of its graduates averages lower than many other military academies. Caesar Sean paid the Collegium particular attention throughout his reign, constantly upgrading and improving the academy considerably with the assistance of the Word of Blake, who provided the academy with several instructors and upgraded training facilities in the latter years.

Recognizing the need to expand the Collegium beyond its purpose as the primary MechWarrior academy, Sean O'Reilly expanded the Collegium even more and opened the Alphard Air Academy in 3059. The Air Academy is preparing to graduate its second class of cadets.

Enrollment

Military training in the Hegemony is divided by class—patricians are automatically accepted into the Collegium Bellorum Imperium, while all plebians are routed to one of several basic training centers. Plebs in the MHAF are rarely allowed to become MechWarriors. That is not to say that plebs cannot enter the Collegium—they can. However, to do so a candidate must not only pass a rigorous entrance exam but also receive the recommendation of a patrician family, often attainable only through extensive bribes. Once in the Collegium, plebians are set for life and after a number of years of successful military service can often expect induction into the patrician class.

Curriculum

Students at the Collegium spend a total of three years in their studies, learning from the classics of military history as well as a selection of approved readings, meant to give potential officers a well rounded yet monitored education. MechWarrior and other ground auxiliary cadets then join a training maniple for a one-year tour with a legion to gain practical experience in the field. Aerospace cadets divide that fourth year between simulator exercises, "buddy flights" with an advanced instructor and solo flight operations both on the ground and deep space.

Atmosphere

With the Collegium populated primarily by patricians, the mood of the school is far less harsh than any other Hegemony military training center. The students are not pampered, but at the same time they are not treated the same way as plebian conscripts. This leads to an attitude of indifference among many cadets, an attitude that is impossible to break once they are serving in the legions.

Graduation

Cadets who successfully complete their total of four years of training are commissioned as legionnaires within the Hegemony Armed Forces and assigned. Students belonging to prominent families, or those who make hefty bribes to the right people within the Hegemony, can usually pick their own assignments. Cadets belonging to lesser families are generally shipped right to the legions garrisoning the Lothian and Illyrian worlds. Graduates of the Collegium are obligated to serve at least eight years within the Caesar's legions.

Personalities

Caesar Julius O'Reilly

A very intelligent young man and a student of classical history, the new Caesar of the Marian Hegemony feels the need to prove that he is his father's son in name only. Quiet and serious-minded, Julius is an idealist at heart and has begun an ambitious program of reform within the Hegemony. Some of his military reforms have met with success, but certain factions in the Senate find his empowering of the plebian class through the creation of the Plebeian Tribune and the granting of rights to the Lothian and Illyrian worlds disturbing. The Caesar is also an accomplished swordsman and martial artist, keeping in shape with daily exercises.

Imperator David Gladding

Born a plebian, then-David Massena was adopted at age two by a patrician family, who reminded him at every turn of his humble roots. This early treatment left him with a inferiority complex and a burning desire to succeed no matter the cost. Gladding graduated from the Collegium and quickly rose to become prefect of II Legio, thanks to an uncanny knack for finding and exploiting the personal weaknesses of any who opposed him. His befriending of Julius started at first as an opportunity for advancement, but has since become quite genuine.

When Julius supplanted his father, the young Caesar promoted Prefect Gladding to Imperator of the MHAF, over the objections of several prominent generals. A smart tactician and a firm believer in the Hegemony's superiority, Imperator Gladding will use any advantage he can get to prove himself and to win his battles.

Prefect Michael Alexander

The commanding officer of I Legio is loved by his troops, hated by his superiors, and despised by the Senate. A coarse, iconoclastic and arrogant man, Prefect Alexander considers himself to be the second coming of the legendary seven-time Roman consul Gaius Marius. In fact, Alexander conducts himself much as history seems to think that legendary man did.

Prefect Alexander's rise in the MHAF officer corps was not without its stutters and missteps, as Michael was demoted twice for insubordination after refusing to follow the dictates of his superiors in battle, preferring instead to "look out for his boys" by following more cautious tactics. Once commander of V Legio, Prefect Alexander was transferred to the prestigious I Legio by Imperator David Gladding, who saw in him a perfect opportunity to tweak the noses of the Senate.

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Writing Credits:

Field Manual Periphery: Marian Hegemony
Camille Klein

Circinus Federation



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Confidential: Eyes Only

From: Adept VI-Rho Angelis Woodbine

To: Precentor Martial Cameron St. Jamais

To complete your manual on Periphery militaries, please accept the attached report on the Circinus Federation. Compiled by the Magistracy of Canopus, we intercepted this report from their Intelligence Ministry. Where necessary, I have added comments based on information compiled by ROM, intercepted through the HPG network or present in our archives. Though not a major power by any stretch, I have found in putting this report together that this otherwise unimportant nation is an example of the so-called "Piranha Principle" in action, impacting the nations surrounding it and spreading chaos throughout its region with little fear of reprisal.

From: Colonel Dana Ambrose, Director of Analysis, MIM

To: Magestrix Emma Centrella

Subject: Analysis of the Circinus Federation

Date: 4 September 3063

Magistrix Centrella,

Contained herein is your Intelligence Ministry's latest report on the Circinus Federation. Their existence today as a semi-legitimate nation, whose institutions carry out organized campaigns of banditry, should be no surprise to a serious student of history. Examples of government-sponsored piracy abound in humanity's pre-stellar history. The sustained acts of kidnapping, murder and slavery wrought by these seafaring bandits far exceeded the cruel exploits of more famous pirates who captained only one or two ships. Similarly, the short-lived miseries caused by today's occasional AWOL mercenary unit or tin-pot Periphery dictator pale in comparison to the centuries of suffering those truly proficient bandit kingdoms, like the Circinus Federation, have wrought on our worlds. Unlike Terra's pirates, who openly declared their status by flying the Jolly Roger, the Federation conducts its raids in anonymity, using the cover of a respectable agricultural society to mask the covert operations that sustain its economy.

Ongoing events could radically change the Magistracy's relationship with the Circinus Federation. The rapidly expanding power of the Marian Hegemony threatens the Federation's continued existence. Compared to the Marians, the Circinians are the lesser of two evils. Because of this, factions in the Free Worlds League are also now apparently lending secret military aid to the Federation. Sending support to the Federation might counter the Hegemony's expansionist plans and thus serve our interests as well. Even with the information contained in this report, that choice is not a clear one. Recent Circinian raids in the New Colony Region show that another Inner Sphere power is employing the Federation to threaten the stability of your alliance with Chancellor Liao and Protector Shraplen. Can the enemy of our enemy be our friend?

History

The Federation traces its origins to the Black Warriors, a mercenary regiment accused of contract violations by its Free Worlds League employers in 2769. Barely escaping the League's navy, Colonel Zacariah Cirion and his warriors swore vengeance on House Marik and fled to Circinus in 2770 to take up a life of banditry.

[This is only a partial explanation of the Black Warriors' origins. Most Warriors were former Star League troops who cashed out to seek more lucrative careers as mercenaries. Despite their mercenary status, the Black Warriors had many comrades in the Star League Defense Force and remained loyal to the Star League. Records indicate that the Black Warriors went AWOL when Captain-General Kenyon Marik, acting on an old grudge against General Aleksandr Kerensky, refused to grant Kerensky access to Marik worlds to launch attacks against the Usurper's forces in the Terran Hegemony during the Amaris Civil War.

After raiding Marik supply depots, the Black Warriors traveled to Circinus, an abandoned Rim Worlds planet that had

become the site of a Star League training camp for the thousands of volunteers who wanted to fight against the Usurper. On Circinus, the Black Warriors helped the Star League Defense Force mold no less than 36 Loyalist regiments from these impassioned volunteers. Unfortunately, a communications error left the Black Warriors behind when Kerensky called for his Exodus. Abandoned by the Star League in the Periphery and with no hope of seeking employment in the Inner Sphere, the Black Warriors were forced to raid the worlds of their former Marik employer to sustain themselves. -AWJ]

Swords and Plowshares

The Federation officially formed in 2785 when a group of Lyran farmers, fleeing the destruction of the Star League, arrived at Circinus. Led by Robert McIntyre, the farmers struck an agreement with the Black Warriors. According to the agreement, the Warriors would protect the farmers and buy their produce. In return, the farmers would not question the Warriors' off-world operations and purchase industrial equipment and other goods that the Warriors recovered from their raids. This pact formed the foundation of today's Federation; a respectable agrarian society that augments its economy via government-sponsored "covert operations." For centuries the Warriors have conducted their raids in near anonymity, using the call signs, colors and insignia of other military units to fool their victims. In keeping with tradition, to this day the Black Warriors remain an official state secret in the Federation.

Light Horse Occupation

The all-consuming chaos of the First Succession War allowed the Black Warriors to conduct their covert bandit raids with little fear of reprisal. Pressed by more important duties, Free Worlds League intelligence organizations were too busy to link the various raids on House Marik's Periphery border to the infant Circinus Federation.

Events changed midway through the Second Succession War. House Marik's Lyran front had reached a stalemate and Captain-General Charles Marik, seeking to regain the offensive against House Steiner, contracted with the elite Eridani Light Horse. Needing a strategic advantage over the heavier Lyran forces, the Light Horse realized that a base of operations in the Periphery would help the mercenaries bypass the many assault regiments stationed on Lyran border worlds. Dusting off old Star League maps, the Light Horse decided on Circinus as a staging point and occupied the planet in 2853. Apparently, most of the Black Warriors were off-world conducting bandit raids when the invasion occurred and decided not return to Circinus until after the Light Horse left almost a decade later. While a wild success for the Light Horse and the Free Worlds League, the occupation of Circinus furthered the deep resentment of the Black Warriors and Circinus' population against the Inner Sphere, the old Star League and House Marik in particular.

[Again, this history is only partially complete. From old Light Horse communiqués in our archives, we know that the Black Warriors actually welcomed the Eridani Light Horse onto Circinus as a former Star League unit. Keeping their past bandit activities a secret, the Warriors joined the Light Horse during their raids on several interior Lyran worlds and granted the Light Horse access to their old Star League training facilities. By helping the Light Horse, the Warriors hoped to earn positions in the unit.

Eventually, the Light Horse commanders learned the truth behind the bandit raids the Warriors had conducted in the decades since the fall of the Star League. Being tradition-bound mercenaries that relied on their top-notch reputation to land contracts, the Light Horse had little choice but to abandon the Black Warriors towards the end of the Second Succession War in 2862, much as the Star League Defense Force had abandoned the Warriors almost a century earlier. Deeply wounded by this second betrayal, the Black Warriors returned to their bandit lifestyle armed with an intimate knowledge of new Lyran targets and superior Light Horse tactics. The Light Horse has never revealed their past association with the Black Warriors, but in 2871, bandits raided the Light Horse when the mercenaries were undergoing rest and refit on an unnamed Periphery world. Almost certainly seeking vengeance against the Light Horse, the Black Warriors were likely the forces behind these raids. -AWJ]

Inner Sphere Privateers

During the Third Succession War, the Black Warriors added border planets in the Lyran Commonwealth to their list of Free Worlds targets. Enriched by these raids, the Federation gathered enough resources to explore eight neighboring planets between 2990 and 3020. The Federation quickly realized that its small population and industrial base would inhibit the settlement of these worlds. To combat this problem, the Federation created a program to encourage citizens to colonize to these planets. Under this program, they could pay off the cost of their transport by working for the government, a corporation or other licensed landholder on the

new planet for a set amount of time. The program quickly degenerated into little more than a front for indentured servitude, in which the Federation government would rent out minor criminal offenders and citizens who owed back taxes to large landholders for backbreaking agricultural and land-clearing work. Eventually the demand for this labor grew so large that the Black Warriors also began taking slaves during their raids. By the end of the Third Succession War, the Circinus Federation had taken its final steps towards true bandit-kingdom status.

During the course of the Third Succession War, Houses Marik and Steiner had independently captured several Black Warrior troops. Their subsequent interrogation enabled both Houses to trace several other bandit raids back to Circinus for the first time. After several terse exchanges with Marik and Steiner diplomats, Federation President C. J. "Bob" McIntyre realized that his growing empire faced potential invasion. He quickly entered into joint reconciliation talks with the Marik and Steiner ambassadors. Through skillful diplomacy and judicious return of prisoners, President McIntyre averted a wholesale counterattack against the Federation and greatly elevated the status of the Federation Presidency.

In the years prior to the Fourth Succession War, the Black Warriors turned their attention away from the Inner Sphere and concentrated on poorer Periphery targets, including the Magistracy of Canopus, the Illyrian Palatinate and the worlds that would eventually become the Rim Collection. With the resumption of hostilities between the Great Houses in 3028, the Black Warriors were given an opportunity to become active in the Inner Sphere once again. In October of that year, House Marik launched Operation Dagger against the newly allied Lyrans Commonwealth and Federated Suns. Because the Commonwealth was engaged in offensive operations against House Liao and House Kurita, the green Forty-second Avalon Hussars was one of the few units defending Commonwealth planets against the Free Worlds League.

To slow down Operation Dagger, the Hussars launched a counterattack on Cerillos, a Marik planet near Circinus. Cerillos was the home base of the veteran Sixth Orloff Grenadiers. Though they took the planet easily, the Hussars realized that they would be facing a superior and more experienced force when the Grenadiers returned. With no other available forces along the thinly stretched front to call on, the Hussars reluctantly contacted Federation President McIntyre. With the Hussars between a rock and a hard place, McIntyre negotiated a contract for the services of the Black Warriors that would give the Federation temporary access to Lyrans supply lines. Though the combined force of both the Hussars and the Warriors eventually lost Cerillos to the Grenadiers, the Warriors still managed to salvage a number of Marik 'Mechs in addition to rights for new Commonwealth 'Mechs as spelled out in their contract. From these resources, the Black Warriors added two regiments to their total force by 3032.

A Piate's Politician

The Circinus Federation had traditionally maintained a careful balance of power between the Cirion family, the commanders of the Black Warriors, and the McIntyre family, inheritors of the civilian title of Federation President. In 3032, the untimely death of General Adam Cirion left the Black Warriors leaderless. H.R. "Little Bob" McIntyre, who had just ascended to the office of Federation President after his father's heart attack, filled the power vacuum in the Black Warriors by taking command of the unit. McIntyre's actions prevented infighting between officers for command of the Warriors. He was a civilian politician, however, not a military commander, and the ineptness with which he led the Warriors over the next decade was nearly disastrous for the Federation as a whole.

Seeking to fulfill his father's dreams of a Circinian empire, McIntyre led an invasion of the neighboring Illyrian Palatinate in 3034 which was a complete failure. The Warriors were built for bandit raids, not planetary assaults. In the end, the Warriors lost over a regiment of light and medium 'Mechs to the firepower of the Arms of Thor, an Illyrian mercenary unit comprised of two battalions of deadly assault 'Mechs.

Needing at least a token victory to bring back to his people, McIntyre then led the Warriors on an invasion of Dersidatz, a unmapped and worthless world belonging to the Lothian League. That costly battle kept the Warriors tied up in anti-guerilla actions through 3040. Cut in half and then forced to commit a battalion full-time to Dersidatz, the Warriors could not effectively mount bandit operations against their traditional targets. In 3035, the Warriors lost an entire battalion to the Fifth Oriente Hussars during a raid on the Marik planet of Sierra. The final insult came when one

of the Warriors' up-and-coming commanders, Captain Hopper Morrison, left the Warriors with a company of 'Mechs in tow to form his own bandit unit, Morrison's Extractors. In less than a decade, President McIntyre had managed to whittle the Black Warriors down from three highly skilled BattleMech regiments to two battered, understrength battalions.

Long forced to stand by while McIntyre made one blunder after another, Michael Cirion was now a grown man and captain of his own BattleMech company within the Black Warriors. With his coming of age, he organized a secret coup against McIntyre in 3041. Anticipating that his day of reckoning was coming, McIntyre used family funds to construct his own loyal BattleMech unit, the McIntyre House Guards. After a month of vicious combat in the wilderness of Circinus, the Warriors and Guards fought to a stalemate, with each side reduced to a battalion of BattleMechs and support units. Unable to prove that Cirion was behind the coup, McIntyre still acknowledged his failures, purged the Black Warriors of most of its dissidents and installed a loyal but competent officer, Major Fritz Donner, to command the unit.

Under The Hegemony's Shadow

Since the Black Warriors' attempted mutiny against President McIntyre, the Circinus Federation and the Black Warriors have undergone a slow rebuilding effort. The Black Warriors took advantage of the distraction of the Clan invasion to execute a series of highly successful raids against the Federated Commonwealth's Periphery border in the early 3050s. At the same time, President McIntyre made several diplomatic overtures to the Commonwealth, which drew further attention away from the Black Warriors as the source of these bandit activities.

The planets Son Hoa and Khon Kaen and a thinly spread mercenary unit employed by the Commonwealth called Mobile Fire, became the Black Warriors' favorite targets. However, the secession of the Lyran Alliance from the Federated Commonwealth a few years later freed up Lyran intelligence personnel to identify the source of the Son Hoa and Khon Kaen raids. They quickly found evidence that the Circinus Federation was behind both attacks. In retaliation, the Timbuktu Theater Militia conducted raids on every Federation world in 3058. The Black Warriors were conducting raids elsewhere at the time, but the McIntyre House Guard successfully defended the Federation capital on Circinus against the Militia. Other Federation worlds did not fare as well. Temporary chaos ensued until President McIntyre was able to hire several small mercenary units to restore order and garrison these frontier worlds.

Because the Clans did not directly engage House Marik, the Warriors managed fewer successes against the Free Worlds League. However, the Warriors did best the Fifth Oriente Hussars during their second engagement in 3056, in which the Warriors successfully looted the Farmington Township on Sierra. In response, House Marik's Sixth Orloff Grenadiers joined the Timbuktu Theater Militia during their raids on Federation worlds in 3058. The Federation's outlying worlds are still recovering from the combined Lyran/Marik attacks, and Black Warrior raids in the Inner Sphere have been temporarily curtailed. It is only a matter of time, however, before the Black Warriors take advantage of the growing unrest in the Lyran Alliance.

In the Periphery, President McIntyre sought closer ties with the Marian Hegemony, trying to curtail any Hegemony adventurism in the Federation after the Hegemony's successful conquest of the Lothian League. President McIntyre established formal trade relations with Caesar Sean O'Reilly, and the Black Warriors and Marian Legions began to coordinate attacks which extended their reach to the New Colony Region. However, the Federation and Hegemony have always been wary of each other. The recent rise of Caesar Julius O'Reilly has all but put an end to this relationship.

With the conquest of the Illyrian Palatinate, the Hegemony has now expanded to the point where Caesar Julius can ignore the entreaties of President McIntyre and even threaten the Federation with invasion. Trade relations and military cooperation between the two states have broken down, and President McIntyre has openly sought military aid to counter the threat that the Hegemony poses to his nation.

The Federation is not the only realm fearful of the Hegemony's growing power. By tracing manufacturers' numbers on salvage recovered from recent Black Warrior raids on our border worlds, we now believe that factions in the Free Worlds League are covertly supplying the Federation with surplus BattleMechs and other weapons in an attempt to shore up the Federation

military against the Hegemony. Captain-General Thomas Marik is unlikely to condone military aid to any bandit kingdom, but the Rim Commonality and other Free Worlds League provinces threatened by the Hegemony's growth are likely taking covert action on their own. These factions no doubt see the Federation as the lesser of two evils compared to the might of the Hegemony.

In recent years, anonymous bandit raids in the New Colony Region have occurred with greater frequency. Close examination of that salvage has revealed that the Federation is behind these attacks and that they are receiving aid from a second Inner Sphere source to mount the raids. This salvage originated in ComStar stores, which indicates that the Word of Blake, ComStar, or the recreated Star League Defense Force is covertly supplying the Federation. Apparently, one of these organizations is employing the Black Warriors to undermine the Trinity Alliance between the Capellan Confederation, the Magistracy of Canopus and the Taurian Concordat.

[As you know, ROM agents are not behind these actions. However, Victor Steiner-Davion is a known opponent of Sun-Tzu Liao. His efforts to keep the Chancellor and his allies distracted would greatly benefit him, not only in his current crusade to take back the Federated Commonwealth, but would undoubtedly aid him in the long run when he and the Chancellor face each other again. -AW]

Circinian Military

To confuse outsiders, the entire Circinian military is commonly referred to as the Black Warriors. The real Black Warriors, responsible for the Federation's covert bandit operations, only comprise about half of the Federation's military strength. The other half consists of the McIntyre House Guards, which are responsible for defense of Circinus and report to the Federation President. This bifurcation of responsibilities allows the Black Warriors to mount raids without leaving Circinus undefended and gives the Federation President plausible deniability when confronted with evidence of the Black Warriors' deeds. It also leads to infighting between the Guards and the Warriors, which limits the overall effectiveness of the Circinian military. In addition to the Warriors and Guards, the Federation employs a number of small lance- and company-sized mercenary units to defend the Federation's outlying worlds.

Mercenaries

In response to increasing threats from the Marian Hegemony, the Federation has recently enlarged its mercenary roster to include more than half a dozen company-sized or larger 'Mech units. This has certainly drained the Federation's coffers, as well as President McIntyre's own pockets. Considering the ease at which the Hegemony rolled over the Illyrian Palatinate—including both the Arms of Thor that had dealt his own forces heavy losses years before—he considers it money well spent if it keeps his nation free from Hegemony rule. These mercenary units generally vary from mediocre to poor in both equipment and training quality, but at this point McIntyre is willing to take anything he can get his hands on.

Ranks

From the Black Warriors' origins as Star League-era mercenaries, the Circinian military follows the standard Star League organization and rank structure. Majors command battalions, captains command companies and lieutenants command lances. Though the Black Warriors and the McIntyre House Guards each lack a third BattleMech battalion to round out a full regimental roster, a colonel commands each unit and reports directly to the Federation president.

The Black Warriors normally deploy their BattleMechs in company-sized units. As a result, the most talented young officers in the Warriors hold the rank of captain. The Black Warriors employ combined arms tactics learned under a decade of occupation by the Eridani Light Horse, and each captain augments his BattleMech company with lances of conventional forces assigned from various support units. In contrast, the McIntyre House Guards use larger, battalion-sized formations and do not integrate their support units under company command.

Training

The Warriors have three sources of new combat personnel: children of existing Warriors who inherit their parents' 'Mechs, fighters, or vehicles; techs and other support personnel who exhibit

talents in various combat specialties; and former members of House and mercenary units who have left their previous employers for various and sundry reasons. The Warriors make extensive use of their Star League training facilities on Circinus to maintain their proficiency and routinely test all three sources of combat personnel for new recruits. The most promising join the Warriors, while the rest are offered commissions in the McIntyre House Guards. Recruits for the Black Warriors also undergo a series of hazings, likely aimed at indoctrinating them into the Warriors' secretive operations. Rumors on Circinus claim that these hazings are brutal affairs but the actual makeup of the rituals are unknown.

Uniforms

Because of the covert nature of their bandit activities, the Black Warriors do not conduct or participate in public functions and lack a consistent uniform. There have been reports that Warriors use discrete means, such as hand signals, small Jolly Roger pins, black armbands and artwork on leather jackets to identify each other and mark rank. Nonetheless, there appears to be no consistent means of picking a member of the Black Warriors out of a Circinian crowd. In the field, the Warriors employ a motley collection of cooling vests, flak jackets, sidearms and other dress and equipment from a variety of other militaries, but wear no insignia of their own. It is not known if the Warriors give awards within their ranks, but they do reportedly earn easily hidden tattoos that mark their achievements from each raid. Many Warriors are no doubt independently wealthy from the booty they have acquired over decades of bandit raids and probably have little need for other rewards.

The McIntyre House Guards do utilize a spartan and functional dress uniform consisting of black pants and a dark gray shirt. The Circinus Federation crest, a stylized skull-and-crossbones bearing fangs and a crown, is worn on the right chest while the McIntyre family crest, a reaping hook, is worn on the left. Battalion and company insignia are worn on the right shoulder. Various combinations of skulls and crossbones mark rank in the Guards and are worn on the left shoulder. The Guards' field uniforms are equally simple and reflect the basic necessities of the major combat specialties (MechWarrior, aerospace pilot, vehicle crew and infantry). The Guards have no formal awards as yet, but many veterans of the Black Warriors' attempted mutiny received personal commendations from President McIntyre.

Personalities

Federation President H.R. "Little Bob" McIntyre

Though still obsessed with maintaining his grip on power, McIntyre has learned from the mistakes he made when he took command of the Black Warriors during the 3030s. After gaining a tremendous amount of weight and nearly cracking under the twin pressures of military and political leadership in a mutinous bandit kingdom, McIntyre now delegates authority and deals with challenges in a more clearheaded manner. McIntyre has reacted to the Marian Hegemony's recent threats in carefully measured steps by purchasing additional mercenary contracts and seeking military aid among the Federation's former Inner Sphere targets. Descended from Lyran settlers, the McIntyre family is the largest landholder in the Federation.

Colonel Fritz Donner

As the only captain who remained loyal to President McIntyre during the Black Warriors' attempted mutiny, Fritz Donner was elevated to command of the entire Warriors in 3042. An expert tactician, Donner has turned the Warriors' fortunes around with many successful raids over the past two decades. It is reported that Donner is not a descendent of the original Black Warriors, but a dishonorably discharged MechWarrior from an unnamed mercenary unit. Though this has undoubtedly led to numerous challenges to his authority, with only a couple exceptions, Donner has coldly silenced those who oppose him. Made fabulously wealthy by McIntyre and still in excellent health, Donner will likely lead the Warriors as long as McIntyre remains in power.

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Writing Credits:

Field Manual Periphery: Circinus Federation
Brant Sponberg

The Lesser Periphery States



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Lesser States

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Origins and History

Consisting of a mere handful of tiny nations and none laying claim to more than half a dozen inhabited worlds, these lesser states are the last beacons of order and legitimacy in the wilds of space that is the Periphery. Some are little better than the bandit kingdoms, while others are formed around a principled government. All are struggling against the predations of both pirates and their fellow Periphery nations in hopes of reaching even the minute level of prestige and influence that the Circinus Federation holds. So while each of these tiny states espouses a different value, they all have one key goal in common with each other: to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the rest of the Human Space.

Combat Strength

Militarily, all fall short of the mark set by the larger nations of the Periphery, even that of the Circinus Federation. After all, none possesses either the economy or the industrial base of even that tiny nation. Instead, they must barter with the major nations or the Great Houses, if they want to legitimately build up their standing militaries.

There are, of course, other options that these states employ, though more often than not these methods involve some sort of piracy or raiding. Finds like the one that the Brotherhood uncovered on Antallos are truly once-in-a-lifetime events. Mercenaries do account for a significant proportion of the military forces of these powers, though the size and proficiency of these units are often far worse off than that of the military "organization" that hired them.

Combat Ethos

It is a dog-eat-dog universe, one in which even the most righteous can fall victim to brigands and other predators. While that axiom is true in the "civilized" Inner Sphere, it is doubly so in the Periphery, where one must occasionally stoop to the level of the outlaws to just defeat them.

Consequently, warfare among the smaller Periphery states is far less organized and often more brutal than that practiced by larger nations. Raids by pirates, neighboring powers and other unprovoked attacks are commonplace. With few aerospace fighters and dedicated DropShips,

interdiction or detection of raiding forces while they are still in transit is almost impossible.

Capable defense is the primary goal of these smaller powers. The population and industrial centers of most worlds are concentrated in just a few individual locations, making the common defense far easier. Though some independent-minded people choose to live in remote location, they must live with the daily dangers associated with that choice. Except for the wealthiest of individuals who can afford to hire their own loyal protection, most who choose this path for themselves unfortunately either end up paying a "tribute" to a local strongman or pirate or end up dead. Unfortunately, this is a way of life not uncommon throughout the Periphery.

Each large city can usually call upon some sort of garrison force (often including a few 'Mechs) in addition to local citizen-soldier brigade (composed of volunteers or conscripts). Some cities even still build walls, though mostly as means of controlling the flow of ground traffic or as a barrier to the elements instead of actual defenses.

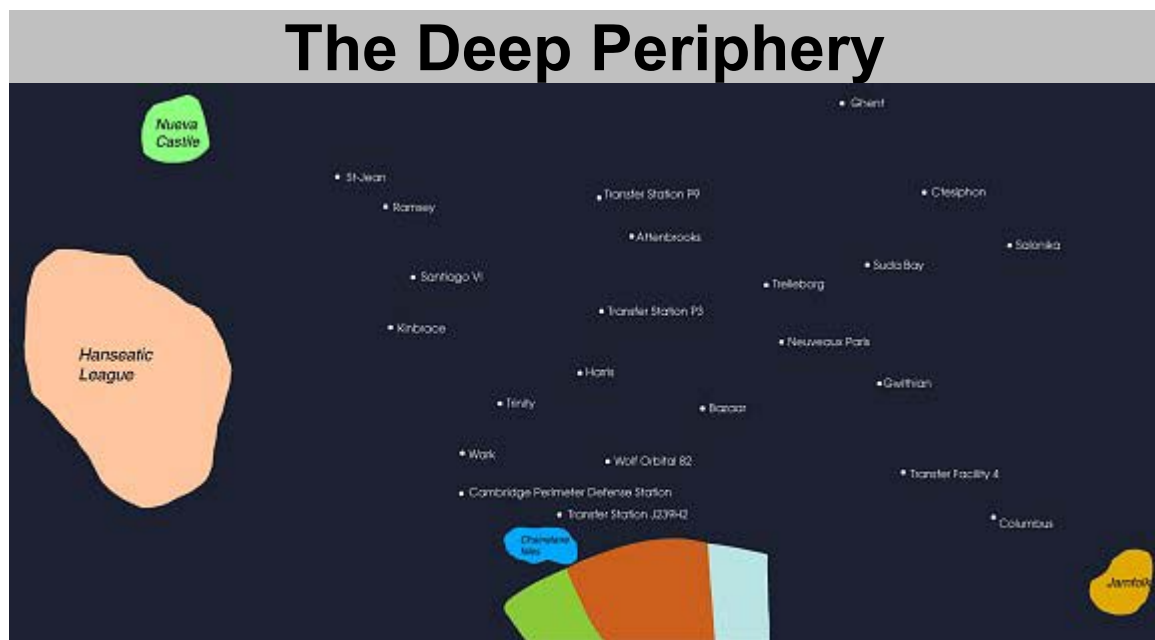
Of course, the old saying that "the best defense is a good offense" applies doubly to the Periphery. Every power is constantly on the watch, prepared to launch their own attack if they discover their enemy is ready to do the same. Unfortunately, it is that same self-perpetuating cycle that truly prevents these lesser states from achieving anything more than they have. Such is the way of the Periphery.

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Writing Credits:

Field Manual Periphery: Lesser Periphery States

Christoffer "Bones" Trossen



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Deep Periphery

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To the masses of unbelievers, the Periphery is the dregs of the universe. Beyond the Periphery is nothing but empty space. Despite the arrival of the Clans from their deep-periphery fastness, the idea of a void beyond known space remains ingrained in the Spheroid mentality. They forget that the great serpent, Amaris, used these distant reaches to train his army of subjugation. We, the enlightened few, remember the truth.

The Deep Periphery is home to thousands of settlements, some still primitive agrarian colonies while others are, if not technologically advanced, comfortable with the workings of machinery. Many of these settlements number only a few hundred people or are limited to a single world. A few, however, are proto-nations, larger in some cases than Inner Sphere states like the occupied

Free Rasalhague Republic or the former St. Ives Compact. Here too, most are of little threat to our plans and have little potential to advance our cause. There are, however, exceptions. Two regions in particular, ironically both toward the Clan homeworlds, offer opportunities and danger in equal measure.

The Hanseatic League spreads its mercantile tendrils across the Deep Periphery, its influence extending from Clan Space to the Inner Sphere. Though militarily weak, the Hansa's networks of contacts -- their worlds are a clearing house of goods and information -- could be of considerable benefit, as would their knowledge of the "uncharted regions."

The cluster of worlds known as Nueva Castile is of less significance at first sight. Locked in a cycle of conflict between two factions, the Castilians and Umayyads, this perpetual war zone is the principal buyer of mercenary troops in the region. Though deep-seated animosities exist between the two factions, it is apparent that the Hansa have played a significant role in prolonging the conflict, controlling as they do the flow of arms, information and mercenaries. There are many lessons to be learned here.

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Writing Credits:

Field Manual Periphery: Deep Periphery

Chris Hartford

Pirates of the Periphery



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The Pirates and Pirate Worlds

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Those looking to escape humanity's worst side colonized most of the planets recognized as pirate worlds. Instead, they found themselves caught up with the worst of the worst. Life on these worlds isn't necessarily bad, except for the citizens who reject the lawlessness and wanton cruelty. For them, life on one of these worlds can easily become a fate worse than damnation.

Antallos

A conglomeration of interstellar trading concerns colonized Antallos in the last century of the Star League. Since opening its halls more than three centuries ago, the world has been known as a trader's crossroads, where literally anything and everything can be had - if the price is right. Following the fall of the Star League, Antallos also became a Mecca for pirates and other

misanthropes looking for a world on which to hide.

The world is host to a score of independent city-states, but none so large and well known as Port Krin. Various pirates and strongmen lay claim to the world's other cities. "The Port" is an open and neutral city, at least in that anyone who has tried to forcibly take or to bully himself into control of the city has ended up dead within hours of trying.

Though life on Antallos is difficult, the world's economy is surprisingly sturdy. That is largely due to the pirates and fortune hunters who have come to Antallos in search of a long rumored Star League cache more than anything else. Since the end of the Clan War and the destruction of Clan Smoke Jaguar, a number of disgraced Clansmen have found their way to Antallos, taking up residence in and around Port Krin. Some of them look like they are out to kill anyone and everyone who cross their path, but a few have realized their lot in life and are slowly being turned into bandits themselves. Of course, the rumors that a Clan "Dark Caste" settlement has somehow been there for decades are nearly impossible to confirm, but the fact those Clansmen are beginning to "fit in" lend some credence to that rumor.

Pain & The Rack

Life on these two worlds ruled by Morrison's Extractors is cruel and difficult. These worlds are even targeted by other pirate bands looking to make a name for themselves or simply to feed off the riches stolen by the Extractors. The Extractors themselves have eased up on the few thousand "free" people who call Pain and The Rock home, realizing that they need their citizens to maintain what little civilization they have. On the other hand, the Extractors have, over the years, taken thousands of more prisoners and turned them into slaves. Even the most believable estimates can only narrow down the combined population of these worlds to between fifteen and twenty thousand, more than half of which are slaves. Conditions are poor, even in King Hopper Morrison's own palace - a complex of prefabricated buildings. By all accounts, the people who are the best off are those who keep themselves on Pain's far continent, Hades.

Pirates Haven Star Cluster

Even today, few facts are known about the Pirate's Haven Star Cluster. A tightly packed cluster of fifty stars, the Pirate's Haven is literally just that. Various reports have identified at least two dozen: different pirate bands that have regularly used the Cluster within the past decade, but the few military expeditions sent into the Cluster have turned up very little. They tightly packed stars, including several binaries and even a rare trinary system; wreak havoc with sensors and communications. More than a few expeditions have never returned from the Cluster, likely victims of jumps that took them too close to some celestial body. I've heard reports of even more pirate ships lost that same way. By all accounts, there are several planets within the Cluster's systems. Because of the nature of the Cluster, however, no one can last more than a few hours on the surface of any of these planets without some sort of protective gear - the visible radiation alone is just too much.

Rezak's Hole

Vance Rezak may have his own estate of sorts in Port Krin, but he stages all of his operations off a world called Rezak's Hole. Located somewhere on the Draconis Combine's Periphery border - he and his crew are very careful about giving away the location of the world - by all accounts it is unimportant. It offers little in the way of use except for its strategic location, giving Rezak and his Damned easy access to the Combine's haunches. The region that is normally lightly protected is now almost wide open, following the Combine's massive realignment of forces to deal with the Ghost Bears and the FedCom Civil War.

Star's End

Like Rezak's Hole, Star's End offers only one real benefit: the world is shrouded in an asteroid field, making it almost impossible to get to. On the other hand, the fact that the world exists within an asteroid field means that the New Belt Pirates must continually be on the watch lest meteors and other space debris smash their bases.

The New Belt Pirates themselves are almost always on the prowl and by all accounts leave only a token force behind to protect the world. Those same rumors also say that the asteroid field is mined heavily and that the pirates have set up numerous defensive layers, a fact easily believed based on Susie "One-Eye" Morgraine-Ryan's legendary "caution" - or paranoia.

Tortuga Dominions

The worlds of the Tortuga Dominions have, it seems, been under the thrall of a pirate leader since the Federated Suns' 237th Light Cavalry Regiment colonized them during the last years of the Reunification World. Like many other Periphery worlds, Tortuga Prime and its surrounding systems became destination for countless refugees of war. The disgruntled 237th became known as the Pirates of Tortuga and plagued humanity for centuries, until the AFFC finally crushed the Pirates in 3042 and captured their leader, Paula Trevaline (who has recently managed to escape the dungeons of New Syrtis, if the rumors are true). The rogue mercenary band, Fuchida's Fusiliers, took over where she left off after breaking their contract with the AFFC rather than face the Clans.

Life in the Tortuga Dominions is surprisingly good. The worlds are able to support each other and they even have a thriving light industry. Though the Fusiliers succumbed to some of the more vile temptations of piracy, they leave the people of the Dominions alone, save for extracting their yearly levies.

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Writing Credits:

Field Manual Periphery: Bandit Kingdoms (Pirates)

Loren L. Coleman

