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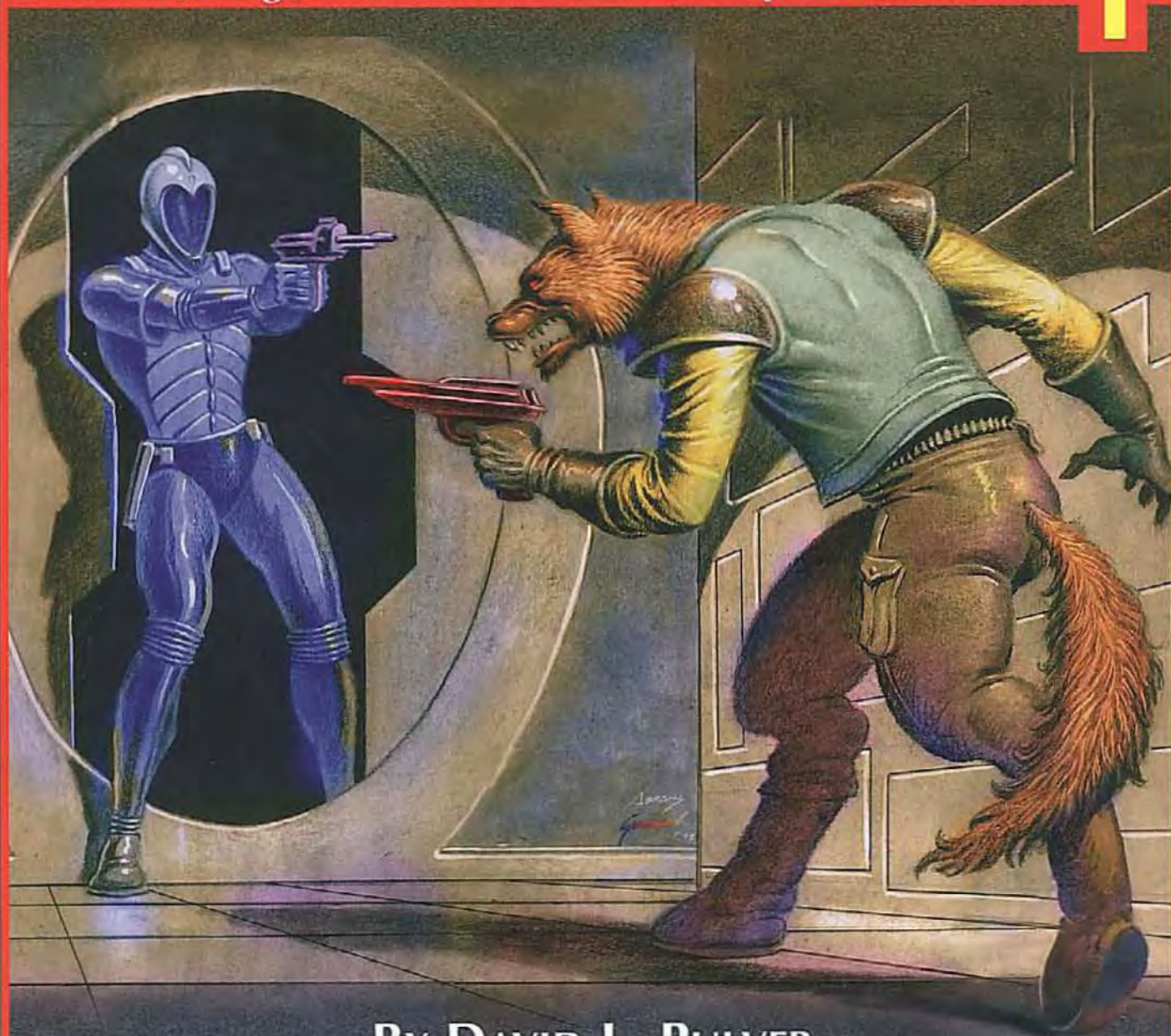
ALIEN RACES

Zhodani, Vargr, and Other Races of the Spinward Marches

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BY DAVID L. PULVER

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS® *Traveller*®
ALIEN RACES 1

Zhodani, Vargr, and Other Races of the Spinward Marches

By DAVID L. PULVER

Based on the award-winning Traveller science fiction universe by MARC MILLER

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are GT for *GURPS Traveller*, T:BC for *Behind the Claw*, CII for *Compendium II*, S for *Space*, UT for *Ultra-Tech*, and VE for *Vehicles*. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated Web list at **www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html**.

INTRODUCTION

In these pages you'll find detailed descriptions of five alien races existing within the *GURPS Traveller* milieu.

The *Zhodani* are enemies of the Third Imperium, but are far from being simple villains. The most alien of the three major races of Humans, their unusual psionic-based society lacks freedoms we take for granted but has many admirable traits. Since Zhodani society is based around psionics, we've also included a chapter of additional guidelines for psionics in *Traveller*.

The wolflike *Vargr* are the other major race described in this book. Although their mindset is quite different than that of Humaniti, their adventurous nature and extensive contact with the Imperium makes them eminently suitable as player characters.

The three new "minor races" described in this book share two traits: all dwell in or near the Zhodani and Vargr, and all are just beginning to make their influence felt on the Spinward sectors of the Imperium. The enigmatic six-limbed Clotho are long-term allies of the Zhodani, while the discovery of the dinosaurlike Drakarans has ignited war and piracy among the small Vargr states on the Zhodani border. The most recently encountered of these races are the exotic gas-giant dwelling Sheol, whose highly unusual first contact has led to an uncommon degree of cooperation between the Imperium and Zhodani Consulate.

All of these races are intended to be useful both as NPCs and PCs; campaigns set mainly in the Zhodani Consulate, Vargr Extents and among the Drak worlds are all possible as well. Of course, there are many more aliens yet to come: *GURPS Alien Races 1* is planned as the first of a four-part series, and later books will cover the Aslan, K'kree, Hivers and Droyne, as well as many minor races, both old and new.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David L. Pulver is a game designer and author based in Kingston, Ontario. Born in Canada, he grew up in England and New Zealand before returning to the Great White North. *Traveller* was the second roleplaying game David ever refereed (starting in 1979). His own *Traveller* campaign lasted 10 years, eventually mutating into a hybrid of *GURPS Space* and *Traveller*. He is glad this eminently logical evolution has now been officially recognized as a Good Thing. David's published work includes over two dozen RPG sourcebooks including *GURPS Bio-Tech, GURPS Vehicles, Bubblegum Crisis: Before and After* (R. Talsorian), *Glory of Rome* (TSR) and *Aliens and Artifacts* (ICE).

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Loren Wiseman was one of the founding partners of GDW, Inc., original publisher of *Traveller*, and spent over 20 years there as a game designer, developer, typesetter and editor. After GDW closed, Loren freelanced for a time, and then came to SJ Games, where he is the *Traveller* line editor and expert-in-residence.

JOURNAL OF THE TRAVELLERS' AID SOCIETY

The long-running *Traveller* magazine is now online at **jtas.sjgames.com**, edited by Loren Wiseman. It supports all versions of *Traveller* with news, articles, discussion areas, and reviews. Subscriptions are $15/year for 52 weekly updates and full access to archives.

The *Traveller News Service* is updated weekly, chronicling the life and times of the Imperium, and is viewable *free* at **www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/news.html**. The SJ Games *Traveller* links page (**www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/links.html**) links to the *Traveller* Web Ring, which includes most of the major *Traveller*-oriented websites. For information on subscribing to the *Traveller* mailing list, go to **tml.travellercentral.com/tmlform.html**.

The Zhodani

Humans evolved on Earth – Terra – over the past several million years. It was a great shock to the explorers from Earth to travel to the stars only to find other Humans already there, and ruling vast empires such as the First Imperium. It took many centuries before it could be established that all the races of Humanity had indeed originated on Terra, having been settled on other worlds some 300,000 years ago by the mysterious Ancients.

Of all these far-flung races of mankind, only three had succeeded in developing jump drive on their own: the Vilani of the First Imperium, the Solomani of Earth, and the Zhodani. By Terran standards, the Zhodani are the most alien.

The Zhodani have the longest unbroken stretch of civilization of any Human major race. Unlike the Solomani and Vilani, they did not experience a Long Night (see p. GT48). But in the past, the Zhodani people suffered their own tragedies, having faced near-extermination in their pre-history, achieved space flight, and then been thrown back to another dark age, only to rise again with a unique civilization based around the powers of the mind.

Even before they reached into space, the Zhodani began to develop the science of psionics and integrated it into their society. The result was a culture in which people not only act, but also think, in a different way than any other spacefaring Human race – and one which possessed radically different values than those of the Terran- and Vilani-dominated Third Imperium.

PHYSIOLOGY

Though Human in all respects, the Zhodani differ slightly in appearance from Humans of Solomani or Vilani ancestry. They tend to be tall and lithe, averaging close to seven feet tall and roughly 200 pounds. Complexions are predominantly swarthy and hair color is usually black or brown. Blond hair is uncommon, but a mutation that occurred on Zhdant in the last 10,000 years made prematurely gray hair twice as common as red hair.

Zhodani have 28 teeth (as opposed to Solomani and Vilani with 32) and the teeth tend to average a tiny bit larger. This is not especially noticeable, but it does mean a brief dental examination can identify a Zhodani who has not been surgically altered.

All the physiological characteristics of Zhodani are the result of two factors: the original gene pool of the Humans who first inhabited Zhdant and minor mutations or developments which have taken place during the 300,000 years they have lived on their planet. Their height and physical build are both consequences of Zhdant's 0.85 G surface gravity. Basic complexion was shaped by environmental factors which selected specific traits during evolution on Zhdant.

The original Zhodani came from a rather limited stock: under 5,000 persons were brought by the Ancients to Zhdant, all from the same small area. Coupled with a lower rate of environmental mutation (less solar radiation from Zhdant's K0 star) and a social reluctance to intermarry with other Humanity, modern Zhodani do not have the wide range of racial characteristics (coloring, height, etc.) that Imperial citizens possess.

The Zhodani and the Ancients

The story of the Zhodani people begins with the arrival of a fleet of Ancients starships in the Zhdant system, around the year -302,000. They spent a year or two constructing a pair of colonies, then jumped out-system, vanishing from history. The first Ancient settlement was a series of bases along the western coast of Qiknavra (the smaller of Zhdant's two continents): towering skyscrapers in the western mountain ranges and undersea domed cities off the shore, all linked by an extensive grav-levitation railway network. The second settlement was not on the planet Zhdant, but rather on Viepchakl, its tide-locked moon, located on a wind-swept desert plain.

Over the next century, the two bases grew into cities, eventually having a population of perhaps 100,000 Droyne and a few of the super-Droyne called Ancients. Each was the center of a vibrant economy. They traded goods and services between one another, and constructed other bases. They sent ships out into the asteroid belt, captured planetoids, and brought them back to serve as space stations and sources of mineral wealth.

"Zhdant City," the name present-day archaeologists have given to the planetary metropolis on the Qiknavra coast, was the center for extensive agricultural and industrial activities. Vast acreages were cultivated, megatons of minerals were mined, and heavy industries were established. Many of the Ancients' activities left marks that remain today: a great open-pit copper mine scars the western edge of the Qiknavra mountain range, and toxic waste dumps dating back to this period have also been found.

Not all Ancient activities were explicable – without context, some seem strange, or even senseless. The Ancients dug curving trenches in the sea bed, and then filled them up with material quarried from elsewhere on the planet. They sliced off mountain tops, lifted them 20 yards into the air, and then filled in the gaps with artificial stone. They built reinforced steel buildings and left them empty and sealed against entry.

Instead of using robots as servants, as they were known to have done on other worlds, the Ancients brought with them Terran Humans. It is unknown whether they were physically removed from Earth itself, or were grown from ova and sperm banks taken from a prior sampling of Earth populations; either were well within the Ancients' capabilities. In any case, the Humans were bred until their population was nearly half a million strong. The exact role Humans played in Zhdant City's society remains obscure, but evidence suggests they were both pet and servant.

Viepchakl City also experienced extensive developments. The city's foundations burrowed miles beneath the lunar crust. Its towers climbed six miles into the sky. The denizens of the city constructed numerous identical buildings, perhaps residential in nature, and a vast tunnel network that carried services to them. As with Zhdant City, the Ancients also performed activities whose exact purpose remains unknown. Caches of desert sands were carefully stored, sorted into stockpiles based on color or grain size. They bored mile-long roads right through solid rock faces with the precision of a laser, only to stop after encountering chasms a few yards across. Stones massing hundreds of tons were quarried, shaped into spheres, and transported half-way across the moon, only to be then left standing forlorn in barren steppes. There is no evidence, however, that Viepchakl City ever housed or bred Humans, or imported them from Zhdant City.

On other worlds, individual Ancient sites are always different. The two cities reflected this feature in almost every aspect, ranging from architectural styles and materials to mining techniques (shaped nuclear charges and X-ray lasers on the moon, while disintegrators and plasma bores were used on Zhdant). They did have one single feature in common: in both cities, road intersections were marked by a stone stanchion topped with a polished crystal octahedron. Archeologists differ in their interpretation of this feature's significance – some believe them a decoration, others see them as having served a practical purpose, e.g., as signposts or for traffic direction.

Diet

Zhodani can also digest certain proteins native to Zhdant which are indigestible by off-world Humans. This is likely an evolutionary adaptation, though it may also result from Ancient engineering. A minority of popular Zhodani foodstuffs and meat animals are *not* digestible by other Human races; eating them may result in digestive problems, allergic reactions or food poisoning.

Restaurants and food shops in regions frequented by non-Zhodani Humans (e.g., in startowns on the Zhodani-Imperial border) will have menus or labels that mark what foods are or aren't appropriate for non-Zhodani. Likewise, caterers at official diplomatic receptions will be aware of the problem. Travelers eating elsewhere in the Consulate should exercise caution.

ZHODANI PHILOSOPHY

The Zhodani cannot be said to have a "religion," for they do not acknowledge, let alone worship, any sort of Supreme Being, nor do they believe in an afterlife in the conventional sense. The ancient Zhodani worship of the moon god Viapchakl had fallen by the wayside as early as the industrial revolution, and had disappeared entirely by the "Second Dark Age" that saw the rise of the psionic nobility. Around -6623 on Zhdant there appeared what some Solomani academics have termed a vaguely Buddhist, vaguely "green" philosophy, *Tavrziansh* ("morality's path"), which is taught in the schools as a matter of fact and endorsed by the state as a component of "proper thought." It is governed by a small organization, academic and secular, the *Fevranzhtavrchedl'* ("guardians of the book"), which every 50 years or so releases a slightly modified version of the "holy book," the *Fevranzhtavr* ("the book of morality").

Tavrziansh holds that life is a matter of duty. Duty arose with life; even the humblest creatures have and perform their duty, in an unconscious "state of grace." Nevertheless, even unintelligent life can fail in its duty. A plague of rodents would be seen, philosophically, as an indication that the rodents had forgotten their place, and corrective measures would be justified.

With intelligence comes the ability to understand one's duty to all life and most especially to one's race. Duty to the race takes priority over all other duties, but it is most praiseworthy to keep one's duties from coming into conflict . . . thus, the delicacy with which the Zhodani contacted, befriended and incorporated the Clotho. The Zhodani can contemplate war, and even genocide, to protect their race, but they follow Tavrziansh better if they protect other life, especially intelligent life, as well.

Duty is also the watchword of the individual. It is understood that everyone has a duty to the race; proles do their duty in one way, intendants and nobles in another.
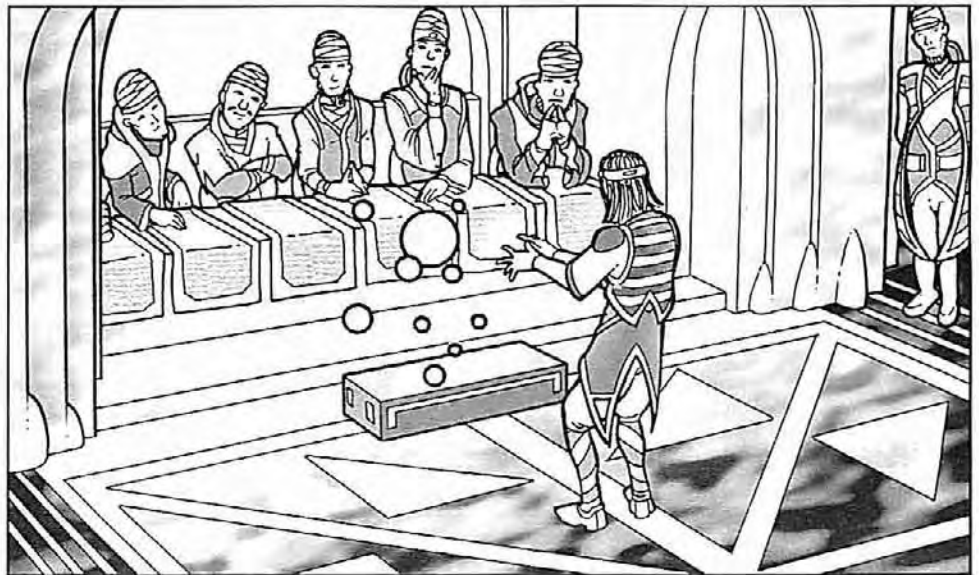
Part of duty is to recognize the duties of others and work to harmonize yours with theirs.

Death, to the Zhodani, is not a complete ending. The "evil" (that is, failure of duty) of the individual spirit will be lost. The "good" of the spirit will merge for a time with the universal energy field, the *Tavrian*, and then return to another member of the race. The more dutiful the spirit, the more personality (and possibly even memory) will remain; this resembles reincarnation. An undutiful spirit will be diminished in proportion to its failures. However, actual demotion on the "chain of being" is rare. It would be a very bad noble who returned as a prole, and a very bad prole who returned as, for instance, an Imperial or a rodent.

But dutiful spirits do advance. Merit, in Tavrziansh, is tied up with psionic power, at least as far as Zho spirits are concerned (Tavrziansh does recognize spirits and duty of other races, but has little to say about them). When a prole displays psionic power, it is said that he showed great devotion to duty in his previous cycles, and now he will be given greater duties as a reward. Interestingly, this is also a sign of past devotion in the *family* of such a prole. Witnessing and participating in the elevation of a spirit is a sign that the parents themselves are also worthy; by performing their duty to their talented child, they confirm their worthiness. In some later cycle, their own spirits will rise.

The gradual spread of psi powers in the Consulate, and the gradual increase in the proportion of nobles and intendants, is thus taken as proof that the Consulate as a whole is behaving well, and that the race as a whole is performing its duty to all life.

Eventually, holds Tavrziansh, worthy spirits will move on to . . . what? Union with Tavrian (*Flietavrian*) is presented as a merger with the universal energy field, with a retention of personality and memories of the spirit's good (e.g., dutiful) behavior in all cycles. Tavrziansh speculates, but does not positively teach, that some of the Ancients may have already reached that state; who, after all, can know? (On the other hand, the rubble of the Ancient civilization makes it clear that some among them cared nothing for their duty.)

Imperial scholars and political scientists feel quite certain that Tavrziansh, and its brief "holy book," Fevranzhtavr, were not "organic" developments of Zhodani belief. They seem too well tailored to foster compliance with the norms of the Consulate! The question is not one that can be effectively pressed or researched, but negative evidence is strong; Fevranzhtavr appears in the historical record quite abruptly in -6623, with no precursor movement or writings of any kind. The earliest extant copies of Fevranzhtavr are very similar in content, but not as "polished." Later versions do not reflect a development of philosophy, but rather a more skilled presentation of the underlying message: "Conform, be good, and you might be a noble someday."

ZHODANI AND OTHER RELIGIONS

No alternate philosophies or religions may be taught or espoused to Zhodani in the Consulate. Offenders (and any converts they have made) will be visited by the Thought Police (see p. 28). Visitors, client races, and so on are nominally free to practice their own beliefs, but not to proselytize . . . and on human-populated worlds taken over by the Zhodani, other religions are subtly but firmly discouraged.

Outside the Consulate, of course, Zhodani are exposed to a wide variety of beliefs. Despite the best efforts of the Thought Police, some Zhodani find Tavrziansh to be unsatisfying once they have encountered an alternative. The very notion of a Supreme Being is unfamiliar to Zhodani raised in Tavrziansh, the idea of a personal afterlife strange and laughable . . . yet some Zhodani stay to hear more, and inevitably converts are made.

Of course, the convert knows that his next encounter with the Thought Police will lead to the loss of his new belief, and possibly danger to his teachers. Some accept this; others run. In fact, religious conversion is the chief source of Zhodani renegades, as religion offers an "end run" around the normally firm Zhodani cultural norms. Both the Imperium and the Tavrchedl' are keenly aware of this.

Zhodani Sports

It is widely held within the Imperium that the Zhodani are humorless automatons incapable of having fun, but this is not true. Sports and games are encouraged because of their health benefits. Zhodani children play simple games similar to those of the children of the Imperium, including versions of tag, blind-man's bluff, hide-and-seek, and so on, providing exercise and diversion.

As Zhodani get older, they are introduced to various team games, and individual physical competitions such as races, to instill a sense of teamwork as well as provide exercise. Psionic skills are used in some games, but others are purely tests of physical skills.

Adult sports tend to be less team-oriented, and stress physical skills as well as psionic ones (the Psionic Games are not the only competitions in Zhodani culture, merely the best known). In many sports, psi skills are prohibited, as the competitions are intended as comparisons of physical abilities alone. Cheating is almost unknown, of course, and would be detected almost immediately anyway.

Zhodani Art

Artists have an important role in Zhodani society. Zhodani fine arts are much the same as those in the Imperium: painting, music, sculpture, theater, and literary endeavors all thrive. The Zhodani have one significant difference in the practice of their art, however.

An artist with telepathy soon learns what provokes a given response, and can pass this information along to others. Zhodani know exactly (for example) what mural to put in a dental waiting room to calm nervous patients. They know what effects the color orange has on the majority of patrons, and can achieve exact (and sometimes subliminal) results by their artwork.

Because of the conformist nature of Zhodani society, most Zhodani art seems limited and unimaginative by Imperial standards. Zhodani artists are not placed under any legal restrictions or censorship, however. They simply know what is acceptable to society as a whole, and remain within those limits voluntarily. Zhodani artists do not feel compelled to stretch the limits of their expression, as do many Imperial artists, and will argue that their creativity is not stunted by the restrictions they work under.

Zhodani Humor

Q: How many Zhodani does it take . . .
A: To change a light bulb? I knew you were going to say that!

The Zhodani sense of humor is different from the Imperial norm in some ways. In general, the Zhodani laugh as an expression of delight or in reaction to a pleasant surprise. Zhodani have little in the way of nervous laughter, or laughter in reaction to another's misfortune. Zhodani appreciate wit, especially plays on words (puns). Jokes that work on many levels and multilingual puns are especially appreciated.

Mildly self-deprecating humor is considered a sign of good mental health, as everyone is expected to exercise humility. The Zhodani feel it takes a certain degree of self-confidence to make fun of oneself, up to a point. Taken to excess, however, such humor is viewed as an indicator of potential mental instability. Good-natured jests as an indication of friendship, romantic attraction, or camaraderie are acceptable, provided that they are received jovially and reciprocated in kind. Gallows humor intended to raise spirits and divert attention from impending disaster is tolerated, but not especially encouraged.

The Zhodani have little appreciation for slapstick comedy. The notion of laughing at another's pain or misfortune strikes the average Zhodani as perverse, and the notion of laughing at another's embarrassment makes them uneasy. Watching a man slip on a banana peel and fall down does not strike them as funny. Watching a man being hit in the face by a cream pie is viewed as mildly humorous if the victim is clearly not physically injured and laughs afterward. They can see humor in certain situational incongruities (a waiter in a restaurant uncovering a tray to reveal a carefully cooked boot, and so on).

Shock comedy (obscenities, vulgarisms) is a complete mystery to the Zhodani. The notion that simply mentioning perfectly natural bodily functions is funny is not something they understand easily.

The practical joke is foreign to Zhodani society. Most such jokes involve some form of humiliation or insult (albeit minor ones), and Zhodani do not consider such things productive or socially acceptable.

Society

The fact that psionics make up a major part of everyday life within the Consulate has had a profound effect upon the mental and emotional make-up of its people. While they are Human, their way of looking at life is quite at variance from most non-psionic Human cultures. It has been said that psionics have made the Zhodani Consulate government the most effective, powerful and absolute tyranny in Human history – and also the happiest and most stable state to live in. Both these statements are quite true.

In contrast to the patchwork-quilt of planetary societies making up the Third Imperium (whose techno-feudalism is an overlay that affects interstellar politics but rarely daily life), the worlds of the Zhodani Consulate possess a homogenous society that, despite minor variations for local conditions, is essentially the same from planet to planet across its expanse.

Zhodani society is divided into three hereditary groups:

Nobles perform all elective governmental functions. They are the only inhabitants of the Zhodani Consulate who are permitted to vote or be elected to government office. Not all nobles work in government – some have senior military positions, manage large hereditary estates, or engage in artistic pursuits. 5.6 percent of the Zhodani population are nobles.

Intendants are a psi-trained middle class. They include most bureaucrats, business and project management, merchant captains and officers, teachers, psychologists and doctors, police, and journalists (though some nobles may also be found in these positions). Many serve as psionic troops ("commissioned specialists") or military officers (except generals and admirals). Intendants also act as personal aides to individual nobles. They make up about 14.9 percent of the population.

Proles (proletarians) are the commoners of Zhodani society and the largest social class. Proles include farmers and factory workers, supervisory and junior managers, small business owners and shopkeepers, enlisted soldiers and spacecrew, scientists and technicians, and common laborers. Just over 79 percent of the Zhodani population are proles.

There is a huge gulf between the lower-class proles on one hand and the higher-class intendants and nobles on the other. That divide is psionics: their possession and use of psionic abilities define the upper classes. Nobles (and those individuals born into the intendant class) are trained from youth in psionic ability. Movement from the prole to the intendant class, and subsequent promotion from intendant to noble, is essentially conferred on those with high psionic ability.

Marriage between different classes is illegal; liaisons do occur, but (especially prole/noble) are socially disapproved of (any children that result are born into the mother's caste, though of course high-psi proles can become intendants).

Despite the adoption of high-psionic proles into the intendant class and the promotion of worthy intendants into the nobility, the upper classes have not grown significantly in proportion to the prole majority. Intendant birth rates tend to be low

because of a strong focus on career over family; Nobles stop after only one or two children, because estates are normally given to the eldest child, and it is considered bad form to leave too many younger sons or daughters lacking such an inheritance. In fact, without the influx from the other classes, the noble class would decline.

The way the Zhodani think is strongly influenced by their society's acceptance and use of telepathy. It differs from that of the average Imperial citizen in many respects.

HONESTY

Extensive telepathic ability among the ruling classes has permitted the Zhodani to weed out criminal personalities and potential subversives early in life, and re-educate them as useful members of society. Thus, there has been practically no serious crime or dissent for thousands of years. One of the foremost values (which Imperial Humans notice most quickly) is the fundamental honesty that pervades everything. Trust is an assumption, not a risk. Walls protect from the elements rather than from intruders. Locks are rare, and most are safety devices to protect children rather than anti-theft precautions. Laws deal more with appropriate action than with crime.

RESPECT

Regard for social superiors is a natural part of Zhodani society. It is ingrained into everyone in the schools and the community. Of course, for true respect to persist, nobles must earn it. Many do so in a roundabout way: their intendants make sure they receive credit for a great many worthy activities.

The hard-working intendant class does almost everything in the name of the nobility. Nobles receive credit for a great many efforts and deeds, some of which they are personally responsible for, but many more of which are handled by intendants with little or no supervision. It is in the best interest of an intendant to make his superior noble look good because that noble is responsible for promotion and advancement. Nevertheless, the credit accorded the nobles helps ensure that they are perceived as hard-working and worthy of their positions.

CONFORMITY

Zhodani are, by and large, conformists. Everyone knows the relatively narrow band of activities which all members of society understand and approve of, and everyone strives to act within that range.

This extends to many areas of Zhodani culture. Even the range of acceptable dress (while wide) is rarely exceeded. Interests rarely involve strange or unsuitable subjects. Too much deviation from the norm is considered an aberration and subject to re-education.

The most distinctive elements of Zhodani dress are turbans and cloaks worn by all Zhodani nobility, the stylish beards male nobles favor, and the headbands worn by all intendants.
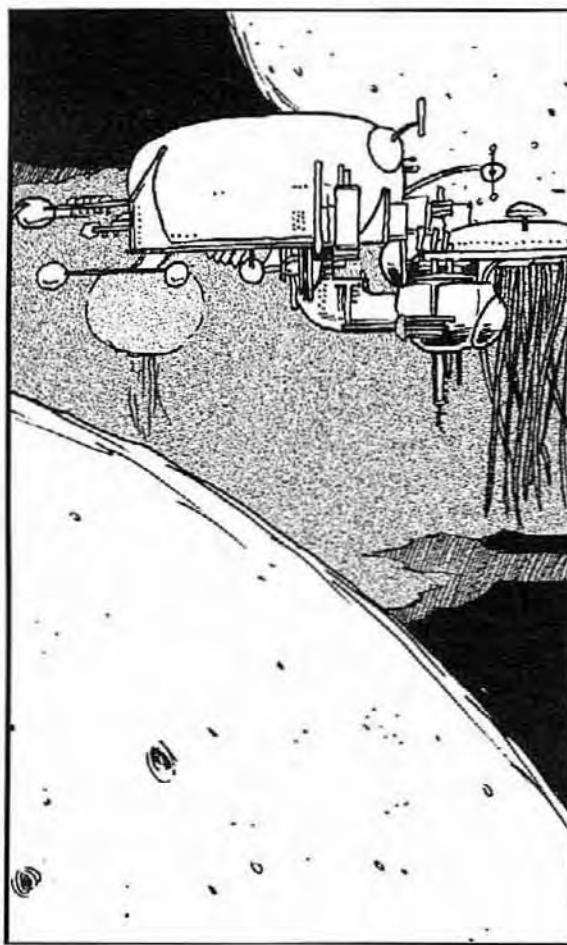
The Final War

The Ancients destroyed each other in a devastating war that began around -300,000 and lasted some 2,000 years. Zhdant was not spared. Radioactive dating shows some 500 megatons worth of nuclear weapons fell on the planet and lunar base circa -299,700, which places the destruction fairly late in the Final War. Zhdant City and Viepchakl City were almost totally destroyed. Structures were flattened, mechanisms wrecked, landscape burned and blackened. The asteroid station was blasted out of orbit and crashed to the surface, burying its remains in the ocean floor. Soot from burning forests combined with the effects of the asteroid impact to create a nuclear winter, triggering an ice age.

Viepchakl was also struck hard. Here the destruction was more precise but just as complete. The towers were sliced off even with the ground (either by energy beams or gravity polarized explosives) and allowed to shatter where they fell. The center of the city became one enormous crater, although the mechanism of destruction remains unclear: Zhodani archaeologists have been unable to measure radioactive contamination nor discover material residue suggesting an asteroid impact.

The Final War was fought in the Zhdant system over a period of slightly under 21 standard days. The attacking strike fleet left, never to return. They had done their work well . . . but even in the face of the destruction, some survivors remained alive on the planet, both Human and Droyne. Perhaps one-tenth of the population, about 50,000 Humans and 10,000 Droyne remained alive. Fearing further attacks, they fled from the radiation-scarred city, scattering into the forests and jungles.

All of the super-Droyne known as Ancients had perished; the Droyne survivors were too scattered and too shocked by the devastation to successfully rebuild. The more numerous Humans, used to following the orders of their masters, had neither the knowledge nor the skills to do so. The result was a rapid slide into barbarism.

Primitive Zhdant

The ice age that followed the Final War created a set of ice bridges connecting Qiknavra with Dleqiats (the larger of Zhdant's two continents). Over these natural highways the surviving Humans of Zhdant journeyed, seeking better lands, perhaps retaining memories of the lost utopia of Zhdant City.

Some 20,000 years after the Final War, the Humans of Zhdant had spread across the globe. They slowly developed primitive technologies: stone tools, huts, fishing. As the glaciers receded, nomadic hunter-gatherers ranged over the larger continent, following herd-beasts. By -250,000, a primitive Human race the Zhodani call *Zhdatl* (*Homo zhdatl:* Learning Man) had established itself in the mid-latitudes of Dleqiats. Shortly thereafter, a rival race, *Vlastebr* (*Homo vlastebr:* Superior Man) emerged in the south-western region of the same continent.

Around -250,000, the two distinct Human races contacted one another, leading to both clashes and inter-mixing. The mixing of the races produced a hybrid race, *Zhodotlas* (Homo zhodotlas; Supreme Man) which gradually evolved sophisticated language and social culture over the next 120,000 years despite the impediment of a second ice age. The next step came in -40,000, when the race began the first herding of animals, followed by their deliberate breeding. By -30,000, Zhodotlas had created several domestic breeds: *kredl* (an analog of Terran cattle), *arrstia* (an analog of Terran chickens, but with fibrous feathers that can be woven into cloth) and *noql* (an amphibious crawler raised in dammed streams). On the heels of animal herding came agriculture, the raising of grains, and even the planting of orchards. By -24,000, Zhodotlas was well established as a farmer and had created a growing culture.

While nobles have more freedom of thought than do proles, and some may be eccentric, even they tend to be conformists. Noble children are subject to careful telepathic supervision when they are babies and pre-adolescents, and thus by the time they are proficient enough to possess mind-shields (usually as early adolescents) and have earned the right to mental privacy, they have been thoroughly integrated into Zhodani cultural mores.

Sex Roles: The Zhodani have been sexually egalitarian since their dark ages, largely because of the emphasis on mental rather than physical strength.

RACISM AND INTOLERANCE

Zhodani feel uncomfortable in most places outside the Consulate, where "liars and thieves are allowed to wander around loose" and the fundamental values of Zhodani society are not enforced. Moreover, as Zhodani lack racial diversity, the average Zhodani has had little experience with other types of Humanity, who appear strange or unusual to their eyes. These two impressions tend to mingle, resulting in an instinctive distrust of anyone with non-Zhodani features.

While Zhodani are by no means xenophobic, they do open up to strangers only slowly. Zhodani settling on worlds with indigenous Human peoples have been reluctant to inter-marry with them, which reinforces this. On the other hand, any Human who looks outwardly Zhodani (tall, lithe, swarthy complexion, dark or gray hair) is instinctively welcomed as a friend; even if the Zhodani know the person is a foreign citizen, they are more likely to warm to him. Later experience will shape future attitudes, of course.

Intendants and nobles, because of their wider experience, are not entirely averse to working with foreigners, especially if those individuals agree to a telepathic scan to check their motivations.

AMBITION AND EDUCATION

Rather than individuals seeking to find themselves, Zhodani society attempts to actively direct individuals to the most productive and satisfying pursuit available.

Telepathy lets Zhodani educators help nearly all members of society to see their own potential and determine, at an early age, the paths they can take toward its realization. These techniques help each person understand his needs and motivations and find a place where ability and aptitude can contribute most to personal well being and the community as a whole.

Individual ambition is accepted as part of Zhodani society in all areas except one – crossing the huge social gap from prole to intendant. Achieving this requires one criterion only: a high level of psionic power. With it, advancement is certain, while without it, going from common prole to intendant or noble status is impossible, and going from intendant to noble is extremely difficult. Note that because inheritance of psi powers is not wholly predictable, it is possible for two prole parents with low power to have a highly psionic child.

Proles

The aspirations of the proles are generally limited to economic and personal goals – to succeed at whatever job they do, and thus win financial security and personal satisfaction. While many individuals are content to do their jobs and enjoy happy lives, those proles with more ambition may seek to excel within a discipline, whether it is as an artist, athlete, scientist, explorer or whatever. Or, they may seek economic success, perhaps using earnings to open a small business, or working hard to impress superiors and win promotion and higher salaries.

However, this ambition has a definite ceiling: proles working within an organization can attain junior management, foreman or non-commissioned officer (NCO) positions that involve supervising other proles, but they will never hold rise to policy-making, executive, command or commissioned officer posts.

As such, the social ambition of proles is sublimated into ambition for their children – hopes that they (or their grandchildren) will have a high enough psionic power to warrant training and elevation into the intendant class.

Intendants

As with proles, an intendant's childhood education will result from natural aptitudes being identified and trained for a suitable and necessary career. (Psionic training will be an important part of education.)

After his studies (which may include education at a local or off-world university or college) his records will be sent to those individual nobles or public- or private-sector organizations that express a need for new intendants with that particular career path. Usually, an intendant or his family will have already made such contacts during his studies, and there will be a job waiting for him – perhaps a local noble that his family has traditionally served. Often, there will be a number of different choices, some of which may require travel and interviews. Because the intendant's education is geared toward a career, there is almost never any difficulty finding a position.

Each noble has one intendant specifically assigned to him; this direct relationship provides the noble with a capable secretary and assistant. Such positions are avidly sought after by ambitious intendants since most of the fame and power of a strong noble rubs off on his personal intendant.

Other intendants take positions with corporations or institutes, with the military, with professions that require psi powers (e.g., psychologist, sociologist, teacher) or as secondary personal assistants with specific duties or assignments for nobles. The remainder of the intendant population works for the generalized bureaucracy that helps the Zhodani government function.

The Viepchakliashtie Empire

T he first major Human empire on Zhdant had its origin in the agricultural communities on the western coastal plains of Dleqiats. These lowlands were fertile, rich areas well-suited to farming. Over the course of several centuries, their population grew and the land under cultivation expanded.

As farmers, they had a natural interest in the seasons, and along the coast they made the connection between the ocean tides and the lunar phases of Viepchakl overhead. A priesthood capable of predicting seasons and tides grew up, and over the course of the centuries established a religion of Viepchakl worship. As their influence waxed, Viepchakl's power grew, replacing the older sun-god Pliebr as the most powerful member of the regional pantheon. The priesthood became a highly organized institution, and their religion both a motive and binding force for an expanding state.

By -18,000, the Viepchakliashtie, or Moon-Worshipping Empire, had gained sovereignty over coastal strips for 300 miles north and south and influenced the coast for another 700 miles inland. Coast-hugging boats and brick buildings were invented. Mathematics, originally for computing tides, was raised and refined as a science. The art of war, needed to maintain the strength of the Empire against nomadic tribes of raiders, was also developed. A proud capital city, Dlolprikl, arose astride a major river flowing from the interior of the continent. It would grow to a population of a million people, serving as the center of trade and commerce for other cities, the hub of a busy transport network necessary to keep its teeming population fed.

The Viepchakliashtie Empire reached its height about -17,000, when it established total control over the archipelago of some 200 islands within 1,500 miles of Dlolprikl.

Intendant social ambition centers on elevation to the noble class. One method is through participation in the Psionic Games (p. 18), which brings powerful psis to the noble class; about one intendant in seven is elevated to the nobility in this way. Another is as a reward for faithful service in later life (about two in seven achieve this, usually near the end of their careers). Some intendants strive for such rewards; others are reasonably happy with their existing place in society.

Nobles

Nobles have more freedom to shape their own destiny than intendants. From childhood, their education concentrates on psionic training and fostering proper social attitudes. They are given a more generalized "classical" education with emphasis on leadership, psychology and personnel management, although they may choose to specialize in certain fields from their teenage years onward.

From the noble's perspective, the most important skill is to be a good manager, to know which intendants are doing a good job and which are simply time-servers, and how to best motivate them. Unjustified praise will lead to sloppy work; on the other hand, being too niggardly can lead to their becoming disillusioned. Since intendants are fellow psis (and thus, in many cases, their minds cannot be casually read), motivating them requires more skill than dealing with proles whose thoughts are an open book.

Some nobles will inherit family businesses or large estates. By custom the majority of any inheritance goes to the firstborn noble, though this does vary between families. If the family owns a large corporation or the like, the heir may take a position within it as a junior executive, captain of a merchant vessel, or the like, and eventually expect to inherit it. Naturally, any young noble will take a skilled intendant aide as an adviser. Those nobles who are not direct heirs typically enter politics at the local level, go into military service as a junior officer, or if they have exceptional aptitude in such areas, may take up an academic career. Nobles may change careers. For example, one who ran a successful corporation or had served with distinction in the military may choose to retire and enter politics.

There are several different ranks of nobility in Zhodani society. These do not come with hereditary government positions (which are elective) but do correlate with the influence (and often wealth and estates) of a family. A member of the higher ranks of the nobility will be expected to live up to his title; if he does so, he can benefit from its prestige and the social connections that come with it to rise far more rapidly through the military, or be elected more easily to higher office.

Ambitious nobles can aim at achieving election to high political office, or becoming senior officials in government agencies or high-ranking officers in the military. If they do so with distinction, they will often be recognized by the Zhodani state and rewarded with higher noble titles, if they did not already possess them. Other nobles turn their attention to other areas: exploration, research, or even commerce . . . although high nobles are more likely to *own* a business, relegating its operation to intendants, than to actually manage it.

CONSULAR GOVERNMENT

The Zhodani have the distinction of being governed by the oldest and most stable Human interstellar state still extant.

The Consulate is a representative democracy with a strictly limited franchise (in practice, an oligarchy). Citizenship (and voting rights) is restricted to the nobility. Proles and intendants cannot vote, although plebiscites and other mechanisms enable them to express opinions.

Government is based around a hierarchy of councils that extend from local communities to the *Qlomdlabr* (the Supreme Council of the Zhodani). On average, each higher council oversees the affairs of anywhere from three to a dozen or more lower councils. This continues all the way up the ladder, from a local town council to world councils to the *Qlomdlabr*.

Councils consist of elected representatives called consuls. A council's membership is typically sufficient to supervise the lower councils under it, although the Zhodani consider the ideal size of a council to be 10 members. A council uses consensus (and if necessary, majority vote) to make executive decisions appropriate to their level of government and budget. Each council, when it approves an order, implements it through its intendant administrative staff and the staff of various government agencies under its jurisdiction. Intendants are often the source of recommendations to the council; they are equally often the individuals who see that the order is carried out.

Consuls serve for an Olympiad (about 2.25 standard years). At the end of an Olympiad, each council will elect a fraction of its members (usually two) to serve on the next higher council; the remainder leave office, often moving horizontally to appointments in government agencies or projects rather than returning to the private sector. At the lowest community council level, elections are held by popular vote of nobles resident in that district. Consuls thus follow an "up or out" progression through the rungs of government, with those who stay in office gaining experience and prestige. (It is possible to go back and run for community office again, though rare.) The progress vaguely resembles the Roman Republic of ancient Terra, hence the Anglic translation of the government's name as "the Consulate."

Local Government

Community councils represent small municipalities or larger rural areas. A typical council has 10 members who represent some 2,800 nobles and oversee around 50,000 proles and intendants. Non-citizens do not vote, but a council is expected to listen to their concerns and act in a paternal fashion to ensure their well-being. Regular plebiscites are held on community issues. Community councils can also receive petitions and lobbyists from individual proles (though this is rare) or, far more often, from their intendants and noble patrons acting on behalf of themselves, business or other special interests.

Community councils handle education, local infrastructure such as roads, hospitals and public utilities, the maintenance of public order and mental health, and municipal tax collection. Consuls will generally work to implement specific goals during their tenure, such as improving local crop harvests, getting a new grav-lev railway line, or ensuring economic growth.

Planetary Government

Consuls elected from local councils are presumed to continue to represent their original community's interests, but as they rise to higher and higher councils, are expected to distance themselves from local pressures and issues, broadening their perspectives to serve the greater good of the larger constituency.

The Discovery of Qiknavra

Around -16,500, rivalry between factions of the Viepchakl priesthood split the empire into coastal and offshore states, which further fragmented.

The small successor states to the Viepchakliashtie at first maintained their individual priesthoods, each with a slightly different doctrine from the others. Soon doctrinal questions were being settled as much by the sword and arrow as by scholarly dispute, and many priesthoods established military orders to defend territory, convert the heathen, and maintain a deterrent strength, and keep the common folk in line.

Gradually, many priesthoods and orders became hereditary, and priest-warriors slowly evolved into a secular feudal nobility. By -13,000 feudalism had taken hold in force and swept the many small nations of northwestern Dleqiats. This rise of a noble class helped perpetuate a pattern of wars and entangling alliances that characterized the next three thousand years of Zhodani history.

Toward the end of that period, the value of science began to be recognized, largely through the idle pursuits of the noble classes, where it became stylish for younger sons and daughters to follow scientific pursuits and for the nobility to act as patrons for expeditions of discovery. The key period can be pinpointed to within a hundred years: -8590 to -8490. In -8590 the printing press was invented (movable type followed in -8530). In -8550 an ocean expedition discovered the continent of Qiknavra. In 8540 explorers in Qiknavra made contact with the civilization that ruled parts of that continent: the Chirpers. The Zhodani named them Qiknavrats, "people of Qiknavra."

Trade began with the various Qiknavrat cultures, with exotic goods from the new continent flowing back into Dleqiats. It was soon discovered that the Qiknavrats had psionic powers, and within 10 years, a few Humans proved able to learn these same arts as well. Some Qiknavrats were taken back to Dleqiats and served as teachers for this new science. Not long after, the many regions of Qiknavra that the static Qiknavrat empires had not settled were opened up for colonization and exploitation. Zhodani migrated there in large numbers in search of land and wealth.

Industrial Revolution

Psionics were an important factor in the next 200 years, and rapidly spread through both the old and new continents. It was discovered certain people had innate talents for different kinds of psionic ability, and these could be improved by early training. Other individuals were inspired by the feats psionics could perform, and attempted to match or duplicate them through science and technology. The need for better and faster inter-continental communications helped spur these developments. Technological improvements to wagons, ships, signal devices and printing were all tried. By -8,300 Zhdant was undergoing an industrial revolution.

The industrial revolution produced railroads which opened up eastern Dleqiats to a wave of settlement similar to that which had swept Qiknavra some two centuries ago. The expansion led to vast farming and ranching concerns of the Dleqiats plains, expanding coastal shipping and mining in the mountain ranges.

Through much of this expansion, the feudal nobility of the many small states of western Dleqiats continued to maintain their power, providing the money to found towns, claiming the new territories in their own names, enforcing their laws and collecting taxes. Eventually, high taxes and the problems of a too-distant administration led to colonial revolts in Qiknavra and eastern Dleqiats, which formed an alliance against the old countries.

The strife resulted in war after war from -8200 to -8000. New advances in technology were pressed into military service, as aircraft, jets, rockets, plastics, food preservation techniques, radio and submersibles were rapidly developed. By -8,000 the warring countries finally agreed to disagree: eastern Dleqiats and Qiknavra were now established as representative democracies (Qiknavra being a multiracial Human/Chirper state) while western Dleqiats kept its feudal system, albeit in a slightly weakened form, with a stronger central government.

In the period of uneasy peace that began in -8000, all three nations turned their attention to space. Teleports to orbit had been attempted before, but proved catastrophic due to energy and momentum problems. Technology proved to be the answer.

The number of council layers on a given world depends on its population – there are usually from one to six intermediate councils before the World Council. As one community council usually exists for every 50,000 people, the "ideal" structure on a modest population world with 10 million inhabitants would be about 200 community councils, 40 city or district councils, eight regional councils and one world council. On the other hand, in a tiny mining colony with only 20,000 people, the community council would be its world council. In many cases, worlds with very small populations are actually "colonial" territories governed by a consul sent from a neighboring world: this prevents the next level of government from being too unwieldy.

Interstellar Government

Subsectors, sectors and provinces (groups of sectors) have their own councils. At world or lower level councils, consuls take office almost immediately after being elected. At the higher levels, a year or more may be spent just travelling to the world where the council meets. The accepted convention is that a consul serves until his replacement arrives.

The Supreme Council

The ultimate ruling authority of the Zhodani Consulate is the *Qlomdlabr* – the Supreme Council. Unlike the other councils, where newly elected members replace those promoted upward, the Supreme Council consists of two groups: the Standing Council (composed of conventionally elected members) and the Senior Members (composed automatically of all former members of the Standing Council).

Senior Members are an advisory body: they provide experience and advice to the Standing Council. They do not have to attend every meeting, and are often offered specific projects to oversee to completion. This is especially useful for lengthy programs, such as an important research project, the economic development of a particular subsector, or the planning of a core expedition, where great authority and someone who can maintain a single vision and steady hand over the long term is vital for its success.

Senior members may also suggest new programs for the council to undertake, and if accepted, may be placed in charge of them. Much of the political maneuvering in the Supreme Council is of an "I'll support your pet program if you support mine" nature. However, in theory at least, it is all geared toward serving and protecting the best interests of the Consulate as a whole.

Partisan Politics

Formal political parties do not exist within the Zhodani system, but factions and interest groups are quite common. From the community to the subsector level, politics are essentially concerned with localized issues. At the highest levels of the Consulate, other questions come to the fore:

Anti-Imperialists believe the Third Imperium's very existence is antithetical to the future of the Consulate, and that if it cannot be defeated, measures must be taken to contain it.

Destinarians believe it is vital for the Consulate to maintain a proper level of funding for the core expeditions (pp. 22-23). They also support extensive research into Ancients (including study or acquisition of Ancient sites and artifacts in the Imperium or other states). They are very concerned with doing their best to fulfill those visions that may be provided by the Ancient "starmap" artifact (see p. 22).

Expansionists don't agree that the Consulate has reached the maximum governable size. They want to change the longstanding policy against expansion to see the benefits of Zhodani-style society brought to other Human races, either through force or through encouragement of pro-Zhodani movements and the establishment of psionics institutes or their equivalent.

Conservatives believe the Consulate has expanded to its natural boundaries, and efforts of government should be restricted to protecting its borders and internal development. Exploration should be limited to that necessary for Consular security

(although many Conservatives believe that discovering the secret behind the Starmap is in this category).

Colonialists are in the minority who also feel the Consulate is not as large as it should be. Rather than the Core Expeditions, they advocate a more rapid and more uniform expansion of the Consulate's borders into undeveloped regions not under the control of other interstellar states.

Progressives are a minority of consuls who believe Zhodani society would benefit by an even greater development of psionics. They advocate increased psionic research and, perhaps, a slow expansion of the intendant class (and thus the nobility) by reducing the minimum psi talent required to enter them.

These are not established parties: rather, Consular politics include different mixes of these viewpoints, and as each becomes ascendant, policy changes. Currently, conservative and destinarian viewpoints are dominant; just prior to the Fifth Frontier War, anti-imperialist and expansionist views held sway, and these have a strong residue of support.

Government Revenue and Services

The Zhodani Consulate maintains itself through a variety of taxes on goods and services. Each council has the authority to levy a tax on gross income to support services like roads, hospitals, firefighting or the Tavrchedl', and at higher levels, starports and the military. A corps of intendants administers the tax laws, auditing records and levying taxes. Basic public utilities (energy supply, air or environmental maintenance companies, computer network providers, etc.) tend to be state-owned and provide government income.

THE LEGAL SYSTEM

The character of crime in the Consulate is markedly different from that of other Human societies. Responsibility for law enforcement is maintained by the telepathic *Tavrchedl'* or Thought Police (detailed on p. 28) who are as much concerned with people's mental health as with actual deeds.

Three broad categories of crime are recognized among the Zhodani: *inadvertent, incited* and *insane* offenses. The concept of premeditated crime for personal gain fits under the insane heading.

Inadvertent crime is an unintentional violation or infraction of the law. It results from inattention or distraction. Examples include accidental violations of traffic or other regulations, failure to return borrowed materials to a lender, forgetting an appointment with a noble or causing an accident because you forgot to maintain your vehicle. For minor cases the usual punishment is a small fine, to compensate society and encourage the offender to be thoughtful in the future. If significant damage or injury resulted, the recompense to society can be substantial, and repeated or extreme cases may be taken as evidence of willful negligence requiring re-education, though such are rare.

Incited crime is an infraction of a law brought about by another. Often it results from an overreaction by an individual to an inadvertent crime or misfortune. For example, if someone responds violently to a perceived insult or injustice, this in an incited crime. The Zhodani recognize people can perform wrong actions out of anger, despair or the like; this mitigates wrong-doing, if the crime is not unduly disproportionate to the situation, but does not excuse it. The solution is re-education: Often, the incited individual is seen as weak-willed, vulnerable to being incited to crime because of a character flaw or subconscious fault. Re-education uses psychological and psionic techniques to remedy the flaw, retraining the individual to recognize similar provocations and avoid or properly handle them. Sometimes, the investigation of an incited crime will turn up an actual injustice; if so, that will also be dealt with in as fair a manner as possible.

Those who have been outside the Consulate and have trouble behaving and thinking in a proper way when they return sometimes fall into this category.

In -7978 the first orbital flights were made by the air force of eastern Dleqiats, followed quickly by flights from Qiknavra. Ten years later, Zhdant's orbit was full of artificial satellites; although western Dleqiats lagged behind in rocket technology, only putting up its first satellite in -7951. In -7959 eastern Dleqiats mounted the first Zhodani expedition to Viepchakl, a somewhat controversial event that possessed both religious and scientific significance. The flight was successful, and a permanent moon base was established in -7950.

In some ways the exploration of Viepchakl hearkened back to that of Qiknavra: there were Chirpers already there. These Chirpers, soon dubbed Viepchaklts ("people of the moon") were the remnants of the Droyne who had inhabited Viepchakl City. Some hundreds of Chirpers had survived the Final War in those segments of the extensive underground tunnels that had escaped destruction. Some stayed in cold sleep for thousands of years, while others simply wandered the tunnels, tending hydroponic farming installations or eating from automated food producers.

Initially it was Human astronauts from eastern Dleqiats that contacted the Viepchaklts, but within a year Qiknavra had launched its own expedition, one which included Chirpers.

The Chirpers from each world met in friendship in the depths of the ruined Viepchakl City. Within a few days, the Qiknavra Chirpers fell ill and died. Reacting quickly, the Zhodani determined that the cause was a bacteriological weapon lying dormant since the Final War. An agent specific to the Qiknavrats was carried by the Viepchaklts; an agent specific to the Viepchaklts was carried by the Qiknavrats. Apparently, biological agents specific to each type of Droyne were drop-launched during the Final War but each went to the wrong world. Although an immediate quarantine was ordered, biological samples from Viepchaklts had already been sent to Zhdant (months before) and it was only a matter of time before the plague spread to the Qiknavrats there.

The anti-Qiknavrats plague also affected Humans (apparently all Humans susceptible to the earlier strain had died off during the Final War), albeit more slowly. On Viepchakl most Humans died within weeks or months. Within a year, the plague's first effects were being felt by Humans on Zhdant. Within two years, one third of all Humans on Zhdant were dead. In 10 years, the Human population was reduced by two-thirds, and Chirpers were extinct.

Insane crime is a general heading for most major crimes against property or individuals, including theft for personal gain, rape, premeditated assault, treason or murder. The general concept is that any individual who commits such a crime must be insane. Sentences for insane crimes call for re-education until the insanity is cured. Sometimes the offender's personality must be largely rebuilt. In rare instances, an execution will be ordered if the individual appears completely incurable.

Note that someone who is caught thinking about performing a crime may be arrested, and judged guilty if mental examination shows that there was serious intent to commit the actual deed.

Justice

Technically all nobles are empowered to sit in judgement of any accused criminal. In practice, nobles who do not possess telepathy are expected to refuse to judge a case and defer judgement until a telepath can be found to handle it.

Cases are generally presided over by a noble consul from the community council in the area where the crime was committed or the legal dispute took place. If there are multiple nobles on a council with telepathic abilities, the case will go to whichever noble is not otherwise occupied. Some councils rotate judicial duties among themselves; others have a few nobles that specialize in them. If a region, facility or ship is under military control, one of the noble officers will handle the case.

Procedures are informal: the noble listens to the basic case and considers the facts presented. In a dispute between two parties, the noble will hear both sides. Additional facts are gathered by reading the minds of those involved. If necessary, the noble may dispatch *Tavrchedl'* (Thought Police) investigators to locate evidence, suspects or additional witnesses. A judgement is made and the decision recorded, usually being sent telepathically to an intendant clerk in the local records center.

Crimes committed by nobles and intendants are seen as special cases, since a noble of higher rank than the accused must judge them. Inadvertent crimes are handled with a warning or admonition; repeated errors might also result in the noble or intendant being dismissed from their present job or losing hope of further promotion.

Nobles are believed under the law to be incapable of incited crimes. Insane crimes reflect a breakdown in a noble's personality (commonly portrayed to the proles as a result of overwork and the demands of responsibility). Minor violations may be let off with a warning and usually a short or lengthy enforced vacation from work; major crimes call for re-education. For the good of all concerned, a convicted noble is usually transferred to another location or world after re-education. Intendants are also re-educated, but usually lose their intendant status and have mental blocks placed in their minds to make them forget how to use their psionic powers.

The Dark Age

The Human die-back erased most of the gains of the past centuries. Vast areas of the plains of eastern Dleqiats were abandoned, as were the Qiknavrats settlements in Qiknavra. Cities were emptied. Attention turned to survival. By -7940, Zhdant had entered a second Dark Age. It would last a thousand years.

The darkness was never total, however. The feudal culture of western Dleqiats had not participated in the lunar expeditions, and as such had been less exposed to the plague. Many of its ruling class still lived in self-sufficient country estates, and these were more easily sealed off. A good portion of the nobility survived the biological holocaust that engulfed the planet, with the result that it was western Dleqiats culture that was the first to recover, and which took control of the devastated world.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITY

So exactly what rights and freedoms do the different classes have in Zhodani society and under Consular law?

Proles

It's important to remember that proles are not citizens. They are subject to the jurisdiction of the Consulate, as manifested through the local government council in the region they reside or, in the case of individuals working directly for a consular agency (such as the military), that organization's hierarchy.

Proles are not serfs owned by this or that noble family, but they are considered to be dependents of the Consulate as a whole. If a prole wishes to change his job and move to another town or another planet, and can afford to pay for moving and transport, he still requires the permission of the local council. In practice, all this means is letting the council office know he is moving, and explaining why to an intendant bureaucrat. If he has a good reason to do so, such as an opportunity for a new, better-paying job, or a region whose schools better suit the aptitudes of his children, the request will be routinely approved. If his decision seems frivolous, or not in his own best interest, the council may not grant it and the Thought Police will doubtless inquire into the person's mental health – why is he unhappy enough to want to change his job and move to a different location?

This is an important fact to remember: All of a prole's major decisions are subject to the scrutiny of the Thought Police and the upper classes (or superior officers, if the prole is in the military). If his actions seem ill-considered or unhealthy, the government may intervene for the prole's own good.

Intendants and Nobles

The greatest freedom that the upper classes have is mental privacy. Privacy of thought is highly respected among the Zhodani upper classes, although proles have no such rights. Nobles have an almost complete right of privacy and intendants nearly as much; in either case, it can only be breached if there is suspicion (in the case of an intendant) or clear proof (for a noble) that the individual is guilty of aberrant thought.

In other ways intendants have less freedom than proles. Membership in this class carries a precondition of service: intendants are expected to be engaged in socially acceptable work under close supervision of the nobility (at least until their retirement). Soon after reaching adulthood an intendant will select a career path, and will generally remain in that career until either retirement (and a pension) or successful promotion to the nobility. Retired intendants have somewhat more freedom, and usually end up raising a family, taking up travel, or becoming involved in hobbies or personal business pursuits.

Nobles are, to a large degree, as free as any Imperial citizen. They have the right to vote or hold office, and are free to travel and do as they wish provided they obey Consular laws. Those who choose to enter military service or join a government agency will, of course, be expected to obey their superior officers.

GMG '98

In the post-holocaust world, technology was regarded with a certain suspicion. Many of the old noble families had retained the tradition of psionic training; in the new world, these powers stood them in good stead, and over the next few centuries, those nobles that harnessed psionic abilities possessed a considerable advantage.

Psi powers were still a rare gift, and could appear in commoners as well. As such, many nobles attempted to attract common-born psi talents to their service by offering them noble titles. Soon, psionic potential became a symbol of nobility as well as a mere tool. The noble used telepathy to judge cases when he held court; in battle, he fought with mental as well as physical weapons. As any commoner who displayed psi powers had a good chance of being elevated to the aristocracy, being of "noble blood" and possessing powerful psi talents were nearly synonymous.

Gradually, those noble families who did not possess psionic gifts (or did not add them to their families through adoption or marriage) were overcome by those who did. By -6800, a new caste of psionically trained nobles was firmly in charge of their own rebuilt nations, and was also establishing colonies and claiming territories in eastern Dleqiats and Qiknavra. While still an aristocratic society, they had learned the lessons of history: they instituted limited democratic principles on a local level, while retaining most power for themselves.

The First Olympiads

Various systems were used to determine who possessed enough psionic power to be worth raising to the nobility. In -6731 the first Psionic Games were held, in Dlolprikl. The first games were poorly organized and poorly attended, but they did give common-born participants an opportunity to display their potential. Successor games were held every three years, and it was soon formalized that any commoner who scored well would be raised to the lowest rung of the aristocracy.

This institution resolved many social problems. It defused the question of favoritism in granting new noble titles – any commoner family could hope to produce a psionic son or daughter that might enter the nobility. It also increased the ranks of the psionic nobles, and ensured they would have the majority in any struggle against non-psis. Finally, it established an event for the public that entertained them and defused latent jealousy and fear: it made psionics part of public life: not a shadowy power, but, a gift that any Zhodani family could hope for, and celebrate with pride and joy when it appeared in one of their children or grandchildren.

THE ZHODANI CONSULATE

The Zhodani give the name *Driantia Zhdantia* to their interstellar community. The name is commonly translated in Anglic as Zhodani Consulate, but literally means "government by the elected leaders of the Zhodani." The Consulate consists of about 6,500 systems spread through more than 175 subsectors and includes both worlds colonized by the Zhodani themselves and non-Zhodani worlds that are administered by the Consulate.

The Consulate is located spinward and coreward of the Imperium (see the map on pp. GT6-7). Over 70 percent of its worlds lie within 100 parsecs of Zhdant, the Zhodani homeworld. The territory of the Consulate is a reasonably compact area: the Zhodani have expanded (with the exception of the core expeditions) in all directions at roughly the same rate, and this is reflected in the size and shape of the Consulate.

The central two sectors of the Consulate were primarily settled during the Zhodani sublight era – the period before jump drive's discovery. The fringes, the territory between the central core and the present borders, were settled in the expansion period once jump drive made greater travel distances possible.

Worlds

Zhodani worlds in the core sectors are classified as representative democracies. More pragmatic Imperial classifiers will describe them as oligarchies, democracies or bureaucracies depending on the degree of responsiveness of the local nobility and intendant bureaucracy to the prole majority.

Some planets with small populations may be administered by other worlds or controlled by corporate interests. Balkanized multi-society worlds, dictatorships and other governmental forms are found within the Consulate, but only in frontier sectors where local societies have not been fully integrated into Zhodani society. These are classed as "unabsorbed" worlds.

Xboat Routes: The Zhodani do not have an Xboat system. Naval bases are directly linked by relay stations (operated by the Zhodani Navy) using fast couriers that also carry government mail. The Consulate also contracts with private companies to maintain postal routes. The equivalent of Xboat lines on Zhodani subsector maps are thus known as Zhodani Postal Routes.

Bases: Naval bases and depots exist on important or threatened worlds throughout the Consulate, usually with an Army or Consular Guard detachment for ground security. The equivalent of scout bases are simply naval bases that are oriented more toward supporting survey or exploration operations.

Tech Levels: Most Zhodani worlds are TL7-11, averaging TL9-10. TL0-6 worlds are generally "unabsorbed" worlds.

Zhodani Travel Zones

The Zhodani do not maintain a system of travel zones, but do have two equivalent categories:

Forbidden Worlds (similar to Imperial red zones) have access prohibited by the Consulate government. Typical uses are military training grounds or planetary bombardment test ranges, Ancient sites, sources of rare or valuable resources, and secret Consular research stations. These are normally watched by 1-6 warships and garrisoned by a contingent of troops.

Unabsorbed Worlds (equivalent to Amber zones) are claimed and governed by the Consulate but not absorbed into the mainstream of Zhodani culture. Long-range programs to bring the world into the Zhodani mainstream may be underway. Often stresses resulting from this lead to local guerrilla activity, requiring action by the Military Thought Police or the Army. In some worlds, a psionic ruling class may be partially established, but still fragile and under attack from subversive elements. Foreign agents on these worlds may also be attempting to stir up anti-Zhodani resistance. An unabsorbed world is not usually permitted armed forces (other than police) and its citizens are generally not permitted off-world without Consular permission.

If they heed travel advisories, off-world Zhodani may visit and trade may be encouraged (to show the benefits of incorporation into the Consulate), but such activities are regulated to prevent unplanned socio-economic disruption. Non-Zhodani may be allowed, or not, depending on the situation. An Imperial sociologist is more likely to be welcome on a world that is a model of integration than one on which Consular Guard troops and warbots are sweeping the countryside for local insurgents.

Reservation Worlds belong to friendly non-Human races that have signed binding treaties with the Consulate. Essentially they are permanently unabsorbed worlds; little or no effort is being made to bring them into Zhodani society. Their citizens can usually trade and travel within the Consulate.

PROVINCES

The Zhodani Consulate is divided into eight *preqlianz* (provinces) which serve as administrative districts. Provinces are an intermediate level between the sector council and the supreme council on Zhdant. Each province is roughly equal in population.

Jadlapriants

The oldest province is Jadlapriants. It includes Zhdant and Tienspevnekr sectors. Roughly half of this province was originally settled by the Zhodani before the discovery of jump drive, an amazing achievement that has been rarely equaled by a sublight spacefaring culture. Included in subsector G of Tienspevnekr sector are the Addaxur (aka Clotho) homeworld and the other worlds reserved for them. Zhodani from Jadlapriants have a reputation for being a little staid in their outlooks. There are almost no unabsorbed worlds in this region.

Iadr Nsobl

This turbulent rimward province includes the Zhodani portions of Yiklerzdanzh, Afachtiabr, Iakr, Briakqra', Tloql (the Spinward Marches) and all of Ziafrplians sector. It borders both the Imperium and the Vargr Extents, along with the non-Zhodani Human-dominated settlements spinward of the Imperium. Iadr Nsobl has been actively involved in wars and military conflicts with the Imperium as well as struggles involving the various Human communities in neighboring sectors. Zhodani from Iadr Nsobl have a reputation for being a bit more adventurous and non-conformist, though the average non-Zhodani would be hard put to notice.

Meqlemianz

The Consulate's spinward frontier, Meqlemianz province includes the Zhodani portions of Tsadra, Eiaplial and Sidiadl sectors. It is relatively well-developed, with a high level of industrialization and colonization and a larger than usual percentage of nobles directly involved in commerce. Relatively few native intelligent species arose in this region, so the worlds here were easily absorbed and the border is quite peaceful.

Iabrensh

Iabrensh includes the coreward sectors of Zdiedeiant and Stiatlchepr, as well as the large Pelican nebula. This province is a major center of ship construction in support of the core expeditions. The region is the farthest from the Imperium; few non-Zhodani traders or travelers are familiar with it.

Shtochiadr

Sometimes known as the Zhodani-Vargr Marches, this province (to coreward and trailing of Zhodane) encompasses Itvikiastaf and part of Tlabrieish sectors. Trade activity with the Vargr and the recently discovered Drakarans is the major focus of the region, which makes parts of it something of a wild-and-woolly frontier. Zhodani megacorporations based here specialize in the production of Vargr-oriented high-tech equipment for sale in the adjacent Vargr states to trailing.

The Second Industrial Revolution

At the same time, while psi made up a growing part of Zhodani society, mundane technology could not be ignored. During the dark age and the rise of psionics, some scientific knowledge had been lost, but enough was retained to allow advances in science as they were needed, although at more conservative pace. Technology was accessible to the entire population and provided many of the same things that psionics could. The psionic nobles realized that they had to support its development: it provided jobs, and an expanding economy and a better life for everyone, and that would assure the psionic nobles remained in power.

The rebirth continued and accelerated. Eastern Dleqiats was again settled. A transcontinental railroad was laid, in many places on the same roadbed which had crossed the continent more than a thousand years before. Qiknavra was resettled, and the ancient cities rebuilt. Expeditions were mounted in hopes of finding any enclaves of surviving Chirpers, but it was fruitless: they were confirmed to be extinct. Mankind was alone on Zhdant.

By -6400, the Zhodani had reacquired space travel, and with suitable precautions returned again to the moon Viepchakl. Sadly, no surviving Chirpers were discovered there either. Planetary missions followed, with several colonies in the Pliebr system's asteroid belts and outer planets established by -6200.

Formation of the Consulate

The lure of the stars was as great as the lure of the planets. Between -6200 and -5415 some 50 interstellar missions were mounted; colonies were established in six star systems within four parsecs, and trade in research, information and very valuable or novel goods was carried on. Sub-light ships traveled established routes, calling at each colony and returning to the Zhodane system over a 50-year period. Exploratory missions went farther out, often on 20- or 30-year expeditions.

In -5823, a union of all Zhodani was established as the Zhodani Consulate, formalizing a *de facto* union which had existed for some time. But during all their explorations, no intelligent races were encountered. The universe seemed to be empty except for the Zhodani.

Then, in -5415, a breakthrough changed everything. Dranzinqabr, a development company working on a fusion power source in the asteroid belt, chanced on the principle of jump drive and produced a working prototype. Within 10 years, the Zhodani Consulate was operating a fleet of jump ships and exploring space within 50 parsecs. With jump drive, the Zhodani could see a truer picture of the universe. Just beyond their previous limits were systems harboring intelligent life, although still at a rather low technological level. On other words, exotic native life provided improved drugs, flavors and fibers. Minerals from new worlds helped shape better structures, better vehicles and better communications.

Expansion and Contact

In -5120, Zhodani ships encountered the Addaxur (the race known to Imperial Humans as the Clotho) an intelligent species of six-legged carnivores from a world about 40 parsecs from Zhodane. This race had established their own interstellar empire of 37 systems (albeit only a few heavily settled) with communications maintained by sub-light ships. The Zhodani observed the fringes of their empire for about 10 years before making open contact. The aliens were less advanced than the Zhodani, lacking jump drive and being late TL8 at the time of contact. Carefully planned overtures established friendly relations. Their empire was incorporated into the Consulate, as well as being allowed to retain sovereignty over its 10 most-settled worlds.

Obrefripl

This province includes occasional worlds and groups of worlds (up to subsector-sized clusters) scattered between Zdiedeiant sector and Chtierabl sector along the path of the core expeditions. It is still relatively sparsely settled and represents a region that is undergoing internal colonial development. Many of the worlds here are unabsorbed.

Chtierabl

A single sector-sized province located 250 parsecs coreward of Zhdant. Chtierabl is well-established and over 800 years old, but it still has a strong "colonial" character.

Vlanchiets Qlom

This encompasses all settled or claimed Zhodani coreward territory beyond Chtierabl sector – approximately 30 subsector and partial subsector-sized areas reaching 600 parsecs toward the core. Portions of this province are as much as 50 years away from Zhdant at Jump-4, including a string of expeditionary bases that extend some thousands of parsecs coreward. Ships servicing this route make extensive use of low passage and robots. This is the Consulate's true frontier region with many worlds unabsorbed, reservations or only recently colonized, and settlement here attracts only the most adventurous of spirit.

BORDERS AND EXPANSION

The Consulate is roughly at its limits of growth; until its overall tech level can increase (through industrial development and research), further expansion of its borders would strain interior communications without providing great amounts of additional benefit. Instead, long-term attention is being directed toward the galactic core (see *The Core Expeditions*, p. 22).

To trailing of the Consulate are the Imperium and the Vargr Extents. Expansion toward the Vargr Extents slowed after Vargr settlements were encountered, but extensive trade and diplomatic activity continues. The original settlements in Tloql (the Spinward Marches) were minor and were driven out by Imperial expansion between 200 and 500. Conflict between the Zhodani and the Imperials has since produced some fluctuation along the Imperial border as Frontier Wars have been fought over the last 600 years.

Rimward of the Consulate are numerous small Human states and, further Rimward, the Great Rift. Through Yiklerzdanzh, Afachtiabr (Far Frontiers) and Iakr (Foreven) sectors, Zhodani expansion encountered a variety of Human and non-Human cultures, many of them long-standing and well established. Some of these, especially various Human minor races, have been enticed into accepting Zhodani ways, with most of them absorbed into the Consulate. Others have remained client states of the Consulate. A few have resisted the Zhodani, accepting Imperial aid or depending on their own resources. These areas are prime regions of conflict between the Zhodani and the Imperium. The Zhodani fear that the Imperium will attempt to establish a direct corridor through the Spinward Marches to absorb these border states; this is a prime reason for the Consulate's "pre-emptive" Frontier Wars.

No large non-Zhodani states exist on its spinward border. Rather, it marks the regions where the Zhodani Consulate has reached the end of suitable worlds or systems within acceptable distances of supporting industrial bases. Some development and expansion continues at a slow pace, but is hampered by the diversion of resources to core expeditions and the fact that much of the Consulate has a lower average TL than that of the Imperium, which limits the availability of high-jump communication vessels.

The Coreward Border and the Core Expeditions

This huge arc represents the Zhodani potential for future expansion. The Zhodani word for the region to coreward – Fronzhatlivr – is often translated as "Wasteland." The Zhodani have found fewer habitable planets and races across most

of the region. Nevertheless, Zhodani scientific curiosity has driven Coreward expansion.

The actual reasons are a Consular secret (see *The Core Expeditions*, sidebar, p. 22). Officially, this type of focused exploration is said to be beneficial to Zhodani society, providing a steady stream of new discoveries and economic opportunities, and an outlet for non-conformist individuals, without causing the societal strain that a more constant non-linear expansion of the Consulate might involve.

Over the years many Zhodani in senior government and military and scientific positions have learned there is more to it. An enigmatic map (the "starmap artifact") was discovered in an Ancient archaeological site, which (partially) showed a route to the galactic core, and this has convinced the Zhodani to expand in this particular direction. This much is also suspected by Imperial intelligence services (and prompted their "Longbow" surveillance project). That the map was also a psionic artifact that showed real-time and precognitive visions has for many centuries remained a deep secret known only to the Supreme Council and an extremely select clique of scientists, intelligence agents and military officers.

Since approximately -4,000 the Consulate has mounted seven core expeditions. The latest was launched in 750 and took 50 years for the round trip, including approximately 10 years of exploration and research. The Zhodani have now explored a narrow corridor reaching some 5,000 parsecs from Zhdant, and have established a string of worlds from which further expeditions are sent out.

The expeditions, relatively unknown outside of the Zhodani Consulate, have been a source of basic research information, xenological data (as new races and cultures were discovered along the route) and even rare or previously unknown minerals and pharmaceuticals. The Zhodani have also discovered a number of Ancient sites along the path of the expedition, which have yielded certain materials and technologies that are still being studied.

Settlements (collectively, the Vlanchiets Qlom province) have been established all along the route to maintain communications with the consulate and keep the corridor open between major expeditions. Such worlds also exploit valuable mineral deposits, research the strange and novel life-forms encountered, and provide maintenance and repairs for ships passing in each direction.

Small expeditions (too many to count) have ventured far beyond the area the major fleet-sized core expeditions have covered. They have travelled laterally to explore new worlds that are beyond the areas shown on the Ancient's star map projector. They have also ventured further coreward, some as far as 1,000 parsecs. Their reconnaissance helps clear the way for each additional core expedition.

To the Imperium, the Zhodani often seem staid. The Zhodani quietly shake their heads. The Imperium is hemmed within its borders, and its Scout service appears to spend much of its time maintaining internal communications and surveys, "making sure the stars stay put." In contrast, the Zhodani are engaged in an epic venture beyond known space, to worlds Humanity has never seen.

ZHDANT

The Zhodani homeworld, Zhdant (often called Zhodane by Imperials), lies far spinward of the Imperium, in the center of the Consulate. It is located within Jadlapriants province; the surrounding subsector and sector are Zhdant, after the world.

Stellar Data

Zhdant orbits the orange star Pliebr, smaller and dimmer than Earth's Sol.

Type: K0 V.
Luminosity: 0.42
Radius: 0.98 Sol.
Mass: 0.811 Sol.

The Zhodani Consulate continued to expand for nearly 4,500 years. Zhodani expansion was a result of natural curiosity and economic forces within Zhodani society. Expansion and production made for a better standard of living. Worlds were explored, colonies established, new industries created. Long-term expeditions were mounted (and are still ongoing) to explore well beyond their borders: to the galactic core, to other spiral arms, and even to the edges of the galaxy.

Zhodani traders traveled the frontiers of the Consulate. They encountered other species: they met Vargr in Gvurrdon sector in -2800 (accidentally giving them more advanced jump technology) and traded with the Vilani in Provence and Corridor sectors around -2000. By circa -1000 the Consulate had reached its present size, but trading expeditions continued. They encountered Imperial traders in 50, and in 460 began mercantile relations with the Aslan of the Trojan Reach.

The Core Expeditions

The Imperium and most other cultures around it have their hands full exploring and exploiting the systems within or near their own territories. The Zhodani, however, have been driven by unusual circumstances to explore the route to the Galactic Core.

In -4218, archaeologists used a combination of clairvoyance and new sensor technology to find previously hidden chambers nearly a mile beneath the site of Ancient Zhdant City. Teleportation was used to reach these chambers, where the archaeological team found certain surviving artifacts. These included a small device that could project a three-dimensional starmap, one which extended along a corridor 30 parsecs in diameter and more than 8,000 parsecs long, aimed at the galactic core.

Initial investigation of the artifact's map showed it to be accurate, even to stellar spectra, gas giants and worlds. The artifact also proved to be a powerful psionic focus. Most psionically talented individuals found the device to produce an undefined and unexplained sense of hilarity (possibly caused by differences between Human and Ancient brains). A very few, fewer than one in 10,000, found that the device produced clear, readable impressions, usually of ships and star patterns along the route of the map.

For more than 200 years, the images remained unexplained. Then in -4074 the Zhodani heavy cruiser *Lienjqiets* (Swift Wind) misjumped and was presumed lost; 40 years later it returned to Consulate space. It had spent 38 years on a primitive TL3 world fabricating an important component of its jump drive. The story of its exploits, while interesting, was filed as routine and would have been ignored but for a few unusual facts. First, a psionic researcher had used the Ancient projector decades before the cruiser had misjumped; his vision had been recorded. Second, the clear image from the projector, which displayed the *Lienjqiets* appearing within a star system (which happened to be within the coreward corridor) and arriving on a world that was unmistakably the one it had been stranded upon, was proven to be fact after the cruiser's return.

World Data

Starport: Class V.

Diameter: 5,974 miles (9,635 km). *Atmosphere:* Thin oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 40%. *Climate:* Warm. *Population:* 83,000,000. *Government:* Oligarchy (Supreme Council of the Zhodani Consulate). *Control Rating:* 5. *TL:* 12.

Zhdant's surface water is divided into two primary seas which divide the planet into a large and a small continent. The polar icecaps are minimal, a mere 2 percent of the world's surface. The planetary day is 27 standard hours long.

Neither the planet's axial tilt of 18° nor its orbital eccentricity of 0.05° are sufficient to cause any extreme variations in temperature or climate. Seasonal variations are similar to most habitable worlds. In the extreme northern and southern latitudes, temperatures reach lows of 32° to -4°F (0° to -20°C) in winter and range as high as 95° to 104°F (35° to 40°C) in summer. The average worldwide temperate is 59.9°F (15.5°C).

Zhdant has two continents: the extensive Dleqiats and the smaller Qiknavra.

Dleqiats girdles nearly 70 percent of the globe and is divided naturally into three regions: western Dleqiats, the Dleqiats Desert, and eastern Dleqiats. Of the three, the west is the oldest and most settled, with a few cities more than 18,000 years old.

The largest city is the seacoast metropolis of Dlolprikl, which is also the site of the Hall of Consuls, where the Supreme Council meets in session. Dlolprikl is a beautiful city with some buildings dating back to pre-industrial times. Its air of antiquity, excellent museums, ancient religious shrines and vibrant cultural life attract visitors from across the Consulate and even a trickle of adventurous non-Zhodani tourists and academics from the Vargr Extents, Imperium and even the Solomani Rim.

Eastern Dleqiats, rich in minerals and soil, was settled in earnest only after the invention of the railway, and the laying of track across the desert. The desert itself remains undeveloped, except for the arable land along the northern shore.

Qiknavra is a much smaller continent (about one-seventh the size of Dleqiats) with thick jungles at the equator and mixed broad plains and forests in the temperate regions. The Shivva Range ("Mountains of Moonlight") stretches from the north to the south through the center of the continent.

A stretch of the western shore of Qiknavra was originally the site of the Ancient Zhdant City. Destroyed in the Final Wars, its ruins have been excavated and explored by the Zhodani for centuries, and the process is continuing as new techniques are developed. Also of archaeological interest are a number of Qiknavaran cities founded not by Humans but by Chirpers (degenerate Droyne). Nearly all these cities have long since been occupied and rebuilt by Humans in the 8,000 years since the Chirper extinction, but a few remnants of Chirper architecture (designed for a winged race) remain, giving the area a unique flavor.

Social Data

Zhdant's population is a mere 83 million. More than 90 percent are racial Zhodani; the non-Zhodani population is primarily Clotho (p. 113) with a smattering of foreign nationals (mostly Humanity and Vargr) in diplomatic and trade delegations.

Zhdant is governed directly by a charismatic oligarchy, the Supreme Council of the Zhodani Consulate. The world has a Control Rating 5 and is TL12, which is among the highest in the Consulate (most other Zhodani worlds do not exceed TL10-11). The spaceport is Class V, with excellent facilities and a naval base.

Viepchakl

Zhdant has one natural satellite, a large, tidally locked moon with a very thin atmosphere and no water. Viepchakl orbits Zhdant with a period of 40.7 local days at a distance of 237,000 miles. The moon dominates the night sky over Zhodane. Natural coloration makes it a reddish pink with dark shadows across its face. Wind-blown dust storms rage across it from time to time, a phenomenon visible from the surface and long seen as portending future events.

Viepchakl has a number of Ancient sites, including an extensive, partly ruined subterranean city and a huge crater left by an Ancient weapon. This site is under Naval and Consular Guard protection, although a few of its tunnels have been made into a museum accessible to tourists. The moon is largely unspoiled, with the only other installations on its surface being a naval base and an archaeological institute.

Other Planets in the Zhodane System

Both orbits inward of Zhdant are occupied by small, airless worlds of no special value.

Adrablsish: The innermost "hot rockball" world in the Zhodane system is tidally locked to the star Pliebr. Some mining is still carried out on the innermost planet, taking advantage of natural smelting processes due to Pliebr's heat. Robots do most of the mining, and fewer than 100 people live here.

Pliantshotl: This bare rock has never been exploited for minerals, though it served as a Zhodani Army hostile environment training area in the remote past. A stand-by military base (currently unused) is located on the planet.

There are three occupied orbits beyond Zhdant.

Dlemstiats Tsiaqr: This is Zhodane's asteroid belt. Mining is the major industry here; the mineral-rich belt has still not been played out despite 3,000 years of exploitation. The belt also provides hulls for some large asteroid-based ships.

Brovlekal: The system's only gas giant. Three large satellites and six small ones orbit it; they are home to traffic-control installations and large naval system defense bases.

Emkachdraf: A small airless iceball. There is a minor system defense outpost there, largely manned by robots.

ZHODANI LANGUAGE

The Zhodani speak the same language throughout the Consulate, having adopted it as a standard soon after achieving interplanetary travel. As the Consulate has remained a homogenous entity since the early spacefaring period, only a few dialects exist. They tend to arise from the jargon of specialized professions rather than planetary or regional linguistic drift.

Some words in the Zhodani language have been included in this book, but others will likely be needed in the course of any adventures involving Zhodani, especially for personal and world names. Words in Zhodani, as in English, have definite letter frequencies and syllable patterns. Zhodani syllables are formed from up to three elements: an initial consonant sound, a vowel sound, and a final consonant sound. The tables below show the various sounds and their relative frequencies. The number in parenthesis shows the total of the relative frequencies; thus initial consonant "B" occurs an avarage of 3 times in 128, vowel "I" 8 times in 31.

The Core Expeditions

[Continued]

The Ancient device was transformed from a museum piece to a state secret overnight, to be used and examined only under very strictly controlled circumstances. All of its visions or premonitions were carefully noted and recorded.

The Zhodani Supreme Council was faced with a dilemma. The Ancient map device clearly had the ability to foretell the future, at least in limited circumstances. It had also been proven a reliable map of the star systems coreward (at least by expeditions which had reached the first hundred parsecs of the route). They could ignore the device, hiding it away in the archives and never investigating its potential. Or they could analyze its map and use its potential to expand coreward.

They chose to use the projector. To date, seven major core expeditions have been mounted to travel the route shown in the projector. There have also been hundreds of minor expeditions checking out systems off the main route, or even beyond the map's data.

The Third Expedition met armed resistance – a xenophobic culture encompassing seven systems (but without jump drive) reacted violently when the Zhodani arrived. The Zhodani were prepared: the projector's images had included space battles. The xenophobes' resistance was crushed and their worlds bypassed.

The most recent major expedition was 370 years ago, in 750. The Supreme Council is planning the Eighth Expedition – but meanwhile, numerous smaller expeditions are underway, exploring unknown space to either side of the main corridor.

ZHODANI SOUND FREQUENCY TABLE

Initial Consonants (128)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
B	3	*b*at
BL	2	*bl*ood
BR	3	*br*ing
CH	3	*ch*ain
CHT	7	whi*ch t*ype
D	6	*d*oll
DL	4	pa*ddl*e
DR	3	*dr*ain
F	3	*f*ool
FL	2	*fl*ood
FR	2	*fr*y
J	4	*j*oy
JD	3	char*ged*
K	3	*k*id
KL	1	he*ckl*e
L	2	*l*ong
M	1	*m*oor
N	5	*n*ew
P	4	*p*oor
PL	4	*pl*ay
PR	2	*pr*ey
Q	1	like *k*ing
QL	1	like *cl*ing
QR	1	like *cr*own
R	3	*r*un
S	4	*s*un
T	3	*t*own
TL	6	*Tl*aloc (Aztec)
TS	2	ca*ts*
V	3	*v*ine
VL	1	*Vl*and
VR	1	*vr*oom

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
Y	2	*y*ellow
Z	3	*z*ebra
ZD	6	maz*d*a
ZH	4	mea*s*ure
ZHD	6	zh+d

Vowels (31)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
A	7	l*o*ck
E	8	g*e*t
I	5	k*i*t
IA	4	*ya*nk
IE	4	l*aye*r
O	2	g*o*
R	1	P*r*zemysl (Polish)

Final Consonants (47)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
B	1	cra*b*
BL	4	a*ble*
BR	4	la*bor*
CH	3	whi*ch*
D	2	ha*d*
DL	4	pa*ddle*
DR	4	ba*dder*
F	3	cli*ff*
FL	3	wa*ffle*
FR	3	a*fr*aid
J	2	a*ge*
K	1	pi*k*e
KL	2	he*ckle*
KR	1	cra*cker*
L	7	do*ll*

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
M	1	da*m*
N	1	ca*n*
NCH	4	bra*nch*
NJ	3	ni*nja*
NS	3	ca*ns*
NSH	4	n + sh
NT	2	ca*nt*
NZ	3	n + z
NZH	4	n + zh
P	1	ca*p*
PL	4	a*pple*
PR	4	*pr*ey
Q	1	like *k*ing
QL	1	like *cl*ing
QR	1	like *cr*own
R	3	*r*ed
SH	4	wi*sh*
T	2	li*t*
TL	5	*Tl*aloc (Aztec)
TS	4	li*ts*
V	3	ha*ve*
VL	2	*Vl*and
VR	3	*vr*oom
Z	5	*z*ebra
ZH	4	mea*s*ure
'	4	glottal stop

Notes: Unpronounceable letter combinations (any two consecutive three-letter consonant clusters) are truncated to just the initial consonant cluster.

The CVC sequence RRR is truncated to R.

Zhodani Names

Proles have two names – a personal and family name. Each has a child's name which is used until age 18, at which point the individual selects a personal name for use in adulthood. Both are drawn from a wide variety of traditional names. The family name may be taken from either mother or father; different families trace lineage through paternal or maternal lines. Family names are numerous, most originating in place names (town, estate or planet) or occupation (farmer, baker, mechanic, radioman) although the original significance may be lost. Use the word generation system, but add a suffix like *-qaf* ("from," as in Dliant Jdiprzhdilqaf, or Dliant from Jdiprzhdil, a large estate on Zhodane) and *-nad* ("-er," as in Tliaqrnad, or miller, from Tliaqre' ["to grind grain"]).

Intendants follow the same scheme as proles but suffix -iepr after their personal name. Thus if Dliant Jdiprzhdilqaf had been discovered to be psionic, his personal name would be Dliantiepr.

Nobles have one name with a suffix which indicates title: *-atl* corresponds to Status 3, *-stebr* to Status 4, *-tlas* to Status 5, *-tlasche'* to Status 6. Several suffixes for Status 7+ exist, the most common of which is *-iashav*.

Sample names:

Prole: Qenzh Chtilnats, Shtelke' Dliatsevqaf, Plevianeqr Stonjinad.

GMG '98

Intendant: Tliablzhdiliepr Dlenjiashfriapqaf, Plitsiepr Fezdepniajnad, Dle'yazheiepr Prenchinzhqaf.

Noble: Detspreflatl, Jrvatsistebr, Chipldlastlas, Stezfialtlasche'.

Deliberately using a short form of a Zhodani's name (e.g., "Tlia" for Tliablzhdiliepr) implies a close romantic relationship. Unless such exists, doing so in public, especially with a noble, is one way to get arrested for re-education.

Zhodani Word Generation Table

The word generation table allows ordinary dice to determine Zhodani words. Sound frequencies in the table are approximate. The table uses two dice – one red (or another color) and one white. Word generation involves three steps: determining word length, determining syllable types, and determining syllable components.

Word Length: Words may be almost any length, although words of more than six syllables are rare. Word length can be produced by rolling 1d to get the number of syllables (to speed generation, the GM can treat any word of three or more syllables as only three). Or, the player or GM can specify word length.

Syllable Type: For each syllable in a word, generate the type of syllable. The *Basic* table is used for initial syllables, and for those occurring after a syllable of type VC or CVC. The *Alternate* table is used for syllables which occur after type V or CV syllables.

Syllable Components: The component consonants and vowels for a syllable are determined from the remaining tables. By inspection of the syllable type, the correct column is determined (initial consonant, vowel or final consonant). Roll one die to determine which table in the column is used, followed by two dice to determine the specific vowel or consonant to be used.

Word Generation Example: The GM needs to name a new Zhodani NPC. He throws one die (rolling 2) to get the name length: two syllables. He then rolls 1d twice on the basic table (6, 4) to find the initial syllable type: CVC. Since the first syllable is type CVC, he must roll another pair of dice on the basic table again for the second syllable type (rolling 3, 4) and gets VC.

For the syllable CVC, each component must be determined. Rolling 1d (4) followed by two more dice (1, 5) for the initial consonant produces *pr.* For the vowel, rolling another die and getting 2 followed by 6,3 produces *e.* For the final consonant, rolling 3 followed by 2, 5 produces *nch.* The initial syllable is *prench.*

Next, each component must be determined for the syllable VC. Rolling for the vowel 3 followed by 6, 5 gives *i;* rolling 4 followed by 3, 1 for the final consonant produces *nzh.* The Zhodani name, then, is *Prenchinzh.* In accordance with the rule for Zhodani names, we would then add a suffix to indicate the character's status. If he were an intendant, for example, the *-iepr* suffix would be added, giving *Prenchinzhiepr.*

ZHODANI WORD GENERATION TABLES

Basic

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	V	V	V	CV	CV	CV
2	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC
3	VC	VC	VC	CVC	CVC	CVC
4	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC
5	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC
6	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC

For initial syllables, or after VC or CVC.

Alternate

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	V	V	V	V	V	V
2	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV C	V
3	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC V	C
4	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC C V C
5	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC C V C
6	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC

For syllables after CV or V.

Initial Consonant 1

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	B	B	B	B	B	BL
2	BL	BL	BR	BR	BR	BR
3	BR	CH	CH	CH	CH	CH
4	CH	CH	CH	CH	CH	CH
5	CH	CHT	CHT	CHT	CHT	CHT
6	CHT	CHT	D	D	D	D

Initial Consonant 2

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	D	D	D	D	D	DL
2	DL	DL	DL	DL	DL	DL
3	DR	DR	DR	DR	DR	F
4	F	F	F	F	FL	FL
5	FL	FR	FR	FR	J	J
6	J	J	J	J	J	JD

Initial Consonant 3

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	JD	DJ	DJ	DJ	K	K
2	K	K	K	KL	KL	KR
3	KR	L	L	L	M	M
4	N	N	N	N	N	N
5	N	N	P	P	P	P
6	P	P	P	PL	PL	PL

Initial Consonant 4

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	PL	PL	PL	PL	PR	PR
2	PR	Q	Q	QL	QL	QR
3	QR	R	R	R	R	R
4	S	S	S	S	S	S
5	S	SH	SH	SH	SH	SH
6	SH	SH	SHT	SHT	SHT	SHT

Initial Consonant 5

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	SHT	SHT	SHT	T	T	T
2	T	T	ST	ST	ST	ST
3	ST	ST	ST	TL	TL	TL
4	TL	TL	TL	TL	TL	TL
5	TL	TS	TS	TS	V	V
6	V	V	V	VL	VL	VR

Initial Consonant 6

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	VR	Y	Y	Y	Z	Z
2	Z	Z	Z	ZD	ZD	ZD
3	ZD	ZD	ZD	ZD	ZD	ZD
4	ZD	ZH	ZH	ZH	ZH	ZH
5	ZH	ZH	ZHD	ZHD	ZHD	ZHD
6	ZHD	ZHD	ZHD	ZHD	ZHD	ZHD

Vowel 1

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	A	A	A	A	A	A
2	A	A	A	A	A	A
3	A	A	A	A	A	A
4	A	A	A	A	A	A
5	A	A	A	A	A	A
6	A	A	A	A	A	A

Vowel 2

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	A	A	A	A	A	A
2	A	A	A	A	A	A
3	A	E	E	E	E	E
4	E	E	E	E	E	E
5	E	E	E	E	E	E
6	E	E	E	E	E	E

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BUSINESS AND ECONOMY

The Zhodani economy is a blend of feudalism, capitalism and state socialism. Individuals are free to own property and make money. They can choose their job . . . but will typically be steered toward a particular field based on early testing and aptitudes. It is considered anti-social not to work if able. Individuals may quit a job – but doing so because of unhappiness, as opposed to because a new opportunity has opened up, is seen as anti-social, and may result in a visit from the Thought Police and re-education.

Small family businesses are owned and operated by proles, but often a local noble has a part-interest in them as well. Generally, a prole will approach a local noble with a business proposal, and if it seems reasonable, the noble will provide a certain degree of capital and use his influence to assist with permits, contracts, etc. In exchange, the noble gets part-interest in the company. This is not considered "favoritism" – anyone can approach a noble; the profits from a successful business are seen as benefiting everyone. Or a prole might instead use a financial institute or try to interest a larger corporation.

Corporations of planetary or subsector size are often owned directly by a particular noble, or more often, a noble family; they may also be run by a large financial holding company that represents the interests of stockholders, most of which are individual nobles or intendants seeking diversified investments for their income.

Single noble families dominate a few megacorporations, but the majority are controlled by holding companies representing numerous interests. In many cases the Zhodani Consulate is one of these interests, with part of the company being state-owned (and that portion of the profits going to support the state). This is especially true of defense contractors and companies working as public service providers. In general, Zhodani industry is much more "nationalized" than that of the Imperium, the state having a stronger role in it.

Zhodani megacorporations doing business within the Consulate include:

Chiadle

Chiadle is a major heavy industrial combine, noted for its rugged farm and factory machinery and industrial, maintenance and repair robots. Chiadle also makes many utility vehicles and armored personnel carriers used by the Zhodani Army and Consular Guard. Chiadle equipment has been exported to some Vargr states and neutral worlds. The company has significant holdings in the Spinward Marches in Cronor subsector.

Ibr Ajklia Driachobl (IAD)

An electronics and consumer products giant, IAD is best known for its quality computer software, making everything from computer operating systems to starship navigation programs. Some IAD software (chiefly translation programs) is even marketed within the Imperium and Vargr Extents.

Priantqlovr Drafr

This megacorporation dominates transport and passenger service within the Zhodani border province of *Iadr Nsobl*, with a home port at Cronor; its name means "Military Star Shipping." It is owned by a Zhodani noble family, but enjoys a permanent military subsidy as a reserve arm of the Zhodani navy. Its ships are armed and can be called up or requisitioned by the Navy when needed.

Tanzhrtl Zofrtia (TanZof)

TanZof is one of the largest manufacturers of civilian starships within the Consulate. TanZof passenger vessels are noted for their excellent attention to internal ergonomics. A ride on a TanZof liner is always a pleasant experience.

TanZof gigs and pinnaces have been used by the navy, but until recently it had not manufactured warships. In the military build-up preceding the Fifth Frontier War, TanZof bid on and received a contract to build a new class of patrol frigate. Unfortunately, TanZof encountered problems dealing with military subcontractors who were not used to working with it, resulting in many of its vessels coming too late for the war, and others experiencing problems in service, particularly with weapon installations, including one catastrophic launch software error in which a missile was prematurely detonated within a turret. A Naval investigation is ongoing; in the meantime, a number of senior TanZof executives in the Quality Assurance division have voluntarily reduced their salaries and undergone counseling.

While TanZof has had difficulties with its military design bureau, its civilian ships remain in high demand.

Tliazhashal

The largest Zhodani defense contractor, Tliazhashal manufacturers starships, grav vehicles, robots, military electronics, energy weapons and scientific instruments. Tliazhashal Shipyards are the major military shipbuilder in the Consulate. They have been very busy of late, replacing losses from the Fifth Frontier War and building a new generation of TL12 warships.

Tliazhashal does not construct civilian merchantmen, but does build scout and survey vessels, and sell many prospecting and lab ship vessels to belters, universities and research firms.

They also own and operate a small fleet of survey and scientific vessels. The Zhodani Consulate has no equivalent to the Imperial Scout Service, and as such privatizes many of those functions not directly related to the navy. Tliazhashal's Survey Division performs, under Consular contract, routine astrographical surveys throughout Zhodani and neighboring space. Tliazhashal is also the major provider of equipment and civilian personnel for the Zhodani Core Expeditions.

Vowel 3

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	E	E	E	E	E	E
2	E	E	E	E	E	E
3	E	E	E	E	E	E
4	E	E	E	E	E	E
5	E	E	E	E	E	E
6	E	E	E	I	I	I

Vowel 4

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	I	I	I	I	I	I
2	I	I	I	I	I	I
3	I	I	I	I	I	I
4	I	I	I	I	I	I
5	I	I	I	I	I	I
6	I	I	IA	IA	IA	IA

Vowel 5

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA
2	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA
3	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA
4	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA	IA
5	IE	IE	IE	IE	IE	IE
6	IE	IE	IE	IE	IE	IE

Vowel 6

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	IE	IE	IE	IE	IE	IE
2	IE	IE	IE	IE	IE	IE
3	IE	IE	IE	IE	O	O
4	O	O	O	O	O	O
5	O	O	O	O	O	O
6	R	R	R	R	R	R

Final Consonant 1

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	B	B	BL	BL	BL	BL
2	BL	BL	BL	BR	BR	BR
3	BR	BR	BR	BR	CH	CH
4	CH	CH	CH	D	D	D
5	D	DL	DL	DL	DL	DL
6	DL	DL	DR	DR	DR	DR

Final Consonant 2

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	DR	DR	DR	F	F	F
2	F	F	FL	FL	FL	FL
3	FL	FR	FR	FR	FR	FR
4	J	J	J	J	K	K
5	KL	KL	KL	KL	KR	KR
6	L	L	L	L	L	L

Final Consonant 3

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	L	L	L	L	L	L
2	M	M	N	N	NCH	NCH
3	NCH	NCH	NCH	NCH	NCH	NJ
4	NJ	NJ	NJ	NJ	NS	NS
5	NS	NS	NS	NSH	NSH	NSH
6	NSH	NSH	NSH	NSH	NT	NT

Final Consonant 4

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	NT	NT	NTS	NTS	NTS	NTS
2	NZ	NZ	NZ	NZ	NZ	NZH
3	NZH	NZH	NZH	NZH	NZH	NZH
4	P	P	PL	PL	PL	PL
5	PL	PL	PL	PR	PR	PR
6	PR	PR	PR	PR	Q	Q

Final Consonant 5

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	QL	QL	QR	QR	R	R
2	R	R	R	SH	SH	SH
3	SH	SH	SH	SH	T	T
4	T	T	TS	TS	TS	TS
5	TS	TS	TS	TL	TL	TL
6	TL	TL	TL	TL	TL	TL

Final Consonant 6

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	V	V	V	V	V	VL
2	VL	VL	VL	VR	VR	VR
3	VR	VR	Z	Z	Z	Z
4	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	ZH
5	ZH	ZH	ZH	ZH	ZH	ZH
6	'	'	'	'	'	

Vestabl-Makarin

Vestabl-Makarin's name indicates a wish to claim descent from the original Makarin combine (founded circa -2800) that was involved in the first contacts with Vargr traders. Actually the company itself is considerably younger, dating only to 743, but was incorporated on the same world (in Ziafrplians sector) as the original Makarin combine and views itself as its successor. In 992 it merged with Vestabl (owners of the largest fleet of ore carriers in Zhodani space) to form the present combine.

Vestabl-Makarin operates subsidized merchants with Consulate-wide interests, but is best known for dominating trade along the Zhodani-Vargr Marches, especially with Gvurrdon sector. Unusual for a Zhodani corporation, many of its ships are armed, and during the Fifth Frontier War a number of them were pressed into serve as troop carriers; two were lost in action.

SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE INSTITUTIONS

THE THOUGHT POLICE

Perhaps the most misunderstood of Zhodani institutions is what Imperials call the Zhodani Thought Police, the *Tavrchedl'*. The Thought Police is a branch of the government charged with maintaining "right thought" in the population. To non-Zhodani they are seen as a secret police constantly spying on the population with telepathy. Their mission is to catch anyone discontented with the system, their lot in life, or their superiors, and brainwash them into acceptance.

The Zhodani viewpoint is completely different. The term *Tavrchedl'* literally means "Guardians of Our Morality." The organization is seen as filling a role much closer to fireman or EMT than policeman.

Zhodani society is a happy one, but even in a happy society, individual members can fall prey to depression, frustration or disillusionment. They can still suffer from mental illness or imbalances. Individuals can find themselves losing trust or confidence in the system. It is for these people that the Tavrchedl' exist.

Thought Police monitor all of Zhodani society, conducting periodic examinations of individuals in order to ensure that everyone's mental health is at acceptable levels. But the Thought Police also conduct random sweeps of the community, looking for signs of unacceptable behavior or deviant thought patterns. When they find such patterns, they seek them out, find the source and remedy the situation.

Tavrchedl' are never faceless guardians. They keep case files on all proles (and forward them along should the proles move) and have access to psychological evaluations made at schools dating back to childhood. The local Tavrchedl' always sends a few officers to visit any newcomers as they move into a neighborhood: a friendly meeting, and a "call us if there is any problem." This is designed to make people feel more secure, and to see the officer as a friendly face. But it also has another purpose: to see that person's face and "feel" their emotional signature, so that the Thought Police officer can more easily scan him during routine neighborhood patrols.

One group that can escape the regular monitoring of the Tavrchedl' are civilian merchant crews, especially those who spend lengthy periods outside the Consulate. Instead, the mental health of such individuals is usually the responsibility of the ship's doctor, normally an intendant telepath, who reports to whatever intendant or noble captains the vessel. If there is a serious problem, the doctor will report to the captain, and, if it can't be worked out, the patient will be sedated or confined (ideally in low passage) until they can reach a civilized Zhodani port.

The mind shields of nobles and intendants provide a certain degree of mental privacy: the Tavrchedl' can detain them only if deeds rather than thoughts suggest criminal behavior. Quite often, however, a noble or intendant will voluntarily come to the Thought Police for help. Every Zhodani is trained almost from birth to regard the Tavrchedl' as friends, and to seek out their help at the first sign of unhappiness
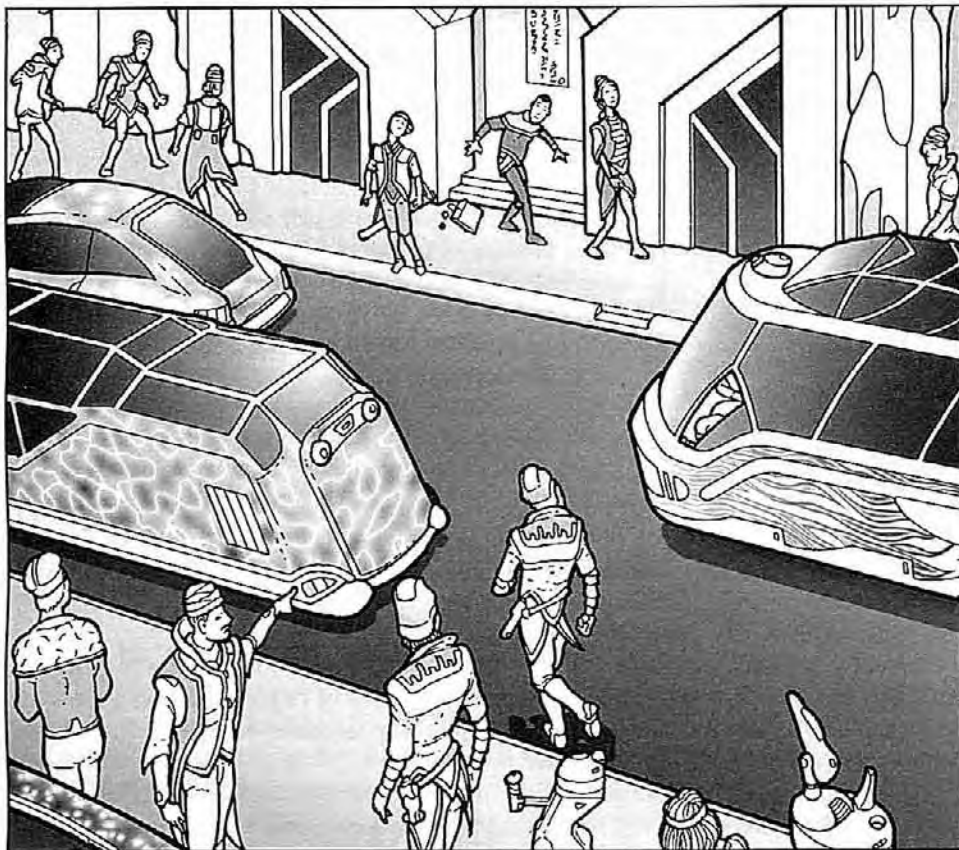
(in the same way as Imperials are urged to seek medical attention for a physical ailment).

The rights of foreign nationals vary with whatever treaty their states have with the Consulate; the treaty with the Imperium is unclear in its protections against casual scrying.

Re-Education

The cure for any aberrant behavior is re-education. Psionics has made this extremely efficient. Long ago, psionics made possible studies which confirmed what educational techniques worked and how efficiently. They allowed academics to plan out lessons with far greater efficiency, and create tests and examinations that confirm that learning has taken place. Psychologists and mental health professionals were able to study the mind and develop mood and behavior-altering techniques with levels of ecffectiveness unheard of elsewhere.

The result is excellent diagnosis and careful treatment in re-education centers. When treatment is completed, the individual rejoins society without any stigma or blot on his record; the period of re-education is much like a period of recovery from illness.

In game terms, re-education represents the removal of mental disadvantages and the substitution of other ones. It is performed as a Contest between the *lower* of the re-educator's Telereceive and Psychology skills and subject's Will, and requires one day for every point worth of a mental disadvantage to be added or removed. Modifiers: the re-educator rolls at -1 per point of disadvantage involved, at -2 if the facilities of a typical Tavrchedl' office (special drugs, monitoring equipment, etc.) are unavailable and a further -3 if lacking the detailed psych-profile case records the office usually has on Zhodani citizens. (These could be absent if an individual has traveled from another world; in cases of "insane" crimes Zhodani authorities may incarcerate individuals for a few weeks to request and await their arrival (or a report they cannot be found). Such records *will* travel with military personnel as they are assigned to different bases, and be transferred when civilians change their residence, move to another job, etc.

The Imperium and the Frontier Wars

Although it had known of it for some centuries, the Consulate first came into solid contact with the expanding Third Imperium around 550. War followed almost immediately (589-604).

The Consulate believed Imperial traders and settlers were moving into subsectors that the Zhodani had already discovered and targeted for colonization, and had begun building up strength in its border regions. As tensions mounted, the Imperial colonists decided to strike first. Their rag-tag squadrons were shattered by the powerful forces the Consulate used, but they achieved their purpose, provoking local Zhodani commanders to mount retaliatory strikes into the Imperium. These in turn drew Imperial counterattacks. As the situation spiraled out of control, Zhodani Provincial Officer Tliaklabtl, in command of the Iadr Nsobl fleet, convinced the provincial council to mobilize, and the Zhodani launched the strength they had been hoarding in a full-scale offensive.

Lasting for 15 years, the First Frontier War engulfed all eight of the coreward subsectors of the Spinward Marches. In the second year of the war, the Zhodani rallied to their side Vargr of the neighboring Gvurrdon sector, forming the First Outworld Coalition. The rapid Zhodani offensive caught the Imperium largely unprepared. The Zhodani quickly expelled Imperial settlements from Iakr and Briakqra' sectors, and the continued fighting was characterized by destructive raids against high-population worlds in the Marches by Outworld forces.

The decisive moment of the war occurred in 604 when now-Consular Officer (grand admiral) Tliaklabtl attempted a bold "war-winning" stroke through Jae Tellona. It was to be coordinated with a Vargr thrust from coreward that would trap the Imperial fleet (which was still concentrating its forces) between a Zhodani anvil and a Vargr hammer. She caught the Imperial fleet at Zivije/ Rhylanor, but much of the planned Vargr support failed to arrive, many having diverted to plunder worlds left undefended by the massing Imperial battle fleet. Attacking regardless, Tliaklabtl met her match in the brilliant defensive tactics of Grand Admiral Olav hault-Plankwell, the Imperial commander, in a bloody battle of attrition in which the cream of the Zhodani navy – the Iadr Nsobl combined fleet – perished almost to the last ship. With them died any hope of Zhodani victory.

The negotiated armistice left the Zhodani in control of the Cronor subsector of the Marches, but established extensive Imperial claims elsewhere in the sector, and was acclaimed an Imperial victory.

If the re-educator wins, the disadvantage is removed (or reduced in potency, if it has several levels); otherwise, the subject remains incorrigible, but repeated attempts can be made at the usual penalty for repeated attempts. If the re-educator scores a critical success, he may also remove or insert a second disadvantage of equivalent or lesser value; on a critical failure a mistake is made and the wrong disadvantage is inserted or removed. If the patient gets a critical success, he convinces the re-educator (and probably himself) that he is "cured," but the effect will break down within hours, days or weeks (GM's decision) after release. On a critical failure, the patient acquires a permanent level of Weak Will (or loses a level of Strong Will) as a side effect of the process.

How the Thought Police Operate

Proles have a *right* to happiness. Intendants and nobles don't; they have taken on the cares of society and the Consulate, and it is understood that this means that they will not always be completely happy.

Usually, an unhappy prole will call the Thought Police long before they notice him. All Zhodani citizens learn, as children, the signs of depression and discontent in themselves as well as others. They know that help is just a vid-call away, and that being happy is both their duty and their right.

But sometimes the Thought Police must be more proactive. Occasionally a prole will sit awake late at night, depressed and angry. Some aspect of society has affected him adversely, and he has been unable to cope with it. Perhaps he lost his old job and is unhappy with his new one; maybe he is jealous of a neighbor who is more successful than he is. The thought patterns spell deviance, and roving Thought Police patrols pick them up (using Emotion Sense or Telereceive).

Late at night, there is a knock at the door. The prole knows the Thought Police have arrived. He invites them in – he views them as emergency medical personnel rather than oppressive law enforcement officers. They enter, talk quietly or loudly depending on what their quick diagnosis indicates. After a few minutes, the prole leaves with the Thought Police. If the person lives alone, a note is left behind, to tell any concerned neighbors who might enter where he has gone. Already, the prole feels slightly better, knowing that someone cares. The Thought Police will also contact the prole's employer. By law, he must be given time off with pay; costs are covered by the state.

A few days or weeks later, the prole returns, much happier. His new job is exactly what he needs and wants, a perfect outlet for his ambitions (perhaps he has been given slightly different duties; perhaps he has been shown the vital importance of the position he occupies). His successful neighbor, he now knows, fills an important role in society, and pays for his success with added responsibilities. Everything is fair. The world seems brighter and clearer.

Tavrchedl' Hierarchy

The Thought Police are a civilian rather than a military body. They are organized into levels of authority which parallel the various ruling councils. Thought Police precincts are organized to cover the same population governed by a local council. Higher levels of Thought Police organization are responsible for re-education and are supported by higher level councils. At the planetary level, the Thought Police command structure is responsible for training new officers, and is supported by the planetary council. Higher level councils support Thought Police research and development, usually of refined techniques for determination or treatment of aberrant behavior.

The Supreme Council is responsible for ultimate policy decisions concerning the Thought Police.

The Second Frontier War

The Zhodani licked their wounds and spent the next dozen years integrating their new territories and rebuilding their navy. The Imperium did neither: Rather than consolidating his victory, hault-Plankwell turned around and launched an expedition against the Imperial Core, taking the Iridium Throne.

This ignited a series of Civil Wars within the Imperium. Seizing their chance, the Zhodani formed the Second Outworld Coalition and renewed their attack in the Second Frontier War (615-620). However, Zhodani forces had been badly battered by their defeat only 14 years before, and even with their Vargr allies, could not muster the strength to break Imperial defenses. After a long holding action, the Imperium assembled large forces and forced a stalemate. The Imperial Admiral on the spot, Arbellatra Alkhalikoi (later Empress Arbellatra) ceded more territory. This won a shaky peace that lasted nearly 350 years.

The Zhodani regarded the outcome of the Second Frontier War as a mitigated success: Imperial expansion was halted. Immediate Zhodani territorial ambitions were largely satisfied by the gains of the Second Frontier War, and their efforts in the Marches became primarily focused on integrating new territory and populations.

THE MILITARY THOUGHT POLICE

The *Tavrchedl' Drianafl* (lit. "Guardians of our Morality for Protection of the Consulate") are officially a part of the Consular Guard, but many military thought police serve on detached duty in the regular Navy and Army, or in regional units. The military thought police have a twofold purpose: maintain the moral and mental health of the Consulate's troops and operate in enemy, disputed or occupied territory to protect the Consulate and its citizens.

The Tavrchedl' Drianafl is less delicate than the forces which deal with Zhodani civilians. Its methods (because it often deals with large populations of discontented individuals, and because these lack the detailed psych files of Zhodani) are coarser or harsher than most Zhodani would prefer.

The military Thought Police is responsible for administration of occupied Imperial worlds and suppression of guerrilla activity. The military administration is concerned primarily with maintaining a safe and docile population, and proven methods of achieving such a condition include some brutal exploits to prove they are serious, followed by inclusion of locals in the governing process. The people that are included often receive a quick re-education and then take their positions with sincerity and dedication to the Zhodani cause. To the rest of the population, such an individual may appear to be brainwashed or coerced.

THE EYE AND THE HAND

The *Tozjabr* (lit. "the Eye and Hand") is the Consulate's primary intelligence and covert operations agency. Often referred to as "Zhodani Intelligence" or "Consular Intelligence" in the Imperium, the operations of the Tozjabr are frequently confused with those of the Military Thought Police.

In fact, the Tozjabr are a quite distinct Zhodani institution. They are relatively "young," having been established circa 550, during the period of tension that led to the First Frontier War. Prior intelligence-gathering activities and special operations had previously been shared between various military branches and diplomatic offices, with counter-intelligence handled by the Drianafl Tavrchedl' (the Military Thought Police).

Faced with the juggernaut of the Third Imperium, it became apparent to the Zhodani Supreme Council that treating covert operations as a simple adjunct to military or diplomatic affairs was no longer practical. The conflict with the Imperium would be of long duration, and military action would simply be exclamation marks in a lengthy cold war in which espionage, subversion and propaganda were weapons of necessity.

With the need for a dedicated covert operations and foreign intelligence organization established, it took some years for the Supreme Council to agree on its character, and whether it would be military or civilian in nature. It was feared the moral authority and integrity of the Tavrchedl' Drianafl would be compromised if they were also tasked with performing regrettably necessary actions that would, if performed within the consulate, be against Zhodani law. For this reason, it was ultimately decided the agency would be a civilian body independent of the Thought Police.

Tozjabr organization is similar to most other intelligence agencies. Operatives includes analysts and field agents; most of the latter are intendants, but a few are proles. Offices are established at the provincial, sector and subsector level, and at embassies on client states and within the Imperium.

Telepathy makes the insertion of foreign "moles" into the Tozjabr very difficult, but the Zhodani character makes finding suitable candidates for undercover agents and instilling proper tradecraft a difficult and lengthy proposition, even with telepathy. The Tozjabr prefer to recruit as both analysts and agents individuals with some experience with non-Zhodani culture, e.g., mercantile, academic, diplomatic or military personnel who have been stationed abroad. Even so, the stress of making decisions and compromises alien to Zhodani thought can be considerable. Extensive counseling is given to operatives before retirement, but a small number of Tozjabr agents are unable to readjust to life in the Consulate and have required re-education or, in a few cases, have turned to crime or defected to foreign powers.

No Peace
Between Us . . .

The Imperium, too, was tired of war. During the period 650-750 cultural exchanges memories of the last war had faded and cultural exchanges flourished. Many Zhodani academics toured the Imperium, and vice versa (writing socio-political studies that have rarely been equaled since due to their first-hand sources). This cooperation extended to many psionic institutes: in some regions it was actually accepted to have a visiting Zhodani adept, or to go to the Consulate for advanced training. ·

Around 770, the long peace began to crumble. First, the Zhodani policy of engagement was predicated on the assumption that the Imperials would, eventually, adopt Zhodani views. Many Zhodani politicians did not wish to wait for the lengthy changes necessary within the Imperium, and instead attempted to influence uncommitted border worlds and client states all along the frontier. Likewise, local interests within the Imperium saw these worlds as fair game for commercial and economic exploitation, and raised fears that they would fall into the hands of the Zhodani.

Within the Spinward Marches, a number of neutral worlds in Querion and Jewell subsectors were torn between nativist, pro-Zhodani and pro-Imperial factions. Both interstellar states offered aid and assistance to their respective clients. The Zhodani Consulate provided funds to support psionic institutes in the fervent hope that such worlds would evolve into more Zhodanilike societies. When fledgling pro-psionic parties did achieve power, they lent Tavrchedl' advisors to help them retain it. In general, the Imperium took a more arms-length approach, but Imperial megacorporations often provided arms, equipment and mercenary strikers to prop up pro-Imperial governments and, sometimes, to overthrow those who took a pro-Zhodani line.

Tozjabr Operations

The new Tozjabr was formed in time to participate in the First Frontier War, but lacking experience, had relatively minimal impact, being essentially an appendage of Zhodani naval intelligence despite the original wishes of its founders.

Tozjabr operations became bolder during the long period of tension leading up the Third Frontier War, when it was largely responsible for the covert funding of a number of psionic institutes throughout the Spinward Marches (and even beyond). Some of these institutes became *de facto* schools turning border world or Imperial citizens into Zhodani agents.

Since the Second Frontier War, one of the major concerns of the Tozjabr has been activities in the Vargr Extents. These are aimed at propping up friendly governments (such as the 40th Squadron) and, in some cases, weakening unfriendly ones. On the simplest level, these involve gathering intelligence to determine the stability and intentions of ostensible allies, and cultivating a web of Vargr agents. Sometimes more direct measures are involved, such as providing covert sponsorship to various groups whose charisma and prestige would be weakened if it were known that non-Vargr arms or funds were flowing toward them. It is suspected by the Imperium that the unusual longevity of the 40th Squadron, a long-time Zhodani ally, is a direct result of Tozjabr machinations.

Between the Third and Fifth Frontier Wars, the Tozjabr stepped up their operations in numerous client states adjoining the Spinward Marches, and in a few cases is believed to have been directly responsible for destabilizing pro-Imperial governments and pushing worlds into the Zhodani bloc.

In 1042 the Tozjabr attempted its most audacious coup to date. Long the flagship of the Imperium's Five Sisters Flotilla (208th Fleet), the *Lightning*-class cruiser *Vermilion Stance* was retired from active service in 1040, being replaced by several ships of smaller tonnage. Transferred to the Scouts, it underwent refit and refurbishment for 16 months at Mora and then was returned to the Five Sisters subsector preparatory to a long-range penetration into the client states to spinward. The mission included large-scale use of the on-board libraries and labs to enhance local technology as "a gift from the emperor."

The Tozjabr acquired the itinerary of the ship from agents within the Imperium, and arranged a surprise for the ship in the Garconne system. When it arrived, all went normally until the reception on the quarters deck. The Zhodani had procured a variety of data acquisition modules which were actually warbots in disguise. Programmed to act clumsily, they gave an image of a race intent on looking very advanced, while obviously having more show than substance. These modules were shipped to the *Stance* to acquire much of the technological data being given away. The ruse worked – each group of modules wandered in selected areas of the ship, accompanied by Tozjabr agents surgically altered to prevent detection. The takeover was set for four minutes to midnight (midnight exactly being too obvious). Had it not been for a curious fuel deck ensign who saw through a warbot's disguise, the plan would have worked perfectly

As it was, the Tozjabr failed to capture the ship, but in the resulting firefight the *Vermilion Stance* suffered enough casualties and internal damage that the much-publicized cruise was abandoned, resulting in a severe blow to Imperial prestige.

A perhaps-unfortunate legacy of the *Vermilion Stance* incident was the establishment of a flamboyant "cowboy" tradition in the Tozjabr. This was carried forward through the agency's next two directors, including the current holder of the position, Director Dezpritlasche'. A former Guards Commando major and Legion of Honor holder, her views on how special operations would favorably influence the course of the coming war were given great credence by the more hawkish elements within the Supreme Council. This led to them placing substantial naval and Consular Guard assets under Tozjabr direction.

During the years leading up to the Fifth Frontier War, Tozjabr focused its operations on the Spinward Marches. Its major accomplishment was to support the expansion of the Ine Givar movement across the Marches (often channeling funding and weapons through the Sword Worlds). The Tozjabr also used covert operations to

eliminate or suborn a number of Imperial pickets and listening posts, enabling a Zhodani task force to make its way undetected to within a mere parsec of Regina/Regina. Perhaps most impressively, it was able to infiltrate the Imperial corporation Magnetodynamics and establish a hidden Zhodani naval base on Fulacin in the Rhylanor subsector in the heart of Imperial territory. The naval base was only discovered by a band of civilian adventurers at the last minute through what amounted to sheer accident; had Murphy's Law not intervened, the Fulacin forward base might have enabled the Zhodani to successfully support the siege of Rhylanor and turn the tide of the war.

One operation that was *not* carried out was a planned assassination of Duke Norris, who made Dezpritlasche' nervous due to his former connections with the Imperial intelligence community. Intended to cause chaos throughout Regina prior to the arrival of the Zhodani fleet, the plan was overruled on advice of the naval high command, who considered Norris a "non-entity" and felt assassinations of sector nobility would have unfortunate political repercussions, hardening Imperial resistance and possibly alienating traditionalists in the Sword Worlds. Dezpritlasche' protested vigorously; her early recognition of Norris' importance has helped ensured her stay in office after the Fifth Frontier War lurched toward its unsatisfactory conclusion.

Future Interests

Overall, Tozjabr operations in the Fifth Frontier War can be said to have been carried out with a combination of ambition, flair and professionalism, but to have failed to achieve lasting or major results. It may be that the Zhodani placed too much faith in achieving strategic surprise, and that the large number of operations carried out themselves risked compromising that very surprise through early or accidental discovery.

With the present peace treaty between the Zhodani and the Imperium likely to hold firm for some years to come, the "secret war" is likely to increase in importance. The Tozjabr are presently attempting to rebuild those spy networks and contacts that were lost during the war.

Aside from their usual interest in Imperial political and military developments, Tozjabr agents are also involved in stirring up trouble in the Border Worlds, and are taking a keen interest in the current mysterious policies of the Darrian Confederation. Beyond the Marches, the agency has become extremely concerned with the anti-Human influence of the Church of the Chosen Ones in the Vargr Extents (which threatens their usual coalition with the Vargr states), and the growing strength of the newly encountered Drakarans near their trailing border.

THE MILITARY

Though they do not consider themselves a warrior people, the Zhodani do have a lengthy military tradition. There are three major services: the Navy, the Army, and the Consular Guard.

THE ZHODANI NAVY

Like the navies of the Imperium, the Zhodani navy operates at three levels, here termed Consular, Regional, and System.

The Consular Navy

This is the interstellar space navy tasked with obtaining space superiority during war, besieging enemy worlds, and protecting interstellar trade routes within the Zhodani Consulate. It is mainly equipped at TL10-11, but a few TL12 ships have been produced since the Fifth Frontier War. The Consular Navy is organized into eight Provincial Fleets, one per province.

Zhodani squadrons tend to follow a similar organization to that of the Imperium. In general, frontier systems are defended by squadrons of battleships and cruisers, with battle rider squadrons held back in reserve fleets within the Consulate.

The Third Frontier War

The First and Second Frontier Wars were fought primarily for territorial reasons and in response to direct provocation. The Third Frontier War was different. The Zhodani had long recognized that the Imperium's higher average technology level and its greater size could "out-produce" the Zhodani within a few centuries, and soon after that, economic imperatives would lead to new expansion that would push the Imperium into Zhodani territory. The Consulate planned the Third Frontier War in a deliberate effort to upset this situation.

The century leading up to the Third Frontier War was preceded by numerous skirmishes. Even so, many in the Zhodani government favored a simple policy of containment rather than outright war, and even after the Psionics Suppressions believed that "avoiding contamination" was a better road to take. Nevertheless, the view gradually grew that a new war was inevitable and if so, the Consulate had better strike first, rather than being caught by surprise as in the First Frontier War. By 960, the military had begun serious planning, even as the war party attempted to align support for the effort. In the end, they achieved support for a strictly limited war effort.

The Third Frontier War (979-986) was characterized more by commerce raiding and hit-and-run strikes than by great planetary sieges. Unwilling to escalate the war (with the large-scale commitment it would have required), the Imperium retaliated in kind. The result was severe disruption of commercial activities within the Marches. The Zhodani, with their state-controlled economy, were willing to accept these losses, as was the Imperial capital. The people of the Spinward Marches were not. The result was growing anti-Imperial sentiment on the part of the Marches' commercial interests and nobility, and criticism of the war effort.

Faced with growing demands to either escalate the war by actually invading the Zhodani Consulate (which was an unacceptable commitment of force, given the state of tensions on the Solomani Rim) or back down, then Emperor Styrx agreed to an armistice, with territorial adjustments heavily favoring the Zhodani.

More important from a Zhodani perspective was the political fallout from the war. Criticisms of Imperial handling of the crisis led to the Emperor's abdication. His successors, not wishing to be put into the same position, reinforced the fleets within the Marches. The taxes required to maintain these forces, combined with the chilling effect that the threat of any later Zhodani invasions imposed, effectively served as a brake on future Imperial expansion within the border region.

The biggest difference between the Consular Navy and the Imperial Navy is that a good percentage of the former's ships (12%, but only 5% of total tonnage) are occupied with exploration duties, which in the Imperium would be the province of the Scouts. Some Zhodani ships are dedicated exploration vessels packed with scientific instruments, while others are simply serving as escorts or on armed reconnaissance missions. Many are tasked with supporting the Zhodani core expeditions, but exploration also continues in other directions, albeit at a much slower pace.

This "warrior-explorer ethic" has a strong effect on Zhodani naval culture. Many Zhodani officers possess advanced degrees in xenology or other scientific fields as well as engineering or naval tactics, and senior officers will have spent a term or so serving on an exploration mission; as such, they are expected to be ready to be diplomats as well as soldiers when necessary.

Regional Navies

Regional navies operate the jump-capable warships that are raised by individual subsectors. They are under the control of the subsector's council. In peacetime each regional navy is responsible for patrolling space within its subsector's borders, especially near worlds that lack the technology level, population or wealth to support a system navy. In Iadr Nsobl and Shtochiadr provinces, the regional navies are relatively well equipped and experienced, due to constant operations against Vargr corsairs, Imperial forces and squabbling client states. In the other provinces, they are generally neglected and under-equipped, and mainly serve a "coast guard" type of function, rescuing ships that have misjumped into frontier worlds, ferrying disaster relief teams about and performing courier missions. In time of war the regional navies are placed under Consular Navy command.

System Navies

These are the planetary defense, system patrol and revenue collection squadrons of each world. They are primarily composed of non-jump capable vessels: revenue cutters, system defense boats, defense satellites and orbital fortresses. Unlike the Imperium, the Zhodani Consulate does not permit system navies to possess jump-capable warships (although client states may).

THE ZHODANI ARMY

The Zhodani Army comprises the planetary armed fighting forces of the individual worlds and subsectors within the Consulate. They deal with planetary surface actions, battles and campaigns. Where necessary, they may serve as ship's troops aboard naval vessels. The Zhodani Army is generally equipped at TL9-11, depending on the subsectors and worlds where particular units are raised.

The basic fighting element is the battalion, about 500-1,000 people and 50-150 vehicles, usually organized into three fighting and one headquarters and support company. Five battalions and support troops form a regiment; four regiments and supporting arms make a division. All units of a division will usually be based in the same subsector, but component regiments and battalions are often assigned to campaigns on different worlds.

On the battalion to divisional level, the Zhodani army has four main types of fighting formation:

Lift Infantry are ordinary soldiers who ride to battle in lightly armored grav vehicles. The majority wear combat armor and carry gauss rifles. They are supported at the battalion level by warbots and light scouting and artillery grav vehicles. Lift infantry regiments normally have three battalions of lift infantry, one of grav tanks (see below) and one of artillery. Lift infantry divisions consist of two regiments of lift infantry, one of lift mechanized infantry and one of artillery.

Lift Mechanized Infantry are similar to lift infantry on the battalion level, but all combat soldiers wear battledress and thus carry heavier weaponry. A lift mechanized regiment normally has two battalions of lift mechanized infantry, two battalions of grav tanks and one of artillery. A division has two lift mechanized regiments, one grav tank and one artillery regiment.

Grav Tanks are heavily armed and armored flying tanks. Grav tank battalions consist of 30-40 grav tanks and 50-60 supporting vehicles. Grav tank regiments have three grav tank, one lift mechanized infantry battalion and one artillery battalion. A division has two grav tank, one lift mechanized infantry and one artillery regiment.

Lift Cavalry battalions are highly mobile striking forces that mix mechanized infantry, fast scout vehicles and grav tanks in the same formation. Lift cavalry regiments comprise three battalions of lift cavalry and one of grav tanks and artillery. Lift cavalry divisions have three regiments of lift cavalry and one of artillery.

Other specialized units also exist on a battalion or regimental level, such as jump troops, commando groupments, engineers, etc.

Note: Zhodani organizational terms here and elsewhere are translated into the nearest Imperial equivalent (company, battalion, etc.), except where referring to psionic forces, which have been rendered idiomatically (groupment, detachment, and so on).

THE CONSULAR GUARD

The Consular Guard are an elite fighting force raised from throughout the Consulate and under the direct command of the Zhodani Supreme Council. They are maintained at a higher state of readiness than the Army, and are generally equipped at TL10-11.

The Consular Guard is sometimes thought of as the Zhodani equivalent of the Imperial Marines (albeit a TL lower), but this is inaccurate. Overall, a Guards division has more grav tank, artillery and supply units and fewer jump-trained battle-dress troopers than an Imperial Marine force. The Marines are focused on their mission as ship's troops and planetary assault, at which they are unexcelled. The Consular Guard is more of a multi-purpose elite force: it does train for planetary invasion, but is also used for regular army missions when the Army requires stiffening, and as a mobile reserve when campaigns go poorly. In general, it can be said the Guard contains a mix of forces good at most military tasks, but not experts in any single field.

Consular Guard organization on the battalion and regimental level is similar to that of the Zhodani Army, but tends to have a higher proportion of grav tanks, e.g., a lift infantry regiment has a mix of two lift infantry and one grav tank battalion.

Rise of the Hawks

The Fourth Frontier War, or "False War" (1082-84) was triggered by a border incident and was fought by reflex; it concluded in an armistice even before the Zhodani Supreme Council could receive news of the war and send orders to the front. The Fifth Frontier War, on the other hand, like the Third, was characterized by careful strategic planning.

The success of the Third Frontier War had strengthened the hand of the anti-Imperial faction in Consular politics. It had also led to the rise of a new Expansionist movement who believed that under the correct stimuli, the Imperium itself might be vulnerable.

Over the past two decades, some Zhodani think-tanks believed they had detected structural tensions within the Imperium itself. Factions in the Supreme Council and a dominant majority within the Iadr Nsobl provincial council that had supported this research believed an all-out effort to capture key worlds of the Spinward Marches might have sweeping repercussions throughout the Imperium. During the Third Frontier War, the Imperium had been structurally sound, but even so, the loss of confidence caused had led to an Emperor's resignation.

This time, it was hoped that a defeat of the Imperial forces would have a high probability of discrediting Emperor Strephon's rule, providing the necessary excuse for one or the other of the archdukes to seize power . . . resulting in a second Civil War, similar to that which had followed the Imperial victory during the First and Second Frontier Wars. Then, the Zhodani had lost their war and been unable to follow up. This time, a Zhodani victory would leave the Consulate in shape to take advantage of the turmoil. Some Zhodani hoped this would see the realization of the Expansionist dream of creating a new, pro-psionic state from the ashes of the old; the more pragmatic simply saw it as reducing the threat posed by the Imperium for a very long time.

The Fifth Frontier War

The exact timing of the Fifth Frontier War was the result of internal Consulate politics rather than any direct Imperial provocation. The accidental deaths of two Supreme Council nobles in 1096 led to a sudden realignment of forces that put a majority favoring a showdown with the Imperium in power. Seeing an opening, the war faction moved quickly to put long-planned military and covert operations in effect. Due to the growing influence of Tozjabr (see p. 31), these plans included a much heavier reliance on covert operations, including a hidden base at Fulacin/Rhylanor and substantial support for Ine Givar guerrilla activities.

The Fifth Frontier War erupted in 1107, when Zhodani forces launched a surprise attack on Regina/Regina in the Spinward Marches, supported by Vargr and Sword World allies and guerrilla uprisings. Unfortunately, an underestimation of the caliber of Imperial sector leadership and sheer bad luck combined to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. Although the Zhodani came very close to seizing key worlds that would have prevented Imperial reinforcement, their initial success turned into stalemate. In late 1109 new elections to Supreme Council combined with the deteriorating situation led many members to favor a negotiated settlement. Negotiations began with the Imperium, and in 1110 the war was over.

The resulting treaty led to some territorial realignment (in particular in the Sword Worlds region), but did not change the Zhodani Consulate's overall relationship with the Imperium. Nevertheless, although the Zhodani officially declared the war a victory (having "settled" certain border questions), it failed to achieve their intended aims. Worse from a Zhodani perspective, the war seems to have led to a strengthening of Imperial position within the Marches, with the appointment of the able Norris as Archduke. It is likely that the Zhodani are now rethinking their long-term strategy, and attempting to determine what a united Marches will mean in terms of future Imperial ambitions.

SAMPLE MILITARY UNIT: LIFT INFANTRY BATTALION

So what if the PCs are involved in a mercenary or other group operating on the Zhodani frontier and have the misfortune to encounter Zhodani Army or Consular Guard troops?

To give an example of what the Consulate usually deploys, the organization and equipment of a typical unit is described below. The *lift infantry battalion* is one of the most common ground formations of the Zhodani military. According to estimates made during the Fifth Frontier War, these units constituted about 32 percent of Zhodani combat battalions in the Spinward Marches; it's unlikely these statistics have changed much.

The lift infantry battalion is organized along fairly standard lines. Each battalion consists of a headquarters company and four rifle companies, for an ideal total of 799 personnel and 127 vehicles. In practice, normal peacetime attrition and delayed replacements will typically see an ordinary battalion about 3-5 percent under strength. The same organization is used in both lift infantry and lift mechanized units – the only difference is in the number and type of other battalions in the regiment and in whether the troops are equipped with combat armor or battledress.

Any position that requires a specific psi power, along with the required power and skill, in noted in italics; otherwise, the officer, while psionic (like all nobles or intendants) may have any talent, which will often be quite rudimentary. Of course, some officers may have additional powers beyond those required.

Headquarters Company

The headquarters company contains the following sub-units: a point defense platoon, a nuclear damper section, a maintenance platoon, a quartermaster platoon, a medical platoon, a communications platoon, a psion detachment, and a command post platoon, for a total of 167 personnel and 46 vehicles.

Point Defense Platoon: This unit is responsible for intercepting incoming missiles or artillery shells. It contains 14 personnel: four drivers, four gunners, four vehicle commanders, one NCO and one officer. They operate four point-defense grav sleds.

Nuclear Damper Section: This section is responsible for protecting the battalion from attack by nuclear weapons. It contains eight personnel: three drivers, two vehicle commanders, two damper technicians and one NCO. They operate two nuclear damper projector grav sleds and a light utility sled.

Maintenance Platoon: This unit is responsible for keeping battalion equipment running and recovering and repairing damaged vehicles. It contains 26 personnel: six drivers, 15 mechanics, three squad leaders, one NCO and one officer. They use six vehicles: two repair van grav sleds, two recovery grav sleds, and two utility sleds.

Quartermaster Platoon: This unit is responsible for ensuring a smooth flow of supplies, and for feeding the troops. The quartermaster platoon contains 13 personnel: eight drivers, three squad leaders, one platoon NCO and one officer. They operate one light utility grav sled and seven utility grav sleds.

Medical Platoon: The medical platoon contains 13 people: four drivers, eight medics and one doctor. They operate three grav ambulances and one surgical van grav sled.

Communications Platoon: The communications platoon contains 12 people: three drivers, five communications technicians (one of whom is a *commissioned specialist*, a telepath with high power and good Telesend skill), one NCO, and one officer. They utilize a meson communicator sled and two LR (laser/radio) communications sleds.

Psion Detachment: This platoon-sized unit is trained to use psionic powers in support of the battalion's combat operations. The detachment consists of a headquarters/transport group, a scout group, a recon group and an assault group.

The Command Post Platoon contains an intelligence section, a communication team, a computer team, an electronic warfare team, and a headquarters group. The

intelligence team consists of two *officer/interrogators,* each a telepath, three soldiers and a command sled. The commo team has one driver, three technicians, and a L/R sled. The computer team contains a driver, three technicians and a computer sled. The electronic warfare team contains one driver, one gunner, one vehicle commander, one EW technician in an EW sled. The headquarters group contains the battalion commander, the assistant commander,, one NCO, two drivers, two gunners, two vehicle commanders and two command sleds. The platoon has 26 men and six vehicles. The headquarters/transport group consists of an officer (a major), a communications technician, and three drivers, with one light utility sled and two utility grav sleds.

The scout group includes four drivers, four gunners, four *vehicle commanders* and four *assistant vehicle commanders* (Telepathy or ESP), riding in four scout grav sleds.

The recon group contains one *officer* (a lieutenant) and 17 *commissioned specialists* (all with ESP).

The assault group consists of six assault teams; each team has two *scramblers* and one *director,* all commissioned specialists. Scramblers have psychokinesis (with telekinesis skill); the director has telepathy and ESP.

Rifle Company (Lift)

The battalion's three rifle companies make up its main combat strength. Each rifle company contains a headquarters & weapons platoon and three line platoons for a total of 158 personnel and 15 vehicles.

Headquarters & weapons platoon: This contains an electronic warfare team, a recovery team, a fire direction center (FDC) team, an indirect fire team, a direct fire team, and a headquarters team.

The EW team contains one driver, one gunner, one EW technician and one vehicle commander in an EW grav sled.

The recovery team contains one driver, one gunner, one mechanic, and one vehicle commander in a recovery grav sled.

The FDC team contains one driver, one team leader, three technicians and one FDC grav sled.

The indirect fire team contains one driver, one vehicle commander, one multiple rocket launcher technician and one MRL grav sled.

The direct fire team contains one driver, one gunner and one team commander manning one gun sled.

The headquarters team contains one driver, one gunner, one vehicle commander, one forward observer, one medic, the company NCO and the company commander (captain). They use a command sled.

Line Platoons: Each of the three line platoons consist of one headquarters team, one point defense team and three rifle squads.

The headquarters team contains one driver, one gunner, one vehicle commander, the platoon NCO, the platoon commander (lieutenant) and one command sled.

The point defense team contains one driver, one gunner and one vehicle commander in a point defense sled.

Each rifle squad contains one driver, one gunner/vehicle commander, one NCO and eight infantry soldiers in one grav APC.

Lift Infantry Equipment

Soldiers in the lift infantry battalions are equipped with Zhodani combat armor (p. 46) and armed with gauss rifles and RAM grenades. Each squad of a rifle company has one PGMP-11 as a support weapon. Individually carried anti-tank missiles are issued as the tactical situation warrants.

Soldiers in lift mechanized infantry battalions are equipped with TL10 battledress and armed with PGMP-10B weapons, with FGMP-11s serving as the squad support weapon.

Zhodani military vehicles are described on pp. 59-63.

The Future

The Zhodani Consulate's stability appears as rock-solid as ever, and its sheer size and multileveled government makes it difficult for any one catastrophe to overwhelm it. Unless a truly unexpected event takes place, it is here to stay.

Perhaps the only thing the Zhodani do fear is lack of knowledge. This may be why they are driven to seek Coreward, and to use the ancient device in the Consular Archives. They believe that the Ancients had a reason to do so, and that if there was something that the Ancients feared, it would be better to be prepared. And yet, the experience of the first explorers to reach Viepchakl and release the ancient bioweapon also haunts them, and leads them to explore both cautiously and in strength: will they open a door best left shut?

As for the Imperium, the Zhodani have been at odds with it since initial contact was established. The underlying reason is the radical differences in culture between these two "dominant" branches of Humaniti. Zhodani morality is repelled by the deviousness of non-psionic human minds, while Imperial distrust of the Zhodani is bound up with the general antipsionic prejudice that has long characterized the Imperium. Prejudice against psionics feeds opposition to the Zhodani, and vice versa. Thus, recent Zhodani history has been dominated by their enmity toward the Imperium, with personal distaste reinforced by a feeling that the Imperium's reckless traders and lawless settlers are spreading spinward, into the Zhodani sphere of influence. Imperials feel Zhodani society destroys an individual's fundamental freedom of choice.

The Zhodani Calendar

Zhodani measure the passage of time using standards established on their homeworld.

Days: The basic unit for the Zhodani calendar is the *zhdanstial* (day), equivalent to 1.12587 standard days or 27.02 hours.

Years: The *chten* (year) is 244.44 zhdanstial or 275.2 standard days (approximately 0.75 standard years) long.

Olympiads: Three chten constitute one *thequzdij* (olympiad) which is 733 zhdanstial long. Every third olympiad is 734 zhdanstial long.

Seasons

The chten is divided into six *shidr* (seasons) each 40 zhdanstial long. Four *zhdanzhdanstial* (holidays) separate the shidr. Off Zhdant, the terms are used now more as months; the weather that characterizes each season is typical of the middle latitudes of the western Dleqiats continent on Zhdant.

The six seasons are *Atrint* (raining), associated with spring rains and the planting of crops; *Vrienstial* (heat), the often stagnant, hot summer season; *Atchafser* (waning), a period when the hot summer weather becomes temperate; *Ataniebl* (harvest), the autumn season to harvest mature crops; *Atshtiavl* (chill), the freezing winter; and *Atpaipr* (thaw), the melting of winter ice and frozen ground.

Tactical Employment

Zhodani doctrine for the employment of lift infantry is almost identical to Imperial doctrine. Thus, only the use of the psion detachment requires special treatment.

The scramblers of the assault teams are most often used in conjunction with attacks on enemy fortified positions, which, for one reason or another, cannot be neutralized by firepower. Immediately prior to the infantry assault on the position, scramblers will disrupt the defense by using telekinesis to pull pins on grenades, squeeze triggers on defender's weapons, activate safeties, etc. (Troops experienced with Zhodani may counter this by keeping weapons pointed away from one another, storing grenades and munitions in bomb-proof containers, etc.) Nevertheless, the actual scrambler assault will clearly mark the position to non-psionic assault troops and suppress the defender's ability to react for several seconds. Properly exploited, this can be a critical advantage for attackers.

ZHODANI COMMANDOS

The most feared Zhodani ground troops are their elite psionic commando forces. During the Fifth Frontier War, some 95 commando groupments (battalion-size units) were deployed in the Spinward Marches. Even though they represented only 2 percent of all Zhodani combat battalions, the commandos caused disruption and morale deterioration greatly out of proportion to their actual numbers. The price of this success was heavy wartime losses, which have not yet fully been replaced. As of 1120, only 72 groupments remain in the Spinward Marches (181 throughout the Consulate). However, despite their smaller numbers, Imperial Intelligence is worried Zhodani commandos may actually be *more* effective now that a war has enabled them to refine their doctrine and provide a cadre of battle-hardened leaders and veterans.

Some commando units also train as "jump commandos." They are issued special equipment enabling them to drop from ships in orbit directly onto a planetary surface. (Orbit to ground teleportations are normally impossible due to effects of energy and momentum, although ground to orbit 'ports are possible for a *very* high-powered teleporter.)

In Consular Guard formations, one commando groupment is assigned to each lift infantry, mechanized infantry or grav tank regiment. Two jump commando groupments are part of each jump regiment of a jump division, and one jump commando groupment is attached directly to each lift infantry and lift mechanized division. Three groupments (two of them jump) are attached directly to each Consular Guard corps as part of the corps troops. In the regular army, one groupment is attached to each corps.

Unlike other Zhodani units, which have only a small psion detachment for each battalion headquarters, most of the personnel in a commando groupment (ideally 422 of 531) are psi talents. Of these, 36 are espers and/or telepaths and 384 are teleports. Teleport talents are all power 15+. All psi talents in Zhodani commando units are issued injectors of psi-double drugs. Distances traveled rarely exceed 30 miles because of the disorientation involved and the need to use drugs for such long-range jumps. A commando groupment will seldom make more than two or three such long jumps per day; multiple short jumps are more common.

A point of interest is the fact that the combat soldiers in commando units, being psis, consist entirely of officers or commissioned specialists (of

intendant or noble status). Of course, the supporting technicians, drivers, gunners and so on are proles.

Organization

A commando groupment is organized into a headquarters & headquarters squadron and three commando squadrons. The commando groupment contains a total of 531 personnel and 59 vehicles.

TABLE OF EQUIVALENT ORGANIZATIONS

ZHODANI	IMPERIAL
Group	Section/Squad
Detachment	Platoon
Squadron	Company
Groupment	Battalion

Headquarters Squadron

The headquarters contains a command post detachment, and communication, medical, nuclear damper and point defense detachments.

Command post detachment: This consists of an intelligence group, a communications group, a computer group, an electronic warfare group and a command group. It has a total of 26 personnel and six vehicles, organized as follows:

The intelligence group consists of two *officer/interrogators* (telepaths with Telereceive skill) and three other ranks, one of which drives the group's grav sled.

The communications group contains one driver, three communications technicians, and a laser/radio (L/R) sled.

The computer group contains one driver, three computer technicians. They use a grav sled with a battle computer.

The electronic warfare (EW) group contains one driver, one gunner, one vehicle commander, one EW technician. They operate an EW grav sled.

The headquarters group contains the *groupment commander* (colonel) and *assistant commander* (lt. colonel), one NCO, two drivers, two gunners, two vehicle commands. They travel in two command grav sleds.

Communications Detachment: This consists of 11 personnel and three vehicles organized as follows: one officer, one NCO, three drivers, six communications technicians, an L/R communications sled and a meson communicator sled.

Medical Detachment: This consists of 13 personnel and four vehicles: four drivers, eight medics and one doctor, operating three grav ambulances and one surgical van grav sled.

Nuclear Damper Detachment: This consists of eight personnel: three drivers, two vehicle commanders, two damper technicians, and one NCO. They control three vehicles: two nuclear damper projector sleds and one light utility sled.

Point Defense Detachment: This unit operates vehicles designed to shoot down incoming missiles and artillery shells. It contains 14 personnel: four drivers, four gunners, four vehicle commanders, one NCO, one officer. They operate four point-defense grav sleds.

Commando Squadron

Each of three commando squadrons contain a squadron headquarters, a transport/robot detachment and three commando detachments.

Squadron Headquarters: This consists of the *squadron commander* (Lt. colonel) and *squadron vice-commander* (major), both teleporters.

Transport/Robot Detachment: This consists of 13 drivers (one an NCO in charge of the unit) each operating a 12-passenger grav APC. They are used for the transport of the unit during non-teleport operations. On some deployments, a squadron may leave behind its vehicles to save cargo space on transport spacecraft, but bring the drivers to operate local grav vehicles. Assisting the detachment are 13 maintenance robots programmed for Mechanical, Electronics and Armory tasks.

The Holidays

The inter-season holidays have their origins in early Zhodani farm festivals and religious holidays, some dating back to many thousands of years. On most worlds they are civic holidays, often celebrated with considerable pomp and ceremony.

Dranzhrin (Sunbright) takes place between Atpaipr and Atrint. It is the vernal equinox, the point when days and nights are equal length. It is also the Zhodani New Year.

Vipechaklstial (Moonday) was originally a religious holiday associated with the worship of Viepchakl, the god resident in Zhdant's red moon. It is now a festival of wild abandon held between Atrint and Vrienstial.

Dranzhrinatch (Sunflight) is the autumnal equinox, when days and nights are equal length. It is a melancholy time for the commemoration of the dead, taking place between Vrienstial and Atchafser.

Kazdievlstial (Thanksgiving) is a traditional harvest festival held between Ataniebl and Atshtiavl.

Thequzastial (Olympiad Day) is a special holiday inserted between Atshtiavl and Atpaipr every third year. Elections of consuls and the winners of the Psionic Games are announced on this date. Every third olympiad, *Atlthequziastial* (double olympiad day) is added immediately after. Its function is to synchronize the calendar (like a leap year) but it also extends the Olympiad celebration.

Expressing Dates

Days within a season are numbered 1 to 40. A Zhodani date is expressed as Olympiad-Year-Season/Day; a holiday name replaces season/day as necessary. Thus, the equivalent of 289-1112 is 3471-1-Dranzhrin.

Zhodani Timeline

The following table shows several key events in the history of the Zhodani (with Imperial dates).

IMPERIAL	EVENT
-302,000	Ancients arrive at Zhdant with Humans.
-300,000	Extensive development of Qiknavra.
-299,270	Final War begins. Humans scatter.
-299,700	Zhdant devastated.
-299,700	Nuclear Winter. Ice age begins.
-280,000	Ice age ends.
-275,000	Nomadic hunter-gatherers range over Dleqiats.
-260,000	Huts, fishing developed.
-100,000	Second Ice Age begins.
-80,000	Second Ice Age ends.
-40,000	Animal herding. Breeding.
-30,000	Special domesticated breeds.
-24,000	Agriculture. Grains.
-18,000	Moon-worship. Brick buildings. Boats.
-18,000	Elementary astronomy and mathematics.
-17,000	Moon-worshipping empire at its peak.
-15,000	Beginning of the first Dark Age.
-13,000	Rise of noble classes, feudalism.
-9000	Encouragement of science and exploration.
-8590	Printing press.
-8550	Discovery of Qiknavra.
-8550	Ocean trade.
-8540	Contact with Qiknavrats (Chirpers).
-8500	Elementary psionic techniques learned.
-8300	Industrial revolution.
-8200	Warfare between Delqiats and Qiknavra.
-8000	Uneasy peace.
-7980	First orbital flights.
-7959	First expedition to Viepchakl.
-7950	Viepchakl base. Discovery of Viepchaklts Chirpers.
-7949	First Qiknavrats-Viepchaklts meeting. Plague.
-7948	Chirper extinction.
-7945	Plague spreads. Human die-back.
-7940	Second Dark Age.
-6800	Recovery. Ascendance of psionics.

Commando Detachment: Each commando detachment consists of a *detachment commander* (major), a *detachment vice-commander* (captain), both teleports, and four commando groups.

Each group contains a *group leader* (captain) and an *assistant group leader* (lieutenant), both teleports, a *group director* (lieutenant, and an Esper/Telepath with Clairvoyance and Telesend skills) and eight *commissioned specialists*, all teleports.

Equipment

Zhodani commandos are equipped with the best personal weaponry and armor the Consulate issues. This is vital, as only a limited amount of equipment can be carried while teleporting.

Combatants are all issued guards battledress (TL10), grav belts and PGMP-10As. One member of each group is armed with an FGMP-11 as a support weapon. Individually carried anti-tank missiles are issued to combatants according to the demands of the individual tactical situation. Occasionally a unit may be armed with less heavy weapons, e.g., Guards Combat armor, gauss rifles and grenades, if the situation calls for it. For example, plasma guns may not be issued if an operation requires minimal or no damage to buildings or starships being assaulted, or a covert operation may necessitate commandos to disguise themselves as lower-TL mercenaries without access to battledress.

Non-combatants in a commando force are equipped with trooper combat armor and armed with gauss rifles. RAM grenades and anti-tank missiles are issued to the non-combatants of the headquarters squadron for its defense, and to the drivers of the transport detachment of each commando squadron.

Outside a combat zone, officers and commissioned specialists are generally unarmed if in Zhodani territory. If serving as part of a force stationed on a troubled world where off-duty soldiers may be endangered, they generally carry snub or gauss pistols.

In jump commando units, all personnel are also issued jump capsules when expected action may require them.

Training and Tactical Employment

The main difficulty of most special operations lies with inserting the commando force behind the enemy lines in close proximity to its target, and safely retrieving them afterward. Zhodani commandos accomplish this by psionic teleportation.

Recruits for commando units are chosen solely on the basis of their talent in teleportation, although certain minimum mental and physical standards are also required. Thus, Zhodani commandos do not occupy the role of elite combat troops, unlike the special forces of most armies.

This is not to say that commandos are not good troops: the average commando receives extra military training, and he is, perhaps, as good as an Imperial Marine trooper; that is nothing to be ashamed of. A Zhodani commando is not, however, the equivalent of an Imperial Marine special operations soldier, or even the equal of special ops troops of, say, the Sword Worlds. This is simply because Zhodani commandos are often average physical specimens with a unique talent who are then given excellent training; in contrast, the average special ops soldier is a superior physical specimen given excellent training.

Teleportation is the key to commando operations. In long-range penetration situations, where teleport disorientation is expected, commandos may jump to previously reconnoitered safe areas (such as small clearings in woods or a vacant lot at night) where they can recover from teleport and then move out against their objective. In short-range teleports, commandos are sometimes inserted directly onto a battlefield or combat zone and open fire immediately. In this regard, they are often used in retrograde operations to disrupt an enemy attack, being inserted immediately behind advancing enemy spearheads to attack them (or their follow-up forces or immediate headquarters) from behind. Zhodani commandos are also used against supply dumps, command posts, communications centers, artillery firebases and other operational or strategic targets.

The obvious defense against commando raids is to mine or carefully watch every possible assembly point within or near possible Zhodani objectives. In practice, this is nearly impossible, and often draws great numbers of troops away from forward lines, which makes any conventional assault more likely to succeed. A more practical tactic is to simply train security forces to be on the alert for teleporters, so that the sudden arrival of enemy forces does not lead to disbelief or panic. An enterprising strategist can also attempt to lure commandos into an attack on a position that appears vulnerable, but is in fact heavily defended – since Zhodani commandos are elites, destroying a single commando squadron can eliminate the only commando forces in that particular battle zone. Of course, success requires outwitting the Zhodani at their own game.

Tavrchedl' Commandos

These little-known formations are the elite troops of the Thought Police. The civilian Tavrchedl' headquarters in each subsector (and the Military Tavrchedl command within each Zhodani army) is assigned one squadron (not groupment) of "special commandos." These are elite formations tasked with counter-terrorism and hostage rescue.

Terrorism is very rare in the Consulate, but dissident groups opposed to the Consulate do exist on unabsorbed worlds. Tavrchedl' commandos are typically assigned to subsectors and individual worlds where these problems are endemic, and are called into action when, for example, such dissident groups have seized Consulate government facilities (like embassies or starport buildings), taken hostage Zhodani nationals (such as diplomats, traders or tourists) or hijacked spacecraft with Zhodani aboard. If peaceful negotiations cannot resolve the situation, Tavrchedl' commandos will be used, provided, of course, they have been assigned to the world, or the situation is one (such as an embassy siege) in which there is time to summon them. As Tavrchedl' are, technically, civilian police forces, this also enables the Consulate to state no Army or Guard units were involved in a particular incident, which is useful propaganda when dealing with the Imperium and neutral worlds.

Tavrchedl' commando units are identical to an ordinary commando squadron in organization, with one difference:

Hostage-Negotiation Group. One of these units is attached to the headquarters of each commando squadron. Each group consists of a *group senior negotiator* (lieutenant) and *group assistant negotiator* (commissioned specialist); each is a telepath and trained psychologist with a background in criminal behavior. Assisting them are a noncommissioned driver and communications technician. They have a grav sled for travel.

Note that because Tavrchedl' Special Commando units are only squadron-sized, they do not possess the extra headquarters unit (nuclear damper team, point defense section, etc.) of military commando groupments.

Training and Equipment: Tavrchedl' special commando recruitment procedures are arduous. Troopers are recruited from Zhodani commando soldiers who are especially physically fit and otherwise elite, and wish to transfer out of the military and into civilian Tavrchedl'. They are then given extra training for instant recovery from disorientation following teleports. They also receive additional combat training, concentrating on close-quarters battle and hostage-rescue procedures. This brings them near the level of the Imperial commando and special operation units.

Tavrchedl' commandos are normally equipped at a somewhat lighter level than their military equivalents – plasma guns tend to splatter civilian hostages as well as terrorists. Combatants are usually issued with TL11 guards battledress and gauss rifles. One man out of each eight-man commando group is sniper-trained and assigned a gauss rifle of extra quality (very fine: +2 to Accuracy, ×30 cost). Commandos also use non-lethal hostage-rescue devices such as stun grenades and sleep gas.

CREATING ZHODANI CHARACTERS

Zhodani characters can be created using the normal *Basic Set* system or the streamlined template system found in *GURPS Traveller.*

RACIAL TEMPLATES

As Zhodani are Humans, they are created as Human characters with only a few minor changes. The most important is height: Zhodani evolved in a lower-gravity and are unusually lithe and slender. Calculate a Zhodani's height normally for his ST, then figure weight from that height, then go back and add 7" (!) to it.

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES

These modifications are suggested for Zhodani characters:

Reputation (Decorated)   *see p. B17*

Outstanding service in the Zhodani military is recognized by *Hero Medals* awarded in classes from 1st (the most common) on up distinguished by service, e.g., Guards Hero Medal 7th Class. "Wound badges" are the equivalent of Purple Hearts.

Enrollment in the *Consular Legion of Merit* is a very high honor awarded to distinguished governmental and military figures by the Supreme Council, based on testimonials from lower councils or military authorities. Members are entitled to wear the distinctive gold sash of honor that marks them as the recognized elite of the Consulate. Legion members do receive concrete benefits. Patriotic Zhodani citizens grant Legion members a 10 percent discount on just about anything from meals to starship passage to air/raft purchases.

Either honor indicates the character will have a positive Reputation. A suggested bonus for the Legion is +3. One or more Wound Badges should be worth +1; a Hero Medal's bonus should be the recipient's best Hero Medal class/3, round up. Total combined bonus for all honors, however, should not exceed +5. The Reputation affects a large class (all Zhodani plus some foreign military or diplomats, ½ value) either "sometimes" (½ value) or "occasionally" (⅓ value) depending on how often the owner wears the sash or medals and how well his face is remembered when he does not.

The discount for the Legion of Merit is bought as an Reputation (Legion of Merit winner) for 10 points; GMs may halve the cost if the campaign is mainly set outside the Consulate.

Status   *see p. B18*

Zhodani society affects the way Status is considered.

ZHODANI STATUS LEVELS

STATUS	DESCRIPTION OR TITLE (AND IMPERIAL EQUIVALENT)
7	Deziashav (protector, equal to Archduke)
6	Toztlasche' (right hand, equal to Duke)
5	Viestlas (highborn, equal to Marquis)
4	Jdistebr (wellborn, equal to Count)
3	Pranatl (aspirant, equal to Baron)
2	intendant (equal to Knight)
1	well-regarded prole
0	average prole
-1	below-average prole

Psionics: Anyone with Status 2+ must have some form of psionic power and appropriate skills.

Administrative Rank   *see p. CI29*

Members of the various levels of Zhodani government councils will hold Administrative Rank as follows:

CONSULAR RANK LEVELS

6	Supreme Consul
5	High Consul (Provincial Council)
4	High Consul (Subsector Council)
3	World Consul
2	Consul (local, town, city or regional)
1	Intendant Aide to a Consul

Council membership generally requires Status 2+ and for rank 3+, a minimum Status equivalent to the rank held. On some very low-population planets, the world consul might only be Rank 2.

Military Rank   *see p. B22*

Ranks in Zhodani Consulate have different names than those of the Imperium. Idiomatic translations of Zhodani ranks are:

ARMY AND CONSULAR GUARD RANKS

RANK	POSITION (AND IMPERIAL EQUIVALENT)
8	Officer of Millions (General)
7	Officer of 5,000 (Major General) or 10,000 (Lieutenant General)
6	Officer of 2,000 (Brigadier General)
5	Officer of 500 (Lieutenant Colonel) or 1,000 (Colonel)
4	Officer of 100 (Captain) or 200 (Major)
3	Officer of 20 (2nd Lieutenant) or 50 (1st Lieutenant).
2	Waiting Officer (Subaltern or Ensign)
2	Leader of 100 (company NCO) or 1,000 (battalion NCO).
1	Leader of 10, 20 or 50 (squad/section/platoon NCOs)
1	Commissioned Specialist
0	Recruit, Trooper, Follower (recruit/private/corporal).

NAVAL RANKS

RANK	POSITION (AND IMPERIAL EQUIVALENT)
8	Officer of Millions (General)
8	Consular Officer (grand admiral)
7	Fleet or Provincial Officer (fleet or sector Admiral)
6	Battleship or Squadron Officer (captain or commodore).
5	Destroyer or Cruiser Officer (lt. commander or commander)
4	Deck Officer (lieutenant).
3	Learning or Watch Officer (ensign or sublieutenant)
2	Waiting Officer (subaltern).
2	Crew or Base Leader (chief petty officer).
1	Section, Compartment or Deck Leader (petty officer).
1	Commissioned Specialist
0	Recruit, Trainee, Spacer or Advanced Spacer (spaceman).

Nobles and intendants must be officers or commissioned specialists; those of lower status may be neither, thus limiting them to rank 0-2 positions.

The lowest rank held by any noble or intendant is "commissioned specialist." Commissioned specialists are officers by virtue of their social status and special talents rather than command training: they are not in the chain of command. Most commandos are commissioned specialists, as are psis in special assignments like a telepathic communicator or a telekinetic scrambler. An Imperial equivalent would be a medical doctor who holds a commission and officer-equivalent rank but is not in the chain of command and does not give military orders. Some positions, of course, require both a specific psi talent and command rank, such as the leader of a commando group or a thought-police interrogation team.

Zhodani officers in all formations will have the minimum psi talents of the nobility or intendant class. Officers in the Talent branch of the Navy or in Army or Consular Guard commando and Tavrchedl' formations are specially selected, and will usually have much higher power.

Psionic Power

Psi powers and skills are common in the upper ranks of Zhodani society. In campaigns centered on the consulate, Zhodani of Status 2+ may buy psionic skills *without* the Unusual Background cost required on p. GT84.

See p. GT84 for common powers and skills; Mind Wipe and Sleep are also available for Zhodani. Many individuals have more than one power, especially both ESP and Telepathy. The average individual will have Power in the 1-10 range, but a substantial fraction of the population have higher or lower Powers. Hereditary nobles and intendants may have any power range; those who were elevated from the proles, or intendants who became nobles through psionic games, should spend 45+ points on psionic Power.

All Zhodani nobles or intendants not Telepaths receive early intensive early training from childhood that gives the single-skill power Telepath (Mind Shield only) costing 2/level.

Honesty

Zhodani are taught from an early age to respect the law. In a society with telepathic police in which wrong thought is an offense, this quickly becomes a habit, and as such, most Zhodani will grow up with the Honesty disadvantage.

Zhodani without this disadvantage are usually Status 2+ diplomats, traders, police or intelligence agents who have spent their lives dealing with "dishonest" non-Zhodani, and thus, by necessity, have been exposed to a more flexible morality.

Intolerance: Non-Zhodani   [-10 points]

The average Zhodani believes, with some justification, that non-Zhodani societies are full of liars and individuals suffering from criminal insanity, and reacts at -2 to them. As Zhodani are racially homogenous, a Human who doesn't have Zhodani build and features is generally assumed to be an alien, and as such, a potential criminal. A Zhodani without this disadvantage is likely to be either unusually tolerant kind of person, or one who has trained himself to deal with non-Zhodani cultures – e.g., a field anthropologist, a diplomat, or an intelligence agent.

Truthfulness

This is not required of Zhodani, but is *very* common, especially among Proles. With little experience in telling falsehoods to one another, Zhodani also tend to be bad liars.

"Taboo" Mental Disadvantages

The following should not be taken by characters raised in Zhodani society: Berserk, Bloodlust, Compulsive Lying, Delusions, Kleptomania, Lunacy, Manic-Depressive, Megalomania, Nightmares, On the Edge, Paranoia, Phobias (if of something commonplace, like Claustrophobia), Pyromania, Sadism, Shyness (Crippling).

A racial Zhodani who does posses any of these disadvantages should really take them as a 5-point Unusual Background or, if a Zhodani within Consulate society, a Secret (mentally unbalanced, will be re-educated if discovered) worth -10 points).

SKILLS

Zhodani with psionic powers will have appropriate skills for them (especially Mind Shield). See p. 169.

Zhodani nobles, with a lifetime of experience in reading minds, tend to be also exceptionally good amateur psychologists. They will often have Detect Lies and/or Psychology skill.
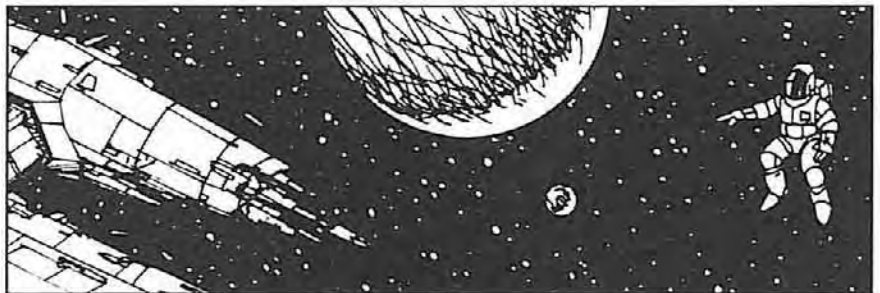
Reasonable Zhodani characters can be created using any of the templates on pp. GT87-105 – just use the above guidelines for Zhodani characters when customizing the template. A few notes:

Attorneys in Zhodani space specialize in commercial, patent and property law; criminal prosecutors and defense lawyers do not exist, as all justice is in the hands of the Tavrchedl'.

Bureaucrats, Managers and *Professors* will normally be intendants.

Bounty Hunters, Corsairs and *Rogues* are very rare to non-existent in the Consulate. *Law Enforcers* use the Tavrchedl' template given below.

Diplomats and *Wealthy Travelers* are typically Nobles.

Martial Artists do exist in Zhodani space. Martial arts are practiced as a professional or amateur sport on some worlds. Traditional styles favor "soft" martial arts emphasizing holds and throws (Judo skill) supplemented by exotic techniques using the skills Body Language, Cloak, and Sensitivity (see pp. CI132-135). Melee weapons have long been out of style, but some staff and stick (tonfa) fighting is still practiced.

Scouts do not exist as a separate service, but the template can represent naval personnel who spent much of their career on Consular Navy exploration ships.

Undercover agents will generally be intendants with a good mix of psionic powers. Imperial or other foreign agents operating in Zhodani space usually pretend to be trade reps or tourists from Zhodani client states or neutral worlds.

Army and *Marine* templates can be used for both Zhodani Army and Consular Guard veterans. Both services include troops trained for orbital assaults as well as ground operations. All officers must be intendants or nobles with psionic powers.

Marine Special Ops equivalent characters do not exist. Instead, see Zhodani Commando, below.

Navy templates can be used for all levels of the Zhodani navy. Officers must be intendants or nobles. Some officers with high power Telepathy or ESP powers may be assigned to a special "talent" branch of the navy. They are used for battle communications, first contact situations and to psionically inspect vessels that are being searched and boarded.

ZHODANI OFFICIAL 75 POINTS

A noble or intendant involved in government administration – he might be a Consul (elected member of a council) or an official in a Consular agency. Retired consuls retain their influence and are often assigned to special projects or diplomatic activities; some even become tourists and travel (though only rarely beyond Zhodani borders), though occasionally this may be a cover or an excuse for a fact-finding mission.

Attributes: ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 13 [30], HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Status 2 [10], Telepathy Power 3 [15]. A total of 35 points in additional Status [5/level], Administrative Rank [5/level], Charisma [5/level], Common Sense [10], Imperturbable or Unfazeable [10 or 15], Security Clearance 1-2 [5/level], Single-Minded [5], extra Telepathy [5/level], ESP [3/level] or Teleportation [2½ /level] [varies] psionic power, and Wealth [10 or 20], Ship Patron [varies, see p. GT84].

Disadvantages: Honesty [-10] and Intolerance (Non-Zhodani) [-10] and a total of -15 points chosen from Hidebound [-5], Incurious or Obdurate [-5 or -10], No Sense of Humor [-10], Odious Personal Habits ("Boring," "Officious," etc.) [-5 to -15], Overweight or Skinny [-5], Sense of Duty (to Consulate) [-10], Stubbornness [-5], Truthfulness [-5], Unfit [-5] and Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Administration (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-15, Politics (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Mind Shield, Telereceive and Telesend, each (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12.

Secondary Skills: Computer Operation (M/E) IQ [1]-13, Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ [1]-12, Speed-Reading (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12, Writing (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12 and Psychology (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-14.

Background Skills: A total of four points in Bard, Language (usually Galanglic), Leadership, Research or Vacc Suit (M/A) and Accounting, Diplomacy, Economics, Intelligence Analysis or Law, all (M/H).

Customization Note: Not all officials will be telepaths as listed, but a majority of those Zhodani who *do* excel in such offices tend to be ones with telepathic power.

ZHODANI COMMANDO 102/112 POINTS

A commissioned specialist or officer from a Zhodani psionic commando unit, either in the Army, Consular Guard, or the Tavrchedl' Special Commandos. The desire for adventure that got them into the military may impel veterans of such units to continue an active life after mustering out. If so, their unique skills can win them further employment as security officers on merchant vessels trading or exploring beyond

Consular borders, or as mercenaries providing special capabilities to pro-Zhodani client states. Some ex-commandos are recruited by the Eye and Hand (Consular Intelligence) where their abilities are much in demand.

As well as commandos, this template can also represent Consular Guard or Zhodani Army psi-talents (scramblers and recon specialists) serving in regular unit Psion Detachments.

The lower template cost is for commissioned specialists with rank 2; the second cost listed is for officers who buy rank 3+.

Attributes: ST 10 [0], DX 12 [20], IQ 13 [30], HT 10.

Advantages: Courtesy Rank 2 [2], Status 2 [10], and one combination of psionic powers based on specialization: if Commando, Telepathy power 5 (Mind Shield only) [10], Teleport power 13 [33]; if Director, Telepathy power 6 [30], ESP power 15 [45]; if Recon specialist, ESP power 20 [60], Telepathy 3 [15]; if Scrambler: Psychokinesis power 13 [65] and Telepathy power 5 (Mind Shield only) [10]. Then choose 15 points from Charisma [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], extra Courtesy Rank [1/level], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5], G-Experience [10], High Pain Threshold [10], replace Courtesy Rank with Military Rank 2-5 [at 5/level], extra Psionic power [varies], Reputation (Decorated) [varies], extra Status [5/level], Strong Will [4/level].

Disadvantages: Fanaticism (Patriotism) [-15], Intolerance (Imperials) [-10], plus -20 points in Callous [-6], Chummy [-5], Code of Honor (Officer's) [-5], either Duty (military, 15 or less) [-15] or Duty (Reactivation, 6 or less) [-2], Honesty [-10], Overconfidence or Glory Hound [-10 or -15], Sense of Duty (His command or comrades) [-10], Stubbornness [-5], Truthfulness [-5] and Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Guns (Light Automatic) (P/E) DX+1 [½] -13*, plus Electronics Operation (Comm) and (Sensors) each (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12, Free Fall (P/A) DX-1 [1]-11, Savoir-Faire (Military) (M/E) IQ-1 [½]-12, and Vacc Suit (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12. In addition, take one of the following:

If commando: Autoteleport and Exoteleport, each (M/H) IQ [4]-13, Battlesuit (P/A) DX [2]-12, Beam Weapons (High-Energy) (P/E) DX+2 [1]-14*, and Body Sense (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11.

If scrambler: Levitation (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12, Telekinesis (M/H) IQ+3 [10]-16.

If recon specialist or commando group-director: Clairaudience (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12, Clairvoyance (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-14, Telesend and Telereceive (M/H) IQ [2]-12.

Secondary Skills: Another Beam Weapons or Guns skill, (P/E) DX+1 [½]-13* or Gunner (any) (P/A) DX [½]-12, plus Computer Operation (M/E) IQ-1 [½]-12, Demolition (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12, First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [½]-12, Gesture (M/E) IQ-1 [½]-12, Judo (P/H) DX-1 [2]-11, Knife (P/E) DX-1 [½]-11, Mind Shield (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12, and Survival (any) (M/A) IQ-2 [½]-11.

If rank 3+ (officer) add: Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12, Intelligence Analysis (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-11,

Leadership (M/A) IQ [2]- 13, Psychology (M/H) IQ-3 [1]-10, Tactics (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-14.

* Includes +2 for IQ.

Background Skills: Spend two points on Driving or Piloting (any) (P/A), Language (Galanglic) (M/A), Sports (any) (P/A), Swimming (P/E) or additional Psionic skills (M/H).

THOUGHT POLICE OFFICER
122 POINTS

The character is a member of the Tavrchedl', one of the Zhodani guardians of law and mental harmony. The Thought Police are also responsible for Zhodani counter-espionage activities. A Tavrchedl' PC is most suited to a Zhodani-centered campaign, but a determined officer might be encountered hunting spies or fugitives on any frontier world along the consulate's border, or assigned to security duties at an embassy within Imperial space.

Attributes: ST 10 [0], DX 11 [10], IQ 13 [30], HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Status 2 [10], Telepathy power 9 (45). A total of 20 points chosen from Alertness [5/level], Contacts (Street; skill-18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3/contact], Fearlessness [2/level], Higher Purpose (Oppose all criminals of one type, e.g., spies, or look out for specific citizens, e.g., children) [5], Intuition [15], Legal Enforcement Powers* [15], extra Status [5/level], extra Telepathy power [5/level].

Disadvantages: Honesty [-10 points] and a total of -25 points chosen from Bully [-10], Curious [-5 to -15], Duty* (To force) [-5 to -15], Intolerance (violent criminals) [-5], Odious Personal Habit ("Authoritarian") [-5], Overconfidence [-10], Sense of Duty [-5 to -15] and Workaholic [-5].

* Thought Police officers *must* have Legal Enforcement Powers and a -5-point Duty; retired officers will have neither.

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Beat) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-14, Emotion Sense (M/H) IQ [4]-13, Law Enforcement (M/A) IQ [2]-13, Mind Shield (M/H) IQ [2]-12, Psychology (M/H) IQ [2]-12, Sleep (M/H) IQ [2]-12, Telesend (M/H) IQ [2]-12, Telereceive (M/H) IQ [6]-14; Guns (pistol) (P/E) DX+1 [½]-12*; Judo (P/H) DX-2 [1]-9.

* Includes +2 for IQ.

Secondary Skills: Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12, Computer Operation (M/E) IQ-1 [1]-12, Criminology (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12, First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [½]-12, Holdout (M/A) IQ-1 [½]-10, Research (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12, Shadowing (M/A) IQ-2 [½]-11 and Stealth (P/A) DX [1]-10; any two of Erase Signature, Mental Blow, Mind Wipe, Psi Sense, Suggest and Telescan, all (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; any two of Detect Lies, Diplomacy and Law, all (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; any two of Piloting (contragrav), Driving (automobile) or Riding (any), all (P/A) DX [1]-10, or Running (P/H; HT) HT-1 [1]-8.

Background Skills: A total of 2 points in Armory (any) or Electronics Operation (any), both (M/A), or Animal Handling or Forensics, both (M/H).

Zhodani equipment is similar to the basic types described in *GURPS Traveller*. Most Zhodani equipment is designed at up to TL11 (with an average TL10); some TL12 items are manufactured on Zhdant and other advanced worlds, but these are generally restricted to a few elite government agencies or military units.

One unique aspect of Zhodani technology is the use of certain psychotronic (psionic electronics) circuitry in equipment, notably psi-sensitive switches that enable nobles or intendants to "flick" gadgets on or off with a thought. See the *Psionics* chapter, p. 142, for details of this technology.

Zhodani can use equipment and facilities designed for other Human races with little difficulty. One exception is the Zhodani height: as they average 7" taller, low doors and ceilings can occasionally be awkward, and clothes or armor designed for ordinary Humans may require re-tailoring (+5% or so to cost) in order to have a proper fit. Aside from trousers possibly too long in the leg, other races using Zhodani equipment may have another difficulty: some equipment intended strictly for use by nobles or intendants (such as Guards combat armor or a personal vehicle) may *only* have psi-sensitive switches, safeties or triggers.

Gun/beam weapons other than hunting weapons (e.g., semi-automatic rifles and shotguns) and items intended for covert operations or criminal activities are generally unavailable for sale on Zhodani worlds, regardless of the local Control Rating. Nobody has any reason to sell them!

ZHODANI COMBAT ARMOR

One of the more distinctive pieces of Consulate military equipment is the ever-present Zhodani-style combat armor. Recognizable by its clamshell helmet (which splits down the center to open), Zhodani combat armor is a standard issue piece of equipment found in nearly every Consulate military unit.

Combat armor serves two purposes: it armors the wearer against enemy attack, and it also protects against hostile environments. The armor can also be fitted with additional accessories such as communicators or sensors.

Combat armor is the standard combat uniform of about half of all Zhodani army personnel and most Zhodani ship's troops. The combat armor's distinct clamshell helmet appearance may evoke Dark Age Zhdant war-helms used by the early psionic nobility, which were often designed to suggest Chirper heads.

Characteristic Models

There are four basic models of Zhodani combat armor, each tailored to a specific task required: trooper model, officer model, guards model and noble model.

All combat armor shares certain characteristics. It is a suit of protective armor composed of a helmet, front and back torso units, two arms, two gauntlets, two legs and two boots. Pressure-tight joints allow the armor to be used in vacuum or in hostile atmospheres. The armor is not powered, but is constructed of light-weight alloys and plastics for a maximum of utility and convenience. Joints are fully articulated to allow normal movement by the wearer.

Combat armor is designed to enable a soldier to fight in any kind of planetary or space environment (including a biochemical or nuclear battlefield) and to provide overall protection against fragmentation, enabling a steady advance under artillery fire. The armor is quite effective against ordinary rifle bullets or lasers, making it useful for operations against low-tech troops or guerrillas, but much less so against a gauss rifle or an ACR using expensive APS ammo. It cannot stop plasma and fusion guns.

Two flap-protected locations (one on the upper left arm, the other on the buttocks) have a self-sealing membrane which allows hypodermic injections without breaking suit integrity.

A belt with connectors girdles the waist and allows carriage of various equipment (from a pistol holster to magazine pouches to medical kit). Backpack connectors allow additional equipment to be attached and carried on the back.

The two-piece clamshell helmet has a seam through the middle of the faceplate and top of the skull which allows it to be opened, with each half then resting on a shoulder. A quick-release at the throat can completely remove the helmet in an emergency.

Combat armor takes 60 seconds to put on and 40 seconds to remove, or half that on a successful Vacc Suit roll.

Trooper Model: The trooper model combat armor is the standard issue body armor for the majority of the Zhodani army. It is the most commonly encountered and the least sophisticated. It is the same as the combat armor on p. GT118 (with +8 DR for being TL10) except that the helmet has built-in multiview goggles, short range communicator with com scrambler (p. GT113) and HUD (p. GT116). With accessories: 36.25 lbs., Cr1,912.5; TL10.

Officer Model: Also called Command combat armor. It is the same as the combat armor on p. GT118 (+8 DR for being TL10) with the addition of a helmet-mounted sensor visor, medium range communicator with com scrambler and personal computer (see p. GT113), as well as a HUD and inertial compass (see p. GT116). With accessories: 39 lbs., Cr3,612.5; TL10.

Guards Model: Guards model combat armor is normally issued to Psion detachments, Commandos, and Consular Guard officers (in place of command combat armor). It is specially produced to enhance (or not hinder) psionic activity. Special wiring patterns in the armor can be switched on to provide psionic shielding and off to not interfere with psionic activity and to form a "psibernetic web" (p. 142) that permits the user to auto-teleport as if the mass of the combat armor (though not other equipment) did not exist. Glove palms are easily removable to expose bare hands for psionic activity that requires contact.

Guards Combat Armor has PD 6, DR 54 on torso, PD 4, DR 44 on limbs, PD 4, DR 36 on hands and feet. The helmet protects the head with PD 6, DR 42 (face is PD 2, DR 34).

The armor incorporates a helmet-mounted sensor visor, mediumrange communicator with com scrambler, and a personal computer (see p. GT113), as well as an inertial compass, HUD and psi shield (see p. GT116). With accessories: 38.25 lbs., Cr 9,112.5; TL11.

Noble Model: Zhodani nobles serving in the military usually wear noble-model combat armor. It is basically identical to Guards combat armor, but is distinguished by its broad cloak, whose deep black ablative cloth is also IR absorbent. The cloak provides an extra DR 24 vs. lasers and plasma/fusion guns (and DR 4 vs. other attacks) and -2 to be spotted by infrared/thermal imaging sensors from the rear (unless aimed at head or feet); if the user crouches and takes no other action, he can wrap the cloak about his body providing complete protection and concealment. For every four laser/plasma/fusion gun hits stopped, DR drops by one.

The workmanship of noble combat armor is of very high quality, with special attention to quality of finish and comfort. With accessories: 33.65 lbs. (38.65 lbs. with cloak). Cr15,362.5, TL11. The ablative cloak alone is 5 lbs. and Cr250.

Zhodani Battledress

Trooper battledress is issued to Zhodani mechanized lift infantry soldiers and jump troops, as well as some ship's troops. It is functionally identical to the TL10 battledress on p. GT118.

Guards battledress is used by commando units and noble officers in lift mechanized infantry units. It is identical to TL11 battledress. In addition, it incorporates a psibernetic web (p. 142) that enables the user to autoteleport with the suit as if it were part of his own body. Guards battledress weighs 8.5 lbs. and costs Cr8,500 more than ordinary TL11 battledress.

ZHODANI STARSHIPS

The starships described here include a mix of civilian and military vessels.

The Navy's elite TL11 battle and cruiser squadrons are assembled in massed "fire brigade" forces deeper within the Consulate. With fleet strength currently at a low ebb due to losses in the Fifth Frontier War, this best makes use of their higher jump capability, enabling them to rapidly deploy to whatever region might be threatened, while "keeping the best goods out of the shop window" to prevent any surprise attack from destroying the cream of the Consulate's fleet in detail. For this reason the majority of Zhodani warships likely to be encountered on the frontiers are the older TL10 designs presented here.

All Zhodani ships with fuel processors need 10 hours to refine fuel (2.5 hours for the scout, 30 for the *Shivva*).

SHIVVA-CLASS PATROL FRIGATE (TYPE ZP, TL10)

An ubiquitous design used by both Regional and Consular navies, the *Shivva* ("Moonlight") is among the most frequently encountered types deployed on or beyond the Consulate's frontier districts. It is unusual for a small escort-sized warship in being lightly armored, unstreamlined and not especially agile: instead it is a stealthy "pocket carrier" for a small fighter squadron.

The *Shivva* class is used on various independent picket, communications and patrol duties, often well beyond Zhodani borders. The fighter squadron lets it patrol a large area without the *Shivva* itself being drawn away from any craft it may be escorting. The vessel's emission cloaking also makes them useful for commerce raiding and support of covert operations.

The *Shivvas* have been built in many variant models with slightly different fighter squadrons. Wild rumors that the vessel carried a powerful psionic talent with a special long-range (or even interstellar!) psi-augmented and communication system added to the confusion. The Fifth Frontier War demonstrated otherwise: the talent served as a central director for the fighter squadron, rapidly conveying battle information and tactical instructions to individual pilots.

Sample class names: (-va = light, thus *Shivva* = moonlight): *Alekrva, Brnava, Doruva, Jadsva, Jirtodva, Loyhva, Mielrva, Uturva.*

Loaded mass (but not cost) includes fuel skimmer and eight *Tlatl*-class fighters.

Crew: Captain (Leadership and Tactics), Pilot (Pilot), Navigator (Astrogation), Sensor/Commo Operator (Electronic Operation [Sensors] and [Communications], six Gunners (Gunner [Laser], [Missile] or [Sandcaster]), 1 Group Fighter-Director Talent (Telepathy and Tactics), 3 Engineers (Engineering and Mechanic), 8 Fighter Pilots (Pilot and Gunner), Medic (Telepathy and Diagnosis, Physician) and one Thought Police officer (Telepathy, Psychology).

600-ton USL Hull, DR 50. Basic stealth and radical emission cloaking. Six turrets (two triple laser, two triple sandcaster, two triple missile). Basic Bridge (5 crew consoles), 23.5 Cargo, Engineering, Fuel Processor, 111 Maneuver, 24 Jump, 240 Fuel (one Jump-3 and a further Jump-1, or two consecutive Jump-2s), 1 Sickbay, 10 Staterooms, two Utility, 80 Spacedock (40-ton capacity, typically one Fuel Skimmer, see p. GT140), 84 vehicle bay (for eight 10-ton fighters).

Statistics: Emass 1,092.45, Lmass 1,868.35, Cost MCr155.589, HP 45,000.

Performance: Accel 2.16 G, Jump 3, Air Speed 0.

YETSABL-CLASS ZHODANI COURIER (TYPE ZC, TL12)

A recent design (based on traditional prototypes) from the TL12 shipyards in the Zhodani core, this swift and elegant starship is a private vessel used by senior government officials for travel and diplomatic purposes. It is named after a racing beast found on Zhdant.

Zhodani Patrol Frigate

DECK 1 - VEHICLE & CARGO DECK

FIGHTER BAYS

AIR LOCK

Stairs up to
Deck 2

FUEL SKIMMER
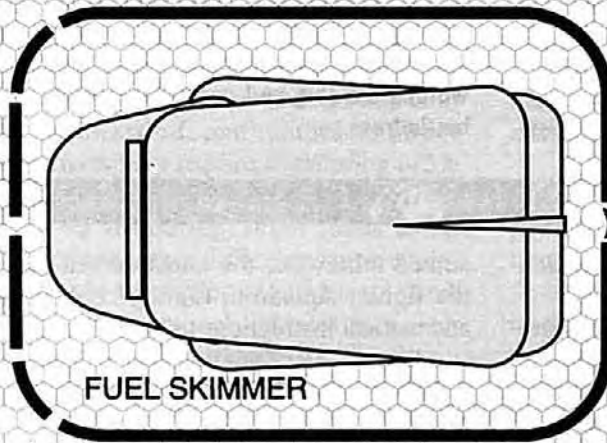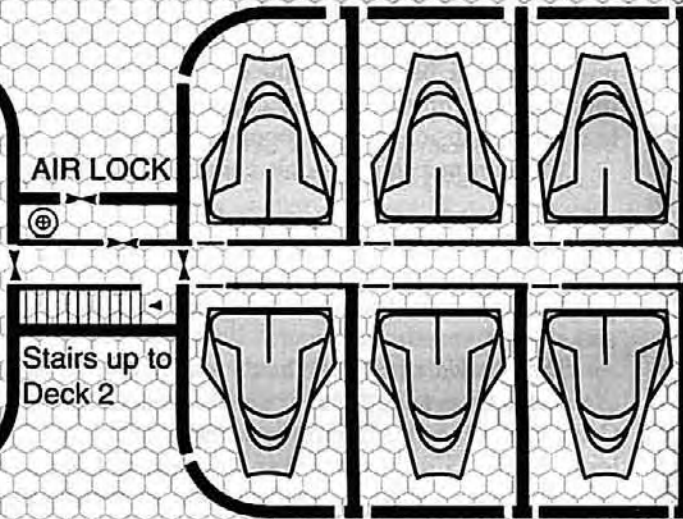
FIGHTER BAYS

Vessels of the *Shivva* ("moonlight") class are easily recognized by the sleek nose section and the dorsally-mounted, semi-detached dome containing the jump drive. The *Shivva* class is a highly useful design, and is deployed on various independent picket, communications, and patrol duties. *Shivvas* are often used for missions outside the Consulate, and are occasionally found inside the Imperium, usually as part of a diplomatic mission accompanied by an Imperial Navy escort vessel.

DECK 1

Shivva Class 600-ton Patrol Frigate

MISSILE TURRET

MISSILE MAGAZINE

CARGO

Stairs up to Deck 2

CANISTER MAGAZINE

SANDCASTER TURRET

PLAN VIEW

Deck 3
Deck 2
Deck 1

Jump Drive Dome
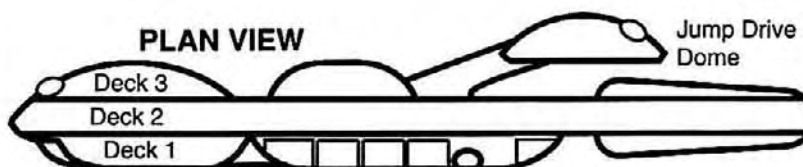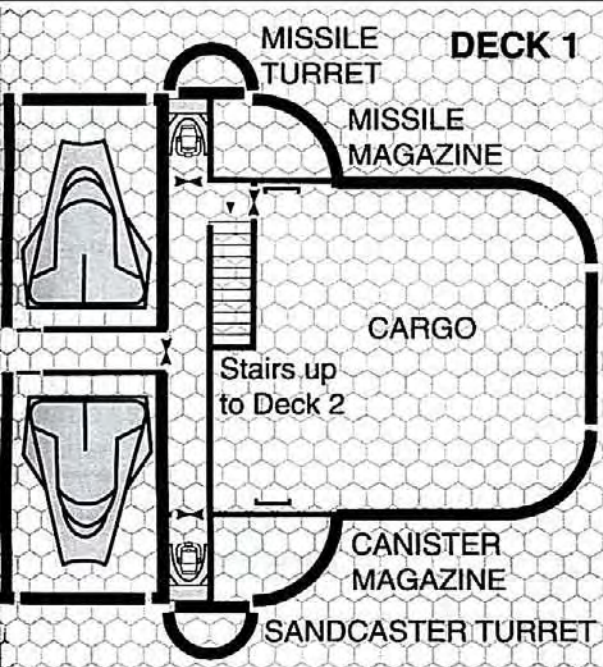
Deckplan Scale:
1 hex = 1 yard

DECK 1 – VEHICLE AND CARGO DECK

Fuel Skimmer Dock: The vessel's 40-ton fuel skimmer is normally stored here when not in use. When used as a fleet auxiliary, the vessels's small craft are sent to other ships in the fleet for any required maintenance. For long duration missions, any necessary repairs or maintenance work on the fighters is done in the skimmer's dock (while the skimmer is off getting fuel), cycling the fighters in and out two at a time. Maintenance is normally undertaken by the pilots themselves, as the standard crew does not include any personnel trained in small craft maintenance.

Fighter Bays (8): Each bay contains one 10-ton fighter. On covert missions, other small craft (air/rafts, G-carriers, and the like) may be carried in place of one or more of the fighters. Each bay has a separate door, and all fighters can be launched simultaneously, although this is seldom done except in wartime. Fighters are normally launched singly or in pairs, one from each side. For safety, personnel are not allowed in the bay during launch or recovery due to the close tolerances.

Cargo Bay: Since the *Shivva* class is not intended for trade, the cargo capacity is small, and normally taken up by mission-specific supplies or equipment, food (for long duration missions), and spare parts.

Deck 2

DECK 2

SR7
SR8
SR6
SR9
SR5
SR10
SR4
Stairs up to Command Deck
SR11
AIR LOCK
FUEL
SR12
Stairs down to Vehicle Deck
CREW LOUNGE
SR13
SICK BAY
SR14
SR18
SR15
SR16
SR17
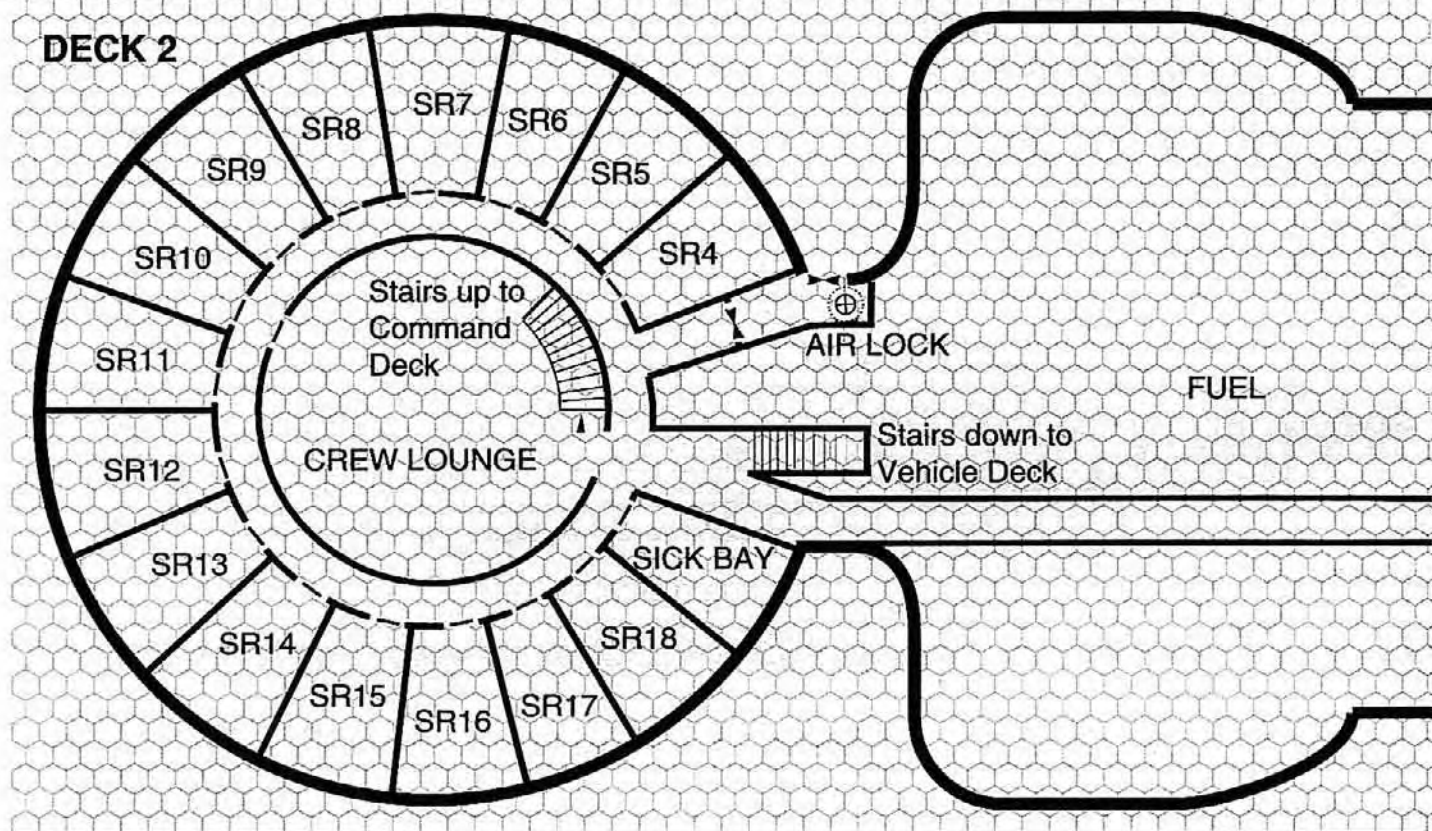
STATEROOMS, FUEL AND MANEUVER DRIVE DECK

The majority of this deck is devoted to fuel storage, and is thus inaccessible to the crew except under extraordinary circumstances.

Staterooms: Staterooms on vessels which are not expected to carry non-Zhodani passengers have no locks on the doors or on any of the interior storage compartments. They have latches to keep them from popping open by accident, but since all Zhodani are trained from birth to respect the privacy and property of others, locks are unnecessary.

FUEL

MANEUVER DRIVE

Stairs up to
Jump Drive
Dome

Stairs down to
Vehicle Deck

AIR LOCK

FUEL
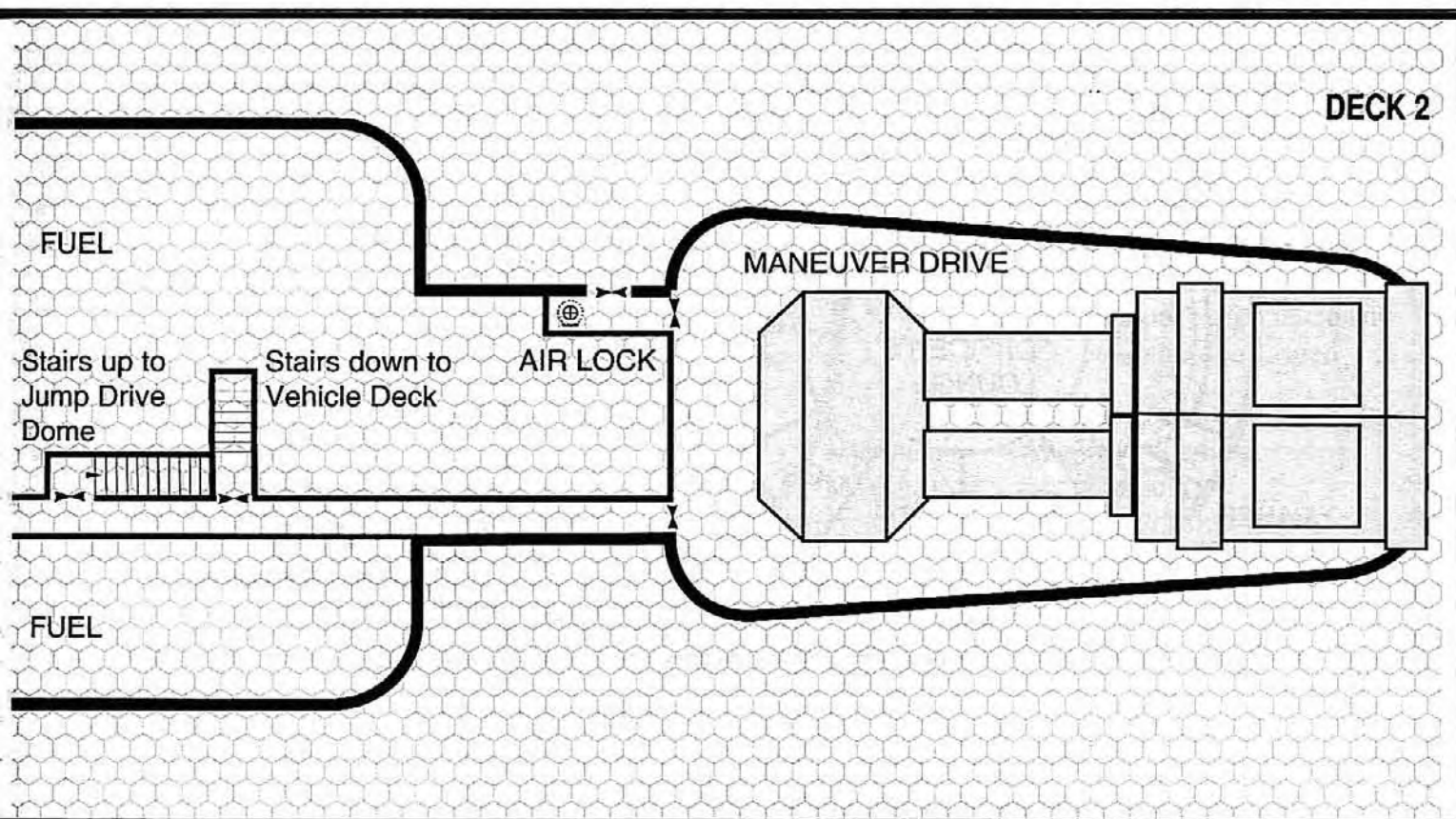
The ship's engineering staff has a small supply of door locks for the rare occasions when a non-Zhodani may be a passenger (if the vessel has to transport a non-Zhodani prisoner, for example), or when a crew member has become dangerous to the others aboard ship and the medical staff is unable to take the proper corrective measures.

Lower Fuel Tank: This and the upper fuel tank on deck 3 contain internal anti-surge baffles.

Deck 3

LASER
TURRET

SR1
(Captain's Suite)

GALLEY

SL

Stairs
down to
Deck 2

Br

Av

OFFICER'S
LOUNGE

Storage

AL

CR

LASER
TURRET

SR2

SR3

FUEL
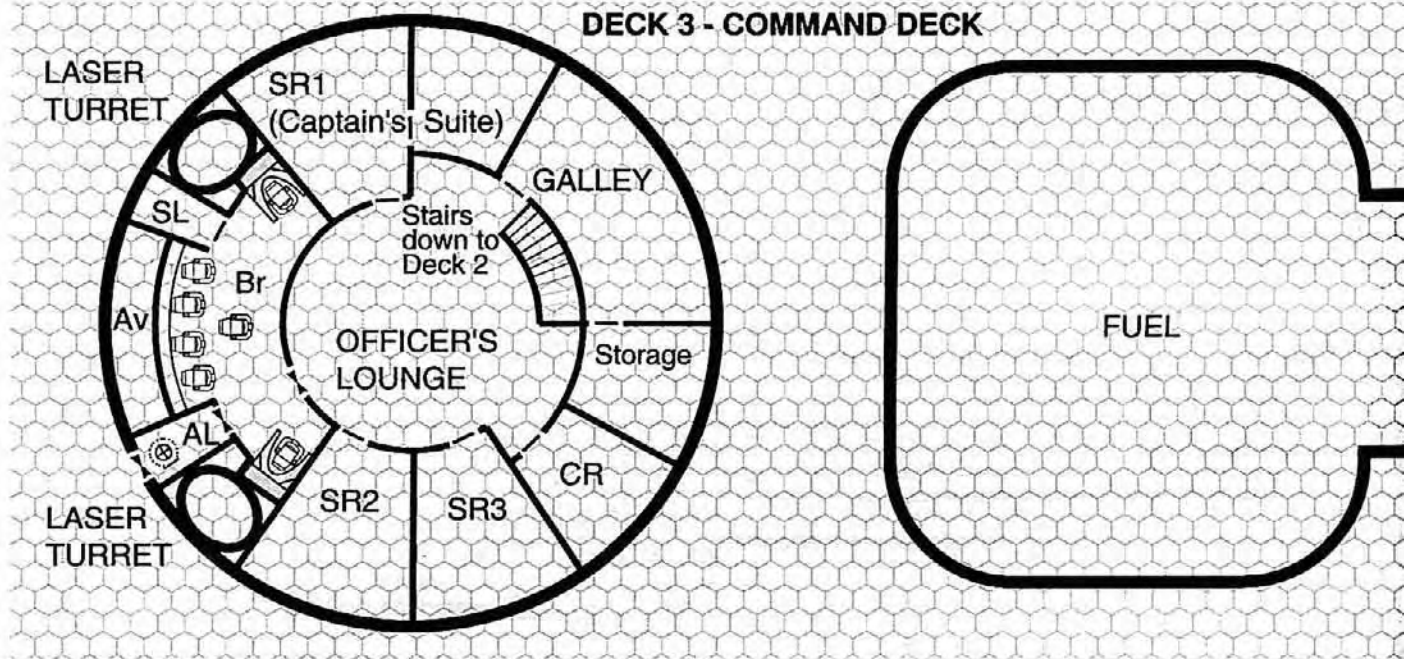
COMMAND DECK

This deck is in two parts, the command dome forward and the jump drive dome aft, each inaccessible from the other without going to another deck first. On a vessel this small, this separation is not a serious design flaw, although it complicates damage control procedures.

Bridge: The storage space known as the ship's locker on Imperial vessels does not have a lock for the same reason the staterooms do not have them.

DECK 3 - JUMP DRIVE DOME

SANDCASTER TURRET

CANISTER MAGAZINE

FUEL

Stairs down to Deck 2

AIR LOCK

JUMP DRIVE

MISSILE MAGAZINE

MISSILE TURRET

KEY

━━	Bulkhead
▬-▬	Sliding Door
▬✕▬	Iris Valve
▭	Access Panel
⊕	Manual Hatch in Floor
⊕	Manual Hatch in Ceiling
⌨	Acceleration Couch

AL   Air Lock
Av   Avionics Bay
Br   Bridge
CR   Conference Room
SL   Ship's Locker
SR   Stateroom
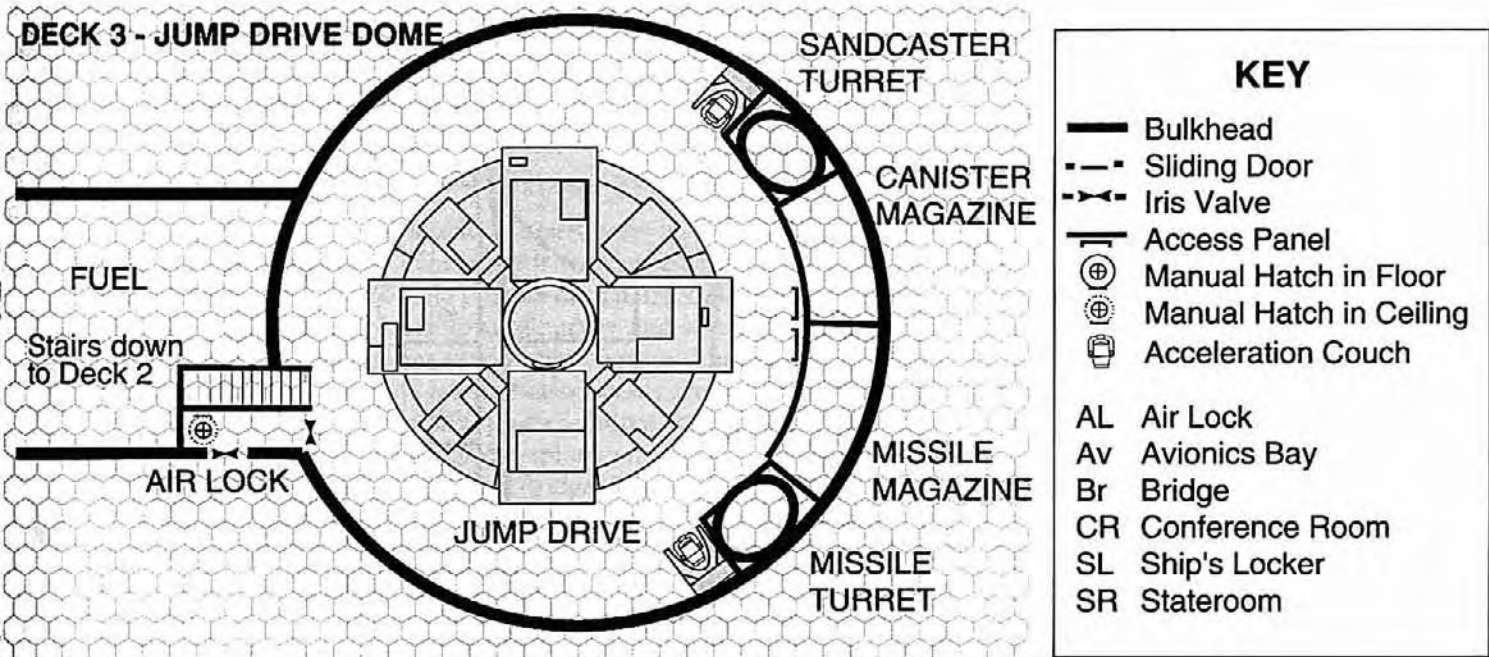
Crew: The ship's medical officer is trained in observational psychology, to detect potential mental instabilities in the crew and treat them before they become major problems.

The psi adept carried aboard the vessel is now known to act as a central director for the fighter squadron, rapidly conveying battle information and tactical instructions to individual pilots.

Zhodani Courier

The *Yetsabl*-class Zhodani courier is a sleek space-plane design, created for the interstellar transport of important personnel, and used primarily by government officials for diplomatic purposes. It is easily recognizable by it's delta wing and canard foreplanes (which aid in high speed atmospheric maneuvering). The placement of the fuel tanks is believed to be an augmentation to the ship's standard skin radiation shielding.

The vessel's mission often takes it outside the Consulate, and it is the Zhodani vessel most commonly encountered in Imperial space. Couriers are normally considered civilian vessels, and as such no special military escort is required. As a courtesy, however, Zhodani vessels check in with Imperial authorities at all major starports (class III or larger), especially if there is a Naval or Scout base present.

Zhodani couriers are a separate design from Zhodani scout vessels, unlike the Imperial practice of using the same hull for both. Zhodani couriers are larger than Zhodani scouts, and contain more and better passenger staterooms and fittings.

Deck 1: Cargo Deck

Fuel: This represents a number of small separate tanks (the divisions of which are not indicated on the plan) instead of the customary internal antisurge baffles. This is a common feature of older designs by other races, but is not normally encountered in Zhodani vessels, and is thus somewhat unusual.

Deck 2: Main Deck

Crew Lounge: The courier is too small to have separate officer and enlisted lounges.

Type ZC Zhodani Courier

DECK 1   DECK 2

Scale: 1 hex = 1 yard

KEY

- ▬ Bulkhead
- ▬▬▬ Sliding Door
- ▸◂ Iris Valve
- ▭ Access Panel
- ⊕ Manual Hatch in Floor
- ⊕ Manual Hatch in Ceiling
- ⊛ Iris Valve in Floor
- ⊜ Acceleration Couch
- ◻ Elevator
- AL Air Lock
- FP Fuel Processor
- Ga Galley
- SL Ship's Locker
- SR Stateroom
- Tr Turret

Elevation View
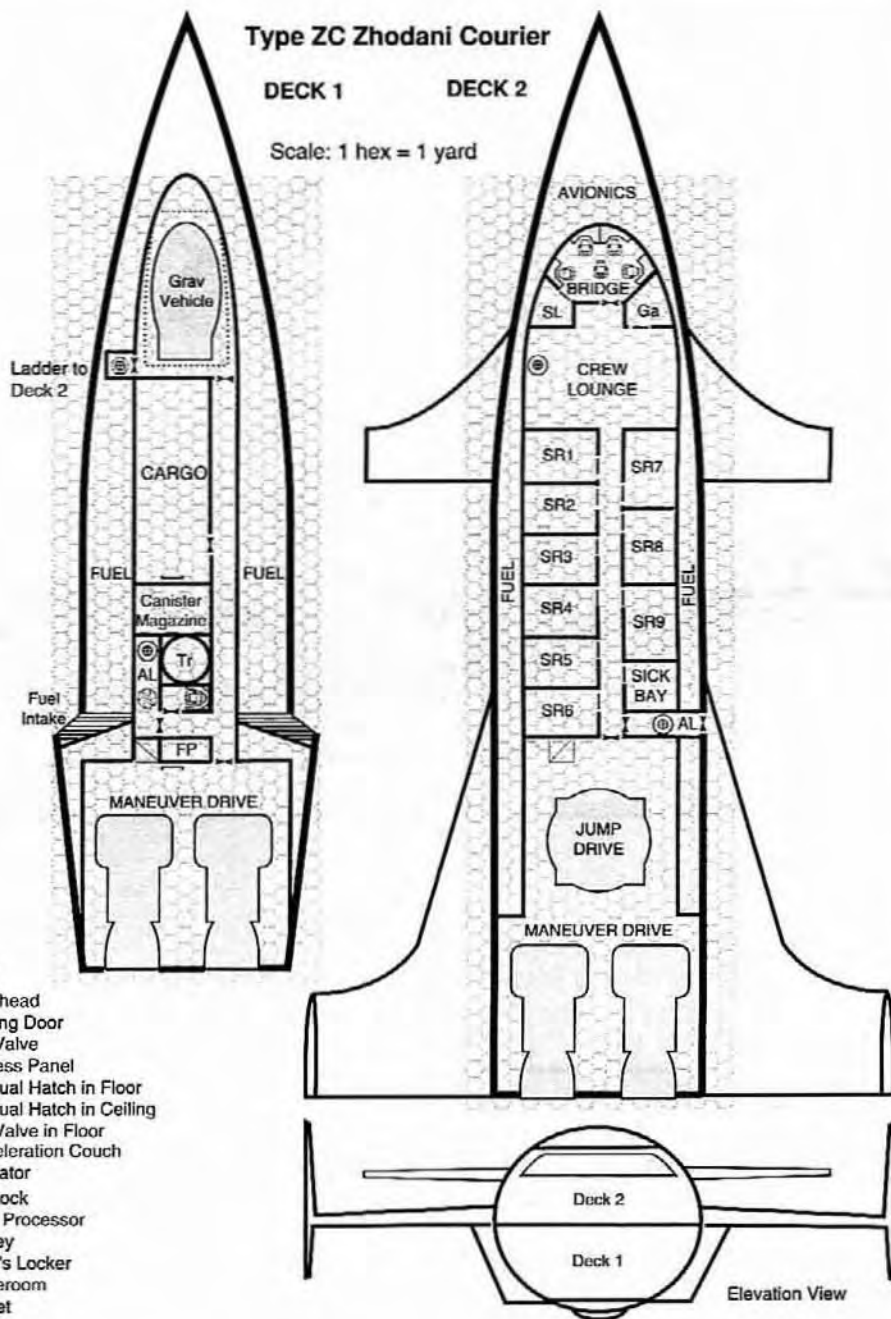
Psionic Switches: The one major difference between the Zhodani ships and those of other cultures is an abundance of psionic switches. Simple psionically sensitive switches are components of iris valves, simple automatic doors, and many convenience items such as lights, temperature or environment controls, and entertainment or communication devices. Psionically-trained individuals with telepathy can activate the switches with a minor flick of their minds.

Crew: Captain/Pilot (Pilot, Leadership and Tactics), Sensor/Commo Operator/Navigator (Astrogation, Electronic Operation [Sensors] and [Communications], Gunners (Gunner [Laser] and [Sandcaster]), Engineer (Engineering and Mechanic).

200-ton SL Hull, DR 600, Turret (two 405-MJ lasers, one sandcaster), Basic Bridge, Engineering, 11 Cargo, 36 Maneuver, 8 Jump, 60 Jump Fuel, 1 Space Dock (up to 250 cf of vehicle, usually an air/raft), 9 Stateroom, 1 Utility, 1 Sickbay, 1 Fuel Processor. Lmass includes one loaded air/raft.

Statistics: Emass 499.475, Lmass 562.075, Cost MCr55.5348, HP 22,500.

Performance: Accel 6.4 Gs, Jump 3, Air Speed 4,134.

Chtanoql-class Scout   [Type ZS, TL10]

A standard Zhodani exploratory vessel used both by the navy and by commercial concerns for frontier exploration and reconnaissance. An old and reliable design, the *Chtanoql* ("Pioneer") is oriented more toward survey and scientific missions and less to courier-type duties than its Imperial counterpart, the *Sulieman*. *Chtanoql*-class scouts have been extensively used in the Zhodani Core Expeditions for supplementary surveys off the main axis of exploration.

100-ton SL Hull, DR 100, Basic Bridge, Engineering, 12 Maneuver, 3 Jump, 20 Fuel, Low Berth (capacity 4), 6 Staterooms, Sickbay, Utility, Fuel Processor, 3 Labs, Turret, 2 Lasers, 7 cargo (+1 in turret).

Statistics: Emass 183.195, Lmass 223.195, Cost Mcr27.676, HP 15,000. TL10 design.

Performance: Accel 2.15 Gs, Jump 2, Air Speed 1826.

Shianjo-class Liner   [Type ZR, TL10]

A passenger liner used in the core regions of the Consulate and along most of its main trade routes. The *Shianjo* class ("Bon voyage," literally, "good journey") are known for their stylish interior design and high jump speed (for a merchant). Staterooms are typically occupied by Nobles or Intendants, while proles usually travel in low passage, unless they are servants or retainers. In peaceful Zhodani space, commercially vessels are typically unarmed, but in wartime this makes them easy meat for privateers and commerce raiders, forcing the Zhodani navy to use convoys and provide escorts.

800-ton USL Hull, DR 100, Heavy Compartmentalization, Basic Bridge, Engineering, 38 Maneuver, 32 Jump, 240 Fuel, Vehicle Bay (Slow Pinnace), 9 Low Berth (capacity 36), 90 Staterooms, 2 SickBay, two Utility, 76 cargo.

Statistics: Emass 1,080.9, Lmass 1,514.96, Cost Mcr156.823, HP 60,000. TL10 design.

Performance: Accel 1.00 Gs, Jump 3, Air Speed n/a.

Zdebr-class Trader   [Type ZT, TL10]

Zdebr-class merchants are typically owned and operated by small trading companies or individuals in frontier regions of the Consulate, such as the Spinward Marches and Zhodani-Vargr Marches. They are more general-purpose vessels than the 400-ton subsidized merchant used in the

Imperium, being closer in actual concept to an oversized free trader. Atypically for a Zhodani commercial vessel the *Zdebr* class is normally armed, albeit lightly by Imperial standards. *Zdebr*-class ships are named after historically famous seaports and caravan routes on old Zhdant.

400-ton SL Hull, DR 100, Basic Bridge, Engineering, 27 Maneuver, 12 Jump, 80 Fuel, Vehicle Bay (Ships Boat), 9 Low Berth (capacity 36), 16 Staterooms, sickbay, Utility, 2 Turrets, Laser, Sandcaster, 104 cargo (+ 4 in Turrets).

Statistics: Emass 503.3, Lmass 1,076.94, Cost MCr66.4857, HP 37,500. TL10 design.

Performance: Accel 1.00 Gs, Jump 2, Air Speed 1,745.

Echtovr Dazhia-class Council Cruiser   [Type ZF, TL12]

These fast, highly advanced ships are used by Supreme Council members or their agents on Consular business. Interior fittings are notably luxurious. They are unusual in carrying a second *starship* internally – a high-G courier useful for side-trips or for ensuring the safety of the Consul.

2,000-ton SL Hull, DR 1,500 (turret armor DR 1,000), 20 Turrets (six with triple sandcasters, eight with triple 405-MJ lasers, six with triple missiles), Basic Stealth and Emission Cloaking, Command Bridge, Basic Bridge, Engineering, 10.5 Cargo, 190 Maneuver, 100 Jump, 800 Jump Fuel, 3 Low Berth (12 tubes), 10 Fuel Processor, Nuclear Damper, Sickbay, 40 Staterooms, 4 Utility, 2 Vehicle Bay (holds one utility grav-sled), 42 Vehicle Bay (holds 40-ton pinnace), 210 Vehicle Bay (holds 200-ton Zhodani Courier).

Mass (but not cost) includes loaded pinnace (p. GT141), utility grav-sled (p. 59) and Zhodani courier (p. 47).

Statistics: EMass 527.475, LMass 582.2568, Cost MCr583.596. HP 90,000. Crew: 41.

Performance: Accel 6.18 G, Jump 3, Air Speed 4,134.

Lienjadl-class Battle Cruiser   [Type ZBC, TL10]

A multi-purpose vessel designed for independent operations in frontier space, either on its own or as part of a small task force. *Lienjadl* ("Swift Retribution")-class vessels are designed to deal with colonial problems. They carry troops and landing craft but are also capable of fighting in the line of battle. The vessel's space dock normally carries a mission-tailored mix of strike fighters and assault boats. Its extensive cargo capacity, staterooms and low berths allow a battalion-sized Zhodani Army or Consular Guard lift infantry unit to be carried if necessary, though normally only a company-sized force is transported.

10,000-ton USL Hull, DR 1,000, Heavy Compartmentalization, Hardened Command Bridge, 2 Engineering, 3,000 Maneuver, 400 Jump, 3,000 Fuel, Space Dock (Holds 1,000 tons, 4 doors), 120 Low Berth (capacity 480), 200 Staterooms, 3 SickBay, 20 Utility, 30 Turrets (20 with triple lasers, 10 with triple sandcasters), 5 Bays (two missile, three particle accelerator) 600 cargo.

Statistics: EMass 31,734.2, LMass 39,734.2, Cost MCr2,562.648, HP 255,000.

Performance: Accel 3.02 Gs, Jump 3, Air Speed none.

Zhodani Slow Pinnace *[TL10]*

Carried by the type ZL liner for ground-to-orbit interface and as an emergency lifeboat. 40 ton SL Hull, 100 DR, Cockpit, 5 Maneuver, 4 Passenger (48 seats), 22 Cargo.

Statistics: EMass 54.06, LMass 164.06, Cost MCr 4.55, HP 7,500.

Performance: Accel 1.22 Gs, Jump 0, Air Speed 1,732.

Zhodani Ship's Boat *[TL10]*

Carried by the type ZT trader. 20 ton SL Hull, 100 DR, Cockpit, 3 Maneuver, 1 Passenger (12 seats), 11 Cargo.

Statistics: EMass 33.64, LMass 88.64, MCr 3.625, HP 4,500.

Performance: Accel 1.35 Gs, Jump 0, Air Speed 1,732.

Zhodani Assault Boat *[TL10]*

A tough, well-armored landing craft used by Zhodani naval vessels. 50-ton SL Hull, DR 750, Basic Stealth, Basic Emission Cloaking, Cockpit, 30 Maneuver, 2 Passenger (24 seats), 7 Cargo.

Statistics: EMass 361.48, LMass 396.48, MCr 12.195, HP 9,750.

Performance: Accel 3.03 Gs, Jump 0, Air Speed 3,721.

Tlatl-class Strike Fighter *[TL10]*

A light anti-shipping fighter carried aboard *Shivva*-class patrol frigates. (*Tlatl:* "throwing blade").

10-ton SL Hull, DR 150. Radical Stealth and Emission Cloaking, hull-mounted Missile Rack, Cockpit Bridge, 6 Maneuver Drive.

Crew: Pilot (Pilot and Gunner [Missile]).

Statistics: Emass 57.3. Lmass 57.3, Cost Mcr 6.9175 (sans missiles), HP 3,000.

Performance: Accel 4.18 Gs, Air Speed 3,000.

Vokr-class Fighter *[TL10]*

A medium-sized multi-role fighter carried on larger Zhodani vessels, named after a large flying predator on Zhdant.

30-ton SL Hull, DR 200, Basic Stealth, Basic Emission Cloaking, Cockpit, 20 Maneuver, one hull-mounted Laser and 2 Missile Racks.

Statistics: EMass 155.46, LMass 155.46, Cost MCr8.365, HP 6,000.

Performance: Accel 5.15 Gs, Jump 0, Air Speed 3,873.

TLI-1085 Jekobr Missile *[TL10]*

With much of its navy still TL10, the Consulate deploys the *Jekobr* ("Javelin"), which trades off warhead size and cruising endurance for acceleration, enabling it to catch faster Imperial Navy vessels. Statistics as SIM-10 (p. GT158), except: "small" 240mm HEAT warhead does 6d × 60 (10) damage, 2,100-lbs. thrust drive gives 7 G acceleration; 252,000 kWS energy bank makes endurance 40 minutes (2 space combat rounds). Weight 303.1 lbs. (0.15 tons); Cost Cr31,480.5.

TL10 missile racks and bays used by Zhodani have tubes for 240mm, not 250mm, missiles; statistics are otherwise the same.

ZHODANI ROBOTS

Almost every industrialized race uses industrial robots in their factories, but the vast majority of these are nothing more than reprogrammable machine tools that remain fixed in their factories. The Zhodani use industrial robots, but they also use *mobile* robots to a consistently greater degree than do other major races.

There are a number of reasons for this. Many other Human and non-Human races expanded in waves of settlers with a pioneering spirit or who were adventurers, dissidents (or even penal colonists) who did not fit into mainstream society. Zhodani society was stable and well-adjusted prior to starfleet, with fewer misfits and adventurous souls.

The fact that robots do not have minds that can be communicated with through ordinary telepathy means that Zhodani do not try and anthropomorphize robots to the same degree Humans do. A Zhodani noble or intendant need only to try to touch a robot's mind to *know* it is not "alive" or see inside the machine's body with ESP to reveal what makes it tick. Nor, in closely monitored Zhodani society, are the fears and prejudices that other races have about a "robot revolt" or "android doubles" likely to occur – at least, not without swift treatment by the Tavrchedl'.

Lacking the biases that limit the use of mobile robots in the Imperium and Solomani Confederation, it is not surprising that the Zhodani make a greater use of robots than any other known major race. Even so, the Zhodani preference for psionics has slowed the development of advanced artificial intelligence. Instead, all Zhodani robots are designed to receive orders psionically – and a result, do not need any great intellect. The role of robots in Zhodani society is simple: machines that do repetitive or dangerous jobs, freeing Zhodani for safer or more rewarding pursuits.

Zhodani mainly use robots for industrial, maintenance and hostile environment activities. The latter function includes everything from space repairs to deep sea mining to combat.

Note: Zhodani military vehicles and warbots generally receive a descriptive name, an identification number based on the first syllable of the manufacturer's name followed by the four digits of the year it entered service (in the Zhodani calender). The description in parenthesis, e.g., "utility grav sled" is a simple statement of function, not a name used by the Zhodani.

Robot Designs

Zhodani robots are usually TL8 to TL11 designs (depending on the planet where they are built). The most advanced models are warbots used by the military. These are

typically TL11, with a few TL12 models entering service with Consular Guard units.

The Zhodani do not, as a rule, build humanoid robots. The standard mobile robot configuration is a legless torso containing a brain, power plant, contragrav system and thrusters. A number of arms, usually two, but sometimes one, three or more, are attached. Often they have built in tools or weapons. The robot is usually topped with and a rotating head turret containing sensors and communication systems. This design may vary somewhat, but it is common throughout the Consulate.

If using *GURPS Robots* or *GURPS Vehicles* to build robots the following design considerations apply:

Brains: No neural-net, biocomputer or sentient options.

Sensors: No bioscanner, chemscanner, three-in-one or Xadar options.

Communicators: No neutrino option, but see Meson Technology on p. GT108.

Propulsion: Typically, vectored thrust reactionless thrusters; the TL11 thrusters listed become available at TL10.

Contragrav: As usual, TL12 CG is available at TL8 while TL13+ CG is available at TL9+.

Weaponry: Jaws are rare in Zhodani robots. For weapons, See restrictions in *GURPS Traveller* Equipment and Supplies chapter. *GURPS Traveller* weapons can be used instead. When installing energy weapons with backpack power supplies, install only the weapon itself – omit the backpack and instead just add that many power cells.

Power System: Typically fuel cells, nuclear power units or energy banks. Only rechargeable power cells are used.

Armor: Usually metal or laminate.

Camouflage and Threat Protection: Intruder chameleon is unavailable.

Biomorphics: Zhodani may install surface sensors, but other types of biomorphics are almost never used.

USING ROBOTS

Robots generally have these advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages: A robot's brain gives it Absolute Timing (thanks to its internal clock), Eidetic Memory 2 (it can store events in its memory, recalling them with perfect accuracy), Lightning Calculator and Mathematical Ability. It also has High Pain Threshold, Immunity to Disease and Poison and (in the case of most high-tech robot power plants) Doesn't Eat or Drink and Doesn't Breathe.

Disadvantages: An ordinary robot has these disadvantages: Cannot Learn (it can't spend experience points to acquire new skills or raise attributes), No Sense of Humor, Reprogrammable Duty (it must obey whoever it is programmed to obey) and Slave Mentality (it follows orders without showing individual initiative).

Like animals, robots normally have a split health/hit point total. Damage inflicted on a robot's body (torso) is treated exactly like damaging a human, except that all robots effectively have High Pain Threshold. Damage to a limb or a head (unless the brain is installed there, rather than in the body) does not reduce body hit points: instead, each head or limb has its own hit points separate from the body's, and reducing that location to 0 or fewer hit points simply prevents that body part from functioning (and disables any components built into it).

ZHODANI WARBOTS

The Zhodani traditionally use mobile robots as part of their armed forces. These robots are not sapient, but are a cheap substitute for ordinary soldiers. They are typically used in conjunction with sapient troops to provide additional firepower, or for strategic reasons.

Imperial propaganda paints the Zhodani use of "death machines" as one more example of their souless culture. The Zhodani have a different view. War is necessary, but not glamorous, and their soldier's lives are too valuable to waste.

Warbots are normal parts of many Zhodani units, and are attached to others for special operations on a mission-by-mission basis. They are used in various ways, ranging from mass assault to mobile fire support platform to providing security perimeters or post-battle pursuit. They are vital for clearing built-up areas, where casualties may be unacceptably high for Human troops; in such missions, they are normally sent in to locations where Clairvoyance-using psion detachments have pinpointed enemy resistance. Against lower-TL forces, use is often made of their flight capabilities for surprise vertical envelopments.

Warbots are programmed to recognize and ignore friendly troops either through pattern recognition ("that is Zhodani combat armor, that is a Zhodani tank . . .") or sometimes other means. They are usually programmed with this information, along with terrain maps, battle plans and threat criteria ("attack enemy battledress troops, then other infantry" or "eliminate enemy ATGM teams").

Zhodani find warbots are highly useful in certain non-combat situations. For example, if the Consulate wishes to keep the peace in a riot-torn city, use of Human troops to patrol the streets simply provides more targets for snipers, leading to escalation of violation. For such exposed roles, warbots are the best choice – they are better armored, highly intimidating, and discourage retaliation. An insurgent may wish to trade his life for a Zhodani soldier; would he do the same for Cr156,805 worth of electronics that the Consulate can well afford to lose?

TLIA-3404 CHIAKRZI (WARBOT, TL11)

The *Chiakrzi* ("Sandstorm") is the standard battlefield warbot used by the Zhodani army and Consular Guard. It is approximately equivalent to a battledress-equipped soldier, albeit faster and tougher. About 5' tall, it has a bulky torso, a low domed "head" with turret sensors and a single antenna, two powerful arms, and a second underside weapon turret (although no visible gun protrudes). It has no legs, but usually floats 1-3 yards off the ground. As the turret is underneath the warbot, it can easily strafe opponents below it, but if in cover most fully expose itself before firing. However, its small size (compared to a tank) lets it quickly pop up, fire, then conceal itself.

Brain: A standard dumb brain equal to a complexity 5 computer, hardened against radiation and electromagnetic pulse. The brain is installed in the robot's body.

Sensors: Basic sensors equivalent to Human sight, hearing and smell, built into the turret, plus thermal imaging (thermograph), night vision and spectrum vision capabilities. The sensors also include a laser/radar detector.

Communications: Basic communicator package (contains a voice synthesizer enabling the robot to synthesize speech, a radio with a range of 500 miles, a cable jack for a fiberoptic cable that allows direct unjammable communication with any other computer or communicator it is plugged into) plus an IFF "beeper" (like that of Zhodani combat armor) and a laser communicator for secure line-of-sight transmissions (blocked by anything that blocks a laser beam) out to a range of 2,000 miles.

Arms: Two arms: each has ST 30. In place of a Human-type hand is a simple gripper (Bad Grip disadvantage).

Propulsion and Lift: The robot floats on contragravity capable of supporting up 1,000 lbs. Since the warbot weighs only about 600 lbs., it can carry a further 400 lbs. (or operate in higher gravity) and still move: thus, it could lift an armored man, or various cargoes. It is propelled by a reactionless thruster with 133 lbs. thrust.

Weaponry: The robot is armed with an FGMP-11 concealed in a fully rotating turret under its torso. The weapon is not visible until it fires.

Accessories: The warbot also includes an inertial compass (giving it effective Absolute Direction).

Power Systems: A nuclear power unit rated at 7.965 kW operates the robot for five years. It also has eight rechargeable E cells that are normally used to give its FGMP-11 500 shots.

Structure: Heavy frame. Two arms (0.9 cf each), two fully rotating head turrets (top 0.518 cf, underside 0.85 cf). Hit Points: Body 42, each arm 36, top head 12, underside head 18.

Armor and Threat Protection: The warbot has PD 4, DR 240 laminate armor with a thermal superconductor layer. Its DR is *doubled* against shaped-charge (HEAT and HEDP) warheads, lasers and X-ray lasers and plasma and fusion guns. It is fully sealed.

Programs: The TK-27's brain can run one complexity 5 program, or 10 complexity 4 programs, or 100 complexity 3 programs, etc. It comes with and usually runs:
Beam Weapons (Blaster) DX+2 [4]-14 (Complexity 4, Cr4,000).
Brawling DX+2 [4]-14 (Complexity 4, Cr4,000).
Combat Reflexes, complexity 4 (Cr3,750).
Electronic Operations (Communications) IQ+7* [4]-15 (Complexity 4, Cr2,000).
Electronic Operations (Sensors) IQ+7* [4]-15 (Complexity 4, Cr2,000).
Tactics IQ+6* [4]-14, complexity 5 (Complexity 4, Cr2,000).
* Skill points quadrupled due to Eidetic Memory.

Statistics: ST 30, DX 12, IQ 8, HT 12/42. Speed 83 (166 mph) flying; can hover. Weighs 603 lbs. (0.3 tons). Total volume 5.1184 cf. Costs Cr156,805 (plus Cr17,750 for programs).

CHI-3374
MAINTENANCE BOT [TL11]

The CHI-3374 has a cylindrical body, four arms each ending in complex tool-hands, and a small wedge-shaped head turret. Like most Zhodani designs, it has no legs, utilizing gravitic lift.

Manufactured by Chiadle, the CHI-3374 is the most common general-purpose repair and maintenance robot used in Zhodani space. It can often be seen at starports and aboard merchant or naval vessels, often replacing one or two Human crewmen. It comes in various versions, mostly differing in the kind of tool systems used. The military also use the CHI-3374 with no modification.

Brain: A standard dumb brain equal to a complexity 5 computer, hardened against radiation and electromagnetic pulse. The brain is installed in the robot's body.

Sensors: Basic sensors equivalent to Human sight, hearing and smell, built into the turret, plus thermal imaging (thermograph), night vision and spectrum vision capabilities.

Communications: Basic communicator package (as per warbot); lacks warbot's laser communicator or IFF.

Arms: Four arms: each has ST 20.

Propulsion and Lift: The robot floats on contragravity capable of supporting up to 500 lbs. Since the bot weighs only about 200 lbs., it can carry a further 300 lbs. and still move. It is propelled by a reactionless vectored-thruster with 67 lbs. thrust.

Weaponry: The robot is armed with a laser cutting torch built into its head. The weapon is not visible until used.

Accessories: The warbot has integral mechanical or engineering tools and electronic or armoury tools in each arm.

Power Systems: A pair of rechargeable E cells built into its body provides 58.8 hours of continuous power. The cells together store 900,000 kWS energy: it uses 4.25 kWS per second.

Structure: Medium frame. Four arms (0.28 cf each), one fully rotating head turret (0.373 cf). Hit Points: Body 11, each arm 36, head 5, each arm 9.

Armor and Threat Protection: The robot has PD 4, DR 20 metal armor. It is fully sealed.

Programs: The CHI-3374's brain can run one complexity 5 program, or 10 complexity 4 programs, or 100 complexity 3 programs, etc. It comes with and usually runs:
Any three Armory (any), Electronic Operations (any) or Mechanical (any) at IQ+7* [4]-15 (each Complexity 4, Cr2,000).
Any two Engineering (any) or Electronics (any) IQ+6* [4]-14, complexity 5 (Complexity 4, Cr2,000).
* Skill points quadrupled due to Eidetic Memory.

Statistics: ST 20, DX 10, IQ 8, HT 12/11. Speed 75 (151 mph) flying; can hover. Weighs 197 lbs. (0.1 tons). Total volume 2.778 cf. Costs Cr18,799.5 (plus Cr10,000 for programs).

All vehicle designs were built using *GURPS Vehicles*. (The Zhodani "light grav sled" is equivalent to an air/raft.)

CHI-2724 YONCHOBO
UTILITY GRAV SLED [TL10]

This is a medium-weight "grav truck" used by both the Zhodani Army and Consular Guard and by many civilian concerns within Zhodani space. The Yonchobo grav sled is equipped with day/night, all-weather capability, plus a proximity alert radar system capable of determining the distance between the vehicle and any obstacles. The vehicle is noted for its ruggedness and safety in a wide range of planetary conditions. Its two grav modules are each individually capable of supporting the full weight of the vehicle at up to 1.3 gravities, and the vehicle is shielded against environmental contaminants, radiation, and is durable enough to withstand likely collisions and incidental impacts.

The standard configuration includes a 500 cf cargo module, sized to accept typical cargo blocks from spacecraft, but a wide variety of variants have been made.

A *Yonchobo* is a slow but reliable draft animal that has adapted well to many worlds in the Consulate.

Body Features: fair streamlining.
Propulsion and Aerostatic Lift: Two 1,000 lb. vectored thrust reactionless thrusters (draw 50 kW each; HP 8). Two 10-ton lift contragravity units (draw 10 kW each; HP 4).
Instruments and Electronics: Medium range scrambled directional radio/cell phone (50,000 mile range; HP 1), medium range lasercomm (10,000-mile range; HP 1), 5-mile range radar, no targeting (1.25 kW, HP 1), 1-mile passive infrared (HP 1), Low-Light TV with 5× magnification (HP 1),IFF (HP 2), GPS receiver (HP 1), radar/laser detector (HP 1), small hardened dumb computer (HP 1, complexity 3) with 2 terminals (HP 4 each).
Programs: Pilot-12 (Complexity 2), Datalink (Complexity 1), Navigation (Complexity 2)
Controls: Computer controls; backup controls (Body, HP 4).
Crew stations: Pilot, Copilot. Occupancy: Short. Accommodations: 2 large crewstations, 2 medium passengers.

Environmental systems: 2 man-days life support.
Safety: crashwebs, 4 man-days life support, NBC for 4 people.
Power Systems: 75 kW NPU powers one grav module and all other systems. 100 kWh rechargeable energy bank backup can also power secondary reactionless module for up to 120 minutes.
Spaces: 4.8 cf short term access space, 22.91 cf waste space, 500 cf cargo space.
Volume: Body 750 cf. Area: Body 500 sf. Medium cheap frame with fair streamlining. Hit points: Body 750.
Armor: DR 10 standard metal overall. DR +50 standard metal open frame "bumpers," front and back only.
Surface Features: sealed, radiation shielding. Military versions have camouflage paint.
Statistics: weight 4,145.35 lb unloaded, 14,945 lb (7.5 tons) loaded (with 4 crew and 5 tons cargo), Cr61,138. Volume 750 cf, size +4, HT 12/750. Maintenance interval 81 hours.
Performance: No ground performance. Can float, no water performance. Stall speed 0, can fly. With one grav unit operational, motive thrust 1,000, drag 250, top speed 175, acceleration 1.5 mph/sec. With both units operational, top speed 245, acceleration 3 mph/sec. aMR 3.5, aSR 4, aDec 14 mph/sec.

The Utility Sled is a Zhodani workhorse vehicle, and a large number of variant versions exist, especially among military users. Some of the most common are:

High Threat modification

In areas suffering from insurgency or similar problems, plates of high-grade nonflammable ablative plastic armor reinforcement are bolted on to the vehicle. The standard mix is 1,250 lb, Cr1,250, and adds DR 100 standard fireproof ablative armor to all faces except the top. This reduces standard cargo capacity to 9.5 tons. While the armor is not sufficient to withstand any severe threat (losing 1 DR per 10 points of damage inflicted on it), it offers protection from fragments and small arms.
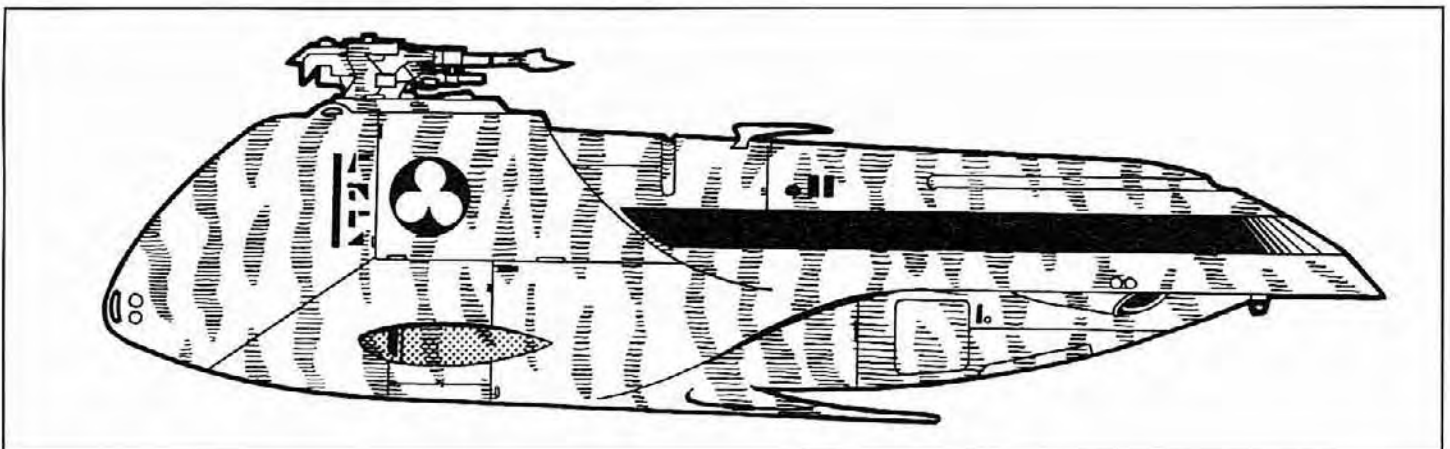
Grav Ambulance Sled variant

Used for casualty evacuation. While intended for military service, it is also used by civilian hospitals on many frontier worlds. Replace cargo capacity with two medium crew stations (medical crew), 10 stretcher pallets, two ESUs, a siren, seven man-days of limited life support (12 hours with full load), plus an energy bank sufficient to last until life support fails, and 24 cf of waste space. Weight becomes 5,215 lbs. unloaded, 8,015 lbs. (4.01 tons) loaded, giving an acceleration of 2.5 or 5 mph (other stats unmodified). Cost of this variant is Cr79,888.

Surgical Van Sled variant

For situations where simple casualty evacuation is not sufficient, this is essentially a mobile field surgery. It includes three medium crewstations, seven stretchers, one stabilized diagnosis table, seven Emergency Support Units (each capable of keeping one critically injured casualty stabilized), a siren, 10 man-days life support, an energy bank sufficient until life support fails, and 4 cf waste space. Weight becomes 6,080 unloaded, 8,080 lbs. loaded (4.04 tons). The performance is the same as the grav ambulance variant. It costs Cr133,438.

Other Grav Utility Sled variants

Other modifications not presented in detail include:

Computer Sled: Equipped with extensive electronic intelligence gathering and processing equipment, including a mainframe for cracking encryption and signals traffic analysis.

Fire Direction Center Sled: Similar to the above, but equipped for receiving corrections from forward observers and transmitting information to appropriate artillery units.

Laser/Radio (LR) and Meson Communicator Sleds: Dedicated battle communications vehicles carrying long-ranged laser, radio and meson communicator gear.

Nuclear Damper sled: Fitted with an auxiliary fusion power plant and a nuclear damper projector unit.

Shop Van Sled: Carries tools and spares.

TLIA-3314 VLEZJAQ SCOUT GRAV SLED   (TL10)

A small, lightly armored, high speed military grav vehicle usually employed for scouting and armed reconnaissance. It is armed with a VRF gauss gun and an auto-launcher for tactical missiles. The *Vlezjaq* is named after a winged predator native to Zhdant's eastern desert that vaguely resembling a cross between a Terran bat and scorpion.

Subassemblies and body features: Three retractable wheels. Turret with full rotation, on top of the body, near the nose. Very good streamlining on body.

Propulsion: 9,000 lb thrust TL11 standard reactionless thrusters (body, 450 lbs., 9 cf, Cr9,000, 450 kW).

Aerostatic lift: 25,000 lbs.-lift TL13+ contragrav generator (body, 22.5 lbs., 0.45 cf, Cr625, 25 kW).

Weaponry: 4mm VRF-Z Gauss gun, concealed (turret, 28.8 lbs., 1.4 cf, Cr8,600, 1,280 kW). 64mm missile launcher, concealed (turret, 55.8 lbs., 2.8 cf, Cr2,092). 50,000 rounds 4mm APS (body, 106.5 lbs., 1 cf, Cr1,500). 50 64mm HEAT missiles (body, 930 lbs., 18.6 cf, Cr543,150) in anti-blast magazine (465 lbs., Cr4650).

Weapon accessories: Full stabilization for both weapons (turret, total 8.5 lbs., 0.4 cf, Cr4,650).

Communications: TL10 communicator with scrambler (body, 0.25 lbs., 0.005 cf, Cr175, 5,000 mile range). TL10 laser communicator with scrambler (body, 2.5 lbs., 0.02 cf, Cr750, 1 kW, 50,000 mile range).

Sensors: Headlights. TL10 PESA (body, 25 lbs., 0.5 cf, Cr100,000, 25 mile range, Scan 19). TL10 AESA (body, 37.5 lbs., 2.5 cf, Cr18750, 50 mile range, Scan 21). IFF (body, 5 lbs., 0.1 cf, Cr1,000, 50,000 mile range).

Navigation: TL9+ INS (body, 10 lbs., 0.2 cf, Cr12,500). TL9+ Military Global Positioning System (body, 1lb, 0.02 cf, Cr750). TL10 Terrain Following Radar (body, 2.5 lbs., 0.05 cf, Cr1,000, 0.25 kW).

Targeting: TL9+ HUDWAC with pupil scanner (body, 15 lbs., Cr1,000).

ECM: TL8+ Advanced radar/laser detector (body, 15 lbs., 0.3 cf, Cr1,500). TL10 Deceptive jammer (body, 50 lbs., 1 cf, Cr50,000, 5 kW).

Computers: TL10 minicomputer, hardened (body, 120 lbs., 0.6 cf, Cr18,750, complexity 5). Dedicated targeting minicomputer, hardened, runs targeting program complexity 5 (+4 bonus) (body, 15 lbs., 0.3 cf, Cr7,750). Dedicated vehicle ops minicomputer, hardened, runs piloting program complexity 5 (+3 bonus) (body, 15 lbs., 0.3 cf, Cr7,750). Two TL10 terminals (body, total 20 lbs., 1 cf, Cr500).

Miscellaneous: Compact fire suppression system (body, 50 lbs., 1 cf, Cr500).

Vehicle controls: Computerized maneuver controls (Cr1,000).

Crew stations: Commander and assistant commander run sensors through two computer terminals. Pilot has piloting computer and gunner has targeting computer. All have normal crew stations (body, total 120 lbs., 120 cf, Cr400).

Occupancy: Short. Crew requirements: Commander, Assistant Commander, Pilot, Gunner (four).

Environmental systems: TL9+ NBC Kit (body, 20 lbs., 2 cf, Cr4,000, 1 kW). TL10+ Limited life system (body, 200 lbs., 4 cf, Cr2,000, 2 kW) with support for 4 person-days.

Safety systems: Four gravity webs, one in each crew station (body, total 80 lbs., 1.6 cf, Cr10,000, 2 kW).

Power system: 1,800 kW TL10 fusion reactor (body, 2,360 lbs., 47.2 cf, Cr318,000, 22.5 kW excess power, 200 year life).

Access & cargo space: 58 cf access space in body. 10 cf cargo space in body.

Volumes: Turret (7.4 cf, takes up 9.4 cf in body). Body (523 cf). Wheels (27 cf).

Surface areas: Turret 23, body 390, wheels 53. Total and structural area 466.

Structure: Extra heavy frame, standard TL10 materials, very good streamlining (1,864 lbs., Cr116,500).

Hit points: Body 2,340, turret 138, wheels 106 each.

Armor: Body has 450 DR standard TL10 laminate, sloped 60 degrees on front and 30 degrees on sides (17,550 lbs., Cr175,500). Turret has 450 DR standard TL10 laminate, sloped 60deg at front and 30deg on sides and rear (1,035 lbs., Cr10,350). Body & turret front PD 6, DR 900. Body sides, turret sides & turret rear PD 5, DR 775. Other faces PD 4, DR 450.

Other surface features: Sealed (Cr4,660). Radical emission cloaking (116.5 lbs., Cr349.500). Radical stealth (116.5 lbs., Cr349,500).

Statistics: Empty weight: 24,858 lbs, Normal internal payload: 1,000 lbs, Ammo: 1,037 lbs, loaded weight: 26,896 lbs, loaded mass in tons 13. Volume 557 cf. Size modifier +4. Price: Cr1,056,498. HT 10.

Ground Performance: Note that typically wheels are only used for parking and so forth. Motive power comes from thrusters. Top speed 230 mph. gAccel 11mph/s. gDecel 10 mph/s. gMR 0.5. gSR 3.

Aerial performance: Stall speed 0, can hover & fly. Top speed 740 mph. aAccel 7 mph/s. aMR 4. aSR 4. aDecel 16.

TLI-960 *DIZIYANATL*
ZHODANI GRAV APC [TL10]

The standard Zhodani Army and Consular Guard infantry fighting vehicle, this is a sleek, turreted grav sled armed with a VRF gauss gun and missile launcher, which carries a commander, pilot, gunner and a nine-man infantry squad. It is named for a famous Army lift infantry commander from the Second Frontier War.

Subassemblies and body features: Three retractable wheels (for parking). Turret with full rotation, on top of the body, near the nose. Very good streamlining on body.

Propulsion: 7,500-lb. thrust TL11 standard reactionless thrusters (in body, 375 lbs., 7.5 cf, Cr7,500, 375kW).

Aerostatic lift: 40,000 lbs.-lift contragrav generator (in body, 30 lbs., 0.6 cf, Cr700, 40 kW).

Weaponry: 4mm Z-VRF Gauss gun, concealed (in turret, 28.8 lbs., 1.4 cf, Cr8,600, 1,280 kW). 64mm missile launcher, concealed (in turret, 55.8 lbs., 2.8 cf, Cr2,092). 50,000 rounds 4mm APS (in body, 106.5 lbs., 1 cf, Cr1,500). 30 64mm HEAT missiles (in body, 558 lbs., 11.16 cf, Cr325,890) in anti-blast magazine (279 lbs., Cr2,790).

Weapon accessories: Full stabilization for both weapons (in turret, total 8.5 lbs., 0.4 cf, Cr4,650).

Communications: TL10 communicator with scrambler (in body, 0.25 lbs., 0.005 cf, Cr175, 5,000 mile range). TL10 laser communicator with scrambler (in body, 2.5 lbs., 0.02 cf, Cr750, 1 kW, 50,000 mile range).

Sensors: Headlights. TL10 PESA (in body, 10 lbs., 0.2 cf, Cr40,000, 10 mile range, Scan 17). IFF (in body, 5 lbs., 0.1 cf, Cr1,000, 50,000 mile range).

Navigation: TL9+ Inertial Navigation System (in body, 10 lbs., 0.2 cf, Cr12,500). TL9+ Military Global Positioning System (in body, 1 lb, 0.02 cf, Cr750). TL10 Terrain

Following Radar (in body, 2.5 lbs., 0.05 cf, Cr1,000, 0.25 kW).

Targeting: TL9+ Head-Up Display Weapon Aiming Computer (HUDWAC) with pupil scanner (in body, 15 lbs., Cr1,000).

ECM: TL8+ Advanced radar/laser detector (in body, 15 lbs., 0.3 cf, Cr1,500).

Computers: TL10 minicomputer, hardened (in body, 120 lbs., 0.6 cf, Cr18,750, complexity 5). Dedicated targeting minicomputer, hardened, runs targeting program complexity 5 (+4 bonus) (in body, 15 lbs., 0.3 cf, Cr7,750). Dedicated vehicle ops minicomputer, hardened, runs piloting program complexity 5 (+3 bonus) (in body, 15 lbs., 0.3 cf, Cr7,750). One TL10 terminal (in body, 10 lbs., 0.5 cf, Cr250).

Miscellaneous: Compact fire suppression system (in body, 50 lbs., 1 cf, Cr500).

Vehicle controls: Computerized maneuver controls (Cr1,000).

Crew stations: Commander uses computer terminal. Pilot has piloting computer and gunner has targeting computer. All have normal crew stations (in body, total 90 lbs., 90 cf, Cr300).

Occupancy: Short. Crew requirements: Commander, Pilot, Gunner (three).

Accommodations: Nine cramped seats for infantry unit (in body, total 180 lbs., 180 cf, Cr900).

Environmental systems: TL9+ NBC Kit (in body, 60 lbs., 6 cf, Cr12,000, 3 kW). TL10+ Limited life system (in body, 900 lbs., 9 cf, Cr9,000, 9 kW) with support for 18 person-days.

Power system: 1,720 kW TL10 Fusion reactor (in body, 2344 lbs., 46.9 cf, Cr317,200, 11.75 kW excess power, 200 year life).

Access & cargo space: 55 cf access space in body. 60 cf cargo space in body.

Volumes: Turret (7.4 cf, takes up 9.4 cf in body). Body (881 cf). Wheels (44 cf).

Surface area: Turret 23, body 552, wheels 75. Total and structural area 650.

Structure: Extra heavy frame, standard TL10 materials, very good streamlining (2600 lbs., Cr162,500).

Hit points: Body 3,312, turret 138, wheels 150 each.

Armor: Body has 500 DR standard TL10 laminate, sloped 60 degree on front and 30 degree on sides (27,600 lbs., Cr276,000). Turret has 500 DR standard TL10 laminate, sloped 60 degrees at front and 30 degree on sides and rear (1,150 lbs., Cr11,500). Body & turret front PD 6, DR 1,000. Body sides, turret sides and turret rear PD 5, DR 750. Other faces PD 4, DR 500.

Other surface features: Sealed (Cr 6,500). Basic emission cloaking (81.25 lbs., Cr48,750). Basic stealth (81.25 lbs., Cr48,750).

Statistics: Empty weight: 36,120 lbs, internal payload: 3,400 lbs, ammo: 664 lbs, loaded weight: 40,184 lbs, loaded mass in tons 20. Volume 933 cf. Size modifier +4. Price: Cr695,213, HT 12.

plexity 7). Dedicated targeting mini-computer, hardened, runs targeting program complexity 5 (+4 bonus) (body, 15 lbs., 0.3 cf, Cr7,750). Dedicated vehicle ops minicomputer, hardened, runs piloting program complexity 5 (+3 bonus) (body, 15 lbs., 0.3 cf, Cr7,750). Five TL10 terminals (body, 10 lbs., 0.5 cf, Cr250).

Crew stations: Commander uses one computer terminal. Pilot has piloting computer and gunner has targeting computer. All have normal crew stations (body, total 90 lbs., 90 cf, Cr300).

Occupancy: Short. Crew requirements: Commander, Pilot, Gunner (three).

Accommodations: Four roomy seats for command staff, each with a computer terminal (body, total 160 lbs., 160 cf, Cr400).

Power system: 1,720 kW TL10 fusion reactor (body, 2,344 lbs., 46.9 cf, Cr317,200, 13.5 kW excess power, 200 year life).

Access & cargo space: 55 cf access space in body. 60 cf cargo space in body. 29.5 cf empty space in body. 0.79 cf empty space in turret.

Statistics: Empty weight: 35,720 lbs, internal payload: 2,400 lbs, ammo: 213 lbs, loaded weight: 38,334 lbs, loaded mass (in tons) 19. Volume 933 cf. Size modifier +4. Price: Cr2,739,718. HT 12.

Ground Performance: Note that typically wheels are only used for parking. Motive power comes from thrusters. Top speed 170 mph. gAccel 8mph/s. gDecel 10mph/s. gMR 0.5. gSR 3.

Aerial performance: Stall speed 0, can hover & fly. Top speed 680 mph. aAccel 4mph/s. aMR 4. aSR 4. aDecel 16.

TLI-960/2 Command Sled variant

A redesign of the Zhodani Grav APC to serve as a mobile armored command post. It resembles the original except for a few extra radio antennae to set it apart. A close observer will notice no launcher next to the VRF gauss gun. Aside from that, there is little external difference.

Subassemblies, Propulsion, Lift, Weaponry, Weapon Accessories, Sensors, Navigation, Targeting, ECM: As Zhodani Grav APC, omitting the missile launcher and its magazine.

Communications: TL10 communicator with scrambler (body, 0.25 lbs., 0.005 cf, Cr175, 5,000 mile range). TL10 long range communicator with scrambler (body, 25 lbs, 0.5cf, Cr625, 500,000 mile range). TL10 laser communicator with scrambler (body, 2.5 lbs., 0.02 cf, Cr750, 1 kW, 50,000 mile range).

Computers: TL10 microframe computer, hardened, high capacity, genius (body, 150 lbs., 3 cf, Cr1,750,000, com-

TLI-960/3 Gunsled and TLI-960/4 Point-Defense Sled variants

This is another rebuild of the grav APC, with the same chassis but a different turret incorporating a rapid-pulse plasma gun and improved target-acquisition and fire control systems. The gunsled is used for direct infantry support; the point-defense sled incorporates a more expensive computer, and is tasked to destroy incoming artillery fire and missiles.

Subassemblies, Propulsion, Communication, Navigation, ECM: As Zhodani Grav APC.

Aerostatic lift: 50,000lbs.-lift TL13+ contragrav generator (body, 35lbs., 0.7cf, Cr750, 50kW).

Weaponry: Rapid-Pulse Plasma Gun (turret, 1,781 lbs., 35.6 cf, Cr74,296).

Weapon accessories: Full stabilisation for plasma gun (turret, 178.1 lbs., 3.6 cf, Cr17,810).

Sensors: Headlights. TL10 PESA (body, 10 lbs., 0.2 cf, Cr40,000, 10 mile range, Scan 17). TL10 AESA (body, 9 lbs., 0.2 cf, Cr15,000, 12 mile range, Scan 17). IFF (body, 5 lbs., 0.1cf, Cr1,000, 50,000 mile range).

Computers: TL10 microcomputer, hardened, high-capacity (and genius on PD sled) (body, 150 lbs., 3 cf, Cr50,000, or Cr350,000 if PD sled, Pow 0.1kW, complexity 6, 7 if

PD sled); usually given a complexity 7 targeting program (p. GT162). Dedicated vehicle operations minicomputer, hardened, runs piloting program complexity 5 (+3 bonus) (body, 15 lbs., 0.3 cf, Cr7,750). Two TL10 terminals (body, 20 lbs., 1 cf, Cr500).

Crew stations: Commander and gunner use computer terminals. Pilot has piloting computer. All have normal crew stations (body, total 90 lbs., 90 cf, Cr300).

Occupancy: Short. Crew requirements: Commander, Pilot, Gunner (three).

Environmental systems: TL9+ NBC Kit (body, 15 lbs., 1.5cf, Cr3,000, 0.75 kW). TL10+ Limited life system (body, 300 lbs., 6 cf, Cr3,000, 3 kW) with support for 6 person-days.

Power systems: 19,500 kW TL10 Fusion reactor (body, 5,900 lbs., 118 cf, Cr495,000, 19,077 kW excess power, 200 year life). Rechargeable power cells provide power for 5000 plasma blaster shots, recharged at the rate of one per second from fusion plant excess (body, 5,320lbs., 53.2 cf, Cr532,000).

Access & Cargo Space: 126 cf access space in body. 10cf cargo space in body. 41 cf of empty space in body.

Volumes: Turret (39 cf, takes up 47 cf in body). Body (881 cf). Wheels (44 cf).

Surface area: Turret 69, body 551, wheels 75. Total and structural area 695.

Structure: Extra heavy frame, standard TL10 materials, very good streamlining (2,780 lbs., Cr173,750).

Hit points: Body 3,306, turret 414, wheels 150 each.

Armor: Body has 500 DR standard TL10 laminate, sloped 60 degree on front and 30 degree on sides (27,550 lbs., Cr275,500). Turret has 500 DR standard TL10 laminate (3,450 lbs., Cr34,500); with slope, this gives Body front PD 6, DR 1,000, body sides PD 5, DR 750 and other faces and turret PD 4, DR 500.

Other surface features: Sealed (Cr6,950). Basic emission cloaking (87 lbs., Cr52,125). Basic stealth (87 lbs., Cr52,125).

Statistics: Empty weight: 48,238 lbs, internal payload: 800 lbs, loaded weight: 49,038 lbs, loaded mass in tons 25. Volume 964 cf. Size modifier +4. Price: for gunsled, Cr 1,873,906, for point-defense sled, Cr2,173,906, HT 12

Ground Performance: Note that typically wheels are only used for parking. Motive power comes from thrusters. Top speed 150 mph. gAccel 8 mph/s. gDecel 7 mph/s. gMR 0.5. gSR 3.

Aerial performance: Stall speed 0, can hover & fly. Top speed 660 mph. aAccel 3 mph/s. aMR 4. aSR 4. aDecel 16.

Other Grav APC Variants

Electronic Warfare Sled: A command sled variant fitted with area jammers, chaff and prismatic aerosol rocket launchers and other electronic countermeasure gear.

MRL Drop Sled: A grav APC with the troop compartment removed and replaced with an enlarged cargo area. The missile launcher is removed, and an articulated ST 50 robot arm substituted. The drop sled is intended to quickly emplace and remove small remote-controlled Multiple Rocket Launchers (MRLs).

ZHODANI VEHICULAR WEAPONRY

Z-VRF Gauss Gun (TL10): This "very rapid fire" gauss gun is a 4mm long-barrelled electric gatling gun, with six rotating barrels. Used mainly as an anti-personnel and anti-missile weapon it is devastating against poorly armored infantry.

19-Megawatt Rapid-Pulse Plasma Gun: A high rate of fire plasma gun useful as both a direct support and point defense (anti-missile) weapon. In addition to the effect on the target, everyone within a 2-yard radius of a hit takes ¼ damage from splattering plasma, and all flammable objects will catch fire.

Z-64 AML (TL10): A light automatic missile launcher launch tube rated for a 64mm, 18.6 lb. missile. Its rapid rate of fire lets it to fire two missiles at once. The standard missile uses Passive Electromagnetic Homing guidance (capable of infrared homing, optical homing and homing on enemy radar or radio emissions) requiring no further control from the gunner after firing; thus, in six seconds, the launcher can fill the air with a dozen missiles. Typical missiles use an advanced shaped-charge HEAT warhead (armor protects at ⅒ DR).

WEAPON TABLES

Name	Malf	Type	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt	RoF	WPS	VPS	CPS	Power	Cost	Shots	TL
VRF-Z Gauss Gun:																
Solid rounds	Ver.	Cr	14d	20	15	1,500	6,100	29.8	100*	0.0032	0.00002	Cr0.03	1,280	Cr8,600	var.	10
APS rounds	Ver.	Cr	6d×3(2)	20	15	2,200	9,100	29.8	100*	0.00213	0.00002	Cr0.15	1,280	Cr8,600	var.	10
Point Defense Rapid-Pulse Plasma Gun																
19-MW output	Ver. E	xp.	6d×40	25	20	3,600	10,800	1,781	20*	n/a	n/a	n/a	380,000	Cr74,297	300/4D	10

Missile Launchers

Weapon	Malf	Guid	Type	Damage	Wt.	RoF	Spd	End	Max	Min	Skill	WPS	VPS	CPS	Cost	Shots	TL
Z-64mm Missile Launcher																	
HEAT Missile	Crit.	PEH	Exp.	6d×25(10)	55.8	2~	450	27	12,300	0	17	18.6	0.372Cr	10,863	Cr 2,092	50	10

The Vargr

Problems in Vargr Historiography

No completely accurate and trustworthy account exists of Vargr history from their original transplantation to the point where they first made their presence known to other starfaring cultures. As with many other elements of Vargr society and background, truth is frequently obscured by a welter of contradictory claims and interpretations among Vargr writers; few human scholars have been able to sift through the contradictory material of rival Vargr historians to arrive at any consensus of what actually happened.

The same problems have hampered first-hand scholarship by Vargr themselves; few ancient Vargr historians wrote with any eye to a goal other than pleasing those who held power at the time, and many rewrote the past to support current regimes. That such occurred in human society is not the point; among the Vargr it's not even seen as dishonest. Much of history is political literature, and Vargr racial pride tends to discourage too much probing by alien outsiders into the cherished myths of this or that group.

The Vargr are a major race of intelligent humanoid beings who resemble anthropomorphic wolves. They are unique among major races, and indeed most sapient species, in that they were not the product of natural selection, but are rather the culmination of an experiment in artificial evolution by the Ancients.

Vargr were initially a puzzle for xenologists. The Vargr did not seem to "fit," having a biochemistry and genetic makeup distinct from most other native flora and fauna indigenous to Lair, their purported homeworld. This was not a new puzzle: similar problems had confronted scientists studying the origins of the Vilani, Zhodani and many human minor races collectively known as Humaniti. All of these enigmas were solved after contact with the Solomani, the humans from Earth. It was eventually discovered that the Vargr, like all the races of Humaniti, had a Terrestrial genetic origin.

Unlike Humaniti, however, the Vargr were not simply transplanted. During the early years of the Third Imperium, researchers concluded that they were the result of genetic manipulation of Terran carnivores, probably wolves. Archaeological data and other evidence (such their presence on the Droyne caste symbols known as Coyns) suggest the Ancients were responsible.

The Vargr are descended from carnivore stock transplanted from Terra to Lair/Grnouf in the Provence Sector 300,000 years ago, during the heyday of the Ancients. These transplanted carnivores were of the family *Canidae* and almost certainly the genus *Canis*, most likely *Canis lupus* (wolves). However, DNA from other canids including jackal (*C. mesomelas*), coyote (*C. latrans*) and fox (genus *Vulpes*) also seems to have been used to a lesser extent. Extensive genetic engineering was performed to give the Vargr intelligence and manipulative ability, and transform them from quadrupeds to bipeds.

The Vargr retain many of the characteristics of their canine ancestors, to a greater degree than humans do with primates. Also, some 300,000 years of natural adaptation took place. It appears the Vargr were not fully fitted to the environment of Lair, and this produced rigorous conditions which made natural selection essential to the survival of the race. This seems to have resulted in further adaptations and development not introduced by Ancient experimentation, which may have been the Ancients' intent. Thus, the Vargr are, in effect, products of both genetic engineering *and* some degree of evolution.

PHYSIOLOGY

Vargr are upright bipeds who resemble a humanoid wolf with a bipedal posture and arms ending in hands instead of paws. Vargr legs are digitigrade – that is, they walk on their toes, their heel not touching the ground. Their bodies are covered with short fur, generally gray, brown, black or rust colored, though a wider variety of patterns appear in Vargr than in Terrestrial wolves. Their fairly long tails end in a flaring brush. Their muzzle is shorter and less pronounced then a Terran canine, but still quite evident with strong jaws and sharp teeth. They have other characteristics consistent with their terrestrial mammalian origin.

A typical adult male Vargr stands five feet, four inches tall (1.6 meters) and weighs approximately 135 pounds (60 kilograms), while Vargr females are an inch or two shorter and 5-10 pounds lighter. On average, Vargr aren't as strong as

Humans, but their reaction speed is measurably faster (although there are wide variations among individuals).

Their hands are similar in shape and functionality to Human hands, though with significant internal differences. Vargr are normally are able to use the same equipment without modification or additional practice. Their hands tend to be somewhat more slender and dexterous than Humans, at least on the average, though there is considerable variation. Vargr fingers retain sharp pointed non-retractable nails useful as claws in close combat, although not as dangerous to an opponent as their teeth.

Vargr are built for sprinting: they can run approximately twice as fast as Humans for a short period. Even so, they tire more quickly, and because of the fur that covers most of their body, they cannot cool off by sweating: instead they pant. The combination of bipedal posture and digitigrade leg design means a Vargr cannot kick effectively.

Due to their origin, Vargr biochemistry is of course terrestrial, making them closer cousins to Humaniti than any other non-Human species encountered off Terra.

Senses

Vargr eyesight is notably sharper than Human sight, but responds somewhat differently to colors; to Humans, Vargr color patterns frequently seem extremely unusual, sometimes muddy, at other times garish and clashing. Vargr have a similar reaction to human color sense, finding it outlandish. Merchants intending to sell to Vargr are well advised to retain a Vargr consultant if offering products in which color is important to sales, such as clothing, textiles or consumer goods. The same is true with Vargr merchants dealing with other races.

A Vargr's hearing is excellent, but again slightly out of phase with that of humans. Sounds that are generally too high-pitched for human ears can be detected, but lower ranges are often vaguely sensed rather than heard. This has obvious implications if Humans talk quietly around Vargr, and means that crossover appeal of musical performances is limited.

The Vargr possess keener noses than do humans, but their sense of smell lacks the acuity of their canine ancestors, and cannot match that of the K'kree. While smell is important in their worldview, it is far less so than in unmodified canines.

Vargr tactile sense is identical to Humaniti's.

Diet

Vargr are mainly carnivores. They eat the same type of food as humans, but prefer a diet of fresh red meat with occasional stewed fruit. They like their meat raw, but heavily spiced. They drink water, wine, beer and fruit juices. Vargr have the capability to both eat and digest food more rapidly than Humans, but their total daily intake does not exceed an average man's.

Growth and Aging

Vargr reach puberty between age 11-12, and are considered mature around age 17. Vargr age at approximately the same rate as do Humans. Anagathic drugs are available for Vargr, but they cannot use the same ones that Humans use.

Some large Imperial pharmaceutical companies such as SuSAG manufacture anagathics (and other drugs) specific to the Vargr metabolism, for sale to Vargr living in the Imperium or trade.

Mating and Reproduction

Unlike wolves, Vargr are sexually active year-round. Pheromones (chemical signals) play a stronger role than among humans: Vargr can detect romantic interest from a member of their race by scent alone, which has obvious implications for courtships. A Vargr pregnancy averages seven months, but mothers tend to be more active than Humans are during this time. Twin births are commonest, but triplets or quadruplets are not unknown. Single births are about as common as triplets, and some groups of Vargr attach special significance to a Vargr born alone. Children are born blind and deaf, helpless for up to two months after birth.

Vargr Dating Systems

Vargr timekeeping varies from place to place; individual worlds generally base it on the local day, while a "week" of 168 hours (one jump) and a "watch" of just over eight hours are common units of measurement for spacefaring Vargr.

As in all things, Vargr acknowledge no universal calendar. Individual planets impose calendar years based on planetary movements around their stars; sometimes standards are imposed across larger areas of space, but there is no true Vargr "standard year." Vargr states dealing with one another will often throw up their hands and simply adopt the Imperial calendar (or the Zhodani, if the state is far Spinward), it being easier to compromise on this issue than to fight over which local standard to use. Vargr states dealing with humans, on the other hand, have been known to insist on the use of the local Vargr dating system as a matter of pride, and to warm toward humans who are familiar with it.

Vargr dates start from whatever point the local populace cares to choose as a starting point. As an example, the large Thoengling Empire, one of the dominant powers in Gvurrdon sector, uses the election of its first modern emperor in 792 and counts in planetary years from the capital (each 1.23 Earth years). The year 1120 by the Imperial calendar is thus the year 267 in the Thoengling reckoning. On the other hand, bishops of the Church of the Chosen Ones treat their year zero as the year the first Vargr was uplifted by the Ancients, which (using arcane methods best known to the church hierarchy) they claim to have established at -312,463 Imperial. Using the Vargr homeworld (Lair)'s year (1.032109 Earth years) which the Church takes seriously (but few other Vargr do), Church calendars will state it is the year 303,827 and counting of the Vargr Ascendancy.

One significant date that both Imperial and Vargr historians can agree upon is the year in which the Vargr invented jump drive and began their *diaspora* (Vargr/ Gvegh: *gzokdae*): -3810. In Imperial years it is now 4,930 Earth years or 4,776 Lair years since that event. This reckoning ("years on homeworld since the diaspora") is also used by Vargr from different states when they need to use a "common" date; it might be popular if the Vargr could agree upon a common name for their homeworld.

Prehistory

The Vargr homeworld (or perhaps foster-homeworld) is generally called Lair by Imperials in preference to the most widely accepted Vargr names, most of which are difficult to pronounce by Humans. No one is sure which of Lair's several continents was the original home of the first Vargr transplantees. Evidence has been advanced for all of them, and some theories suggest settlements were made on more than one.

It isn't known with any certainty whether the Ancients meddled only once with proto-Vargr stock or made return visits to guide the continuing development of the race in a desired direction. Most evidence suggests only a single intervention took place. It seems that, unlike the Zhodani, the Vargr were left largely on their own to develop, rather than being used as servants and pets, and that the Vargr were confined to a single world. However, the possibility that some Ancient worlds other than Lair possessed Vargr servants and that these settlements were completely eradicated in the Final War cannot be ruled out.

The social groupings of pre-civilized Vargr hunting packs were the basis for the evolution of Vargr society. In prehistoric times the Vargr packs spread throughout Lair and dominated its other species through their development of language and technology. The Vargr were somewhat slower to discover tools or fire than humans, perhaps because of their natural weapons, but their gregariousness seems to have spurred more rapid development of sophisticated language and writing.

Ancient History

Early in their history, the majority of Vargr moved from dependence on hunting to herding domesticated animals. As evolved carnivores, the first Vargr towns (circa -9,000) were not agricultural in nature but were rather fortified centers for trade and various industries such as textiles, mining, smelting and pottery.

Lacking the need for large governments to manage huge irrigation projects such as those of Egypt or Persia, the Vargr states were primarily small enclaves, fiercely independent. Much of early Vargr history has been likened to the Classical Greek period on Terra, although similarities are superficial. City-states rose and fell in prominence, and in the process developed science, law, ocean trade, philosophy, literature, warfare . . . but on the whole, the Vargr governments were smaller in scope than those of equivalent periods of Terran history.

Communication

Vargr voice boxes were modified to make them capable of speech, but their lupine heritage is reflected in their extensive non-verbal body language. Tails, and to a lesser extent the movement of ears and the state of a Vargr's fur, serve as an unconscious means of signaling a Vargr's emotional state to other Vargr (and also to many Humans, who have long racial experience with canines). For example, a twitching tail indicates nervousness or anger, one held high and straight signals determination, and a rhythmic sway is a sign of contentment.

Vargr speech is not quite the mixture of barks and howls that some make it out to be, but does have a strong echo of their canine ancestry. Vargr can and do howl, albeit not with the same intensity of a wolf – at least, not without some practice and training. A little of the texture of Vargr speech is lost to Humans, as some high notes are above their hearing threshold.

PSYCHOLOGY

Vargr retain a number of mental and behavioral traits that bear an obvious relationship to the instinctive behavior of the canines they were derived from. Although sapient, the Vargr are still very much pack-oriented carnivores.

The trait that Humaniti finds most negative about the Vargr is a nature often characterized as "inconsistent," "chaotic" or "impulsive." Vargr can seem intensely loyal to an interest or cause, then suddenly shift allegiance. The rapid evolutions in Vargr politics and commerce are bewildering, and maps showing national boundaries are rarely accurate for more than a few decades. In many parts of the Imperium, humor based on the mercurial-tempered, "confused" and "disloyal" Vargr is common.

GREGARIOUSNESS

The Vargr are a very gregarious people, enjoying the company of one another and demanding the security and comfort of fellowship with others of their own kind. This is a natural development of the primordial instincts that kept hunting packs together. As a rule, Vargr enjoy living in close proximity with one another. At the family level, they tend toward extended families. Solitary confinement is more of a torture to most Vargr. On the other hand, Vargr have less of sense of privacy and personal modesty than Humans – within a pack, that is. They can be quite prim with outsiders, especially those of other races.

CHARISMA AND DOMINANCE

Although they are gregarious, the group behavior of Vargr is characterized by a constant struggle for dominance within the group. The ability to exert personal authority over others derives from an individual's prestige and force of personality. The Vargr have various words in their different languages to describe this important personal characteristic, but Humans call it *charisma*, a general term characterizing the individual Vargr's ability to inspire and dominate others of his kind.

A charismatic Vargr radiates confidence and ability in voice, manner and posture, and other Vargr are naturally drawn to him. But charisma is also affected by events: defeat has a profound negative impact on the individual's bearing and conduct, telling others he has failed. Because of this, the Vargr are never content to rest upon their laurels. Much of a high-charisma Vargr's behavior is based on a need to continually reaffirm his abilities, win the approval and support of others, to prove, over and over, that he is worthy of his place in the group.

Vargr with lower charisma, who make up the majority of any group, are usually loyal followers. They are aware of their own lack of the qualities they see in charismatic leaders, and so attach themselves to a leader in the hopes that a little bit of his or her reflected glory will help them. The Vargr follower transfers his attention from proving he is better than other Vargr to proving *his group* is better than other groups. This is one of the strongest forces in Vargr society; it has allowed what little social cooperation exists among their people.

RACIAL PRIDE

Vargr possess a fierce personal pride. Vargr are easily insulted, which sometimes leads to them getting involved in conflicts without proper regard for possible consequences.

Vargr pride extends to their race; Vargr do not like to be placed in a subordinate position compared to non-Vargr. Their unique origin as an artificially uplifted species is a touchy subject. Some don't want to discuss it. Many take pride in it, choosing to see themselves as the product of a (successful) attempt to develop a superior species. Others believe Vargr should be recognized as the natural successors to the Ancients, and in time will take their place as the dominant race of the universe.

Imperial xenologists often dismiss such claims as over-compensation for a submerged racial inferiority complex, suggesting Vargr themselves are bothered by the fact that they are "uplifted animals" rather than a naturally evolved race. Declarations of Vargr supremacy thus simultaneously affirm their racial self-image and provide a ready rejoinder to aliens that claim their species' artificial origin makes them inferior. Vargr xenologists, of course, hold a different view.

VARGR SOCIETY

Vargr social organization is not easily comprehended by human minds. Analogies from Terrestrial history are prone to be easily misinterpreted. Perhaps the closest Earth culture which might provide a good model for Vargr social structures is that of the Dakota Sioux of North America in the 19th century, but it is unwise to press the comparison too far. There are as many, if not more, distinct Vargr societies are there are Human ones.

The key elements that shape Vargr society are a strong emphasis on collective and informal lines of authority and an equally strong force from ingrained pack-tribe-nation loyalty.

Although gregarious, Vargr tend to be most cohesive on a low level, in bands or small groups (the equivalent of packs). A Vargr gives his loyalty to a charismatic leader, and follows that leader over the dictates of higher authority if necessary. However, Vargr are always susceptible to the lure of some other group if the charisma of that leader is superior.

Vargr tend to follow higher-charisma individuals, who mean much, *much* more to Vargr than more abstract and impersonal institutions such as governments and nation-states. There is a Vargr proverb "If I can smell my leader's confidence, I needn't fear; if I can scent his fear, I need a new leader." While Vargr charisma is by no means pheromone-based, that accurately conveys the desire for close bonds of contact.

The Vargr have little respect for human concepts like *title* and *chain of command*. Instead, they respect an individual they can see, hear and scent. In situations where this is not possible, maintaining larger organizations depends on maintaining a hierarchy of close personal contacts between each level: the highest leader must have followers who are regularly exposed to his charisma, and they in turn must be charismatic enough to keep the loyalty of their followers, and so on down.

For example, consider a Vargr military unit in a tiny Vargr principality. A major commands a battalion, part of a regiment run by a colonel, who is subordinate to the prince. If both the colonel and the prince are charismatic, and convey this through personal contact, the major will be very loyal. If the colonel is not charismatic, the major will be testing him in an effort to get his job and rise in the prince's favor. If the colonel is charismatic but the prince is not, the major will support the colonel in a *coup d'etat* aimed at taking over the state. If neither of his superiors is charismatic, the major is likely to desert to the enemy, try his own takeover, or move on – he doesn't have a sense of "patriotism" or "regimental loyalty." However, if the state were attacked by non-Vargr, he certainly wouldn't desert or turn traitor – racial pride would prevent it.

Ancient History

[Continued]

Periodically a leader would unite a number of mutually hostile groups by a combination of persuasiveness and force of arms, but such unions did not outlive that leader's own lifetime (and usually did not even last that long) before disintegrating. Instead, the enduring Vargr epics feature those personalities whose monuments were far more enduring: charismatic adventurers who took break-away factions and led them on overland exoduses or voyages of discovery, to found successful colonies and open up new lands.

As a rule, the Vargr were incapable of accepting authority more remote than the number of people a single charismatic individual could personally sway. Vargr rulers could rarely stay in one place – they needed to be always on the move, holding continual congresses and rallies. Combined with the higher demands that a carnivore race placed on food resources, this limited both overall population and the governability of Vargr societies.

Vargr Curiosity

One element of Vargr psychology, often overlooked by Humans eager to condemn their race as one of freebooters and demagogues, is their intense curiosity. As pack predators, Vargr were near the top of their food chain on Lair: they had little reason to be afraid of anything, and tend to react to new things with a sense of "this might be worth hunting or owning" rather than "this might be dangerous." Vargr thus tend to approach, rather than back away from, the unknown. Their interest in seeing what is over the next hill or in the next star system has helped spread their race throughout the stars; it has also kept their strong racial pride from turning into xenophobia – Vargr are always interested in aliens, even if that interest is somewhat predatory.

Racial inquisitiveness has also helped Vargr scientists and inventors. While Vargr often have difficulty maintaining long-term projects, the vast number of tinkerers and backyard inventors attempting to do things for the simple pleasure of seeing what will happen has often led to important discoveries (and also some significant disasters) within Vargr history. Still, in a universe where many states tend more and more toward technological and scientific conservatism (to avoid social disruption) the willingness of the Vargr to experiment openly with "taboo" technologies may eventually lead to them surpassing some other races in their technological development.

Centralized authority is very tenuous at the higher levels of Vargr society; instead, action is based on broad consensus of viewpoint, which might, at any one time, be shaped by the vision of a charismatic leader. This has made it very difficult for large states like the Imperium to deal with Vargr governments.

PACK DYNAMICS

Small Vargr groups with a shared purpose tend to be very cohesive: in effect, they form a pack, whether it's an infantry platoon, a factory shift, the crew of a ship, a business or a corporate department. For pack-mates, "work" and "home" lives are rarely artificially separated. For example, a Vargr business will often arrange housing as part of the job, so that all employees will live in the same neighborhood or apartment building. Larger organizations consist of a number of packs (for example, departments of a business). Packs are often part of a larger organization, but in general, the loyalty of such groups' component members will be greater toward their own immediate leader than toward the parent institution that they are part of.

Vargr who work together tend to establish an informal hierarchy of dominance. Whenever a new person enters such a group, there is tension. Humans might wait for a new, untried individual or leader to "prove himself" – Vargr will begin challenging that person immediately, and not let up until he demonstrates his charisma is equal to the job, or shows a willingness to accept a position at the bottom of the pack.

Either position can be difficult. Vargr previously at the bottom see the newcomer as an opportunity to improve their own position, by having someone to dominate. The immediate superior wants to establish *his* dominance; if the new member enters the group at anything but an entry-level position, he'll face challenges from below as well. Challenges can range from physical (cuffs, shoves) to psychological. They'll only last a short time, though: other Vargr will observe how he handles himself in the first few scuffles, and a new hierarchy will be established.

For all the (figurative) backbiting that goes on within it, a pack will rapidly close ranks and pile on against an outside threat. When responding to challenges, a newcomer must be careful that he doesn't over-react – if someone cuffs you, snarling and jumping on him is one thing, but pulling a knife or gun, or tearing out his throat after he's surrendered, is another. A Vargr who acts crazy will be reclassified as an enemy by the entire pack.

LOYALTIES

To a Vargr, most loyalties are temporary, but *no less strong* for all of that. A Vargr does his best for a group as long as he remains within it, but has no illusions of staying in it forever, nor do others. A Vargr may move to join another group, possibly with diametrically opposed objectives or even ideals. Or the Vargr may become a loner for a time. Always, however, he is seeking to improve his own lot by moving on to a situation that enhances his own charisma and dominance.

The transference of individual-to-group-dominance is inherently unstable. Individuals within the group are each seeking their own niche and striving to achieve more and better things to improve their own charisma. As leaders make mistakes or go off in a direction others disagree with, factions emerge and cause considerable upheaval as members of the original group are drawn in different directions. Often *factions* are just individuals who want to go a different way; without enough charisma to sway others of the group, they end up on their own, deserting their erstwhile comrades, or being driven out for refusing to recognize the group's accepted leader's authority.

Individual Vargr often challenge a leader when things go poorly for the group as a whole, or when the leader's authority is diminished by something (whether it's injury or a mistake). This does not mean that individual Vargr will start squabbling at the first sign of danger or hardship. If adversity or casualties are expected, and the group is still achieving its goals despite them, a cohesive Vargr pack will often have higher morale than an equivalent group of Humans.

For instance, if a Vargr platoon is suffering heavy casualties, individual Vargr are less likely to run or hide then are Humans: as long as it looks like their unit can still win and their leader is on top of things, they'll generally keep fighting. On the other hand, once it's apparent that the group is in trouble and the leader doesn't know what to do, he'll be faced with swift challenge from charismatic followers. If he cannot handle this (on top of whatever problem led to the challenge), he'll lose the confidence of those under him. A successful challenge may see a fresh new leader with a new outlook taking command, or the entire group swiftly fragmenting if no one leader can win the group's loyalty in time to take suitable action.

Unsuccessful vs. Successful Groups

Often a Vargr who is naturally charismatic and who has achieved success in one field is propelled into a leadership position for which he lacks the specific experience, talents or skills necessary. Such a situation is inherently unstable: the leader's initial high charisma tends to lead the group into situations it cannot handle. Unless the leader learns on the job, the effect will often be a string of reverses that erode the leader's charisma. If no one charismatic challenger appears, the result will usually be the splintering of the group as rivals exert their influence over parts of the group and draw them away from the larger whole.

Successful groups with good leaders must grow to survive. If a group does well, its leader's charisma is enhanced, and both through his force of personality and his reputation, he can attract more members. The constant influx of low-charisma, low-status Vargr is good for the stability of the group, because it means that the status of existing individuals within that group can rise automatically: promotion no longer requires challenging a leader or moving on. In such a situation, giving enthusiastic support to popular and successful leaders is seen as ensuring that the position of everyone in the group improves. The equation "growth equals stability" is vital to any Vargr organization, and is essential for understanding how Vargr can succeed as a society.

Industrialization

Vargr "empire building" had to wait until science advanced to the point where transportation could support greater population densities and communications enabled the number of individuals who could be directly exposed to a leader's charisma could increase. Circa -4000, the developments of railway, telegraph and meat-packing made populous cities and larger states possible; the invention of radio, air travel and, especially, television, enabled individual leaders to project their charisma on an intercontinental, planetary and later interplanetary scale.

Even these states, however, were far from the human concept of a "nation." Groups supposedly within the sphere of that nation's territory could and did act completely without the sanction of the "established government." In short, towns, cities, hinterland and counties were all more autonomous than anything in human history. To humans, much of Vargr history looks like uninterrupted anarchy; the few Vargr who have studied the pre-starflight history of human cultures have described them as monotonous, rigid, and stratified, and find the "herdlike" willingness of ancient human populations to endure lengthy dynasties of incompetent or oppressive leaders baffling.

Vargr began exploring their own solar system in earnest about -3900. Space travel was supported by the majority of Vargr, seen as a natural road to space exploration, and rival governments began to compete to establish bases and interplanetary colonies. The colonies set up on two of Lair's sister worlds declared independence from their founding nation, resulting in the Colonial Rebellion (-3815 to -3790), a three-way struggle for dominance throughout the Vargr system. The first full-scale space war in Vargr history, the Colonial Rebellion's historical significance was far greater, for it was during this conflict that researchers seeking a military edge discovered the jump drive (in -3810). The jump drive was quickly acquired by every major system government and the Vargr – beginning with the losing side in the Colonial Rebellion – began spreading throughout the stars.

Interstellar Society

The Diaspora of the Vargr race was incredibly swift. Their curiosity and the natural Vargr tendency to move on when they couldn't win a fight, either with nature or with opposing forces, led them to spread quickly if thinly.

Most colonies were small, many were undersupplied and collapsed, but others prospered, becoming high-population worlds that served as the nuclei of small interstellar states and which themselves spawned further colonizing expeditions.

The turbulent preindustrial history of Lair replayed itself as the Vargr spread through space. The slow speed of interstellar communications combined with the Vargr's own racial drives. The result was constant, chaotic expansion.

The initial Vargr expansion of the Diaspora was stopped in the trailing direction by the Windhorn Rift, a region where stellar density was insufficient to permit easy travel. This was lucky for the Vargr: beyond the rift lay the Vilani Imperium.

Unified, dedicated to the maintaining the status quo of the Pax Vilinaca, the emperors and Imperial governors would have attempted to subdue the Vargr had they discovered them, for it was accepted policy that no race – especially non-humans – with the secret of the jump drive should exist independent of the Ziru Sirka.

The ambitions of individual Vargr are then channeled toward striving to do better than others of equal rank, in the hope of impressing their immediate leaders and insuring promotion over their heads. A growing, successful Vargr enterprise is rewarded by more success – until it reaches natural limits of growth imposed by the nature of its enterprise, such as the ability of its upper leadership to remain in contact with its base. Then, rather than stagnate or becomes static, as many Human enterprises do, the lack of further growth will quickly result in either a dynamic new leadership taking the movement in another direction, or more likely, the group splintering as individual Vargr abandon it to join other groups with more opportunities.

EGALITARIANISM

Although Vargr groups place an emphasis on dynamic leadership, Vargr *societies* tend to be essentially egalitarian: static systems that lock individuals into rigid hereditary castes are generally foreign to Vargr worlds. Vargr societies seldom erect social barriers that prevent a competent and charismatic Vargr from a poor family attaining higher status, since to do so is generally an invitation to a populist revolution at some point. The concept that even the lowest Vargr can, with sufficient charisma, aspire to rule as a prince is found in all Vargr cultures; pauper-to-prince tales are an important part of Vargr myth, drama and folklore.

The ruling elite of individual Vargr states has been known to establish artificial barriers that perpetuate the rule of an elite. However, there is generally a mechanism to incorporate charismatic individuals who might otherwise overthrow the system. For example, a feudal system may exist, but instead of succession being based purely on heredity, nobles may often adopt heirs from outside their family.

GOVERNMENT

There is no central Vargr interstellar government; indeed, there is no governmental type that can be said to be "typically Vargr." The higher the level of government, the more unstable it usually becomes, because of the impossibility of gaining consent from all Vargr involved. Since there is little respect given to formal authority figures who do not derive that authority from high charisma, respect decreases rapidly as these figures become more remote.

Vargr attach little importance to office or position, and a great deal of importance to the character of the individual occupying that position. A distant leader, no matter how personally able or charismatic, cannot exercise his charisma to win others to his standard, and thus is considered less worthy of respect than someone on the spot who has the charisma to influence his neighbors directly. The concept of a hereditary monarchy possessing some innate divine right to rule is rare.

Vargr see governments as groups that can bring together diverse interests under a single leader, in order to perform tasks that could not otherwise be managed, and to provide protection and services that smaller groups are too weak to provide. Those governments capable of appointing individuals who can retain the confidence of the governed are successful; those that cannot, forfeit that confidence and are unstable in the subsequent struggles for dominance.

Vargr are highly territorial, but an important difference between many Vargr and Human governments is that Vargr governments are more concerned with sovereignty over people and interests (e.g., hunting rights, trade rights) than land. Wealth and property (homes, factories, starports, etc.) are valued, but the idea that the city or world they sit on belongs to the state is not as strongly ingrained. To a Vargr, the concept of empire means more "the people I rule and the ships and wealth they bring me" than "the land I possess." There are many cases of several governments co-existing in the same physical space, "ruling" with different memberships, responsibilities and interests.

Interstellar Governments

In all their time in space, the Vargr never been able to come to terms with the requirements of governing a long-lived interstellar state. With no such a thing as an

interstellar radio to bind worlds together the way planet-bound population can be unified, time and distance has effectively reinforced the basic lack of acceptance accorded to remote authority.

Interstellar states have been established, some of them quite large, but the degree of control exercised by the central government has always been even more tenuous than even that of the decentralized feudal structure of the Third Imperium (which exercises minimal control of local affairs in any event). Then, too, half or more of the worlds within the "boundaries" of a given interstellar state may in fact be not only independent but also actively hostile to the central authority.

LAW AND JUSTICE

Most Vargr states have some degree of formalized legal code, but laws are followed only in proportion to the government's ability to enforce them, which tends to result in Vargr states avoiding attempts to legislate morality or to pass laws governing what Humans would call "victimless crimes." The gregariousness of Vargr society makes individual sociopaths stand out, and these are usually dealt with on the local level "within the pack" . . . either by vigilante justice or by dragging the offender in front of the nearest authority figure.

Vargr tend to not to feel outrage or guilt over many actions that humans would consider crimes. Insane acts – cruelty done for cruelty's sake, killing someone for a trivial reason – these things will provoke outrage in a Vargr. Rational crimes, such as theft or murder to improve one's wealth or position or to remove an enemy, are seen quite differently. Since any government is supposed to protect its citizens, that government's leaders regard lawbreakers as challenges to its authority. However, the attitude toward criminals is more like what many professional soldiers feel toward the other side: "it's them or me, but no hard feelings."

Law enforcement and justice demonstrate the ruler's strength. Punishments have two goals: removing a societal threat and deterring future behavior on the part of other criminals. However, unless a criminal is judged insane, there is no effort at *reform*, since criminal actions are not seen as amoral. Exile as a punishment is more common among the Vargr (where the nearest border is usually close by) than in the Imperium.

This divorce of morality from law means a highly charismatic leader can attract followers for almost anything – "legal" or "illegal." The neighbors of the Vargr are constantly subjected to impromptu raids and scattered piracy by bands of Vargr (totally without government sanction, of course) who have been talked into a raid, battle or war by a charismatic leader. The inability of Vargr governments to deal with these situations (or even comprehend the concept of dealing with them) has led to many frequent misunderstandings with neighboring human cultures throughout the history of Vargr-human contact.

VARGR AND HUMANS

A human patron hiring a Vargr group isn't that unusual. Humans often play one Vargr group against another. Humans traveling in the Vargr Extents may also wish to hire Vargr emissaries (or bodyguards) in order to have someone familiar with local cultural and political realities. Vargr prefer to be hired by and work with charismatic humans, but, of course, money and self-interest also talk.

Zhodani Contact and the Gvurrdon Hvaek

Instead, the first Vargr-Humaniti contact occurred with the Zhodani. Circa -2,800, the Vargr encountered merchant vessels from the Consulate. Since the Vargr were by then all over the place, it is hard to say which of several "first contacts" had primacy. According to Vargr legend, one notable early meeting occurred in what is now Gvurrdon Sector when a corsair squadron ambushed a Zhodani merchant cruiser engaged in a trade and discovery voyage.

The cruiser was from Makarin corporation, a Zhodani trading combine, and the Vargr were very impressed by its sleek design and (especially) its jump-3 capability, as only jump-2 vessels were then known, although not by the strange smooth-faced aliens who crewed it. Nervous at the telepathic abilities displayed by the alien captain, the Vargr were on the verge of executing the Zhodani. However, one of the corsairs, Gvurrdon, believed their claims that they were part of a large empire. He befriended the Zhodani and helped them escape with their ship. Gvurrdon spent years with them, traveling as far as Zhdant. Afterward he attained a trusted position as an emissary, helping Makarin open trade with other Vargr.

After 10 years, Gvurrdon grew bored with this life, and with a number of Vargr compatriots stole one of the advanced Zhodani vessels. Several more years of raiding and trading followed until, the now-aged Gvurrdon (leaving behind his grand starship) visited a respected Vargr prince named Knurroe. Although he seemed to be only a poor loner, the prince listened to his stories and gave him fine hospitality. In return, Gvurrdon gave Knurroe a kingly gift: the Zhodani spaceship. From its design, the prince produced more jump-3 vessels, and with that advantage crafted one of the largest and longest-lived Vargr empires, which would eventually span over 300 worlds. He named it the Gvurrdon Hvaek (Gvurrdon Pact), after the wanderer who had given him the ship; even today, the sector bears the name of this Vargr corsair, trader and emissary.

The Gvurrdon Hvaek dominated the Gvurrdon sector from the year -2700 to -2300. Eventually a series of non-charismatic leaders and the gradual loss of the Gvurrdon Hvaek's technological advantage resulted in its fragmentation into numerous successor states. Its fall left a recurring power vacuum that rival governments have tried to fill, with varying degrees of success, from -2300 to the present day. Still, the memory of that once vast and long-lived (by Vargr standards!) empire lingers, and inspires the dreams of many ambitious Vargr leaders: the desire to equal or exceed the achievements of the legendary prince Knurroe remains strong.

Vilani and Vargr

The rise and fall of the Gvurrdon Hvaek was only a footnote in the slow decline of the First Imperium, but the fighting in Gvurrdon and numerous other Vargr states often spilled over their borders into the Vilani empire. First contact with the Vilani took place around -2700. Provincial governors with their own ambitions took to employing, arming and equipping "barbarian" mercenaries from beyond Imperial borders. The Imperial governor of what is now Deneb, Corridor and Provence was the first Vilani leader to have direct dealings with the Vargr. After receiving reports of Vargr corsairs operating on the now-ragged edges of Imperial space, he hired them as part of a bid for the throne. The governor was defeated; the retreating Vargr mercenaries turned on the governor's own worlds. This set a precedent for further incursions by the Vargr.

Unlike the strong (and at that time expansionist) Zhodani Consulate, the Imperial border was increasingly seen as a "soft underbelly" by ambitious Vargr captains and admirals. From -2400 through -1700, Vargr bands followed charismatic leaders to raid and plunder worlds whose navies had been destroyed or diverted by power struggles within the weakened empire. Corsairs would discover lightly defended worlds, and their reports would attract the attention of Vargr border states. Soon mass migrations of Vargr would settle on these planets, conquering the indigenous populations and founding new colonies. Dissidents would inevitably spin off new groups and travel onward.

Vargr will less often hire humans. Vargr racial pride make it difficult for them to believe that humans can do anything better than a Vargr. Unless a non-Vargr has some unique skill or ability, they prefer to work with their own kind. Vargr might also hire humans out of necessity. For example, if there are no native Vargr about, a group of Vargr traders who get into troubles might have no one else to turn to.

Vargr find humans difficult to understand – the stability and antiquity of human society all seems very inscrutable indeed. Their lack of proper body language – their flat faces, lifeless ears and no tail – only makes it worse. Can't they show emotion? This ties into a Vargr view that human society is unfathomable, full of sinister depths and dark schemes Vargr can only barely perceive. Just as Humans can stereotype Vargr, Vargr can stereotype Humans. For instance, a Vargr may not offer a job to a Human who is employed ("everyone knows Humans never change jobs").

Still, those Vargr who have made a study of Humans believe they can be useful. Human loyalties don't shift as often as Vargr do. On the one hand, this does lead to a fear of human society as a massive juggernaut that will keep rolling over you no matter what you do to try and stop it. On the other, Vargr can believe that human agents *are* more reliable. In a situation where the risk of sudden defection or divergence of action would be unacceptable, hiring humans from a culture like the Imperium, where loyalty is a virtue, treachery the worst of crimes, and phrases like "his word is his bond" are still taken seriously, makes some sense.

Vargr who have studied humans enough to feel comfortable with human hirelings, know, of course, that these are ideals not always lived up to, so they will look for humans who have a reputation for keeping their word. Naturally, the honest Zhodani are considered to be good hirelings.

While a Vargr *leader* may find a human a good lieutenant, he is unlikely to promote him to a position over other Vargr this would offend. One exception is if the human has started at a low level and worked his way up, making friends along the way: in this case he may be seen as "one of the pack."

One danger aliens working for Vargr do face is the danger that a sudden swing of fortune will result in a change of leadership and thus policy in the group that hired them. This is true in any job, of course, but among Vargr it can happen with little warning and frightening speed. This can leave human hirelings high and dry if the new regime has no use for them (cash advances are useful . . .). On the other hand, Vargr are more likely to accept malleable loyalties than humans are. The "new regime," if the new leaders are unfamiliar with human psychology, may expect aliens to react like Vargr and switch sides as well; characters who "play along" may be able to turn the tables later.

THE VARGR EXTENTS

The Vargr Extents are those regions of space settled by and under the direct control of various Vargr governments and factions. They span all or part of more than 21 sectors situated roughly coreward of the Imperium, between the Zhodani Consulate and the Two Thousand Worlds of the K'kree.

The most heavily populated regions are the dozen sectors coreward of the Spinward Marches, Deneb, Corridor and Vland sectors. Every conceivable form of governmental organization can be found somewhere in the Vargr Extents, although some are very rare; often several radically different governments can be found on the same world. The only cohesive force in the Extents is the fierce feeling of racial pride, which, on occasion, brings about a tendency toward racial cooperation, especially against external enemies. These tendencies usually break down quickly in the wake of struggles for dominance among cooperating groups.

There are believed to be some 1,100 independent multi-world interstellar states existing within the Vargr Extents, although many are only small clusters of three or four worlds. Only about one-tenth as many occupy more than a single subsector, and those spanning the better part of a sector can be counted on one hand. The number is approximate; in the time it takes for a ship to travel the width of the Vargr Extents, a half-dozen such nations will have been absorbed by or combined into larger states, or fragmented into smaller ones, or simply changed their names.

A complete listing of Vargr states is an exercise in futility; a history of their rise and fall would occupy many volumes, and would be incomprehensible and largely irrelevant.

VARGR WORLDS

Vargr worlds, especially those with populations over a few hundred million, have a marked tendency toward balkanized multi-society governments. Civil disorder is fairly common on Vargr worlds: GMs who want to randomize such encounters can roll 1d vs. the local Control Rating each week. If the result is higher than the CR, some sort of disturbance takes place. This can range from a startown riot or political demonstration to a military coup. Generally disturbances will be potentially more serious on worlds with larger populations. Depending on severity, civil disorder may shut down shops, transportation and even starport services.

XBoat Routes: Few Vargr states have anything as organized as an Xboat system. Military ships or private contractors may carry messages and mail, usually at only jump 2-3.

Travel Zones: The Traveller's Aid Society may post certain worlds in Vargr space as Red Zones (usually due to an ongoing war or extremely xenophobic natives). These are not recognized or posted by Vargr states, though sometimes a Vargr state will interdict a world, usually either to punish an enemy planet with economic blockade or to protect a crucial military or research installation.

Bases: In addition to naval and scout bases, some Vargr worlds have corsair bases. Unlike the few hidden pirate bases within the Imperium, the location of some larger corsair bases is often well known (though prudent corsairs also maintain some secret installations) and visited by traders as a source of cheap goods and a market for luxuries, spares parts and weapons. Vargr caring less for geographic boundaries than humans, occasionally naval and corsair bases will share the same world; this generally indicates a certain degree of informal tolerance for the latter by the former, although by no means does it indicate the corsairs are under naval command or vice versa.

Hazards: Hijacking is considerably more common in the Vargr Extents.

Vargr in the Imperium

A few planets populated entirely by Vargr exist within the Imperium, but millions of Vargr are citizens on loyal subject planets, generally within the coreward sectors such as the Spinward Marches, Deneb, Corridor and Vland.

Vargr can and do mingle with humans and other Imperial races, although they often congregate in a particular section of a given startown or city. This is mainly a function of their gregarious nature, but occasionally represents some degree of anti-Vargr prejudice as well. In any event, the Vargr Quarter is a colorful and rather exotic locale, filled with bright colors and the sounds of hacking Vargr voices raised in argument or haggling. Vargr districts carry a reputation for violence, danger and disorganized crime not entirely unearned.
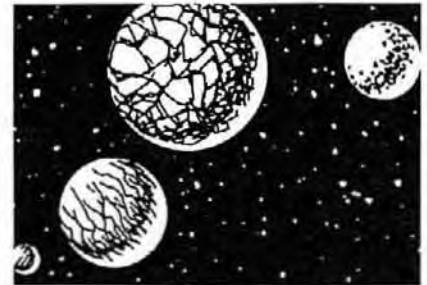
Wolves in the Night

As the First Imperium collapsed, the Terran-dominated Ramshackle Empire tried and failed to fill the vacuum, eventually collapsing. Throughout the Long Night (from -1776 onward), much of Human space was no better organized than the Vargr had ever been, and Vargr raids and migrations became even more common. Vargr reached across the Windhorn Rift into neighboring Human-dominated sectors such as Meshan, and sometimes even farther, settling in areas to Trailing of these Human worlds near the borders of the K'kree.

It was at this time that the words "Vargr corsair" became a synonym for pillage and destruction. With Human interstellar governments in disarray, small bands of corsairs could penetrate deep into Human space. While migrants from a Vargr state might seize an entire border world, an average corsair squadron lacked the organization and manpower for such conquest. If tribute wasn't forthcoming, or resistance took place, their only recourse was terror: drop a nuclear weapon on a city or starport, and perhaps the next city would give in to tribute. The corsairs did damage far greater than their numbers: two dozen Vargr in a single warship could devastate a world. When a fleet of corsairs spread like locusts throughout an entire subsector (as in the notorious Sack of Gashikan in -1658), the result was destruction and terror on a scale that would be remembered for millennia.

The Vargr Conquests

Perhaps more enduring then their legacy of fear were the blending of Human and Vargr settlements on worlds all across the Coreward reaches of the Ramshackle Empire. Genocide was not a common Vargr tactic. Rather, after a world had been intimidated by repeated Corsair attacks, it was more likely to accept the protection of another band of Vargr. After a few years as local overlords, they would attract colonists, and gradually the world would assume a half-Vargr, half-Human character, with a Vargr ruling class and outworld traders dominating a Human population. Inevitably, coups and revolutions led to changes in the Vargr government, and in many cases the new Vargr rulers found Human allies; history records that some charismatic Humans even rose high in the service and favor of this or that border prince.

The Vargr Enclaves

While Humans of the period may have been excused for thinking that the Vargr were all ravening freebooters, the Vargr themselves had other things on their mind. More important then raiding was the opportunities that the (temporary) end of Human hegemony granted the race. Expansion followed the now familiar pattern: breakaway Vargr would journey to a new world, it would grow and become established, and in the process acquire a government; the inevitable civil strife that resulted would hive off new bands of exiles and renegades ready to seek another home.

The Long Night was not dark for the Vargr: it was a vibrant period now remembered fondly as time of growth and exploration, the race spreading both coreward and far to trailing as they opened up regions of space even the Vilani had not touched. By -1500, the first Vargr had begun crossing the Lesser Rift, and by -700 most of the Vargr Enclaves had been settled and the settlements were beginning to encounter explorers and traders from the Two Thousand Worlds. Among the farthest ventures were those of the corsair-explorer-artist Mazaroegfl, famous as the first Vargr to ever encounter K'kree. Sometimes known as the Vargr Marco Polo among Human scholars, his epic saga remains popular across the Extents.

Just as the Great Rift kept the Vilani and the Vargr apart, it is perhaps fortunate that the Lesser Rift existed, or conflict between the K'kree and the Vargr enclaves would likely have been fierce and bloody in the centuries to come.

Vargr within the Imperium keep much of their cultural pattern, including a lack of respect for authority figures, although they have been known to follow charismatic human leaders. They treat the Imperial government much like any distant Vargr regime, enjoying the benefits proffered (which, at times, may include the opportunity to enlist in its service) and following its dictates only as it suits them, or when they are conspicuously enforced. Aside from Imperial citizens, other Vargr – adventurers, corsairs, mercenaries, smugglers, criminals and even a few honest traders – can be found throughout the coreward frontier, albeit usually only along the immediate border.

Humans in the Vargr Extents

A few worlds inhabited by humans, mostly of Vilani descent, can be found within Vargr states of the Extents, especially those bordering on adjacent Imperial territory. These regions were once part of the First Imperium and were overrun by the Vargr incursions. Some of these worlds were retaken by the Third Imperium, but several of the earliest conquests remained Vargr.

The status and treatment of humans varies from world to world: some are given planetary autonomy, while in others human and Vargr show equal status with a peculiar mixing of Vilani-human and Vargr behavior being shared by both races. On a few, the humans are treated as second-class citizens or slaves.

The Traveller's Aid Society advises that all Vargr worlds be considered amber zones, but hundreds of thousands of Imperial citizens visit the Vargr Extents every year for a wide variety of reasons: trade and diplomatic missions, scientific research, or mercenary commissions are three of the most common. Nevertheless, humans are somewhat rarer visitors in the Vargr Extents than vice versa. On all but the closest border worlds, human visitors will be looked upon with (sometimes rather forward) curiosity.

THE VARGR HOMEWORLD

The Vargr "homeworld" and "capital" is a planet known to Humans as Lair (Grnouf subsector, Province Sector). Lair has never been accorded any great status in the hearts and minds of the Vargr race, unlike such homeworlds as Terra, Vland, Zhdant, Kuzu or Kirur.

The true homeworld of the Vargr is, of course, Terra, but the world on which their culture and race developed is Lair. It lies two sectors coreward of the Imperium's Corridor sector. Lair is, of course, a human name. When speaking to Vargr, other names are usually used – Lloelldegh, a term meaning "homeworld" in a couple of archaic Vargr languages, is one reasonably safe option that is actually used near the homeworld, and which will at worst get a puzzled expression elsewhere.

Within Gvurrdon sector and the Marches, the Gvegh word *kanersaghae* ("our territory"), spoken with a certain emphasis, is the generally accepted term.

Lair has seen no special privileges because of his historical significance. Indeed, Lair was only recently united, and strong forces seem bent on pulling it apart once more. Of the dozen empires that have incorporated Lair in the last 800 years, seven of them have been ruled from a different world entirely.

Stellar Data

Lair orbits the yellow sun Kneng, a solitary star somewhat smaller and not quite as bright as Sol.

Type: G5 V.   *Luminosity:* 0.67.   *Radius:* 0.91 Sol.   *Mass:* 0.94 Sol.

World Data

Starport: Class V.

Diameter: 7,962 miles (12,842 km). *Atmosphere:* Dense oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 50%. *Climate:* Cool. *Population:* 2,300,000,000. *Government:* Multiple societies. *Control Rating:* Various. *TL:* 12.

Lair is divided into five continents by its oceans, with 10 percent of the surface covered by polar icecaps.

The planetary day is 26 standard hours long, while the year is 376.72 days. Lair has no orbital eccentricity but its axial tilt is equivalent to Terra (23.5 degrees). There is some geological evidence that this tilt was induced artificially some 300,000 years ago, presumably by the Ancients. Average temperature is a cool 61°F (16°C).

Lair has three natural satellites. The largest, orbiting at 94,000 miles, is tidally locked to Lair. The others orbit at 1,250 and 5,625 miles. All are airless rockballs, but have been heavily mined and contain extensive space port facilities.

Social Data

Lair has a population of 2.3 billion and is TL12, with a Class V starport (with an orbital elevator) on planet and a class IV port on the closest moon. As of 1120, the previous government, an aging clique of repressive leaders classed by the Imperium as a non-charismatic oligarchy, has been overthrown, apparently due to the death of most of the senior government officials after the luxury starliner *Evaekso* overshot the starport and crashed into the capital building, killing an estimated 3,000. The destruction of central authority lit a tinderbox. After approximately six months of anarchy in which some 120,000 Vargr are believed to have been killed or fled the planet, Lair is now under the control of three or four different governments:

The Koseng Roukhous (idiomatically: "temporary empire") is a dictatorship under the control of the former deputy chief of the planetary security force, who claims to be the legitimate successor to the planetary government. About a quarter of the army and most of the planetary security force supports the Koseng Roukhous, along with a wing of system defense boat squadrons. The Koseng Roukhous claims the Homeworld Protectorate has no business on the planet and that the Zaeto Kuengrorarr are no better than invaders. The fact that both major starports are occupied by other powers is galling to the Koseng Roukhous leadership.

Zaeto Kuengrorarr is an off-world corporation that had just completed an impressive orbital elevator "beanstalk" complex at the time of the revolution. Intended as a "showcase" project of the prior regime to replace an aging and outdated spaceport, the project cost billions and resulted in heavy tax burdens. In the confusion following the terrorist incident, Zaeto Kuengrorarr used its own (surprisingly well-armed) security troops and construction workers to mount a sudden attack on one of Lair's primary deep meson gun sites and seized control of it "to protect the security of its investment." The corporation has since reinforced its units with a brigade-sized mercenary force to take control of the elevator complex and several key cities, claiming that planetary government owes it MCr40,000. It intends to collect that investment one way or another. The corporation has indicated it supports the Homeworld Protectorate Force goals, provided its own legitimate interests are taken care of.

The Third Imperium

The rise of the Third Imperium saw the resurgence of Vilani and Solomani Humaniti and an end to their Long Night; for the Vargr, the coming dawn was a red one indeed.

Self-proclaimed heir to the First Imperium, the expanding empire of Cleon and his immediate successors felt it could not tolerate Vargr states occupying worlds that had belonged to Vilani in the Vland, Deneb and Corridor sectors. As the Third Imperium expanded to what it believed to be its natural boundaries it fought a series of fierce conflicts with various Vargr governments, known as the Vargr Campaigns of 220-348. Initially aimed at protecting Imperial communications through Corridor, whose predation had proved too much of a temptation for Vargr corsairs to resist, it transformed into a hard-fought struggle lasting over a century in which the Imperium retook much of the former Vilani territory lost during the Long Night.

From the Vargr viewpoint, it was a disaster, and a bitter blow to racial pride. On many worlds the Vargr population was completely eradicated – either fled deeper into the Extents or exterminated by Humans who remembered the ravages of the corsairs. Elsewhere, the Imperium simply installed Human governors, and Vargr populations were integrated directly into the Imperium.

In a few Vargr states, pragmatism overcame racial pride: individual Vargr princes and admirals scented the way the wind was blowing and swore fealty to the emperor. On some worlds with mixed Human and Vargr populations, the Humans found themselves not only paying taxes to the Third Imperium, but saddled with the same Vargr overlords, now with shiny new Imperial titles as barons or marquises.

By 350 the border from Antra to Anarsi (in Vland) (nicknamed "the Line" by the naval crews that enforced it) was stable. Successive emperors developed a standing policy of "No Vargr Below the Line," enforced by aggressive Naval patrolling.

Vargr in the First Outworld Coalition

There is no space to follow the rise and fall of Vargr states all across the Extents. Instead, the rest of this history will concentration on events to Spinward, and in particular, relations between the Vargr, Imperium and Zhodani.

The Spinward Marches had long been an indirect cause of Vargr-Imperial conflict, if only because Imperial efforts to protect their line of communications to this outworld frontier had helped spark the Corridor Wars. As Imperial settlers and traders moved out from the already colonized regions of the Marches into frontier subsectors, the Imperial Navy and Scout service aggressively patrolled the disputed space. Ostensibly there to maintain "freedom of navigation" (i.e., suppress piracy) and perform planetary surveys, the armed Imperial presence, which also included a number of large and well-armed ex-Navy scout cruisers, served to dissuade Vargr settlers from moving into the coreward regions (such as Aramis subsector) where the Imperium had no firm claim of occupancy but a long-term interest.

As the Third Imperium's expansionist agenda became clear, a number of Vargr states in Gvurrdon sector, the largest of which were the Ngoerrgh Togzekhz and the Gnaithlloellarrgh Gzolakhgha, grew to resent what they saw as a slow but inexorable spread of Human hegemony throughout once neutral space. So did the Zhodani Consulate, who were experiencing similar problems on their own borders. When the First Frontier War broke out, some of these states and corsair bands along the border that had felt constrained by the Imperial presence took advantage of the turmoil to strike across the border and into Imperial space.

Initially these raids were not synchronized with the Zhodani, but toward the end of the war (602) an effort was made to coordinate operations during the Zhodani's crucial Jae Tellona campaign. Unfortunately, rivalry between the admirals of the two largest Vargr contingents, the Ngoerrgh Togzekhz and the Gnaithlloellarrgh Gzolakhgha, led to a breakdown of command. Rather than reinforcing the Coalition's main battle fleet, many ships of the Ngoerrgh Togzekhz and other minor allies instead split off to plunder undefended Imperial worlds. Although the Gzolakhgha Vargr stood by the Zhodani, their combined strength was no match for the gathering Imperial Navy, and at the decisive Battle of Zivije in 603, the Outworld Coalition met defeat.

The Lloelldegh Sarrgh ("homeworld protectorate force") consists of elements of the subsector navy and army contingents from five other nearby worlds. They have taken the main starport and occupy a 300-mile "interdiction zone" around it for the purpose of delivering humanitarian relief supplies. Major worlds in the subsector are divided on which factions to support, and as such have been unable to agree on authorization for an effective blockade. At present, the Homeworld Protectorate Force is calling for an end to fighting and a planetary plebiscite by regions to establish a new government or set of governments.

The popular guerrilla army known as the Naelengva openly controls a number of cities in the southern continent, and is fighting the Koseng Roukhous and (to a lesser extent) Zaeto Kuengrorarr. Some of its factions also insist on the Protectorate Force leaving the world; others believe it is necessary to keep the Koseng Roukhous from using its SDB assets. It is led by a popular revolutionary committee controlled by a number of charismatic leaders who promise that after the Koseng Roukhous is overthrown, the new regime will institute rule by an elected dictator. The Naelengva appear to enjoy wide popular support. About a third of the planetary army appears to have gone over to the Naelengva, although they have little in the way of heavy equipment or spacecraft. They also have a dozen system defense boats, which are currently concealed in the planet's oceans, engaged in a deadly game of hide and seek with those of the Koseng Roukhous.

The planet is now classed as "balkanized" multi-society world. Shockwaves from the conflict are spreading like ripples across Provence sector. A number of corsair bands are moving toward Lair, in the hopes of being hired by the rival forces or otherwise exploiting the situation. The planet's Control Rating has dropped from the previous 5 to 2 (in places, to 0).

GVURRDON SECTOR

The Gvurrdon sector is located immediately to coreward of the Spinward Marches, and also contains a portion of the frontier between the Vargr Extents and the Zhodani Consulate. As a result, Vargr states in this region continually interact with the adjoining human societies and are frequently aligned with one or the other them. This aside, it can serve as a fairly typical example of those Vargr regions that directly border the Imperium.

Gvurrdon is a turbulent sector, most of whose worlds are not under the direct control of any single Vargr state; many Vargr worlds are completely independent. A strip of worlds to spinward are part of the Zhodani Consulate, although these are settled by Humans. Gvurrdon is not well mapped, and planetary government types as well as interstellar state boundaries change regularly. Gvurrdon's strategic importance is considerable, as for the last six hundred years it has been the staging area for Outworld Coalition attacks on the Imperium and the source of the Zhodani's Vargr allies.

The present Imperial policy has been one of economic engagement with the Gvurrdon Vargr, establishing several trading stations along the border, especially in Aramis subsector, to encourage commerce. The ultimate goal is to tie Vargr economically to the Imperium, lessening their chance of joining the Zhodani in future wars. This appears policy appears to be having its success: while three Vargr fleets from the 40th Squadron attacked the Imperium in the Fifth Frontier War, the majority of the Imperium's trading partners, including the largest Vargr states, remained neutral or provided only unofficial support. Political entities come and go with rapidity; long-term economic relationships can be more stable.

Some of the multi-world states presently significant in the Gvurrdon Sector are the Thoengling Empire, Commonality of Kedzudh, 40th Squadron, Dzen Aeng Kho (Society of Equals), the Thirz Uerra (Thirz Empire), the Rukh Aegz (worlds of the leader Rukh), Gnoerrgh Rukh Lloell (Anti-Rukh Coalition), the Urukhu and the Gaerr Thue (Pact of Gaeer). Most are primarily concerned with their own alliances and conflicts, but three of them have become more persistently involved with non-Vargr affairs.

Ekhlle Ksafi (40th Squadron)

During the Battle of Zivije in the First Frontier War, the sole Vargr unit of the Ngoerrgh Togzekhz fleet to remain steadfast in the line of battle and survive was the 40th Squadron, then under Commodore Koudvan. After the battle, the 40th fought their way back to the Vargr Extents only to discover that the Vargr defeat had led to civil war at home.

Finding nothing to respect in the leaders of either warring faction, Koudvan convinced his squadron to stay together and carve out a niche of their own. Descending on the small neutral cluster of worlds known as the Urdzu Kane, they conquered it and established a feudal state based on their direct military rule.

Over the next five centuries, the Ekhlle Ksafi's fortunes waxed and waned but one thing has remained constant: the 40th Squadron itself. Thanks to Zhodani military assistance, the Squadron navy (actually a small fleet) includes the largest and most capable cruiser-sized and capital ships in the sector (although some are getting old) and its crews are among the most experienced in fleet actions.

Officers from the 40th Squadron govern the state. The Squadron maintains old ranks and discipline dating back to the First Frontier War. Each ship is essentially a closed warrior fraternity; squadron members mate with the crews of other ships and have their own distinct and closed culture, many never venturing onto a world. The planetary governments under their protection are allowed a great deal of autonomy, but the Ekhlle Ksafi keeps the peace between the stars, demands tribute (including new recruits, usually from merchants) and has control over all military starships.

Governmental continuity is preserved through a curious custom of using low passage to preserve the most charismatic and talented ship captains and select crewmembers (who have won this honor through service) over the centuries. The First Officers of the Squadron run the ships and, through regular inter-ship councils and meetings with planetary leaders, the state's foreign policy. "Old Crew" are thawed in time of military or political crisis – some of 40th Squadron's leaders personally fought in the First Frontier War, and all have a somewhat stretched and distorted sense of history, especially from a Vargr perspective. Many Vargr look upon the old captains and crew with an almost religious awe.

The Ekhlle Ksafi have remained Zhodani allies for a surprisingly long time for Vargr, and they also possess a long tradition of enmity against the Imperium. As a political entity, the 40th fought in the Second, Third and Fifth Frontier Wars, its fleets swelled by independent contingents from other Vargr states and corsair bands.

The Fifth Frontier War was a failure for the Ekhlle Ksafi, who suffered heavy losses (including some of its irreplaceable Old Crew) for very little gain. The loss of leaders and ships led to a mutiny on one of its command ships, and saw its grip on three of its worlds weakened when planetary governments broke with the fleet and (in alliance with corsairs) declared their independence. (Despite Imperial hopes, two of these worlds have become havens for corsairs, although the third is petitioning for membership in the Commonality of Kedzudh.)

Even as other Vargr states eye it and scent weakness, the 40th Squadron is now building up its strength with Zhodani economic assistance and planning how to regain its position.

Thoengling Raghz

A large centralized state covering parts of Gvurrdon and Tuglikki sectors, located several parsecs beyond the Imperial border. The Thoengling Raghz (or Thoengling Empire) is one of the most stable of Vargr states, having existed in its current form since 792.

The head of state is the Emperor, a charismatic individual with great authority. He is elected for life by an assembly called the Gvur-Thoeng. The Emperor is expected to listen to assembly advice, but has great freedom to act in matters of interstellar affairs and security of the realm. The Gvur-Thoeng are elected from each world (based on population); aside from choosing the emperor, they advise him on concerns in the worlds they represent and must approve (by majority vote) any decrees relating to new taxes or tariffs. This gives them some say in policy.

Vargr in the Second Coalition

The immediate outcome of the First Frontier War in Gvurrdon sector was further turmoil at home. The Ngoerrgh Togzekhz and the Gnaith-lloellarrgh Gzolakhgha had paid a heavy price in naval strength and their leadership's personal prestige. The Ngoerrgh Togzekhz broke apart in civil war; the Gzolakhgha Emperor struggled to keep his throne while beset by other states that smelled his weakness and snapped about his borders. In 605 a "lend-lease" of 23 Zhodani cruisers enabled the Gzolakhgha Emperor to crush internal disturbances and retain his throne, but under these circumstances, refusing further assistance to the Consulate was impossible.

In 615 the Second Frontier War began: the Zhodani were firmly allied with the Gzolakhgha Empire (assisted by the 40th Squadron, a splinter faction of the Ngoerrgh Togzekhz), and forces were well coordinated. However, memories of the devastating raids of the previous war had stiffened the resolve of the Imperial worlds to coreward, which had invested heavily in system defense forces. As their forces bogged down during attempts to capture crucial gas giants for refueling, the Gzolakhgha failed to penetrate deeply into the Marches. Weakened by repeated blows from the Imperial border fleet, by 619 they had achieved no significant territorial gains. With reports of the Imperial Navy's new dreadnoughts hammering the Zhodani fleets, the tattered charisma of Gzolakhgha's emperor gave way, and he was shot in the back by one of his own lieutenants. The power struggle tore the empire apart.

Warring States

O ver the next two hundred years, various leaders and successor states attempted to reunite the Gnaith-lloellarrgh Gzolakhgha. None succeeded, and by the time of the Third Frontier War (979) the sector was again thoroughly balkanized, with several multi-world states and scores of independent systems. The oldest were the small but feisty 40th Squadron and the growing Thoengling Empire (founded in 792). Several of these states sent ships against the Imperium, but except for the stubborn belligerency of the 40th Squadron, the attacks were merely raiding rather than any coordinated action with the Zhodani. Still, the continued successes of Zhodani diplomacy worried the Imperium, as did the rise of the Church of the Chosen Ones, a Vargr supremacy faith that Imperial sociologists feared might prove a unifying force.

With disturbing reports reaching the Imperium from Vargr traders and IISS agents, the Imperium made a concerted effort to counter this growing trend. In 996 an unprecedented personal mission was undertaken by the young Duke Nobert (great grand-father of Norris) of Regina, who journeyed (with a strong colonial navy escort) into Gvurrdon sector in the hope of seeking treaties with those Vargr states not yet swayed by Zhodani philosophies or mega-credits.

Nobert made a strong impression on his Vargr hosts, culminating in a reciprocal visit by the Thoengling Emperor's eldest daughter, Rraenling, in 999 . . . probably one of the few times that a Vargr warship would be seen in the skies over Regina without eliciting total panic. Rraenling remained at the subsector court for some two years, staying for the Imperial Jubilee and doing much to establish good Imperial-Vargr (or to be far more accurate, Marches-Thoengling) relations in the process.

As the Imperium attempted to patch up relations to Spinward, Vargr traders had encountered a new minor race, the Drakarans, whose aggressive expansion into Vargr space sparked war and conflict (see pp. 103-107). However, the threat they represented was at first apprehended only by the Vargr to coreward and by the Zhodani who were in contact with them.

Closer to home, the Imperium had another problem . . .

Emperors are sometimes respected Thoeng members, but are just as likely to be corporate bosses, planetary politicians or successful war-leaders. By law, no member of the Emperor's family can succeed him, although the imperial family generally receive high posts in the government, military or civil service. This rule has generally ensured that emperors continue to hold the respect of the citizenry. Sons and daughters of the upper nobility are fostered at the imperial court, where every effort is made to inspire a sense of personal loyalty to the emperor.

The Thoengling Empire is a major trading partner of the Imperium and has generally supported Imperial interests in the Vargr Extents. Thoengling Empire trading corporations are especially active within Aramis sector in the Spinward marches, maintaining offices and trade stations at Lablon, Focaline, Zila, Jesedipere and Junidy. The Empire has a very close relationship with the growing Imperial corporation Oberlindes Lines.

Kedzudh Aeng

The Kedzudh Aeng (Commonality of Kedzudh) was inaugurated in 1044 by treaty of seven independent member worlds suffering heavily from corsair raids. Together they formed a loose interstellar confederacy designed to protect themselves and their shipping from piracy.

Individual Commonality worlds control their own internal and external relations. Government is composed of representatives from each world, with very limited powers of taxation which support a small bureaucracy, university, a subsidized merchant program and a professional navy-cum-police force, the Kedzudh Patrol. Since the member worlds couldn't agree on the location of the capital, it was placed on Kedzudh, a sparsely populated world in the middle of the Commonality; this also had the benefit of reducing inter-world tensions as conflicting claims of ownership (and the high technology living artifacts upon on it) had been a bone of contention between the worlds.

The Kedzudh Patrol has been fairly successful in reducing raiding and pirate activities. It has not been able to eliminate it entirely, partly because its budget tends to be slashed whenever it has become too successful. As such, it often operates with second-hand ships purchased from larger states, such as decades-old vessels acquired from the Thoengling Empire or the nearby Aramis and Regina colonial navies.

To supplement its own forces, the Patrol offers a bounty for the capture or proven destruction of any corsairs that attack Commonality ships. The Patrol also has a history of offering down-and-out tramp traders commissions as Q-ships or as "bait" in exchange for economic incentives such as mail contracts, free annual maintenance, waiving of docking fees, or the dropping of smuggling charges.

The Commonality has neutral or better relations with most of its neighboring Vargr states, the Imperium and the Zhodani. As a result, quite a few Vargr merchant combines have arranged to use the Kedzudh Aeng as a "flag of convenience," paying a small annual fee ($10/ton of ship) for this privilege.

The capital of the Commonality is a large orbital spaceport, Kedzudh Aengkh.

The planet below is sparsely inhabited, with a very thin atmosphere and a largely frozen ocean. Under the ice is a complex ecology including non-sentient biomechanical robots built at TL13 by an unknown race. Many contain parts which, while mostly inexplicable, are nevertheless of great interest to Vargr scientists and engineers.

The University of Kedzudh is based at the capital: its original purpose was to bring scholars and scientists from each member world together to study the living artifacts (including some Imperial and Zhodani specialists in biomechanical and robotic systems), not to mention sponsoring (well-armed and equipped) expeditions under the ice to capture and study samples of these life-forms. The University is now one of the foremost xenological and scientific institutes in the Vargr Extents.

THE VARGR MILITARY

Few conventions exist for the composition, use or organization of Vargr military units. No Vargr state has ever been successful enough for a long enough period of time for a "traditional" scheme to make a permanent impression across the Extents the way that Western military organization effected Terra (and through it the Rule of Man, Third Imperium and Solomani Confederation). Imperial observers tend to "humanize" Vargr military organizations, applying familiar names to ranks and units; often the correspondence is stretched rather thin.

Command and Morale

Charisma gets a Vargr command, but ability keeps him there. Survival may depend on success or failure in the field, with new officers coming up from the ranks who may be good *leaders* but who are untrained in tactics and strategy. The concept of a "military academy" through which young graduates are placed in command of seasoned veterans is alien to the Vargr. An unseasoned young officer *can* rise rapidly in rank, but it will be a result of his charisma and his personal successes, not because of any title or diploma. The kind of artificial social distance placed between gentlemen officers and enlisted soldiers that exists in the Imperium or among the Zhodani is a very rare thing in Vargr military organizations.

There is a tendency among the Vargr to have higher but rather more brittle morale than comparable human units. A Vargr force may go into battle with enormous confidence and determination, but if their leader proves less capable in battle than off the field, or if he's killed or incapacitated, morale plummets. Some groups of soldiers may rally around a new charismatic leader capable of swaying them to fight on; others will break quickly in the absence of direct inspiration.

Insubordination and Mutiny

Vargr military units are, like any Vargr institution, prone to divisive and disruptive influences. There is a disturbing tendency for individual charismatic soldiers to become the center of movements that resist higher authority for one reason or another, giving rise to conditions that humans would describe as *mutinies* and on occasion to outright treachery on and off the battlefield.

Actually, Vargr "mutinies" are frequently more in the nature of strikes or protest meetings. The best parallels in early Terran history include the various provincial army mutinies in early Imperial Roman period, the Parliamentary Army following the English Civil War or the Great Mutiny of the British Navy in 1798. In these cases, the mutinies were characterized by a refusal to continue duty until certain demands (often including requests for replacement of unpopular officers) were met, but no real change in the basic loyalties of personnel involved.

This is generally the case with Vargr army units as well . . . though incidents in which leaders have acted entirely on their own initiative in mounting a raid or starting a battle, contrary to the plans and instructions of higher military authority, are also quite common. On occasion, desertions or outright treachery (even in the face of the enemy in the midst of a major battle) have been organized by charismatic individuals who sensed an opportunity to gain status by joining the opposition.

The Kforuzeng Corsairs

The growing Imperial commerce through the Vargr Extents attracted attention to an old peril: Vargr corsairs. The largest band at the time was the Kforuzeng. They began in 1070 when a renegade Thoengling officer organized a mutiny; his small patrol ship was used in a few petty raids, and after making a name for himself, he arrived at a non-aligned world to sell his cargo, found two other small corsair captains and one smuggler and convinced them to follow him against a larger target. A carefully planned strike against an orbital storage depot in the Sangen system netted some two million credits in rare earths.

As success followed success, the Kforuzeng captains built up their authority and reputation, landed on other corsair bases to recruit troops and independent captains, and organized the band into a typical semi-military structure. By 1085 they had 20 ships and were the dominant corsair band in Firgr subsector. Realizing that only continued growth would satisfy their followers' ambitions, they began recruiting heavily and organizing mercenary operations (some within the Imperium) to supplement their raiding.

They also ran the Vargr equivalent of protection rackets. For example, when vessels of the Imperial shipping firm Tukera Lines crossed through "their" space to trade with the Thoengling Empire, the Kforuz raided several Tukera vessels, then sent a representative to Tukera with a suggestion that, perhaps, the Kforuzeng might provide escorts and anti-piracy patrols "for a suitable fee." The Tukera executives knew what was going on but paid anyway, realizing that, at least in the short term, paying off the corsairs was cheaper that adding their own escorts to the run.

Other companies had a different view. Tukera rival Oberlindes Lines also ran the same route, but solved their problem in a typically flamboyant manner: they purchased the obsolete 60,000-ton Lightning-class Fleet Intruder *Sparkling Distress* and converted it into a merchant cruiser renamed *Emissary*. Through a convoluted, irregular, slightly shady and completely unprecedented procedure, the nearly complete weaponry array of the vessel remained intact. Oberlindes rightly felt it was necessary for expeditions into the Vargr extents.

Grand Ambitions

By 1105 the Kforuzeng were the largest but not the only Corsair band in the region: others included the slightly smaller Aegzaeng and the Uekuzez. For a time the Kforuzeng coordinated operations with the others – then they betrayed and murdered most of the Uekuzez leaders (many of the rest fled into exile settling in Aramis subsector) and seized the band's starships. Shortly after that, they intimidated the Aegzaeng into joining their organization, giving them some 40 starships ranging from 100 tons to 1,000 tons in size. Now possibly the most powerful corsair band in the sector, they began to have bigger ambitions.

Witnessing the *Emissary* sail serenely through their sphere of influence had convinced the band's leadership that their future depended on becoming an actual naval power, which meant the acquisition of a capital ship of their own. After an attempt to use human agents to hijack the *Emissary* failed (in 1105), the Kforuzeng hatched a more complex plan. Using their hoarded wealth, they began the construction of a large warship, the *Ozarr*. Needing state-of-the-art weaponry for it, they used their contacts in Tukera Lines to arrange for a crooked executive to divert two powerful spinal meson gun weapons being shipped by Tukera to the Imperial Navy to the corsair band (in exchange for a cool MCr 500).

Unfortunately for the Kforuzeng, agents working for Oberlindes uncovered and thwarted the plot. While details of the Kforuzeng reverse were kept secret by most parties involved, the band lost considerable blood and treasure in a scheme that had gone nowhere. Fortunately for their reputation, the subsequent outbreak of the Fifth Frontier War and its chaotic aftermath provided plenty of opportunity to recoup their losses.

A failed mutiny can mean severe penalties for the ringleader . . . but often just a slap on the wrist for his followers, if they surrender quickly enough. When a mutiny goes badly, the mutineers will often themselves change sides and show their loyalty by enthusiastically getting rid of their ringleader . . . and likewise, "loyal" troops may do the same. Any Vargr leader who makes decisions that turn out to be bad ones had best watch his back. Followers who "turned" at the right time can expect to be welcomed back into the fold without further reprisal – Vargr hold few grudges, and there is little of the sense of outrage humans show to traitors. Captured mutineers may be treated harshly, but the goal is not to punish wrongdoing, but rather to eradicate charismatic rivals and instill some fear of the consequence of further disobedience. Likewise, even ringleaders can often survive if they are willing to humble themselves and accept humiliation rather than destruction.

VARGR ARMIES

Most Vargr governments maintain planetary armies in one form or another. There is a certain degree of instability in the structure of most armies, since the Vargr emphasis on charisma over formal authority causes individuals to rise to officer positions based more on their ability to sway a crowd then on their ability to plan and execute a battle. Thus, most formations undergo a (sometimes costly) shaking out process in which incompetent officers make mistakes, drop in charisma (or die) and are then replaced by charismatic subordinates . . . with luck, eventually the unit will attain a happy medium in which it finds a commander who is *both* charis-

THE VARGR

matic and competent, the likelihood of doing so depending on the overall quality of the troops. Vargr states prize units of veteran troops with battle-tested, charismatic leaders; for this reason, mercenary formations (successful ones generally meet this criteria) are used to an even greater degree than within the Imperium.

On a tactical level, Vargr armies tend to show a preference for organizations that emphasize combat power over logistical support, with more "teeth than tail." This gives them considerable initial striking power but some deficiency in long-haul campaigns. On the other hand, any Vargr commander who allows a campaign to drag on has a strong risk of losing his command in any event.

VARGR NAVIES

Vargr space navies are generally equivalent to the armies described above. Again, they are usually organized on a strictly local level, led by popular rather than trained officers, and subject to frequent disciplinary problems. This is especially aggravated within Vargr navies, because a jump-capable ship is much more an independent unit than any platoon, company or battalion-sized formation: it is far easier for a mutinous ship captain (or crew) to break away and join the other side, or simply desert.

Vargr Marines

There are no specific marine units in most Vargr states (though a few larger ones do maintain them). Units of the army are often assigned to shipboard duty directly, with little distinction made for special training and organization.

VARGR CORSAIRS

One reason for the lack of marine forces in most Vargr militaries is that this role is often filled by corsairs. These bands of freelance space-and-ground fighters flourish throughout the Vargr Extents. Corsairs can grow to wield considerable power (sometimes more than the local government) depending on the charisma and prestige of their leadership and the size and quality of the force.

Corsair organization is as infinitely variable as other Vargr military forms. Typically, bands center around one or more small starships, each manned by a space crew and a ground combat force. If possible, the ships are kept in low orbit where they can provide fire support, while the corsairs land in boats. Typically each ship will carry a short infantry platoon (three or four squads, each about six to eight Vargr) and a small command group, with g-carriers or a couple of air/rafts for ground mobility. Troops are usually equipped with light armor (rarely better than combat armor) and gauss rifles, ACRs or lasers, with a few carrying individually portable missiles or plasma guns. Artillery, grav tanks and dedicated support, supply or command vehicles are rare: the starship and its boats provides these things. Larger corsair forces will often have additional ships: a few armed merchants or liners for carrying troops or carrying away loot, or to act as decoys, some fast scout vessels, and often a single large "flagship," usually a frigate in the 800-ton range.

Many corsairs are former Vargr naval personnel who've deserted with their ship intact and gone freelance. A war can also produce many corsairs: rather than join the winner, captains on the losing side may simply head elsewhere.

Another way that corsairs are established is through popular subscription. A charismatic leader gets together a few followers, puts up some money himself, and announces he's building a ship; who wants to support it? If it's on the Imperial or Zhodani border, a quick appeal to racial pride can help. Few contributions will be large, but if, say, on a world of 25 million inhabitants, a mere 10 percent of the population contribute Cr5 each month, a small ship can be financed within a year. Some telemarketing, a suitably resonant and dramatic name for the vessel (typically based on the local port or world's name, e.g., *Terror of Koudzen* or the like), and the enterprise is away and running.

Post-War Blues

Vargr "renegades" fought battles with Imperial patrols and continued raiding for a few years after the war, but this was to be expected. The Fifth Frontier War had the usual ripple effects through the Vargr states to spinward as leaders who returned tail between their legs and politicians who had backed the losing side (the Outworld Coalition, at least from the Vargr perspective) swayed or tottered, while Imperial allies gained more adherents.

In 1119 Vargr corsair activity against the Marches resumed with a vengeance, as extremely well organized and ruthless fleet of Vargr raided Fenteman/Aramis, destroying an orbital starport before plundering the world. A second large-scale raid struck Foelen/Jewell; use of a small nuclear weapon and debris from orbital combat raining on inhabited areas left 500,000 dead.

An unintended effect of the Imperial victory in the Fifth Frontier War was the rise, after nearly a quarter-century of disgrace, of the Church of the Chosen Ones, this time in a strange new form: the Dzen Aeng Kho (Society of Equals), whose mushroomlike growth is spreading through Gvurrdon sector. More a philosophy and a fraternity than a religious theocracy, it was initially slow to win adherents, but after the defeat in the Fifth Frontier War, many Vargr have found its skewed vision of racial supremacy serves as balm to their injured pride.

Generally, the ship is financed in exchange for a share of the profit (*after* expenses . . .) so a little wealth may or may not trickle down to investors. That's not the important thing, though – the appeal to local and racial pride is. The ship is financed in the same way that an Imperial word might finance medical research or another worthy charity.

Since the building of the ship itself benefits the local starport economy, local government might also provide support: it is also better to have those aggressive, high-charisma individuals off raiding neighbors than upsetting the power structure at home. Moreover, there is usually an understanding that the starport that provided the funds will be the vessel's home port, handling any loot. Local merchants may support it, as they will expect an influx of off-world goods at cut-rate prices. (Non-shipbuilding industry may oppose it for the same reason.) Finally, the corsair is seen as a possible ally that the planetary government can hire in time of need.

By and large, Vargr corsair bands are distinguished from ordinary mercenaries or privateers in that they contain integral space transport and skilled ground combat forces, with experience in all aspects of fighting. An average corsair band will carry out piratical raids on neighbors (worlds, shipping, and other, rival, corsair bases) but can also be found hiring out as mercenaries to governments or corporations.

Corsairs typically charge lower rates (about 60%-80%) than Human mercenary forces, preferring to work on the understanding that they will be able to loot, and retain a certain percentage of the booty gained in the course of a campaign.

Vargr corsair bands sometimes operate within the Imperium, renamed "mercenary companies" for the duration of their stay. Any such band faces close scrutiny by the Imperial authorities, who prefer not to encourage the kind of economic dislocation that result from a policy of widespread pillage.

Of course, the hiring of small Vargr forces – a single ship or two, with a platoon-sized or company-sized force of soldiers – is less likely to attract attention, and for this reason small Vargr units can be quite valuable for commando operations or short-term striker missions. For obvious reasons, Vargr are rarely hired for garrison, cadre or security duty. Some corporations and governments have also found that hiring Vargr mercs can be a good way to inflict "deniable" damage on rivals, since a hired Vargr commando raid can easily be mistaken for a completely freelance corsair attack, with theft or destruction of a particular object, person or installation being seen as merely incidental rather than the real target of the raid.

Perhaps surprisingly, corsair bands are somewhat *more* stable than comparable government military forces. Their relatively small size means the loyalty of such bands is given to the leader rather than more abstract authority. Corsairs are also better able to respond to conditions and move on in the event of an unprofitable situ-

ation; this makes a leader's task easier, by enabling him to sidestep the demoralization Army or Navy forces often experience when trapped in dead-end assignments like blockades or garrison.
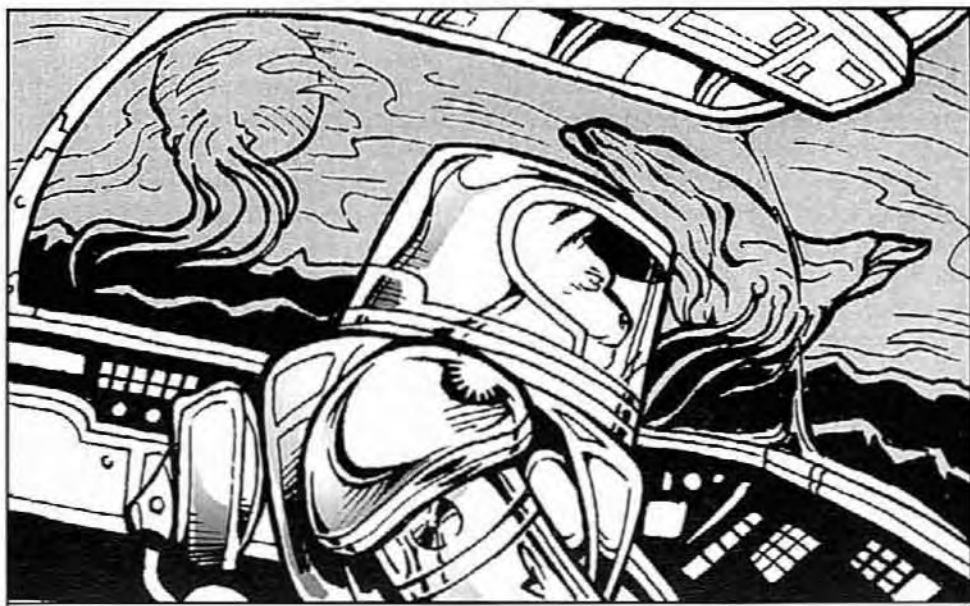
This is not to say that corsairs do not have their share of divisive influences. Rather, to form a corsair band, its leader must have begun with a wide degree of popularity among his followers. He is simply in a better position to maintain this then are state-owned forces, who must obey a higher command. Of course, all can be lost on the battlefield: because corsairs tend to fight more actions, more often, unlucky or unskilled corsair commanders who display military incompetence will be quickly caught in the tide of shifting dominance, and swept away by those who can command greater respect and loyalty.

VARGR RELIGION

"Books have no charisma," as the Vargr said to the priest. Vargr do codify their religious beliefs, but they are much more likely to find inspiration from live preachers than the words of dead ones, no matter how eloquent. Since believers often have experiences of their own that may vary somewhat from the original revelation, Vargr religions frequently either shatter into multiple competing doctrines or become flexible enough to embrace varied interpretations. The more elastic a faith is, the longer it tends to survive, albeit in increasingly diffuse forms. The Church of the Chosen Ones, for example, is a relatively recent faith, but the *idea* of the Vargr's unique origin having universal significance is an enduring concept.

An individual Vargr will have an experience he believes has spiritual significance; if he is charismatic, he can easily infect others with the same vision. If it was strong enough, it may survive his death, by spreading to other charismatic individuals who will continue his faith. Vargr services come in all shapes and sizes, but all tend to be vigorous, loud, and involve enthusiastic audience participation. The "religious revival" from early 20th-century America is one appropriate model; so are many other religions that emphasize activities like ecstatic dance, singing, spirit possession, howling in tongues and even ritual sacrifice. Vargr do use high-tech media (with all the flair of an early Terran televangelist), but personal contact is more important. A successful movement depends on having a charismatic leader and many charismatic disciples to spread the word.

There are a large variety of Vargr religions – animistic, polytheistic, and monotheistic and others not easily described. Many flourished in ancient Vargr history, or have grown up on small colonial worlds. Most burn brightly, and die quickly, but a few came at the right time and place for especially charismatic ministers and missionaries to spread them through the stars.

The Church of the Chosen Ones

The revelation that the Vargr "creator" was in fact the Ancients had considerable impact on Vargr faith, comparable to the effect of the theory of evolution on Terran religions. Some Vargr religions lost adherents, or argued against the theory; others incorporated it (the Ancients may have created the Vargr; so what? – the local Vargr god or gods created the Ancients). Then there were the completely new faiths that evolved . . . This influential (and sometimes fanatical) Vargr movement began two centuries ago. It postulates that the Vargr were carefully brought along a particular evolutionary course, as they were "intended" to take their place as leaders of all sapient societies in the Ancients' sphere of influence.

The Church believes that the Ancients not only "invented" the Vargr race by genetic manipulation of Terran carnivores, but that they also returned to the Vargr several times, improving the race to the point that it could take its rightful place. Some Church members even believe that the Ancients will return again to bring this about.

A Few Cautions

"OK, if you're a Terran, and you're visiting a Vargr world for the first time, you need to remember a few things:

1. You don't have to spell out the word "walk" in front of a Vargr.
2. Vargr do not drive a ground car with their heads stuck out the windows.
3. Never instruct a Vargr to enter your room with the word "come."
4. When you throw a ball in front of a Vargr, he will *not* drop everything and chase it.
5. Never offer a Vargr a chair by using the word "sit!"
6. The symbol for lavatory is *not* a fireplug.
7. Some nicknames to avoid: "Rover," "Spot," "Rex," "Fido," "King," and "Big Fella."
8. Never greet a Vargr by trying to scratch him behind the ears."

— Vilani comedian
Anton Wilson-Peale

Vargr Events

The Church of the Chosen Ones has enjoyed periodic revivals and declines. It was discredited for four decades prior to the Fifth Frontier War, but the poor performance of Vargr forces in that same war has led to a recent resurgence of the Church, especially in areas of the Gvourdon sector that supported the Outworld Coalition. Not surprisingly, a sense of racial superiority and manifest destiny has helped provide a cushion against feelings of inferiority at yet another recent military defeat.

The Church is strongest among the 56 worlds that have embraced the rule of the Society of Equals. Akin in some ways to the Masonic lodges of old Terra, and with other similarities to Dakota Sioux fraternities and warrior societies, the Society of Equals brings together Vargr from all levels of society who go to meetings wearing complex scent-blocking masks and heavy robes in a deliberate effort to suppress their own charisma.

Society of Equals leaders have taken to blaming the Vargr performance on the Zhodani to focus attention away from Vargr performance. They claim the objectives of the Fifth Frontier War were poorly thought out. First, there should be no more cooperation with Human inferiors such as the Zhodani, whose repeated failures of nerve have led to past Vargr defeat. "Who was it who sued for peace?" they say, "The Zhodani – many Vargr ships continued fighting long after the armistice and were dragged to defeat by the cowardice of their allies." Second, some Chosen members believe Vargr fleets should have targeted "systems with secret Ancient sites" like Shionthy and Kinorb, where they believe hidden caches of Ancient artifacts exist which only a true Vargr of the Church of the Chosen could hope to uncover.

The Church believes all Ancient artifacts are the property of the Vargr, and their possession by or sale to Humans is heretical. To acquire them, it sponsors legitimate archeological digs in Vargr space and somewhat less legal activities elsewhere, sometimes even hiring detested Humans, if absolutely necessary.

Senghik Outoun

Vargr who follow this faith believe spirits with high charisma survive after death. Believers claim Senghik Outoun initiates can channel their spirits in order to enhance their own charisma. Congregations are generally small, typically a neighborhood, a spaceship crew or (occasionally) a military unit. There are no churches; meetings are in members' quarters. Individuals are initiated by attending a ceremony; priests are initiates that have experienced a number of possessions and memorized the rituals. Priests usually receive gifts from the members.

Initiates work themselves into an ecstatic state through stamping, music and howling, while a priest chants the (usually idealized) life history of whatever spirit is to be raised that night, mixed with regular invocations to an immaterial divinity *Kfaeghr Gohz*, (literally: herder of souls) to draw that spirit among them. Ceremonies are usually held late at night and last three to six hours. If everything goes well, one participant will generally become "possessed." He assumes an alien persona (that of the spirit the priest was trying to summon). Often the host's voice will alter in register, and his mannerisms, walk and stance will change.

Senghik Outoun believers tell stories of hosts gaining new skills or learning lost secrets. Most observers consider the Kfaeghr ritual a form of auto-hypnosis. The religion prospers because it appears to give proof of a further existence beyond death, and appeals to every Vargr's desire for higher charisma.

In game terms, participants in a Senghik Outoun ceremony should roll against Will+2 every hour; the first to fail is "possessed" for 3d hours. He gains a level of Charisma (due to enhanced self-confidence) and suffers the Delusion he is sharing his body with that spirit. He usually gains Overconfidence (if he doesn't have it already) and 5-30 points of other Mental Disadvantages and Quirks appropriate to the host's view of the "spirit" (often derived from the chanted biography).

Some peculiarities of Senghik Outoun belief: a priest's chant (not song) must be rapid and rhyming (Poetry roll to compose and Bard roll to perform, and sometimes a Breath Control roll to keep going without collapsing from exhaustion); after he "snaps out" of possession, a worshipper is forbidden to attend another ceremony

until after a week-long purification period (during which he abstains from most physical pleasures).

Senghik Outoun has spread widely through the Vargr extents, and has naturally mutated widely. The Ghuedzvan subsect dispenses with congregations: families perform rituals at home, channeling their ancestors. Followers of the Rukh kfaeghr believe the deceased's skull is necessary for the ritual to work; otherwise a malignant spirit will possess the host. A few corsair bands practice a form of headhunting, taking skulls of high-charisma enemies. The Zhatuga kfaeghr, a widely dispersed trading clan that practices the faith, insist all their priests be female and born during jump; strange tales are told about them, and there is some reason to believe they may have psionic training.

BUSINESS, TRADE & COMMERCE

In many Vargr societies, ownership of small businesses, from a restaurant to a free trader, is often held in collective, with employees owning more or less equal shares. *Control* of the business is not shared, though – decisions are made by whatever charismatic leader is currently in charge.

The collective approach to ownership is desirable given the mercurial nature of Vargr leadership. For example, aboard a human free trader, the owner is often the captain: the crew may own a few shares, but the captain is typically the owner with a multi-million credit personal stake in "his vessel." Removing him from control might require bloody mutiny or more money than a crew could muster. In a Vargr business in which everyone has an equal share and management has less to lose, necessary leadership changes are much simpler, and often the present leader will willingly accept what may be only a temporary demotion.

In larger Vargr corporations the "equal share" approach isn't practical, but since even the wealthiest individuals rarely own more than a few percent of a big company's stock, it's not really necessary. If a CEO is deposed, he can still retain his stock, or sell it; he's just no longer a decision-maker.

Housing and Cities

A Vargr city is a lively, chaotic place, filled with (to Human senses) garish color, loud noises and strange smells. Vargr like closeness: the streets are packed with dense crowds of pedestrians, and buildings press together. Grav and ground vehicle traffic is fast and chaotic; the accident rate is low only because of superior Vargr reflexes. Zoning codes are rare, so commercial, residential, government, religious, entertainment and even industrial establishments jumble together, often even in the same building. Few laws restrict who can sell goods where; even in high-tech cities, Vargr streets tend toward a flavor closer to an Eastern bazaar, echoing with the calls of open-air vendors hawking everything from religious literature to fresh-killed meat to power cells. As likely as not, there will also be loud political rallies or protests. "Planetary" regulations for things like weapon carriage and sale of goods can become meaningless, as different local governments in the same city set their own rules.
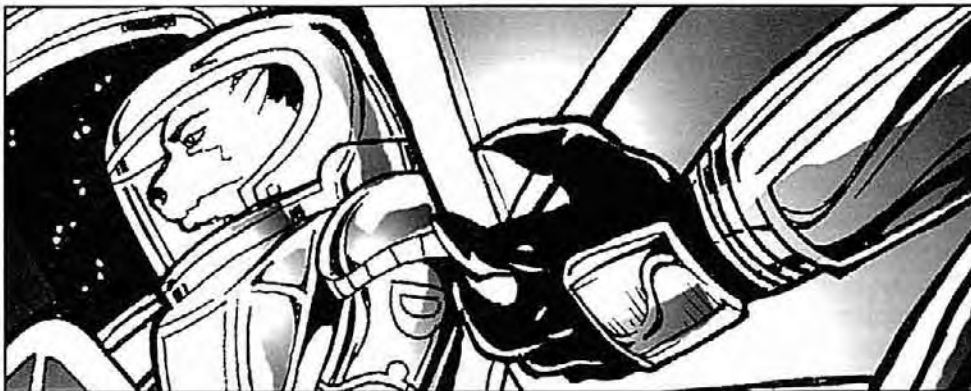
This table allows ordinary dice to determine Vargr words. It works just like its Zhodani equivalent (on p. 25).

Basic Table

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	V	V	V	V	VC	VC
2	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC
3	CV	CV	CV	CV	CVC	CVC
4	CV	CV	CV	CV	CVC	CVC
5	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC
6	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC

Alternate Table

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV
2	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV
3	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV
4	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC
5	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC
6	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC

Initial Consonant 1

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	D	D	D	D	D	D
2	D	D	D	DH	DH	DH
3	DH	DH	DH	DH	DH	DH
4	DZ	DZ	DZ	DZ	DZ	F
5	F	F	F	F	F	F
6	G	G	G	G	G	G

Initial Consonant 2

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	G	G	G	G	G	G
2	G	G	G	G	G	G
3	GH	GH	GH	GH	GH	GH
4	GH	GH	GH	GH	GH	GN
5	GN	GN	GV	GV	GV	GV
6	GV	GV	GV	GZ	GZ	GZ

Initial Consonant 3

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	GZ	K	K	K	K	K
2	K	K	K	K	K	K
3	K	K	K	K	K	K
4	K	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF
5	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH
6	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH	KN

Initial Consonant 4

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	KN	KN	KN	KN	KN	KS
2	KS	KS	KS	KS	KS	KS
3	L	L	L	L	LL	LL
4	LL	LL	LL	LL	LL	LL
5	N	N	N	N	N	
6	N	NG	NG	NG	NG	NG

Initial Consonant 5

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	R	R	R	R	R	R
2	R	R	R	R	R	RR
3	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR
4	RR	S	S	S	S	S
5	S	S	S	S	S	S
6	T	T	T	T	T	T

Initial Consonant 6

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	T	TH	TH	TH	TH	TH
2	TH	TH	TH	TS	TS	TS
3	TS	TS	V	V	V	V
4	V	V	V	V	V	V
5	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z
6	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z

Trade Goods

Aside from the usual items (high-tech gadgets, rare earths, weapons, gems, etc.) substantial profit can be made shipping more mundane items to and from Vargr worlds. Human merchants normally know what *they* want; local exotica available on Vargr worlds will depend very much on the planet's resources and TL. But what should a human merchant fill his discretionary hold space with?

Vargr enjoy eating a wide variety of meats; thanks to their terrestrial ancestry, animals that taste good to humans are usually appreciated by Vargr, which makes merchants' lives easier. Trade in live animals or embryos is not uncommon, but since many Imperial planets have their own unique meat animals, some of which do not do well on other worlds, there is a large trade between Vargr and non-Vargr worlds in frozen meat products. Groats (found on certain worlds in the Spinward Marches) are an example of a herd animal considered a delicacy by most Vargr.

Novel spices are highly prized. Merchants should check to see if they are both safe and palatable to Vargr, though. Some Vargr also like wine, beer and liquors.

Textiles are often good exports. Vargr prefer textured and distinct (some would say gaudy) clothes. Fine natural fabrics, especially in bright colors and flashy designs, are in great demand for clothing, wall hangings and rugs or carpets. If shipping finished clothing, make sure it's designed to Vargr preferences – see *Equipment* on p. 94.

When shipping other types of goods to the Vargr worlds (or to any alien race, for that matter), traders should consider the small details that may make or break a sale. A consignment of rakish TL12 grav bikes may be hot sellers, but if the bike's seat isn't designed to accommodate a tail, customer reaction will be lukewarm. Vargr normally enjoy consumer goods in color patterns bolder than Humans like – don't forget that the same applies to software graphics, and for that matter, make sure all text and audio interfaces are reprogrammed in the local dominant Vargr language! Traders should not ignore scent, either. A sale can be gained or lost because of odors imperceptible to Humans. For example, furniture made of a wood that gives off an aromatic odor might be enjoyed, while a paint or varnish used in another product might give off a smell Vargr find unpleasant. If gadgets use power cells, make sure they're compatible with the ones the customer uses.

Small traders may simply shop around until they find the right goods, but sometimes it can be profitable to arrange a special production line for goods bound for the Vargr Extents.

LANGUAGE AND NAMING

There are thousands of Vargr languages and as many forms for names. The most commonly encountered language in the Spinward Marches and adjacent regions is *Gvegh*. Counting the related languages Gvegh-Aek, Knithnour, Uedhu and Taeksu, the Gvegh language family is spoken by about 60 percent of the Vargr encountered in the marches and neighboring Gvurrdon sector.

Note: The word "Vargr" is not from any of that race's languages, but rather is taken from a word for "wolf" in an ancient Solomani language. It is interesting that this word comes from a language used by the Vikings of Terra, who were likewise famed as raiders, traders and explorers in the pre-technological era on that world. Unlike "Lair," the term is one many Vargr are comfortable with; some Vargr languages even accept it as a legitimate Vargr word.

Among Gvegh speakers, each individual usually chooses his or her own name upon reaching majority; as a child, a Vargr goes by his mother's name with a suffix that indicates his sex and birth order. Names have varying significance: some have a meaning in Gvegh, others are passed down from pre-Gvegh languages whose meanings are now forgotten. A Vargr may name himself or herself after a personal hero, a significant event or accomplishment in their life, or simply because they like the sound or meaning associated with the word.

VARGR SOUND FREQUENCY AND PRONUNCIATION TABLE

Initial Consonants (115)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
D	5	dog
DH	5	this
DZ	3	suds
F	4	fang
G	10	gang
GH	6	ach (voiced)
GN	2	hag night
GV	4	hag view
GZ	4	hag zebra
K	10	kite
KF	3	lock fist
KH	6	ach (German)
KN	3	lock night
KS	3	locks
L	4	lock
LL	4	miller
N	2	name
NG	2	thing
R	5	run
RR	4	perro
S	5	sun
T	4	toy
TH	4	think
TS	2	its
V	5	vine
Z	6	zebra

Vowels (25)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
A	5	lock
AE	4	kite
E	2	men
I	1	kitten
O	4	on
OE	2	doe
OU	2	loud
U	3	fun
UE	3	feud

Final Consonants (43)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
DH	1	this
DZ	1	suds
G	3	goat
GH	2	ach (voiced)
GHZ	1	ach zebra
GZ	1	hog zebra
K	2	kit
KH	2	ach (German)
KHS	1	ach so
KS	1	locks
L	2	lock
LL	1	miller
N	5	name
NG	5	thing
R	3	run
RR	3	perro (Spanish)
RRG	1	RR+G
RRGH	1	RR+GH
RS	1	cars
RZ	1	car zebra
S	1	sun
TH	1	think
TS	1	its
Z	2	zebra

Note: Gvegh syllables ending in a vowel cannot be followed by a syllable which begins with a vowel.

There is no space to go deeply into the syntax and vocabulary of the Gvegh language, so words and names should be randomly generated to sound like actual Gvegh words. Players should assemble an appropriate word and may assign any desired meaning or significance (or none at all) to it.

Words are constructed syllable by syllable. There are four types: those consisting of just a vowel (V), those beginning with a consonant (CV), those ending with a consonant (VC) and those that both begin and end with a consonant (CVC). The ratio of these four syllable types in Gvegh is about 1:3:3:3 (V:CV:VC:CVC). As with the Zhodani tables, the number in parenthesis indicates the total of the frequencies, thus "DH" occurs five times out of 115, "U" occurs three times out of 25.

CREATING VARGR CHARACTERS

Vargr characters can be created using the normal *Basic Set* system or the streamlined template system found in *GURPS Traveller*.

VARGR RACIAL TEMPLATE (O POINTS)

So that players won't have to flip between two books, the Vargr racial template given on p. GT83 is repeated here, in slightly expanded format. This template also codifies the earlier descriptions of Vargr physiology and psychology in game terms.

Attributes

ST -1 [-10 points]; DX +1 [10 points]. Vargr are somewhat smaller than Humans, but have faster reflexes.

VARGR WORD GENERATION TABLES

[Continued]

Vowel 1

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	A	A	A	A	A	A
2	A	A	A	A	A	A
3	A	A	A	A	A	A
4	A	A	A	A	A	A
5	A	A	A	A	A	A
6	A	A	A	A	A	A

Vowel 2

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	A	A	A	A	A	A
2	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE
3	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE
4	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE
5	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE
6	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE	AE

Vowel 3

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	AE	AE	AE	AE	E	E
2	E	E	E	E	E	E
3	E	E	E	E	E	E
4	E	E	I	I	I	I
5	I	I	I	I	I	I
6	O	O	O	O	O	O

Vowel 4

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	O	O	O	O	O	O
2	O	O	O	O	O	O
3	O	O	O	O	O	O
4	O	O	O	O	O	O
5	O	O	O	O	OE	OE
6	OE	OE	OE	OE	OE	OE

Vowel 5

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	OE	OE	OE	OE	OE	OE
2	OE	OE	OU	OU	OU	OU
3	OU	OU	OU	OU	OU	OU
4	OU	OU	OU	OU	OU	OU
5	U	U	U	U	U	U
6	U	U	U	U	U	U

Vowel 6

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	U	U	U	U	U	U
2	U	U	U	U	U	U
3	UE	UE	UE	UE	UE	UE
4	UE	UE	UE	UE	UE	UE
5	UE	UE	UE	UE	UE	UE
6	UE	UE	UE	UE	UE	UE

Final Consonant 1

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	DH	DH	DH	DH	DH	DZ
2	DZ	DZ	DZ	DZ	G	G
3	G	G	G	G	G	G
4	G	G	G	G	G	G
5	G	GH	GH	GH	GH	GH
6	GH	GH	GH	GH	GH	GHZ

Advantages

Vargr are smaller than Humans, but have superior senses, faster reflexes and are better short-distance sprinters. They possess natural weapons (claws and teeth) and protection (fur).

Acute Taste/Smell+3 [6 points].

Acute Vision +1 [2 points].

Alertness +1 [5 points].

Claws (+2 damage) [15 points].

Enhanced Move 1 (doubles Move, with the limitation that running fatigue begins after five seconds, -30%) [7 points].

Fur (DR 1, keeps warm) [4 points].

Teeth (1d-1 bite in close combat) [5 points].

Disadvantages

Cannot Kick [-5 points]. Due to their digitigrade posture, Vargr can't kick in close combat (unless a foe is prone and the Vargr standing, in which case they can stamp downward). This disadvantage's cost was set at -5 points, canceling the 5 point cost that Vargr pay for having sharper-than-normal teeth.

Chummy [-5 points]. This is the famous Vargr gregariousness, a "pack mentality" that leaves them happiest when in groups they have come to find trustworthy, whether among Vargr or not.

Curious [-5 points]. Even more than Humans, a Vargr will go out of his way to investigate new things.

Easy to Read [-10 points]. Vargr find hiding their feelings an alien concept. Even if the Vargr doesn't say what he thinks (which he usually will), posture, facial expression, ruffled fur are all easy for other Vargr to read. These cues are also fairly obvious to Humans, as Vargr are descended from canines and Humans have been reading their dogs' body language for millennia (the correlation is not total, but comes close enough).

Proud [-1 point]. Vargr are always concerned with their own status within any individual group, and that group's status in society. They are also quick to take offense at racial slights.

Reduced Fatigue (-1 fatigue) [-3 points]. Vargr are good sprinters, but lack the long-distance endurance of Humans.

Reduced Hit Points -1 [-5 points]. The lighter Vargr build. Thus, the average Vargr has HT 10 but only nine hit points.

Reputation -2 [-10 points]. Vargr have a universal reputation as chaotic, easily swayed and potentially disloyal.

Features

Vargr average 4" less than a Human of the same ST and weigh proportionately less. Their hearing is in a higher

range than that of Humans, as described under *Senses* on p. 65. And they react to Charisma, Rank and Status in different ways than do Humans – see the discussion of the appropriate advantages, below.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Although not required, these modifications are suggested when creating Vargr characters from scratch, or adapting existing *GURPS Traveller* templates for use with Vargr.

Appearance

Decide what color the Vargr's fur will be: usually brown, black, or rust, or a mix of these shades. Some Vargr may have natural gray or white fur, but these are much rarer.

Charisma

The bulk of Vargr have no Charisma. About 1 in 4 have a +1 Charisma; maybe 1 in 20 have +2, 1 in 100 a +3, one in 500 a +4, and after that, the rarity increases exponentially. For realism and play-balance, GMs should forbid starting Vargr PCs (and possibly others) from having more than Charisma +5.

Vargr react to Charisma bonuses at double value, i.e., +2 per level. As Charisma equates with dominance, GMs can optionally use a more complex set of rules:

A *lower* Charisma Vargr reacts to one with higher Charisma at +2 per level of *difference* between their Charisma.

A *higher* Charisma Vargr reacts at no bonus to a lower Charisma personage under normal circumstances. However, if that personage does anything that could be perceived as challenging the higher-Charisma Vargr's leadership or position, or acts in an overly familiar or presumptuous fashion (for example, interrupting him, or asking for an unearned favor) the Vargr will react at a penalty equal to twice the level of *difference* between their Charisma.

An *equal* Charisma Vargr reacts at no penalty under normal circumstances, but if the other individual acts in a way that can be construed as challenging them, apply twice the challenger's full Charisma as a penalty.

Charisma and Race: GURPS normally assumes Charisma works across racial boundaries without penalty. For more realism, GMs can assume this is true, but the *doubled* Charisma bonus only applies when two Vargr interact, or when one of the aliens has a suitable advantage, such as Cultural Adaptability (p. CI23), or has lived among Vargr for some time and also makes a Xenology skill roll.

Challenges: When dealing with reactions and loyalties of a group of Vargr, GMs may also wish to reroll existing reactions whenever a situation changes to create uncertainty as to the relationship between dominant and subordinate Vargr. For example, if a leader's position is weakened by a bad decision, Vargr will reconsider their loyalty.

Variable Charisma: A Vargr's charisma is closely tied to his self-confidence and his perception of the worth accorded him by others, especially other Vargr. Success or failure at important tasks can cause Charisma to fluctuate.

In game terms, GMs should allow Vargr to buy added levels of Charisma with experience whenever they succeed at something that would boost a Vargr's self-image, especially in public. Note that as a Vargr's Charisma rises, the magnitude of success needed also rises! Similarly, GMs should allow Charisma levels to *drop* from failure, especially in public. (In the latter case, the GM should allow the player to regain such losses without paying any character points for them if subsequent actions make up for it.)

For example, suppose the group is in trouble, and unable to decide on a strategy. A Vargr character takes command and leads them out of danger. If the Vargr were used to taking such a leadership role, success wouldn't be worth an alteration in Charisma unless the party was much larger, the danger greater, or the task involved more important than usual. If the Vargr had never done this sort of thing before, his Charisma *could* certainly rise!

VARGR WORD GENERATION TABLES

[Continued]

Final Consonant 2

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	GHZ	GHZ	GHZ	GHZ	GZ	GZ
2	GZ	GZ	GZ	K	K	K
3	K	K	K	K	K	K
4	K	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH
5	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH	KHS
6	KHS	KHS	KHS	KHS	KS	KS

Final Consonant 3

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	KS	KS	KS	KS	L	L
2	L	L	L	L	L	L
3	L	L	LL	LL	LL	LL
4	LL	N	N	N	N	N
5	N	N	N	N	N	N
6	N	N	N	N	N	N

Final Consonant 4

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	N	N	N	N	N	N
2	N	N	NG	NG	NG	NG
3	NG	NG	NG	NG	NG	NG
4	NG	NG	NG	NG	NG	NG
5	NG	NG	NG	NG	NG	NG
6	NG	NG	NG	R	R	R

Final Consonant 5

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	R	R	R	R	R	R
2	R	R	R	R	R	R
3	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR
4	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR
5	RR	RR	RR	RRG	RRG	RRG
6	RRG	RRG	RRGH	RRGH	RRGH	RRGH

Final Consonant 6

Red Die	White Die 1	2	3	4	5	6
1	RRGH	RS	RS	RS	RS	RS
2	RZ	RZ	RZ	RZ	RZ	S
3	S	S	S	S	TH	TH
4	TH	TH	TH	TS	TS	TS
5	TS	TS	Z	Z	Z	Z
6	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z

Vargr in the Zhodani Consulate

Because the Vargr and the Zhodani racial personalities are so nearly opposite, one might suspect that they would make poor neighbors. Nevertheless, the Consulate and the Vargr Extents have gotten along without a single major war for thousands of years.

The Zhodani, thanks to their psionic gifts, really do understand the Vargr mentality. Thus, they are not surprised when a stable trading partner undergoes a change of leadership and becomes unreliable or even hostile.

The Vargr have a great respect for Zhodani psychic gifts – which the Zhodani foster. Many Vargr already think of Humans as big, cold, spooky creatures. Zhodani are even bigger, colder and spookier than ordinary Humans! It's bad enough that Vargr can't tell what the Zhos are thinking. What makes it worse is that they know the Zhos *do* know what they're thinking. Therefore, sane Vargr will think twice before *considering* a change of allegiance where Zhodani are concerned.

Vargr living and working in the Consulate are those who can discipline themselves (or whose leaders can discipline them) to something closer to Zhodani standards. Vargr legally within the Consulate include merchants from neighboring states and the Vargr citizens of those planets taken into the Consulate as Reservation Worlds (see p. 18). They are still Vargr, but under Zhodani rule they are a bit less mercurial, because the worst troublemakers soon get a visit from the Thought Police.

Vargr corsairs from outside the Consulate remain a source of minor friction, but it's a very charismatic leader who can convince his crew to attack Zhodani unless the odds are very good, or times are so troubled that the Zhodani navy is sure to be elsewhere.
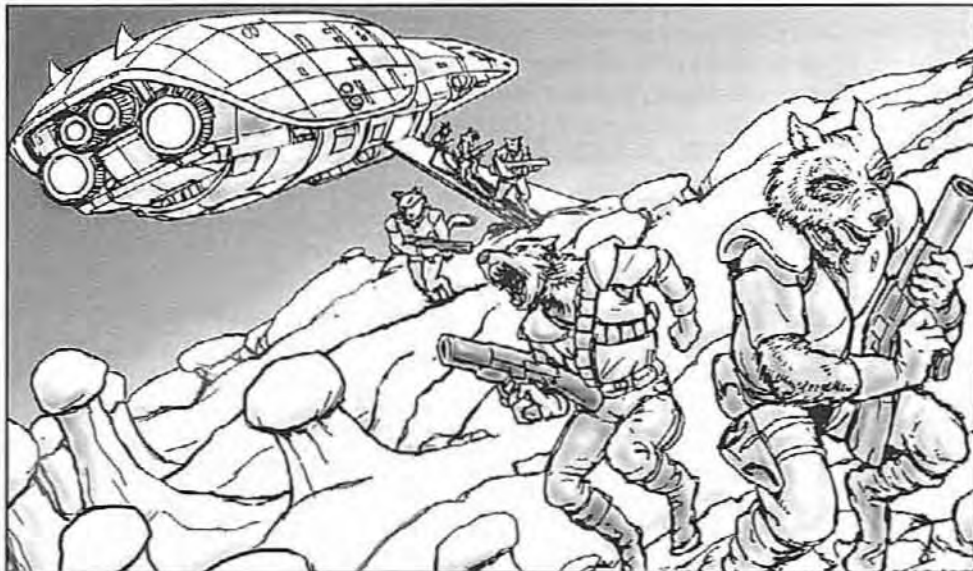
Charisma and Close Combat: Vargr of higher Charisma are somewhat more likely to react in a physical way to disrespectful low-Charisma subordinates – the proper response is to accept a cuff or nip and back down. Fighting back generally results in the superior's followers ganging up on the insubordinate and teaching him a lesson. When a Vargr is fighting in close combat vs. another Vargr of higher charisma, it is hard to stay confident: the difference in Charisma is taken as a penalty to the lower-Charisma Vargr's DX and fighting skills. "Fair fights" between Vargr of close Charisma can sometimes occur in dominance situations, especially if followers are absent or wavering; the loser generally suffers temporary loss of Charisma.

Status

Vargr within the Imperium are normally of status -1 to 5; there are some Vargr nobility in certain coreward sectors. Within the Vargr Extents, Imperial titles of nobility are not used. It is unlikely that a Vargr will be able to retain a high status unless he has Charisma to match: no Vargr's Status level should be more than two levels greater than his Charisma.

VARGR STATUS TABLE

LEVEL	STATUS	MONTHLY COST OF LIVING
7	Ruler of a large Vargr state	Cr50,000+
6	Ruler of a small Vargr state	Cr30,000
5	Planetary ruler	Cr15,000
4	High official	Cr8,000
3	Middle official	Cr4,000
2	Low official	Cr2,000
1	Highly regarded individual	Cr1,000
0	Average individual	Cr500
-1	Below average individual	Cr200
-2	Slave	n/a

"Official" may also be read as "corporate executive." Individual Vargr states may have their own ruler or noble titles, or none at all. Vargr generally recognize a person's status by the influence he wields and the respect he receives, rather than by a title.

Vargr tend to react to personality rather than position. To simulate this, the GM may rule that a Vargr reacts to someone's Status as if it gave only half (round up) the usual bonus.

Military Rank

Again, Vargr tend not to be much for titles. Vargr Army and Navy ranks are generally translated into the Imperial equivalents. Corsairs tend to use terminology that is a mix of army and navy, and varies dramatically from band to band.

Rather than assign names that might be deceptive, here's a rough idea what a different ranks would be in charge of:

ARMY AND CORSAIR RANKS

RANK	COMMAND
7	Large band: several dozen ships and a brigade of troops
6	Medium band: a dozen ships and a battalion of troops
5	Small band: a few starships and a company of troops
4	Single corsair ship
3	Platoon of ground troops or a small craft
2	Section (half-platoon) of ground troops
1	Infantry squad or combat vehicle
0	Ordinary spacehand or trooper

Corsair ships are normally in the 100-1,000 ton range. For each ship, the band will also have a platoon or so of troops.

As with Status, the GM may rule that rank of any kind only provides half its normal reaction bonus (round up) to Vargr.

Impulsiveness

Although not a mandatory part of the Vargr racial template, Impulsiveness is *very* common. Many Vargr are likely to have this -10 point disadvantage!

Paranoia

This isn't much more common in Vargr than among Humans, but the paranoid is one of the classic archetypes in Vargr legends and folk tales. He is often a Vargr who starts out as a fair ruler, but whose creeping paranoia leads to the execution of first his enemies, and then, tragically, his friends . . . Just as often, the paranoid is an advisor who urges his leader to trust no one. The leader takes his advice to heart and ignores him.

The other mythic archetypes are the Taker, personification of Greed; the Empire Builder, personification of Megalomania; and, in contrast, the Prince, personification of Charisma.

Taboo Disadvantages

Some disadvantages Vargr are *unlikely* to have, and which GMs should discourage players from taking for their Vargr characters are: Codes of Honor (except Pirates' Code, which can reflect some cohesive Vargr packs), Fanaticism (to anything other than a high-charisma leader), Honesty, Sense of Duty (to any group larger than close friends/companions), Shyness, Xenophobia.

Vargr in the Zhodani Consulate

[Continued]

This is because, when the Zhodani *do* suffer a corsair raid, their reaction is very different from the indiscriminate retaliation favored by the Drakarans (see p. 105-106). The navy goes to a great deal of trouble – often aided by agents of the Tozjabr – to learn who was really responsible, and who is supporting that ship or fleet. Then, and only then, does the navy act. Perhaps a trap is set for a lone ship; perhaps a rival fleet is hired to go head-hunting; perhaps a world is embargoed and reparations demanded; perhaps an isolated base is bombed into glowing slag, with no survivors. And sometimes, just often enough to be spooky, corsair leaders are kidnapped, taken to the Consulate, and released some time later as good, trustworthy friends of the Zhodani.

To the Vargr, the coldness and near-certainty of Zhodani reprisals are alien and terrifying. And that's all right with the Zhodani.

Nearly all of the character templates on pp. 87-105 of *GURPS Traveller* are suitable for Vargr.

Bounty Hunters are very common in the Vargr extents, where the numerous states make it easy for criminals to flee outside the jurisdiction of ordinary authorities.

Corsair templates can be used to represent small Corsair bands (those with a single ship or two). For larger and more organized bands, see the Vargr Corsair template below.

Farmer templates should usually be read "herdsman" or "rancher" and emphasize such skills.

Hunter/Guide is a favorite occupation of adventurous Vargr living in the Imperium.

Marine and *Marine Special Ops* templates are only suitable for Vargr characters who are Imperial citizens.

Martial Artists are quite rare: Vargr tend to rely simply on claws, teeth and their Brawling skill, while their inability to kick limits the kind of moves they can perform.

Merchants and especially *Scouts* are very popular careers for the naturally inquisitive Vargr. Among Vargr in the Imperium, the Scout service is far more popular than other military services. Many Vargr states lying on the edge of known space often have government or corporate equivalents.

When using templates, remember that the Vargr's racial DX+1 means all DX-based skill levels also increase by 1, at no extra cost.

VARGR CORSAIR   75 POINTS

In Human usage, "corsair" is a romantic term for space pirate . . . but "Vargr Corsair" carries a different meaning: a member of an armed non-governmental fighting force with its own space transport and ground troops. Vargr corsairs typically have a more complex quasi-military organization, for they do not limit themselves to raiding ships. They often find temporary employment with a government or corporation as mercenaries, and occasionally become the nuclei for actual planetary or subsector navies.

Attributes: ST 10 [10], DX 13 [20], IQ 12 [20], HT 11 [10].
Advantages: A total of 25 points in 3D Spatial Sense [10], Ally Group (2-5 75-point pirates, 9 or less) [10], Charisma [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Contact (corporate or government; skill-18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3], Daredevil [15], Fearlessness [2/level], G-Experience [10], Light Hangover or No Hangover [2 or 5], Luck [15], Military Rank [5/level]. A corsair leader *must* have Charisma [5/level] at least equal to half his Military Rank and vice versa . . .
Disadvantages: Enemy (Imperium or powerful rival Corsair band or Vargr state, 6 or less) [-20], and -15 points chosen from Bad Temper [-10], Callous [-6], Compulsive Carousing [-5], Compulsive Gambling [-5 to -15], Greed [-15], Reputation [varies], Selfish [-5] and Trademark [-1 to -15].
Primary Skills: Brawling (P/E) DX+1 [2]-14. *Either* Beam Weapons (any) *or* Guns (any), both (P/E) DX+3 [2]-15*.
Secondary Skills: Free Fall (P/A) DX [2]-12, Language (usu-

ally Galanglic) (M/E) IQ [1]-11, and Vacc Suit (M/A) IQ [2]-12, plus any *two* of these seven options:

1. Astrogation (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Piloting (spacecraft type) (P/A) DX+1 [4]-13.
2. Armoury (vehicle or spaceship weaponry) (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Gunner (vehicle or spaceship weaponry) (P/A) DX+3 [4]-15*.
3. Engineer (Vehicles) (M/H) IQ [4]-12, Mechanic (any) (M/A) IQ [2]-12.
4. Electronics Operation (Comm) (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Language (Galanglic or another Vargr tongue) (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Traffic Analysis (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11.
5. Electronics Operation (Sensors) (M/A) IQ [2]-12, SIGINT Collection/Jamming (M/H) IQ [4]-12.
6. Intimidation (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11, Running (P/H) DX-1 [2]-12, Throwing (P/H) DX-2 [1]-11 and one of Demolitions (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Piloting (Contragravity) (P/A) DX [2]-13 or Gunner (a heavy portable weapon) (P/A) DX+2 [2]-14*.
7. Leadership (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Tactics (M/H) IQ [4]-12.
* Includes +2 for IQ.
Background Skills: A total of 4 points in Area Knowledge (System) or First Aid, both (M/E); Electronics Operation (Security Systems), Gambling, Heraldry (Ship's Markings), Interrogation or Streetwise, all (M/A); Knife (P/E); Shortsword (P/A), and Carousing (P/A; HT).
Customization Notes: Choose secondary skills to reflect your specialties: (1) space pilot, (2) gunner, (3) technical, (4) comm, (5) sensors/ECM, (6) ground troops (7) command. Only take (7) if Charisma is +1 or greater!

Note: successful corsair bands also employ undercover agents, medical technicians and occasionally emissaries.

EMISSARY   80 POINTS

Emissaries are individual bargainers or arbitrators employed by Vargr governments and other powers. The fragmented nature of Vargr society means there is a great need for mediators to assist in resolving disputes. The problems of obtaining a consensus of opinion between disparate groups has given rise to a Vargr profession known as *Emissaries* whose function is to mediate between various parties and help groups come to terms enough to permit mutual action for mutual benefit.

Emissaries bear a resemblance not only to the diplomatic services of other races, but also, most vividly, to the heralds of Medieval Earth. They are go-betweens who arrange all manner of agreements, in politics, business and other areas of life (such as marriages or apprenticeships), thus enabling the society to function despite the inherent instability of the system. They should not have Impulsiveness.

Attributes: ST 9 [0], DX 11 [0], IQ 13 [30], HT 10 [0].
Advantages: Charisma +1 and a total of 25 points in Legal Immunity [5 to 20] (20 points is Diplomatic Immunity), Patron (Agency, 6 or less) [15], Status 1 [5] and Wealth [10 or 20]; plus 10 *more* points in Charisma [5/level],

Fashion Sense [5], Language Talent [2/level], Sanctity [5] and Voice [10].

Disadvantages: A total of -20 points chosen from Duties [-2 to -15], Enemy (Rivals, enemy agents, etc.; 6 or less) [-10], Overconfidence or Glory Hound [-10 or -15], Secret (Spy) [-5 to -20] and Sense of Duty (Nation, planet or system) [-10].

Primary Skills: Administration (M/A) IQ [2]-13, Bard (M/A) IQ [2]-13, Diplomacy (M/H) IQ+2 [8]-15, Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ [1]-13 and a M/A language (Usually another Vargr tongue, Galanglic or Zhodani) at IQ [2].

Secondary Skills: Politics (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12, Research (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12 and Writing (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; *one* of Acting or Fast-Talk, both (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-12; *one* of Detect Lies or Psychology, both (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12; *one* of Economics, History, Intelligence Analysis or Law, all (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-12.

Background Skills: A total of 7 points in Disguise, Holdout, Lip Reading, Photography, Streetwise or Vacc Suit, all (M/A); Brawling, Beam Weapons (any) or Guns (any), all (P/E); Freefall and Piloting (any) (P/A) and Carousing (P/A; HT).

By adding Clerical Investment [varies], an emissary can also represent a Vargr priest.

LONER   80 POINTS

Loners are low-charisma Vargr who, for one reason or another, find it difficult to fit in with a pack, but who are driven to travel by their own curiosity or a desire to find some place they will fit in.

Sometimes tragic events will cause a Vargr to leave the familiar pack behind. Often it is the death of a mate or maybe they were once a respected leader, but were ignominiously deposed. It is too much for their pride to put their tail between their legs and assume a subordinate position, so they've decided to go far, far away, to a place where no one recognizes them. Or so they like to tell themselves. Often, loners are simply criminals who crossed the wrong person and end up running from the law.

Loners are found in any situation where they can rely on their own talents without having to boss around other Vargr. The typical loner has drifted between numerous odd jobs: working passage on a tramp freighter, belter, bounty hunting, salvage operator or junk dealer, travelling salesman, even criminal.

Attributes: ST 9 [0], DX 13 [20], IQ 12 [20], HT 11 [10].

Advantages: A total of 20 points in 3D Spatial Sense [10], Alcohol Tolerance [5], Alertness [5/level], Fit [5], G-Experience [10], Improved G-Tolerance [5 or 10], Intuition [15], Light Hangover or No Hangover [2 or 5], and Luck [15].

Disadvantages: A total of -20 points in Alcoholism [-15],

Compulsive Carousing [-5], Compulsive Gambling [-5 to -15], Greed [-15], Impulsiveness [-10], Loner [-5], Obsession (making the big score) [-5], Odious Personal Habits ("Fleabag," "Foul mouth," etc.) [-5 to -15], Secret (whatever he's running from) [varies].

Primary Skills: Brawling (P/E) DX [2]-14, Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Scrounging (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-13, Streetwise (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Vacc Suit (M/A) IQ [2]-12.

Secondary Skills: Pick any three of the following sets:

1. Freight Handling (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11, and any two of Astrogation or Electronic Operations (any) or Mechanic (J-Drive or M-Drive) (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Gunner (P/A) DX [2]-15*, Piloting (Small Spacecraft) (P/A) DX [2]-13.

2. Beam Weapons (any) or Guns (any), both (P/E) DX+2 [1]-15*; Fast-Draw (any) (P/E) DX [½]-12; *Three* of Interrogation, Intimidation, Research, Shadowing and Tracking, all (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Stealth (P/A) DX-2 [½]-11.

3. Computer Operation (M/E) IQ [1]-12 and any two specializations of Armoury (any), Electronics Operation (any) or Mechanic (any) (M/A) IQ [2]-12, or Engineer (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

4. Any two of Electronics Operation (Security Systems), Gambling, Intimidation, Lockpicking or Traps (M/A) IQ [2]-12, or Forgery (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11. Any one of Climbing or Stealth (P/A) DX [1]-12, or Escape, Pickpocket or Sleight of Hand, all (P/H) DX-2 [1]-11.

5. Engineer (Mining) (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11, Free Fall (P/A) DX-1 [1]-11, Geology (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10, Prospecting (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11.

6. Merchant (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13, and one of Accounting or Economics (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10.

Background Skills: A total of 5 points in First Aid (M/E), Cartography, Gambling, Holdout or Survival (any), all (M/A); Carousing (P/A; HT) or Driving or Piloting (any) (P/A).

Customization Note: Secondary skill sets represent various jobs held down: 1. free trader, 2. bounty hunter or mercenary, 3. technician or ship's engineer, 4. criminal, 5. belter, 6. travelling salesman or junk dealer.

EQUIPMENT, VEHICLES AND STARSHIPS

Vargr and Human equipment (and the game rules for using it) are generally interchangeable. Some kinds of clothing or armor are a problem. Boots or shoes (due to the Vargr digitigrade posture), closed-face helmets (due to the snout) and pants (the need for a tail) can be difficult. Vargr also require less insulation and/or padding due to their fur, so an outfit that may be fine for a Human will be too hot for a Vargr. Regions with substantial Vargr/Human trade often sell alien versions. Otherwise, come back the next day and pay a further 10 percent . . . In an emergency, Vargr trying to use Human footwear or vice versa can do so at -1 to Move (or worse). A Vargr trying to use an outfit whose pants lacks provision for a tail will be at -1 DX due to cramps; a

few minutes work with a knife or teeth may be able to fix this, but such impromptu tailoring is not a good idea for a vacc suit or other sealed outfit and difficult or impossible with rigid body armor.

Vargr chairs and similar furniture are designed with a tail in mind; while some Human furnishings are comfortable, others (e.g., a bucket seat with a solid back) are not. Tailed bipeds are common enough throughout Imperial space that almost all starship and starport fittings made in the Imperium have a removable panel to accommodate a tail. If a Vargr ends up stuck with improper furniture for a long time (e.g., while riding a vehicle) the GM (at his discretion) can assess extra Fatigue per hour.

VEHICLES

These are typical vehicles that might found carried aboard Vargr starships, or on high-technology worlds in the Vargr Extents. Vargr tend to build their vehicles tough rather than pretty, perhaps because Vargr play even more dominance games in traffic than do Humans. Nevertheless, they do like a streamlined look if that can be combined with ruggedness.

VARGR SPEEDER (TL10)

Vargr tend to enjoy driving fast – this sleek speeder satisfies that need, while being durable enough for dangerous or military use if necessary, filling the role of a useful fast scout, getaway or police vehicle. It has four CG generators but it only needs three of them to fly. Also, there are two thrusters for redundancy. It has a navigational radar and a terrain-following radar, which of course can be turned off if the pilot wants to zig-zag between the trees and hills rather than skim over them.

Subassemblies: None.
Body Features: Superior streamlining.
Propulsion: Two 3,000 lb.-thrust TL11 standard reactionless thrusters (Cr6,000, 300 lbs., 6 cf., 300 kW).
Aerostatic Lift: Four 2,000 lb.-lift TL13 contragravity generators (Cr2,040, 24 lbs., 0.48 cf., 8 kW).
Weaponry: None.
Electronics: 5,000-mile radio (Cr50, 0.25 lbs., 0.005 cf.), 10-mile air-search radar w/ no targeting (Body front, Scan 17, Cr2,500, 5 lbs., 0.1 cf., 2,5 kW), light amplification (Cr100), inertial navigation system (Cr12,500, 10 lbs., 0.2 cf.), terrain following radar (Cr1,000, 2.5 lbs., 0.05 cf, 0.25 kW), small computer (Cr250, 0.5 lbs., 0.01 cf.), terminal (Cr250, 10 lbs., 0.2 cf.).
Controls: Computerized (Cr1,000).
Crew: Pilot in a roomy crew station (Cr100, 40 lbs., 40 cf.).
Accommodations: Three roomy passenger seats (Cr300, 120 lbs., 120 cf.). *Occupancy:* Short.
Environmental Systems: 4 man-days limited life system (Cr2,000, 200 lbs., 4 cf, 2 kW).
Power Systems: 312.75 kW Nuclear Power Unit (Cr68,050,

337.75 lbs., 3.3775 cf).
Space: 9.88 cf access space, 5 cf cargo space, 3.02 cf. empty space.
Volume and Structure: Body 250 cf. *Area:* Body 250. *Structure:* Medium, very cheap materials (Cr7,500, 1,000 lbs.).
Hit Points: Body 375.
Armor: PD 4, DR30 cheap metal armor overall (Cr1,875, 1875 lbs.).
Statistics: Empty weight 3,925 lbs. Usual payload 900 lbs. Loaded weight 2.4 tons. Volume 250 cf. Size modifier +3. Cr104,515. HT 12.
Air Performance: Stall speed 0 mph, can hover, can fly. Aerodynamic drag 25. Top speed 1,340 mph. aAccel 25 mph/s. aDecel 14 mph/s. aMR 3.5. aSR 4.

VARGR G-CARRIER (ARMED) (TL10)

A larger and heavier grav vehicle, designed to carry a squad of troops to the edge of the battle zone. It is armed with a simple 30mm auto-cannon in a rotating turret. This kind of flying battle-taxi would be the heaviest "grav armor" that most corsair bands would be equipped with, but suitable for a quick raid on a low to medium TL world. Remove the auto-cannon and the Vargr G-carrier can serve as a civilian grav-truck or grav-bus.

Subassemblies: Full-rotation turret.
Body Features: Fair streamlining, 30-degree front slope on body.
Propulsion: Two 1,000 lb.-thrust TL11 standard reactionless thruster (Body, Cr2,000, 100 lbs., 2 cf., 100 kW)
Aerostatic Lift: Four 5,000 lb.-lift TL13 contragravity generators (Body, Cr2,100, 50 lbs., 1 cf., 20 kW)
Weaponry: 30mm Autocannon (Turret front, Cr5,400, 230 lbs., 4.6 cf.) in a fully stabilized mount (Turret, Cr2,300, 23 lbs., 0.46 cf.) with 1,000 rounds of ammo (Cr1,700, 850 lbs., 5.5 cf.).
Instruments and Electronics: 2 scrambled 5,000-mile radios (Cr350, 0.5 lbs., 0.01 cf.), 20-mile PESA (Body front,

Scan 19, Cr80,000, 20 lbs., 0.4 cf.), 5-mile PESA (Turret front, Scan 15, Cr20,000, 5 lbs., 0.1 cf.), IFF (Cr1,000, 5 lbs., 0.1 cf.), inertial navigation system (Cr12,500, 10 lbs., 0.2 cf.), terrain following radar (Cr1,000, 2.5 lbs., 0.05 cf., 0.25 kW), HUDWAC (Cr250), radar/laser detector (Cr75, 0.75 lbs., 0.015 cf.), minicomputer (Cr3,750, 10 lbs., 0.2 cf.), two terminals (Cr500, 20 lbs., 1 cf.).

Maneuver Controls: Computerized (Cr1,000). Crew Requirements: Driver and Commander/Gunner, both in normal crew stations (Cr200, 60 lbs., 60 cf.).

Accommodations: 10 normal passenger seats (Cr1000, 300 lbs., 300 cf.). Occupancy: Short-term.

Environmental Systems: 12 man-days limited life system (Cr6000, 600 lbs., 12 cf., 6 kW).

Power System: 126.25 kW Nuclear Power Unit (Cr30,250, 151.25 lbs., 1.5125 cf.).

Access Space: 4.5125 cf.

Cargo Space: 20 cf.

Empty Space: 8.02 cf (body) +0.34 cf (turret).

Volumes: Body 500 cf., Turret 11 cf.

Surface Area: Body 400, Turret 30. Total area 430.

Structure: Heavy frame, cheap materials (Cr25,800, 1,935 lbs.).

Hit Points: Body 1,200, Turret 90.

Armor: Front PD 5, DR 75, all other locations PD 4, DR 50, cheap metal overall (Cr5,375, 5,375 lbs.)

Statistics: Empty weight 9,748 lbs. Usual payload 2,800 lbs. Loaded weight 6.274 tons. Volume 511 cf. Size modifier +4. Cr204,250. HT 12.

Air Performance: Stall speed 0 mph, can hover, can fly. Aerodynamic drag 215. Top speed 265 mph. aAccel 3 mph/s. aDecel 14 mph/s. aMR 3.5. aSR 4.
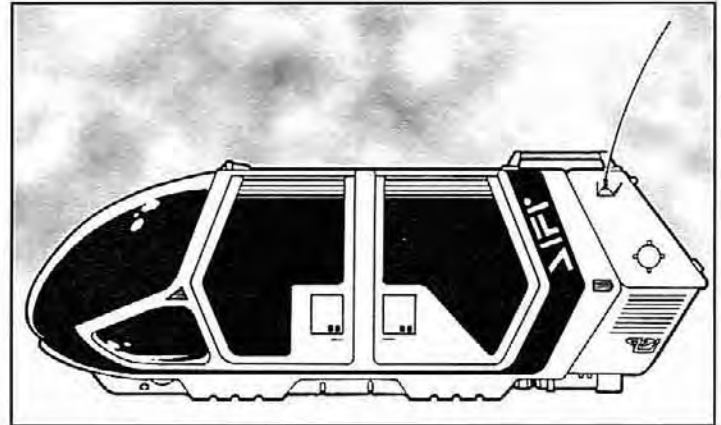
TL10 30mm Autocannon

A 30mm long-barrelled automatic cannon firing caseless ammunition. With solid ammo, it uses these statistics:

Malf	Type	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt	RoF	WPS	VPS	CPS	Power	Cost	Shots	TL
ver.	cr.	9dx3	20	15	1,500	6,100	230	12	0.85	0.0055	Cr3.4	–	Cr5,400	1,000	10

VARGR STARSHIPS

Due to the instability of Vargr economics and lack of unified interstellar policing, bank financing is often difficult to acquire for an object as easily absconded with as a starship. As such most Vargr ships are purchased flat out. As few individuals can muster the megacredits, it is fairly common for merchant vessels to be owned either by large corporations or as a co-op of all crew. Vargr characters seeking to obtain vessels outright usually do so from wealthy patrons who will provide a ship in return for some major task or length of service.

"Fixed" expenses such as berthing fees, fuel, etc. tend to be more variable in Vargr space: roll 2d-7×5% (treating results below 0 as negatives) to determine the change in cost from world to world and possibly from visit to visit.

VARGR CORSAIR (VP, TL10)

This sleek, spined, and almost sharklike design is favored by Vargr pirates and raiders, both for its utility and its rakish design. Originally built as a patrol ship, it is still used by many small Vargr navies, but its notorious ubiquity within the corsair trade stems from Vargr naval officers making unauthorized choice of early retirement and a career change, acquiring in the process a more valuable mustering-out benefit then their superiors intended. However, with piracy an approved career in most Vargr states, the VP has since been deliberately built for bands who have chosen the life of a corsair, and sometimes even financed through subscription.

Crew: Captain (Leadership and Tactics), Pilot (Pilot and Astrogation), Sensor/Commo Operator (Electronic Operation [Sensors] and [Communications], four Gunners (Gunner [Laser] or [Missile]), 2 Engineers (Engineering and Mechanic), one Gig pilot (Piloting and Gunner). Corsairs usually go double occupancy and pack up to 24 crew aboard, the extras being a squad of ground troops. The low berths are typically used for prisoners or spare crew.

400-ton SL Hull, DR 200 (DR 100 turrets). Basic Stealth and Emission Cloaking. Four Turrets (two with triple 360-MJ lasers, two with triple missile racks); Basic Bridge (5 crew consoles), 36 Cargo, Engineering, Fuel Processor, 77 Maneuver, 12 Jump, 80 Fuel, three Low berth (12 tubes), two Spacedock (for g-carrier), 12 Staterooms, one Utility, 84 Vehicle Bay (50-ton cutter). Loaded mass (but not price) includes g-carrier, cutter and passenger module. A second module is sometimes carried in cargo.

Statistics: EMass 1,134.66, LMass 1,510.58, Price MCr85.5994, Hit Points 37,500.

Performance: Accel 2 G, Jump 2, Air speed 2,862 mph.

Vargr Courier (Type VX, TL10)

A swift vessel intended for transportation of messages and emissaries rapidly over interstellar distance. The closest thing to an Xboat found in Vargr space, albeit often in private hands.

200-ton SL Hull, DR 100, 2 Turrets (with three 360-MJ lasers in each), Basic Bridge, Engineering, 8 Jump, 60 Fuel, 44 Maneuver, 4 Staterooms, Low-Berth, Fuel Processor, Utility, 24 Cargo.

Statistics: EMass 459.51, LMass 579.51, Price MCr56.5132

Performance: Accel 3 Gs, Jump 3, Air speed 2,800 mph.

VARGR TRADER
TYPE VT   (TL10)

Vargr trading vessels tend to have longer legs (both in terms of speed and jump capability) than those of the Imperium.

200-ton SL Hull, DR 100, 2 Turrets (with one 360-MJ laser in each), Basic Bridge, Engineering, 6 Jump, 40 Fuel, 31 Maneuver, 5 Staterooms, Utility, 2 Fuel Processors, 54.5 Cargo (+4 in turrets).

Statistics: EMass 340.57, LMass 633.07, Price MCr41.5552

Performance: Accel 2 Gs, Jump 2, Air speed 2,400 mph.

VARGR FRIGATE
TYPE VF   (TL10)

A typical small warship used on patrol and anti-corsair missions, or as an escort during fleet actions. The vessel carries a 20-ton Armed Fast Gig and has room for a G-Carrier or similar vehicle. The gig is included in the cost and mass.

800-ton SL Hull, DR 400 (Turrets DR 100), 8 Turrets (six with triple 360-MJ lasers, two with triple missile launchers), Basic Bridge, Engineering, 24 Jump, 160 Fuel, 254 Maneuver, 32 Staterooms, Low-Berth (capacity 4), Sickbay, 2 Utility, 2 Fuel Processors, Spacedock (42-space; holds Gig & G-Carrier), 15 Cargo.

Statistics: EMass 2,501.99, LMass 2,576.99, Price MCr188.5448

Performance: Accel 4 Gs, Jump 2, Air speed 4,100 mph.

Vargr Packet   (TL10)

A standard medium-sized merchant vessel used in Vargr space, generally as a passenger line with supplementary cargo capacity normally used for mail. The shuttle (see below) can carry all passengers and almost half the cargo. The shuttle is included in the Packet's cost and mass. The packet is has a good jump rating and can take care of itself in a fight; medium-sized corsair bands often "acquire" one or two such ships as useful troop transports.

600 Space USL Hull, DR 100, 6 Turrets (three with triple 360-MJ lasers, two with triple sandcasters, one with a triple missile launcher), Basic Bridge, Engineering, 24 Jump, 180 Fuel, 40 Maneuver, 36 Staterooms, 3 Low-Berths, Sickbay, 2 Utility, 2 Fuel Processors, Vehicle Bay (100-ton Shuttle), 96 Cargo.

Statistics: EMass 1,129.01, LMass 1,609.01, Price MCr142.1401.

Performance: Accel 1 G, Jump 3.

Vargr Shuttle   (TL10)

100 Space SL Hull, DR 100, Cockpit/Systems, 8 Passenger, Utility, 26 Maneuver, 40 Hold.

Statistics: EMass 159.12 tons, LMass 359.12 tons, Cost MCr9.3, HP 12,000.

Performance: Accel 3 Gs, Air Speed 3,100 mph.

20-ton Armed Fast Gig   (TL10)

Small auxiliary for the Vargr Frigate. It can carry 24 troops in passenger seats and a G-Carrier in the cargo hold.

20-ton SL Hull, DR 100, Cockpit/Systems, 2 Passenger Couch, 10 Maneuver, 2 Cargo. Hull-mounted 360-MJ laser.

Statistics: EMass 68.54, LMass 78.54, Price MCr5.85.

Performance: Accel 5 G, Air Speed 3,200 mph.

400-Ton Vargr Corsair
Scale: 1 hex = 1 yard

KEY

▬ Bulkhead	AL	Air Lock
▬·▬· Sliding Door	CM	Canister Magazine
►◄ Iris Valve	ELB	Emergency Low Berths
▬ Access Panel	FP	Fuel Processor
⊕ Manual Hatch in Floor	MM	Missile Magazine
⊛ Manual Hatch in Ceiling	SL	Ship's Locker
⊜ Acceleration Couch	SR	Stateroom
⊗ Iris Valve in Floor	St	Storage
⊗ Iris Valve in Ceiling	Tr	Turret

The Vargr Corsair is produced in a number of variations, and no class name has been assigned. It represents one of the few starships specifically designed for piracy and commerce raiding.

The corsair is a sleek-looking vessel recognizable by the paired forward curving fins on each side, three much smaller similar fins on each side of the forward hull, and an asymmetric dorsal fin. The ostensible purpose of the fins is to act as control surfaces when maneuvering in an atmosphere, but many observers feel that the original Vargr designer put them there more for their appearance (to make the ship look menacing, rakish, and more "piratical") than for any utilitarian purpose.

Deck 1: Cargo Deck

Cargo: The pressure-tight bulkhead between the cargo hold and the cutter module hold is designed to be dismantled and removed if necessary to facilitate the transfer of goods between the two holds.

Deck 2: Engineering

The 50-ton modular cutter is normally the Vargr variant of the popular LSP design, either produced under license or (more commonly) a knock-off. Performance and characteristics are identical, the main difference being that controls and fittings are designed for use by Vargr rather than humans. Switching modules must be done outside the ship, during which time the ship is especially vulnerable to attack.

Deck 3: Command Deck

Staterooms 1-2: These are relatively roomy, and are reserved for the Captain and chief engineer respectively.

Common Room: This serves the same purpose as the lounge on other vessels.

DECK 3 COMMAND DECK (Top)

DECK 1 - CARGO DECK (Bottom)

DECK 2 - ENGINEERING (Middle Deck)
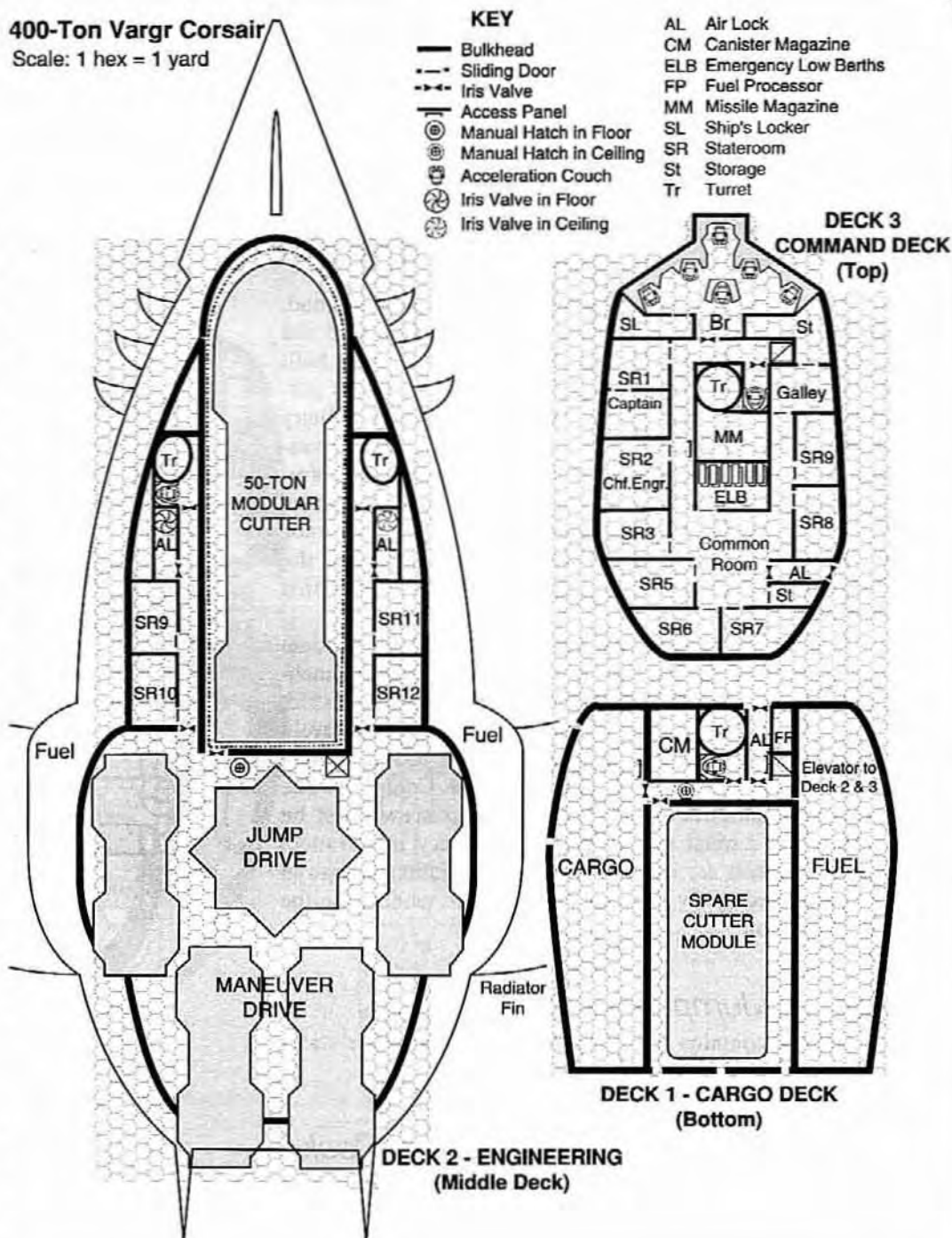
Vargr Trader

Not all Vargr vessels are designed with raiding in mind, and the Vargr Trader (also known as the Vargr Tradeship and Vargr Free Trader) is typical of the myriad of designs built for use in and around the Vargr Extents. Trade vessels normally lack the fins and spines designed into Vargr military vessels, and semi-military ships such as the Corsair. The vessel is fitted with larger jump and maneuver drives than corresponding Imperial designs, and thus is often used by Human merchants who must operate along less well-traveled trade routes in the assorted small buffer states between the Zhodani Consulate, the Vargr Extents, and the Third Imperium.

A few Vargr worlds have been taken under the Zhodani wing as reservations, but most of these are classified as unabsorbed (see p. 18) and their citizens subject to some restrictions on travel. The Zhodani allow Vargr merchants relatively unrestricted passage within their borders, provided they agree to follow the rules of trade inside the Consulate. The main requirements are that vessels and crew must be unarmed, and must file a detailed itinerary in advance. Unarmed vessels are capable of carrying additional cargo in the space freed up by removal of the turrets, as noted in the text description.

Deck 1: Jump Drive Deck

Deck 1 contains the jump drive, the passenger staterooms, and the passenger lounge.

Deck 2: Maneuver Drive/Cargo Deck

This deck contains the bridge, the maneuver drive, the cargo hold, and the crew's quarters and lounge.

Deck 3: Fuel Processor Deck

Deck 3 contains the fuel skimming and processing machinery and a secondary cargo deck. Fuel tanks are not specifically illustrated in the plan, and are fitted in interstitial spaces on the ship.
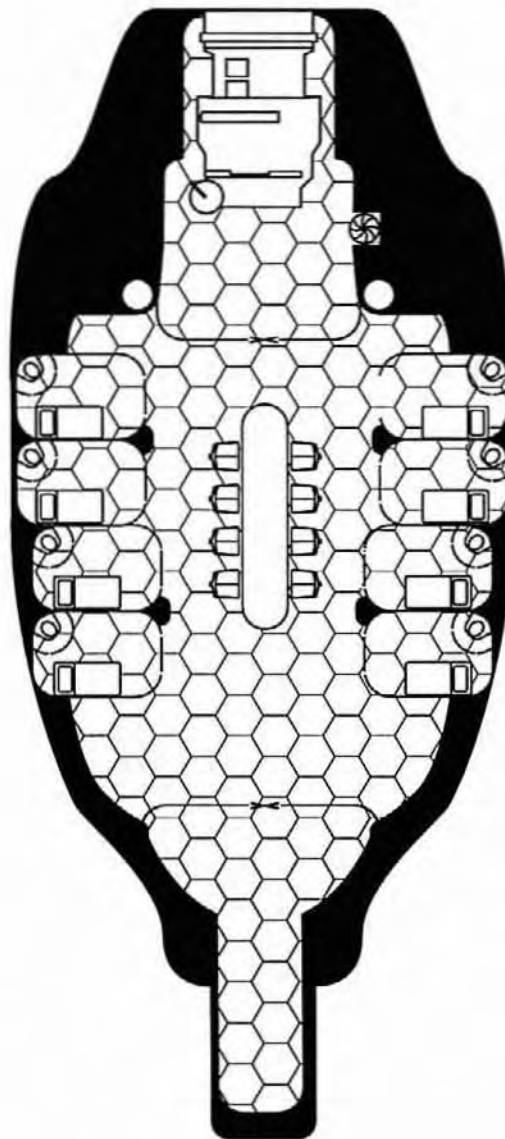
DECK 1

Deck Plan Symbols
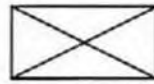
Symbol	Description
⊠	Cargo Elevator
– – –	Sliding Door
▬ ▬ ▬	Folding Airtight Partition
———	Interior Partition
▬▬▬▬	Airtight Bulkhead
⌐⌐	Access Panel
I	Iris Valve
○	Iris Valve, Overhead
✸	Iris Valve, Floor
✸	Iris Valve, Floor and Overhead
⊞	Acceleration Couch
⌂	Fresher
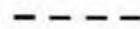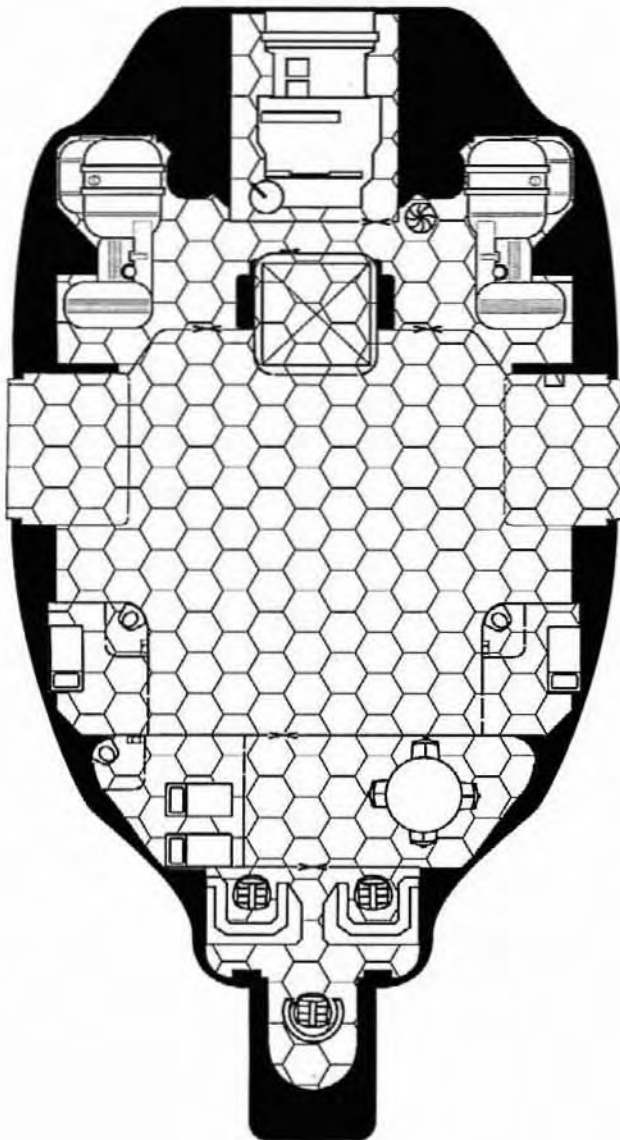
DECK 2
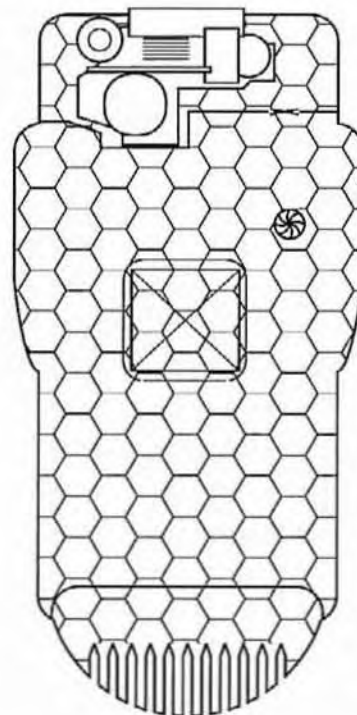
DECK 3

SCALE IN METERS

3   6   9
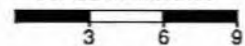
The Drakarans

Drakaran History

Proto-Drakarans on ancient Kas'Drak appear to have evolved from carnivore stock. Nomadic hunting/herding cultures grew more sophisticated, establishing permanent trading and craft villages, which served as the nuclei for civilization.

The dominant planetary culture, the matriarchal clan-based *Neh'Toz*, evolved in southern latitudes circa -1500 and would give birth to a new religion, *Limak Neh'Toz* (-1400) and the first continental civilization, the Great Canal Empire (-1050 to -700). By -500 the empire began to fragment under the pressure of southern steppe nomads, but one remnant, the south-eastern province of Ta'tohk, retained Imperial culture. Following the invention of the steam engine, Ta'tohk was the birthplace of an industrial revolution circa -400.

The various Railway Clans of Ta'Tohk and the factory towns they connected became the dominant powers on Kas'Drak, and by -200 their influence had spread across the Drakaran supercontinent. Lesser vassal clans and independent families formed landsteamer caravans which moved out from beyond the frontier railway towns, to settle new lands and fighting with more primitive steppe nomads. Circa -150 to -50, many small wars were fought as greater clans attempted to gobble up the lesser, which formed new alliances for self-protection. By -100 the Steam Age was over, and most of the globe was divided between greater clans and their vassals. A second industrial revolution followed with the development of electronics (about 150) and shortly after that, nuclear power and space travel.

The Drak Ne'Vha (humans and some Vargr call them Drakarans) resemble man-sized one-eyed tyrannosaurs covered in beautiful jeweled armor that flashes with all colors of the spectrum. The Drakarans are a starfaring race of traders, warriors and seekers, uncompromising in their search for truth, yet bound to the ancient, cruel customs developed for survival on their brutal homeworld.

PHYSIOLOGY

Drakarans are carbon-based, oxygen-breathing humanoids. A typical Drakaran stands 6 feet, 2 inches tall and weighs 220 pounds. They are bipedal, with an upright posture, two strong arms, short, powerful legs and a reptilian tail. Their torsos are muscular, with rainbow scales that shimmer and glitter like a prism.

A Drakaran's head is lizardlike, but with a high forehead and enlarged cranium. The Drakaran's large single eye (a feature common to most animal species on their world) is deeply set in a long armored slit just below its forehead, which serves to protect it from dust. In contrast to the great eye, its ears are mere holes, and its nose is only a slit on the end of a short, flattened snout. The jaw is powerful, the mouth filled with several rows of sharp teeth. Drakaran hands have five fingers and an opposable thumb, each digit tipped with a sharp claw.

The Drakarans have two sexes. The females are smaller than the males, and possess a marsupial-like pouch.

Senses

The primary Drakaran senses are vision and smell; a Drak's large single eye is equal to a Human's for most applications, although long-distance depth perception is slightly inferior. To compensate, Drakarans constantly swivel their heads back and forth, establishing depth through parallax. Its olfactory sense is far superior to a man's, being designed to sniff out water or blood in the open desert. On the other hand, its hearing, adequate for worlds with dense atmospheres, suffers in lower pressure environments, and is less acute than a Human's.

Reproduction, Growth and Aging

Drakarans are oviparous: a female is fertilized by a male, and after about 150 standard days will lay three to four translucent eggs during a two day period. Eggs are carried in a pouch by the mother until they are ready to hatch, some 90 days after the eggs are laid. As the Drakarans have nothing akin to mammary glands, the mother produces no milk – young were originally fed on blood and food predigested by their parents. These days, commercial formulas are used.

The average Drakaran reaches its full growth after 20 earth years, and lives to 80 in a natural environment.

Communication

Like Humans, the Drakarans communicate primarily through verbal speech, supplemented by largely unconscious gestures and body language. Drakaran speech is low, a mix of harsh sounds and the occasional whispering sibilants. When angry, they hiss like a kettle boiling over.

Diet

The Drakaran metabolism is based on left-handed amino acids, like that of most humanoids and all Terran life-forms, so they can eat the same foods that Humans do. They evolved from hunting carnivores, and eat only a small amount of vegetable matter, preferring meat products. Most terrestrial animal protein is compatible with their metabolism.

The Stalking

Drakarans do not sleep, although they rest for an hour or so after meals or heavy exertion. Instead, every 20 standard days they must enter "the stalking," a waking dream in which suppressed primal instincts are aroused.

While experiencing the Stalking, Drakarans become hunting animals, pure and simple. They will not remember language, or use tools or technological devices (though if wearing armor, they might not remove it). Their only interest is to hunt down and kill food. A stalking Drakaran will not harm other Drakarans (except possibly enemies or rivals), but any other intelligent beings are fair game! A stalking Drakaran will only eat food he has personally killed; confinement while in this phase may cause madness or starvation. Groups of Drakarans who enter the Stalking at the same time will cooperate much like pack animals.

The stalking reflex lasts for four to seven standard days. Before it occurs, a Drakaran can voluntarily delay the onset of the Stalking by up to three days time (or longer with drugs, see p. 100) but will suffer fatigue and lapses of concentration, much like a Human who is deliberately going without sleep.

The cycle of the Stalking appears to be related to the Drakaran 20-day lunar cycle, but occurs at different times in the month for different individuals, although families (or other groups that live closely together) tend to naturally synchronize their periods after a few months. The stalking once simply resulted in all work stopping for the affected group, but now robots and computers are used to continue handling business.

PSYCHOLOGY

Perhaps because so much of their animal nature is suppressed until the stalking, the Drak are normally a cool, unemotional people. They never get angry, but they also never forgive an offense or insult. They approach problems with a ruthless sense of reason, with survival of the family (or, for Drakaran leaders, the race) uppermost in their minds.

A Drakaran values the existence and prosperity of its extended family above all things – even his own life, or the life of individual friends, mates, or children. A Drakaran's goal is to improve his *family's* position, with personal well-being incidental to this. In a low-status family, its members will attempt to avoid poverty and to gain wealth and land. For high-status families, improvement means seeking political power and influence.

Next to the family, the Drakarans revere order and truth. Simplicity is a virtue. The Drakarans like things to be clear, neat and tidy. In science, the solidity of mathematics and physics is prized over the random diversity of biology and the ambiguities of the social sciences. In politics and in business, the Drakarans detest no-win situations, half-measures, compromise and bargaining. Drakaran merchants or diplomats will offer clear terms – take it or leave it.

All Drakarans dislike ambiguity and uncertainty. No Drakaran will ever lie about anything – the concept is totally foreign to them. The Drakarans are so forthright about their opinions that many Solomani and Vilani consider them unforgivably rude; on the other hand, many Vargr also say what they think, and the Zhodani find them easy to get along with.

The Drakaran system was blessed with a second (marginally) habitable planet, N'Varr, a chilly world with a thin atmosphere. Rival clan space expeditions using nuclear pulse jet and ion drive spaceships colonized N'Varr, circa 520. The discovery of extraterrestrial life on N'Varr fuelled innovation in previously neglected biological and life sciences, creating a climate that led to breakthroughs in both medicine (which extended Drakaran life spans) and food production. The unintended result was a dramatic population explosion.

By 700 expanding population had diminished planetary resources, especially on metal-poor N'Varr. This led the more adventurous clans to begin full-scale exploitation of the gas giant moons and asteroid belts. Ownership of trading or prospecting vessels became the social equivalent of holding land. Growing competition for increasingly scarce asteroid resources led to new conflict in deep space. Clans armed their seekers and traders, and skirmishes took place between them. By 900 the spacer clans had begun constructing specialized warships and forming alliances to enforce and protect their claims.

First Contact

In 954, a Vargr starship misjumped 30 parsecs and appeared in the Kas'Drak system, beyond the edge of explored Vargr space. Among the Drakaran clans tensions were very high – when the Vargr starship strayed into disputed territory, it was mistaken by ships of the *Shimaak*, a medium-sized spacer clan, for a claim-jumping rival vessel, and crippled with missile fire.

The Shimaak discovered their error within a few hours, when they boarded the alien vessel. Its crew were dead or dying, and Drakaran medicine could not save them. The ship itself was approximately the equivalent of Drakaran technology (mid TL10) . . . but some parts of its drive system were *different*.

Rumors of the Shimaak's capture of an alien ship spread. A few weeks later, the Shimaak's rivals, the Tazbeg, mounted a raid on the research station where the starship wreckage was being studied. This sparked an all-out interplanetary conflict, the "War of the 128 Clans." A multi-clan alliance which would become known as the Ashket Vhadrakis Oom formed around the Shimaak. Using reverse-engineered Vargr technology, they were able to improve their technologies and, in the process, win the war. The Ashket gathered many other clans into its embrace, establishing collective security mechanisms that enforced a system-wide peace. Ashket scientists continued to study the alien starship's most puzzling feature, its jump drive. In 988 they made a breakthrough, developing a crude jump-1 prototype.

Jump drive technology became the carrot that the Ashket offered for membership in their alliance. It worked. By 1020, land-hungry Ashket clans were rapidly expanding along jump-1 routes through Ghocknael and the adjacent Anzidiadl sectors. By 1050, the Drakarans had six established colony worlds; by 1095, dozens.

Nevertheless, the Ashket remained acutely aware they had accidentally destroyed an alien ship, and they feared a potentially hostile encounter with the advanced aliens that had created it. To this end, the great clans embarked on a crash program to develop a true interstellar navy, the Ash Lokbar.

A few Drakarans are known to shade the truth, lie by omission or deceive by misdirection. The majority of the race considers such deviants to be total miscreants; families harboring them may be expelled from their clans. A Drakaran who deliberately spread an untruth would be considered insane and treated accordingly. If a Drakaran wishes to conceal something or keep a secret, he will simply refuse to answer. Drakarans are naturally modest; they dislike flowery speech and consider *excessive* or undeserved praise or compliments to be almost as rude as a Human would an insult.

Drakarans are intensely conservative, and change their views only when confronted with the logical necessity to do so or the obvious falsehood of their opinions.

SOCIETY

Drakarans live in extended families, consisting of about two dozen individuals, a third of which are married couples, and the rest children. The Drakaran family is matriarchal, ruled by the eldest grandmother (called the Greatmother), who makes all important decisions. When she is too old to rule, the eldest Drakaran female who has borne children becomes the new matriarch. Otherwise, male and female Drakarans are social equals. Marriages are generally arranged by the greatmothers to cement alliances and exchange skills; husbands live with their wife's family.

Compared to the family, individuals have little importance in Drakaran society. For example, Drakarans who commit a crime are not punished; rather, the entire family is. Unlike a Human adult, who after a time will be expected to leave home and become independent, a Drakaran always owes obedience to the family matriarch, and the family will always provide for him throughout life.

Families are economic cooperatives. Personal property and wealth is unknown, although purchases are arranged for different families (or clans as a whole) as if between competing businesses, which is, largely, what they are. Someone who leaves the family (except through marriage) forfeits everything. Social standing is based on land ownership, but the family (not individuals) owns land, like all other property. Those families who own no land are a proletarian class at the bottom of the Drakaran social pyramid.

Larger social groups are formed from families related by marriage. Drakaran families allied by marriage make up larger clans – similar to pocket nations or corporations – which join to increase their own political and economic power. In essence, Drakaran society is an aristocracy in which the oldest and wealthiest land-owning families control industry and business. Land, wealth and political power are seen as inseparable. A Drakaran family can only achieve upward mobility by getting rich and acquiring land, or by having its members develop sufficient skills or fame that a rich family will want to ally with it through marriage.

Survival Customs

The homeworld, Kas'Drak, is mostly desert, with less land for raising food than on a more Earthlike planet. Drakarans breed quite rapidly, and this fact, combined with the Drakaran homeworld's unforgiving climate and limited natural resources forced the people to adopt ruthless methods to control population and ensure survival-oriented behavior.

Traditional customs exist to cull the weak and unfit, so that they will not be a burden on the family. Children with birth defects are always killed, usually by exposure. Drak who become old or sick enough that they can no longer work for the family are obliged to commit ritual suicide by walking into the nearest wasteland without provisions.

One test that almost all adults must someday face is *Thaqok-Pav*, the Trial of Thirst and Wind, whereby a Drakaran couple prove their fitness to mate and sire children. All marriages are arranged by the Greatmother to enhance the prestige or wealth of the family, or add to the family's skill base. After a marriage is arranged between two families, the prospective husband and wife are abandoned together in one of the desert wastelands, with minimal equipment. If they can work together and make their way out of the desert, they are allowed to mate and produce children, since they will have proven both their fitness to survive and their ability to cooperate together in adversity. For Drakarans living off-world, different harsh environments may substitute for the desert.

Although the crueler traditional customs have been abandoned as Drakarans developed technology and space travel, many still remain in force. Drakaran culture tends to develop traditional ways of doing things. Breaking these traditions is hard: if a social system has worked for generations, why change it?

Religion and Mysticism

All Drakaran forms of worship tend toward unambiguous monotheism, deism, or atheism, with little of the confusing dogma and ritual that characterizes Human religions.

The major Drakaran religion is an uncompromising monotheistic faith known as *Limak Neh'Toz*. Most of the traits characteristic of Drakarans, such as cool logic and the importance of the family, are taught to be virtuous. Limak Neh'Toz is also the source of many of the harsh tests of fitness that still exist in Drakaran society. Drakarans tend to worship by simple prayer and meditation. The religion lacks a formal hierarchy: community elders and Greatmothers serve as teachers and ministers as needed. Limak Neh'Toz is followed by two-thirds of the Drakaran population. The other Drakaran religions are similar in basic character if not in detail.

GOVERNMENT

Each clan is ruled by a *Lumog*, or Council of Greatmothers, reserved to those matriarchs whose families have at least one Ikashi – about MCr20 – in land and income. Each Lumog meets regularly to discuss major issues, and set taxation rates (for families, not individuals). Clans are the powers at the country and town level. They control civil services, such as police, fire-fighting or utilities (often contracting these to individual families). On high-tech worlds, many of them engage in commerce, occasionally owning starships (each crewed by a family).

Clans vary in size, but are generally divided into the *Nhevadrakis* (lesser clans) and *Vhadrakis* (great clans, defined as a clan that has a number of lesser clans as clients). Clans generally control rural areas outright, but in a large metropolis a single great clan and a number of lesser clans usually share the territory and divide interlinked responsibilities among one another, with one having a hereditary responsibility for, say, city power generation.

On low population worlds, a single clan, or a group of them, might be all the government there is. On high population worlds, the dominant political entity is usually a coalition of that world's great clans, the *Vhadrakis-Oon*. Each Lumog sends ambassadors to the Vhadrakis-Oon to represent their interests.

Ski'Skedrak ("outlaw clans") are a special case: they are small (usually no more than a few hundred or thousand people) and formed from individuals or families that, for one reason or another, were expelled from their clan. Often their origins lay in families who suffered economic disadvantage and turned to banditry in order to support themselves. They also include the remains of clans shattered by wars, and isolated groups with ideologies or goals not acceptable to majority Drakaran culture.

Second Contact

That the Drakarans did not meet the Vargr sooner was a consequence of spacial geography: with only jump-1, Drakaran expansion followed jump mains, many of which happened to lead away coreward and spinward from the Vargr Extents. As a result, "second contact" with the Vargr did not occur until 1091, when Drakaran trading ships chanced upon vessels of the *Ilksang Oekhgnoull*, a small Vargr corporate state in Ghoekhnael sector.

Actual contact was anticlimatic: the Ash Lokbar had grown substantially in strength, but the Drakarans had no idea of the size or capabilities of the Vargr. Thus, they acted with tact and delicacy. The Ilksang Oekhgnoull were taken aback to find the aliens not only admitting to accidentally destroying a Vargr ship in 954, but offering apologies and reparations.

Ilksang Oekhgnoull research revealed the lost Vargr had belonged to a trading firm long since out of business, from a state that had fragmented a generation ago. However, a tenuous relationship *could* be traced back to their company, so these details were not repeated to the polite and seemingly timorous aliens. In 1092 the Ilksang Oekhgnoull accepted MCr 1,028 in reparations as full payment for the starship's destruction and the accidental transfer of jump technology, as well as exclusive trading rights and "secure, peaceful borders."

For the Drakarans, the next decade saw an explosion of interstellar commerce. Family traders began voyaging to trailing and rimward deeper into Vargr space and spinward and rimward, toward the Zhodani Consulate. In 1094 Zhodani diplomatic and intelligence sources began to hear rumors from their clients and trading partners of a new minor race. The next year the Consulate dispatched a diplomatic mission to a Drakaran colony world. Peaceful contact followed, the Zhodani showing their usual skill at such things; they soon negotiated a treaty with the Ashket Vhadrakis Oom. This recognized mutual borders with the Zhodani, halting Drakaran spinward expansion, but also provided for both increased trade and technological exchange.

Waking the Dragon

The majority of Drakaran commerce was still with the Vargr. The Drakaran's generosity toward the Ilksang Oekhgnoull had resulted in the corporation vastly expanding its merchant shipping. It had also given other Vargr an impression of a rich but timid race. In 1102, a large corsair band, the Zosokhsourztourrgh, decided to extort funds from both the Drakarans and their trading partners by attacking merchant shipping along the now busy Drakaran-Vargr trade routes through Ghoeknael sector.

The Ash Lokbar (Drakaran navy) had maintained a low profile. Intended for all-out warfare in defense of the homeworld and major colonies against alien invasion, its ships were primarily heavy battle units with limited strategic mobility, ill-suited for fast moving anti-piracy operations. Faced with the destruction of merchant shipping and the demands of influential clans for protection, the Ashket Vhadrakis Oom overreacted.

The raids were known to be taking place near the border between the Ilksang Oekhgnoull and the Thoerz Zdarr, a medium-sized Vargr empire spanning seven worlds. The Thoerz Zdarr's emissaries refused to accept responsibility and suggested the Drakarans reach accommodation with the corsairs. Soon afterward, more ships and a Drakaran trading station were struck with great loss of life. The Ilksang Oekhgnoull provided intelligence that confirmed corsairs were operating from bases within the territory of the Thoerz Zdarr. The Ashket Vhadrakis Oom concluded that the Thoerz Zdarr government had lied to them.

In 1111, twelve battle squadrons struck without warning. Their targets were naval and corsair bases, starports and shipbuilding industry on the three central worlds of the Thoerz Zdarr.

Drakaran psychology makes it difficult for Ski'Skedrak to conceal themselves within existing society, so they flee to its fringes. In the past, deserts, island chains or mountain ranges were the haunts of Ski'Skedrak bandits, raiders and rustlers. Today, Ski'Skedrak havens are off Kas'Drak, usually on uninhabited worlds in distant frontier systems. Some are pirates or mercenaries; others operate havens for scientific research in areas not approved by the rest of the race.

LAW AND JUSTICE

Drakaran society has less crime than most Human cultures (the Zhodani excepted). Drakaran criminals have traditionally been outlaws living in the wild. On well-settled worlds like Kas'Drak, planetary unity and modern communications mean there is no place to run to. Native Drakaran criminals – the Ski'Skedrak – are almost entirely found on frontier planets. Of course, on planets shared by other races, alien criminals are possible.

Families keep the peace within their own territory; clans attempt to deal with any inter-family strife. Within a family, the greatmother has complete authority over the life and death of individual members. Crimes involving other family members may be settled between both family's greatmothers. If a settlement cannot be reached, the Lumog will arbitrate, enforcing settlements with the clan military forces, and if necessary outlawing an entire family (which generally means them going into exile as clan troops confiscate their land and property).

Drakaran custom requires citizens to act for the public good of other Drakarans. Criminal behavior includes witnessing a crime and doing nothing to remedy or report it.

Settlements typically involve financial restitution, but may involve other considerations, e.g., forced marriages or treaties. Compensation for death or injury is judged based on financial considerations: a sum equal to the estimated life earnings

of the victim for the clan minus the cost of maintaining him is often the restitution for an accidental or deliberate killing.

The fate of a criminal is the responsibility of his greatmother. She may, or may not, punish him, usually depending on the reasons for the criminal act and his value to the family. Note that family members that exhibit sociopathic tendencies (including lying) can be executed.

TAAKAS YH'DRAK

Usually translated as "worlds of our race," this is the territory occupied by the Vhadrakis Oon and independent clans. It includes some 37 worlds wholly or partially inhabited by the Drakarans, centered on Kas'Drak (the Drakaran homeworld) and connected by jump 1-3 routes adjacent a larger sphere of Vargr-colonized worlds and a smaller number of human states, many of them Zhodani clients. It encompasses parts of Anzsidiadl and Ghoekhnael (Zheranzanzji to the Zhodani) sectors.

DRAKARAN WORLDS

The vast majority of Drakaran worlds are new colonies only a few decades old, with populations ranging from a few thousand to a million. Single clans generally govern colonies, although a few larger clans have multiple colonies. Most worlds have governments best classed as corporate states, family/clan or oligarchies. Worlds rated as multiple societies may contain rival clans, or mixed Vargr-Drakaran settlements.

Bases: Askhet (mixed naval/marine) bases are located at strategic points and near worlds inhabited by independent clans (which also have their own bases). There is no equivalent of a scout service.

Xboat Routes: The equivalent are Secure Traffic Routes that are regularly patrolled by Ash Lokbar (navy) warships and are used by merchant ships with mail contracts.

HOMEWORLD

Kas'Drak is the Drakaran homeworld – the name means "Mother of the Race." Located on the spinward edge of Ghoekhnael sector, it orbits the yellow G1 V star Kastaakas just inside the warmer edge of its lifezone.

Starport: Class V.

Diameter: 10,170 miles (16,403 km). *Atmosphere:* Dense oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 50%. *Climate:* Warm. *Population:* 18.5 billion. *Government:* Oligarchy. *Control Rating:* 3. *TL:* 10.

Most of the world's land area lies in a single supercontinent surrounded by several island chains. The predominant terrain is prairie, steppe and desert, with sparse coastal forest regions. Dust devils and sandstorms are quite common, especially around the equator. The equatorial region, previously uninhabitable for much of Drakaran history, has been partially terraformed in recent decades to make the climate more suited for herding. Extensive canal networks and weather control satellites have turned a burning dustbowl into fertile (though arid) prairie. Even so, constant ecological management is necessary to prevent the land reverting to desert, and many areas of uninhabited wasteland still exist.

Kas'Drak's population of 18,501,200,000 is low for a racial homeworld, but high for a race of carnivores. The planet's moon, Biranon ("the Hunter"), has an unusual blue color, and a thin, unbreathable atmosphere. It is heavily settled with a number of domed cities (the world was inhabited before terraforming technology was developed). Because its phases correspond to the onset of the Stalking, it has major religious and mystical significance, and figures prominently in Drakaran art.

Other areas of interest in the system include N'Varr (the third planet, a colder, heavily forested world with a thin atmosphere, population 3,005,600,000) and two asteroid belts and a gas giant moon system that have extensive heavy industry (population 320,000,000). Many great clans from the asteroid belts own trading ships that operate throughout the Taakas Y'Drak.

War and Peace

The Drakaran attack was devastating. The Thoerz Zdarr worlds had been settled less than two centuries; their total population and industrial capacity was under a tenth of Kas'Drak alone, and the Drakarans had been building up military strength for 40 years. Within three months the Ash-Lokbar had defeated the main strength of the Thoerz Zdarr naval and planetary defense forces, and much of their empire's infrastructure was in ruins. Vargr raiders extracted a toll from Drakaran colonies and merchant shipping, but by 1112 the issue was not in doubt. The Ash-Trankar – Drakaran clan marines – had landed on five of the Thoerz Zdarr's worlds and were waging a bitter ground war with the remains of the Vargr army and local militia. Only two border worlds were still holding out.

The Drakaran invasion sent shockwaves through the rest of Ghoekhnael sector. In addition to the Ilksang Oekhgnoull, several other Vargr states were neighbors to the Thoerz Zdarr. These mobilized their forces and began building warships and hiring mercenaries. One small state, the Princedom of Taekvonutoe, accepted Thoerz Zdarr refugees; these began calling for a pan-Vargr crusade against the alien aggressors. Another small empire, the Ksoesueng Reghz, remained neutral, but large numbers of mercenaries from the empire supported the Thoerz Zdarr cause. The Ashket feared the Ksoesueng Reghz would be drawn into the war, and chose to hold back a large reserve instead of committing them against the remaining Thoerz Zdarr worlds.

In 1113 the Ksoesueng Reghz struck – but not at the Drakarans. Instead they seized the two remaining Thoerz Zdarr worlds the Ash Lokbar had not yet taken. After a month of fierce fighting the Thoerz Zdarr were destroyed. As Drakaran and Ksoesueng Reghz fleets confronted one another, emissaries from the Ilksang Oekhgnoull and the Zhodani Consulate (who had no liking for a widening conflict on their trailing border) attempted to bring both sides to the bargaining table.

In 1114 the Ashket and the Ksoesueng Reghz accepted an agreement that split the Thoerz Zdarr's worlds between them.

INSTITUTIONS
THE MILITARY

Each Drak Ne'Vha clan has its own military forces. Great clans normally have organized ground and space forces, with lesser clans having smaller "militia" forces or a few armed trading vessels.

The Vhadrakis, or greater clans, each dedicate half of their total military to the *Ashket Vhadrakis Oom* ("military council of the great clans"), a unified alliance that is also the closest thing the Drakarans have to an interstellar government. These forces serve under an integrated command structure with high command rotating among the great clans. They train together, and share naval base facilities. Some shared equipment is used, but others differ somewhat from great clan to great clan; lesser clans use their patron great clan's equipment and organization.
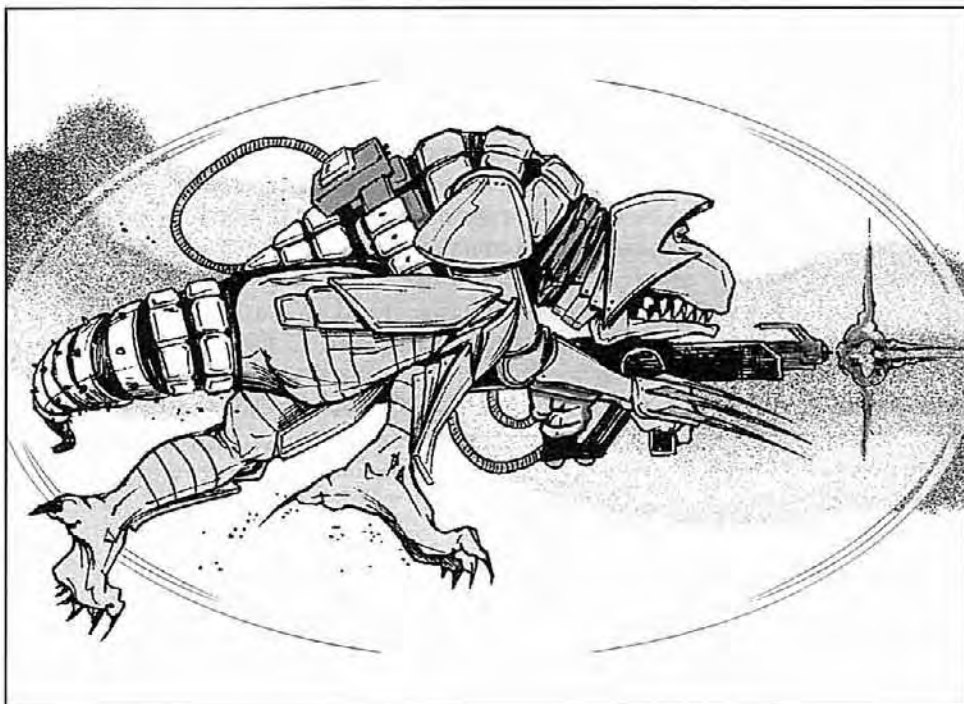
Ashket doctrine tends toward a "no compromise" style of warfare considerably at odds with that of the Vargr, and closer to the "decisive battle" model popular among Solomani. They are quite willing to use nuclear weapons if real estate is not worth preserving and the enemy are unable to retaliate in kind.

The Ashket have two services, the *Ash Lokbar* (equivalent to the Navy) and *Ash Traknar* (equivalent to Marines). There is no formal standing army, but lightly armed militia organized on a clan-by-clan basis do exist, and if necessary could be expanded.

Ash Lokbar forces are unusual in that the vast majority of warships follow the battlerider concept. This resulted from their late acquisition of jump-drive technology and crash naval program: rather than create an entirely new jump-capable fleet, they built tenders capable of carrying existing non-starships into action. Unlike the Imperium, Vargr or Zhodani, Drakarans extend this down to the escort level, with 3,000-5,000 ton "escort tenders" carrying flights of 200-600 ton defense boats.

The Ash Traknar are more conventional. They are mainly composed of forces from the homeworld and N'Varr. They consist of a balanced mix of grav-mobile armor, artillery and armored infantry. They are supplemented by "colonial ranger" forces mainly recruited from contingents provided by lesser clans that have settled on new colony worlds. These latter specialize in light infantry tactics in alien and wilderness environments, and have proven the most effective in fighting Vargr insurgencies.

The Current Situation

The Drakaran-Thoerz Zdarr War killed 90,000 Drakarans, including several thousand civilians in colonies and merchant vessels hit by Vargr raids. Some 300,000 Vargr military personnel and 5.7 million civilians died; the latter was "collateral damage" from deadfall ordinance and tactical nuclear strikes against Vargr troop concentrations, or deaths from hunger and disease brought on by the breakdown of civil infrastructure.

The years 1114 to 1120 have seen an uneasy peace. It is a bitter irony that the destruction of the Thoerz Zdarr navy caused a worse corsair problem than existed before. Many Thoerz Zdarr warships and troopships chose to flee rather than surrender. While some went over to other Vargr states, others soon fragmented into several large corsair bands built around individual escort or cruiser-sized ships.

A few such bands remain in the Drakaran-Vargr border region. The Ash Lokbar has shown a fine disregard for the sovereignty of unaligned Vargr worlds in their willingness to strike at corsair bases, which contributes heavily to the region's tensions. Some of these well-armed bands have chosen to take their operations rimward, moving into Tlabrieish and even the fringes of Gvurrdon. As they do so, they displace or absorb smaller forces, causing ripples that are beginning to be felt as far away as the Spinward Marches.

Despite the tensions, trade has regrown. A steady stream of raw materials and high-tech goods flows between established and developing Drakaran worlds, while commerce with the Zhodani (and several of their client states) grows. Trade with the Vargr is down from pre-war levels – Drakaran clans mostly deal with the Ilksang Oekhgnoull, who act as middlemen.

TECHNOLOGY

The Drak prefer simple devices that are easy to maintain. This does not mean they are anti-technological. In principal, a laser or a fusion bomb is in many ways "simpler" in physics then a cannon, and a rocket is less complex then the mechanical nightmare that is a 20th-century automobile's internal combustion engine.

Drakaran science is often driven by the need to find "simple" answers to riddles of the cosmos – their physicists enjoy searching for things like grand unified field theories, for instance. In their search for these universal truths, Drakarans soon mastered gravity. Drak gravity-control devices are among the best available, and are highly sought after by other races. It is likely that this mindset is what kept them from development of jump drive on their own.

Although not technological leaders, the Drakarans are just as advanced as most Imperial worlds in the fields of chemistry, metallurgy, and physics, and produce excellent theoretical mathematicians and physicists.

In contrast to the "physical sciences," Drakaran biology and social science are not well developed. The Drakaran mindset has little patience for either field. Similarly, the race's ruthless attitude toward the sick and unfit has held back the development of sophisticated biochemistry or medical science. Medicine has also suffered because the hardy Drakarans are less likely to get ill. The result of this is that Drakaran medical and biological technology is little more advanced then that of 20th-century Earth, and cloning and sophisticated genetic engineering are totally beyond them.

Drakaran weapons and devices are well made, requiring little maintenance. The best Drakaran technology has a smooth elegance. Many weapons are Fine (+1 Acc, five times cost) but are otherwise conservative, functional designs lacking frills or accessories. Drakaran devices are built to perform a single function very well – they detest complex multipurpose gadgets like battledress or general-purpose robots, and work extensively in modular systems when this kind of technology *is* required.

TRADE

Drakarans engage in a full spectrum of trade with neighboring races. Although their austere habits limit their production or purchase of luxuries, they export industrial products of all sorts, especially scientific instruments and gravitic technology, and import foodstuffs, some forms of equipment (e.g., advanced surgical tools), and any Vargr or Human gadgets or inventions that the Drak haven't thought of.

LANGUAGE

The Drak Ne'Vha have a single dominant language, *N'Toz*, although some archaic languages do exist. (N'Toz is a M/A skill). Drakaran names consist of a personal name followed by a family name. Most family names consist of three syllables, ending in a consonant sound. Sample family names include Ikishkat, Jisarok, and Annaket. A Drakaran who marries into a family adopts the new family's name. Drakaran personal names are one or two syllables, taken from colors or odors. Drakarans travelling among aliens often translate the personal name into the alien's language, while retaining the family name: a Drak might call himself Blue Ystok, for instance. Drakarans use few titles, but a member of a family part of the *Lumog* (the aristocratic ruling council) usually adds the title *Vrai* (translated as Lord or Lady) in front of the family name, e.g., Blue Vrai Ystok. A family matriarch is usually addressed as *Ki* (Greatmother to Humans) *instead* of the personal name, e.g., Ki Iriska, or Greatmother Iriska.

CHARACTERS

Drak Ne'Vha characters can be created using the normal *Basic Set* system or the streamlined template system in *GURPS Traveller.*

The Current Situation

[Continued]

With more enemies and territory and longer trade routes, the Drakaran military is stretched thin. One flashpoint is the occupied Vargr worlds. Half the Khoukhourzkhoung inhabitants have fled or been deported, and settlers from small, land-hungry Drakaran clans have moved in. This has caused friction with the several million Vargr who remain there under Drakaran rule. The heavy Ashket units have been withdrawn, leaving the field to local militia and ranger units, who face periodic riots and guerrilla warfare, something the Drakarans are temperamentally ill-equipped to handle. Aware of this, some clans are considering hiring foreign mercenaries – but not Vargr. Perhaps Humans, from the Zhodani client states to spinward, or even from farther afield . . .

The offworld Thoerz Zdarr refugees have settled on various non-aligned Vargr worlds, where their poverty and bitterness have made them ready recruits for local demagogues and corsair bands. This has itself caused more instability in the region, as opposition groups use them in their own power plays.
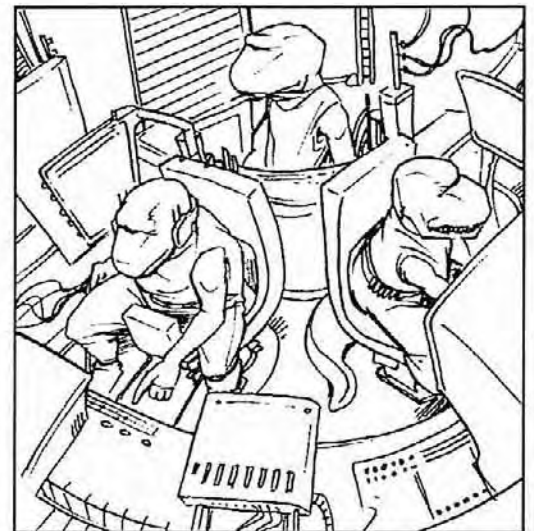
D rakarans tend to be traditionally minded. Whether on their home-world or on a frontier colony, or within a domed habitat they prefer tried and true designs. Traditional family dwellings consist of several rooms spaced around a large open courtyard containing a sand garden; the entire extended family lives under one roof. Because agricultural lands are so expensive and because of their building style, Drak Ne'Vha cities tend to be large sprawling affairs using ungrazable lands. The Drak dislike under-ground buildings, and except for storage areas, few exist – space colonies tend to have large open spaces and huge win-dows, while hostile-environment colonies use domes rather than tunnels. Drakaran construction tends to be blockish and solid, using stone, brick, metal and con-crete in preference to wood. Rooms are large and spacious even in "poor" dwellings, since Drak have less need for privacy then Humans, and would rather have one large room for an entire family then several smaller ones.

Drakaran cities and towns are laid out in geometric patterns, a function of the race's obsession with order and harmony. Similarly, with one exception, the cities and even the slums are obsessively neat and tidy, with a large budget devoted to waste disposal or cleaning robots. The exception (from a Human perspective) is that they have a deliberately large, though carefully controlled, population of wild scavengers. These are reptilian creatures analogous to squirrels or rats, but often the size of dogs or cats. The scavengers eat garbage and provide prey for city dwellers during the Stalking (see p. 101). Few are dangerous, but walking down a back street and coming face to face with a pack of dog-sized lizards can be unnerving to Human visitors!

DRAKARAN RACIAL TEMPLATE (75 POINTS)

Drakarans are more expensive characters than most other races, due to the phys-ical adaptations that fitted them for survival on their harsh homeworld.

Attributes

ST +3 [30] and HT+1 [10].

Advantages

Acute Sense of Taste and Smell +3 [6 points].

Claws [15 points]. Punch does +2 damage.

Cool [1 point]. Drakarans rarely display emotion, and are not prone to panic (+1 to avoid Fright Checks).

Doesn't Sleep (must enter "the Stalking" once every 20 days, -50% cost), 10 points].

DR 2 [6 points]. Drakaran scales.

Extra Hit Points +1 [5 points]. Heavier build.

Striker (tail, 1 hex reach, -4 DX to hit) [6 points]. Can strike into side or rear hexes only, doing thrust+2 cr. damage.

Sharp Teeth [5 points]. Bite does cutting damage as per an animal of equivalent Strength.

Temperature Tolerance [2 points]. "Comfort zone" is 35-124°F heat. The Drakarans evolved in desert lands: the function of their colorful scales is not so much armor as to reflect heat and retain moisture. They prefer warm dry conditions that approximate the ancestral steppes of their homeworld.

Disadvantages

Hard of Hearing (only -2 to hearing rolls, -50% cost) [-5 points]. Drakaran hear-ing is poorer than a Human's is.

No Depth Perception (reduced effect, -40%) [-6]. Instead of suffering the more severe penalties of One Eye, their large eye gives a -2 when firing Snap Shots (or on Vision rolls to judge distance if the Drak does not take a second to concentrate).

There is no penalty when making Aimed attacks, or in melee.

Sense of Duty (Family) [-5].

Truthfulness [-5 points].

Features

Calculate height normally, but add 40 pounds to weight. Females have a marsu-pial-like pouch. The Drakarans breathe a standard oxygen-nitrogen mix at 1.3 atmospheres pressure.

The Stalking (see p. 109) replaces sleep and occurs every 20 days. A Drakaran in the Stalking acts as described on p. 101. Essentially he functions as if he had the disadvantage Bestial (-10 point version, p. CI101): i.e., like a primitive. Also, all skills involving technology, tool use, literary or language are *forgotten* for the duration. He has the following skill adjust-ments: add +2 to Stealth, Tracking and Survival (Desert). It lasts 4-7 days (roll 1d+1, minimum 4 days).

The Stalking can be delayed if circum-stances demand, but each eight hours it is put off requires a Will roll (-1 per 8 hours it has been put off) to avoid entering it anyway. Success means he resists, but takes one Fatigue (recover-able only during the Stalking); failure means he enters the state with 1d+2 hours.

THE DRAKARANS

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Although not required, these modifications are suggested when creating Drakaran characters from scratch, or adapting existing *GURPS Traveller* templates for use with them.

Social Status

This depends on family and clan. For example:

STATUS	DESCRIPTION
3	Important family in large clan
2	Important family in small clan
1	Ordinary family in large clan
0	Ordinary family in small clan
-1	No clan
-2	No family

Add +1 to status if Family matriarch, add +2 to Status if Clan matriarch (must be female). Unless circumstances were very unusual, a clan matriarch must have the Age disadvantage. An example of an important family would be one owning a spaceship.

Duty

Duties to employers listed in templates can be read as duties to their family. Note that most families function as small corporations and specialize in performing particular jobs. Drakarans may work outside their family setting, but will be expected to send back excess income to their family.

Patron

A clan will generally count as a Patron, value depending on the size of the clan, how important the family is within it and the family head's relationship with the clan matriarch.

Taboo Disadvantages

Disadvantages Drakarans are *unlikely* to have are Bad Temper and Berserk.

CHARACTER TEMPLATES

Drakarans will normally follow a family profession. Ideally, Drakarans prefer to work in a family business – for example, a free trader that is crewed by members of the same extended family, with a greatmother as captain and the more experienced family members as the officers. However, families that have fallen on hard times may send individual Drakarans to work in companies or crew vessels owned by non-Drakarans.

The character templates on pp. 87-105 of *GURPS Traveller* are suitable for Drakarans if modified as described above. Among the most common templates for traveling Drakarans are:

Belters and *Merchants:* These are very common professions; they are often run by single families, but a family that is short-handed or fallen on hard times may make a partnership with non-Drakarans, leading to some mixed-race crews.
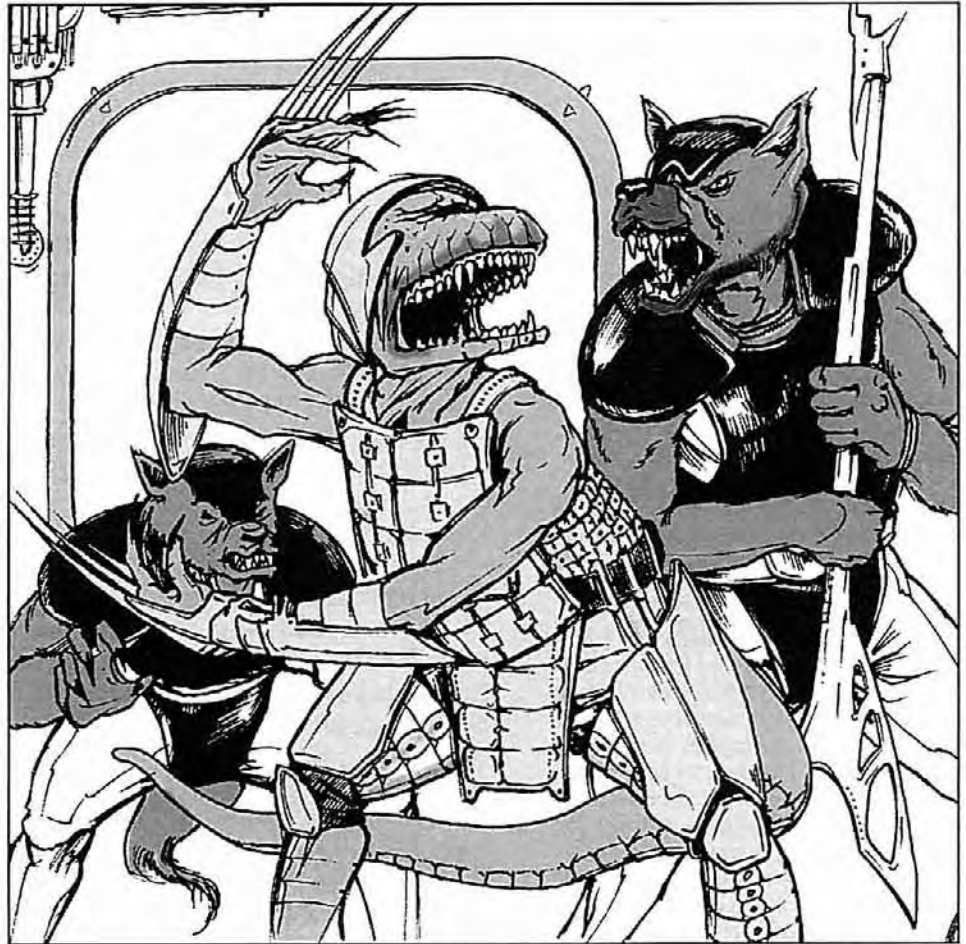
Housing and Cities

[Continued]

Outside the cities are agricultural regions – usually prairie land – on which herds of meat animals are grazed. Due to very high land prices in the center of major cities, many individuals live in suburban areas and commute to work (if they can't work at home via computer datalink), so cities are surrounded by extensive road networks. A majority of families (even poor ones) own personal transport, ranging from wheeled vehicles to aircraft, but with a high percentage of grav vehicles. Public transit is rare, but most vehicles utilize efficient reactors, so pollution is kept to a minimum.

Clothing and Costume

Drakarans wear silklike cloaks, head bands, sashes and veils on their home world or in controlled environments, more for ornamentation then clothing. Jewelry is rarely worn – it would suffer in comparison to the bejeweled Drakaran armor!

On the planets they prefer (hot and arid worlds) the Drak wear *sunmasks* (visorlike goggles) to protect their single eyeslit against dust and glare. On cooler (e.g., Earthlike) worlds Drakarans wear full cloaks and robes, usually in solid flat colors, sometimes with transparent fabrics. Drak rarely wear shoes or boots unless travelling off-world.

Drakarans dislike water. In very wet weather, Drakarans tend to carry parasollike umbrellas and complain a lot.

Recreation and Art

Compared to Humans, Drakarans spend little time engaged in leisure activities, perhaps because the Stalking provides a necessary release from tension. Drak have scant interest in music, and their art and literature tends to lack subtlety. One entertainment that is universally popular in Drak society is the Kyzinga, or silent puppet show. A class of wandering landless families who worked as migrant laborers and traders originally performed Kyzingas. They celebrate some traditional aspect of Drakaran society, such as marriage, the Stalking, the life of a poor colonial family, or politics in the Lumog. A Kyzinga is not a single performance, but a soap-opera style cycle of plays. Most Kyzinga focus on the doings of a single family, with larger-than-life (and often humorous) characters whose lives change and develop across a dozen or more performances. These productions are usually silent, but with elaborate stages and special effects. Since most characters are cliches, it is easy for a Drakaran to understand what is going on.

Families specializing in mass entertainment have filmed Kyzinga plays using robots or computer animation, but most Drak still prefer the traditional live puppet performances.

Diplomats and Managers who are senior family or clan officials acting as troubleshooters for their interests and perhaps as liaisons with Ilksaeng Oekhgnoull ("Strange Commerce"), the Vargr corporation that handles most Drakaran-Vargr trade.

Military who may be serving or retired members of clan military forces, often veterans of Ashket forces that fought in the war against the Vargr. Ex-soldiers or spacers typically go to work for smaller clan or family-run security agencies, or serve as crew (gunners, for example) aboard trade or exploration ships.

EQUIPMENT

Drakaran technology is almost exclusively TL10. In their pre-contact recent history, most Drakaran combat involved space actions against renegade clans; Drakarans fighters tend to favor energy weapons such as lasers, as well as rocket launchers.

Heavy combat armor often has high-density metal claws attached to the gauntlets ($500, 2 lbs.; punch does thrust/cut +2 damage and DR protects at half value).

Drakaran vehicles are usually rugged and simple.

Drakaran medical and biotechnology is only at TL8 levels. A drug to suppress the Stalking costs Cr100 per dose; it adds +2 to Will to resist, but doubles fatigue loss from resistance.

Drakarans from wealthy families typically enjoy hunting for sport. Those raised on their homeworld or other frontier planets (rather than in asteroid colonies) will often practice with traditional hunting weapons and riding animals. These include morningstars, throwing spears and lances, often wielded from a mount. Even today, Drak explorers and hunters often ride and fight from large two-legged riding lizards:

Drakaran Riding Lizard

ST: 45	**Speed/Dodge:** 12/7	**Size:** 4 hexes
DX: 14	**PD/DR:** 2/2	**Wt.:** 1.5 tons
IQ: 4	**Damage:** 2d+1 imp.	**Habitat:** plains
HT: 14/40	**Reach:** C,1	

SPACECRAFT

The Drakarans prefer large spaceships, with room to stage "vermin hunts" in the corridors. Starships should allot about 5-10 percent overall tonnage-spaces to corridor space (no weight or cost). Drakaran vessels are of a simple, rugged design. Being designed for operations in a frontier region, civilian vessels are usually quite well armed. Ashket warships are generally rider designs; Drakarans take a brute force approach to military craft, emphasizing heavy weapons and armor over speed or stealth.

Drakaran Family Trader (400 tons)

The more adventurous Drakaran clans have a number of families that own and operate small trading vessels. Bank financing is generally available for the family through the clan: merchant clans tend to function much as trading combines.

Two staterooms are usually combined for use by the family matriarch and her mate; the outer office often also contains a religious shrine. Extra passageways throughout the ship provide room for the Stalking.

Crew: Captain (Leadership, Tactics), Pilot (Pilot and Astrogation), Sensor/Commo Operator (Electronic Operation [Sensors] and [Communications], four Gunners (Gunner [Laser] or [Missile]), two Engineers (Engineering and

Mechanic), one boat pilot (Piloting and Gunner), one medic (Physician, Diagnosis, Surgery).

400-ton USL Hull, DR 400. Heavy compartmentalization. Four Turrets (two with double 360-MJ lasers, two with single missile racks); Basic Bridge, 107.5 Cargo (+4 in turrets), Engineering, Fuel Processor, 54 Maneuver, 12 Jump, 80 Fuel, one Low Berth (4 tubes), 40 Passageway, one Sickbay, 60 Spacedock (for 30-ton Ship's Boat), nine Staterooms, one Utility. LMass (but not price) includes loaded ship's boat.

Statistics: EMass 955.05, LMass 1,661.027, Price MCr 70.9554, Hit Points 37,500.

Performance: Accel 1.3 G, Jump 2.

30-ton Drakaran Ship's Boat (TL10)

A rugged, short-range spaceplane vehicle, used to transfer cargo, crew and passengers to and from the Family Trader.

30-ton SL Hull, DR 200, Cockpit Bridge, Fixed 360-MJ laser, 15 Cargo, 6 Maneuver, 1 Passenger Couch (capacity 12).

Statistics: EMass 73.58, LMass 148.58, Cost MCr 8.655, HP 6,000, Hull Size Modifier +7.

Performance: Accel 1.61 Gs, Air Speed 1,732.

Khaz'akum-class Patrol Tender

The *Khaz'akum* (idiomatically, "mother of monsters") are the standard Ashket escort and patrol ships. They are designed to carry two *Vr'tahk*-class patrol riders.

3,000-ton USL Hull, DR 100. 20 Turrets (10 triple sandcasters, 10 triple 360-MJ lasers), one Bay (12,810-MJ particle beam bay). Basic Stealth and Emission Cloaking. Command Bridge, 6 Cargo, Engineering, 4 Fuel Processor, 400 Maneuver, 90 Jump, 600 Fuel, 150 Passageway, 2 Sickbay, 1,260 Vehicle Bays (two 600-ton riders), 36 Staterooms, 6 Utility. LMass (but not price) includes two loaded Patrol Riders.

Crew: Captain (Leadership, Tactics), Pilot (Pilot), Navigator (Astrogation), two Sensor/Commo Operators (Electronic Operation [Sensors] and [Communications], 22 Gunners (Gunner [Laser], [Particle Beam] or [Sandcaster]), nine Engineers (Engineering and Mechanic), two medics (Physician, Diagnosis, Surgery), 26 rider crew (various skills).

Statistics: EMass 4,105.675, LMass 3,758.95, Price MCr498.6205, Hit Points 120,000.

Performance: Accel 1.26 G, Jump 2.

Vr'tahk-class Patrol Rider (type PB)

The *Vr'tahk* are used both aboard Patrol Tenders and as system SDBs. *Vr'tahk*-class PBs are also exported to and used by the Drakaran's Vargr allies; they have the advantage of being more than a match for a typical VP corsair. *Vr'tahk* PBs (idiomatically "legendary snake in the grass") are named after carnivore/pouncer species and the environment they hide in.

Crew: Captain (Leadership, Tactics), Pilot (Pilot), Sensor/Commo Operator (Electronic Operation [Sensors] and [Communications], four Gunners (Gunner [Laser] or [Missile]), six Engineers (Engineering and Mechanic).

600-ton SL Hull, DR 1,400, Basic Stealth, Radical Emission Cloaking, Total Compartmentalization, Hardened Basic Bridge, Engineering, 422 Maneuver, Low Berth (capacity 4), 10 Staterooms, Sickbay, 2 Utility, 6 Turrets (4 with triple Lasers, two with triple Missile Launchers), 5 cargo.

Statistics: EMass 4,198.195, LMass 4,223.195, Cost MCr148.1986, HP 45,000.

Performance: Accel 4 G, Jump 0, Air Speed 6,032.

Drakaran Trader

400-Ton Drakaran Family Trader
Scale: 1 hex = 1 yard

KEY
— Bulkhead
- - - Sliding Door
•✕• Iris Valve
⚌ Access Panel
○ Vertical Shaft in Floor
◌ Vertical Shaft in Ceiling
○ Vertical Shaft, Floor & Ceiling

AL Air Lock
Av Avionics Bay
Br Bridge
LB Low Berths
MM Missile Magazine
MS Matriarch's Suite
SR Stateroom
VN Vermin Nursery

DECK 3 - QUARTERS
Ladder down
VN, SR7, SR5, SR3, FUEL
F, SR8, Sick Bay, LB, VEHICLE BAY (UPPER), FUEL
AL, SR6, SR4, SR2, SR1, MS
Ladder down
Ladder down

DECK 2 - ENGINEERING & BRIDGE
Ladder up
F, Ladder, Br
MANEUVER DR., Fuel
MISSILE TURRET
MM
MANEUVER DR.
JUMP DRIVE, Fuel, VEHICLE BAY (LOWER), FUEL
Ladder down
F
Ladder up, AL
MM
MISSILE TURRET, Ladder up & down

DECK 1 - CARGO
LASER TURRET
FUEL, F, AL, FUEL
Ladder up
CARGO
F, Ladder up, FUEL, St
FUEL, Ladder up, F, AL
LASER TURRET

The Drakaran family trader is easily recognizable because of it's unique shape. From the outside, the blocky, pyramidal construction of the Drakaran family trader makes it resemble several Mesopotamian ziggurats or Mayan temples glued together. The inside of the vessel is a confusing (to humans) labyrinth of surplus passageways, corners, twists, and turns designed to facilitate the periodic Drakaran "stalking" ritual.

The vessel itself is unstreamlined, and dependent upon a smaller auxiliary craft (normally 40 tons or less) for fuel skimming and surface-to-orbit cargo transfer.

Deck 1 – Cargo Deck

The cargo deck is large, and readily accessible from the vehicle bay. Loading and unloading is facilitated by the large cargo doors at the bow end of the cargo deck. The surface interface craft is normally lowered to the cargo deck by a lift for loading, and then exits the ship through the bow doors.

Deck 2 – Engineering and Bridge

Bridge: The bridge on the family trader, in common with all Drak vessels, is tucked into a corner, seemingly added to the plans as an afterthought. Drak naval architects have no explanation for this, the most common answer being that the bridge, like every other facet of a ship, should be put where it belongs, and in no other place.

Deck 3 – Quarters Deck

Stateroom 1: The largest stateroom aboard is reserved for the Matriarch, the leader of the family group that serves as the ship's crew, and the vessel's commander and default owner.

The Clotho

The Clotho (known as Addaxur to the Zhodani) are a six-limbed semi-humanoid minor race dwelling entirely within the Zhodani Consulate. The Clotho achieved limited sub-light interstellar travel before the expanding Zhodani encountered them, and became the first alien race to become part of the Consulate. Today, most Clotho live within the 10-world Addaxur Reservation near the center of the Zhodani Consulate. Several hundred million additional Clotho have settled on other worlds, generally in neighborhood- to city-sized trade enclaves.

ORIGINS

The Clotho evolved from six-limbed nocturnal carnivore/trappers who burrowed under the roots of the monolith trees of their homeworld's forests. They spun complex webs for catching small game and elaborate web-symbols (glyphs) to mark territory. Dramatic climactic changes circa -550,000 caused a drop in numbers of the species the Clotho preyed upon. The Clotho began to hunt larger game, developing physical snares and traps and snares and more cooperative behavior. Increasingly complex glyph symbols were developed. By -200,000 the proto-Clotho had been replaced by the modern Clotho species, with a larger skull and glands evolved to spin finer (but less adhesive) webs that were more effective in communication than in trapping of game, and upper claws that were better suited for tool use.

PHYSIOLOGY

The average Clotho stands seven feet tall (if fully erect) and weighs 180 lbs. Their torso is triangular, with charcoal gray skin and long silky hair, dark gray or blue-black, except for a hairless wedge-shaped face. Clotho possess two legs and four arms.

Their head has a small mouth with sharp teeth, and a flat nose, while its ears are small but pointed, protruding above the top of the head. The Clotho's most prominent facial feature is their two oval eyes. Clotho intelligence is roughly comparable to that of Humans, but all Clotho possess excellent spatial sense.

Each limb has an extra set of joints, effectively giving them an extra elbow or knee. The upper and lower arms differ, for while the lower pair of arms is very strong, adapted for occasional quadrupedal movement or burrowing, the upper set is more dexterous and utilized for manipulation and weaving glyphs. Each hand ends in a thumb and four fingers tipped with sharp clawlike nails, originally used both for rending prey and burrowing.

Clotho are incapable of speech, instead communicating visually by weaving intricate weblike symbols known as glyphs.

The race prefer regions with average humidity and cool climate. They breath a standard oxygen-nitrogen mix and prefer gravity of 1.1 G (slightly above Earth's and significantly greater than that of the Zhodani homeworld Zhdant).

Senses

A Clotho's sense of smell, taste and hearing are approximately the equal of a Human's. Their sense of touch is marginally better. Eyesight is excellent, and both night vision and color discrimination are superior to that of a Human.

Early History

The earliest artifacts of Clotho are tools and other artifacts dating back to -200,000. Archeologists believe that circa -120,000, hand movements used to spin glyphs evolved into a gestural language, suitable for faster communication; by this time a symbolic writing system had originally begun to appear using pigments and brush strokes to create simplified versions of permanent glyphs. Domestication of animals for meat, blood, milk, leather and other products occurred around -70,000, and by -20,000 the first settled civilizations began to appear, with orchards and enclosed pastures.

Urban civilization based around towns led to the rise of a mercantile civilization and the development of a wealthy, leisured middle class with time for art and science by -7000. Established interests hampered industrial progress, but by -6400 the Clotho had evolved a spacefaring civilization based around large space habitats and elegant lightsail clippers.

In -6212 they had reached the nearest star (1.2 parsecs away). The Clotho spread from star to star primarily through robotic probes and the shipment and cloning of genetic material. Their "empire" was bound together primarily by information technology and radio, with no central government. By -5150 they had explored and claimed some 37 nearby systems using robots, although Clotho had only walked on 10 of these.

In -5127 everything changed: a Clotho outpost was chanced upon by an exploration starship from the Zhodani Consulate.

The Clotho were the first race to be contacted by the Zhodani since the discovery of the Viepchakl chirpers over 2,000 years ago. The biological disaster that had occurred then, combined with the highly alien appearance of the Clotho, caused the Zhodani to use extreme caution and delicacy. Ten years went by as the Zhodani survey ships and robot probes, with sophisticated emission cloaking and stealth systems monitored Clotho electromagnetic traffic and observed their colonies. From the Zhodani perspective, the Clotho appeared quite alien. Their psychology was seen as strange, obsessive and in places immoral from a Zhodani perspective – but with its emphasis on community and order, not without virtue. Moreover, they appeared not to be a warlike society.

The Zhodani debated various alternatives, ranging from interdiction to conquest, occupation and assimilation. The latter was considered to be beyond the resources of the Consulate. While the Navy had the capability to blast the Clotho back into their stone age, the Consular ground forces were tiny: Zhodane had been completely at peace for 300 years, with no need for troops beyond ceremony, disaster relief and landing party security. Moreover, the few Zhodani xenosociologists felt that any attempt to transform the Clotho society was simply beyond their expertise. Interdiction was possible, but with the Clotho already possessing sublight drives and possibly able to develop jump drive in the future, it was believed any such effort would require destruction or occupation of the Clotho industrial base. Doing this would certainly turn the aliens into enemies, and would also negate all the expected benefits of trade and technological exchange that might flow from a first contact with an advanced race.

Growth and Reproduction

Clotho are bisexual and warm-blooded, but they are not mammals. Pregnancy lasts nine months, and young are born alive, almost invariably as fraternal twins. Infants are fed with predigested food until old enough to chew for themselves. Clotho growth rates and lifespans approximate those of Humaniti.

Diet

While the Clotho diet is similar to the Vargr one in general outlines, they are less similar biochemically; about a third of foodstuffs that can be digested by Vargr or Humans are inedible to the Clotho and vice versa. Clotho do enjoy live food, particularly rodents. A clean and attractive six-legged scavenger (the *Xaafi*) enjoys almost the same position of affection among the Clotho as does the kitten among Human cultures, except that most Xaafi are generally eaten by their owners once becoming adults.

Lower classes eat dead or frozen foodstuffs from necessity, but when a sibling pair is offworld it is a mark of status to have live homeworld fauna brought along. Since Clotho choose clean and aesthetically pleasing food animals they see no reason to cage them. Consequently, ships are often swarming with them.
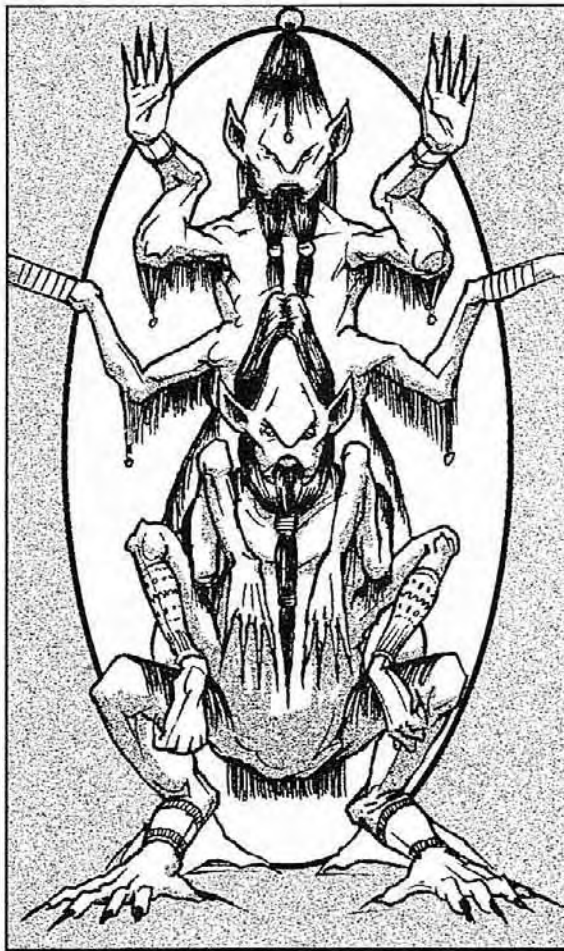
THE SIBLING PAIR

Clotho reproduce sexually in a manner similar to Terran animals, though they are less fertile and children are always born in twin brother-sister pairs. This sibling unit forms the basic element of their society, analogous to the Human family.

The ties between twin brother and sister are the strongest in Clotho society, the two living, thinking, playing and working together, from birth until death. They become almost a single entity, far closer than most Human marriages. One of the pair's most important functions is to cooperate in weaving glyphs: only if a male and female spin their different colored threads together can the Clotho language express complex concepts, and only a sibling pair possess the empathy and shared purpose to cooperate properly in doing so.

This cooperation is the most important aspect of Clotho psychology and culture. Even mating takes place between sibling pairs rather than individuals, the two siblings choosing another pair of siblings as sexual partners. The mother's pair raises any children that result; the father and his sister have no claim upon them. It is considered good luck if the females in both pairs become pregnant, however.

If one member of a sibling pair dies, the other becomes a *rogue*. Rogues traditionally commit suicide (care for any children is handed over to relatives) but a few have been known to obsessively devote their lives toward eradicating the cause of their sibling's death. If another being was responsible this may be revenge, but if, for example, a disease was the cause of death, the rogue might devote himself or herself to a search for the cure! Any rogue that does not kill itself is by definition insane, and is liable to develop numerous mental problems. Rogues are normally shunned by society; most quickly kill themselves, some become legends.

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

Clotho languages are entirely visual, an evolution of webs spun by their ancestors to attract mates, mark territory and catch food. Luminescent threads are extruded from glands in their mouths and woven into complex patterns by their delicate claws. Males and females secrete different colors, the hue of which can be further altered by saliva, and these are combined into the complex glyphs which make up the race's language.

Glyphs are usually drawn on surfaces or spun between trees or structures (some Imperials have jokingly referred to this as "graffiti"); seeing these scattered around a neighborhood in a Zhodani starport is one sign that Clotho are on the world.

A Clotho conversation is a beautiful thing, combining elements of both dance and calligraphy, and unlike Human words, is preserved until the glyphs dry and fade, which occurs after a few hours of sunlight. A single word concept is typically 4" across; a sentence usually spans a foot or so. Communication is slower than Human speech, (approximately one sentence every 10 seconds) and requires a good deal more space, but is in some ways more precise.

Printed representations of glyphs form a written language. Clotho have supplemented their glyphs with a well-developed sign language used for rapid communication. With four limbs it is somewhat more expressive than Human sign language, but cannot match the complex symbology that is conveyed with glyphs. Clotho have also mastered Human sign languages. Some Clotho have learned to understand spoken languages, but all find them very difficult.

Translation and Names

Clotho Glyphs can be learned by Humans and even reproduced using computer graphics, holograms or a paintstick. Translators can also be modified to translate visual symbols into words and vice versa, with the addition of a camera with a visual recognition system and some form of image projector.

Many Clotho words are translated idiomatically, or given accepted equivalents. For example, the symbols for "perfected" and "light" can also mean a laser: a translation might render the concept as either "perfected light" or "laser," depending on how good it was at judging context.

Quite a few words (mostly individual and place names) are drawn from combinations of archaic language symbols for which the actual meaning has been lost. Zhodani graphics-to-voice translators assign individual syllables to these symbols, and represent the resulting combinations as, essentially, nonsense words. For example, the name used for the Clotho race is known to translate as "children of [unknown glyph]" the untranslatable symbol apparently referring to an ancient pair of demi-gods or ancestor-heroes. Zhodani translators choked, rendered the symbol as Addaxur, and assigned that name to the species. The reason the Imperials use a different word is that at the first contact between Imperials and Clotho, the Imperials used a different translation program. Rather than use a set of nonsense syllables, the Imperial Scout Service assigned a racial name out of Terran mythology (*Klotho*, in Greek mythology, is one of the three Fates, and is usually associated with spindles and spiders).

About half of Clotho personal names translate into renderable multi-symbol phrases: God-in-the-Pod, Coherent Light, Snake Hiding, Panzerlilly. A sibling pair will share a name, modified by glyph for male or female, composed of a personal name joined to the glyph for their Design. The other half do not translate; Humans usually either make up nicknames for them or use the substitutes the translator spits out.

B y -5003 the Zhodani had woven a series of treaties with all significant Clotho patterns that spelled out the two races' interrelationships. Located in the core of the Consulate, Clotho accepted Zhodani direction of their external affairs in exchange for the right of free passage of their merchant vessels through Consulate space and the protection of the Consulate Navy.

The major change that occurred was the Zhodani insistence on the Clotho's development of (at least) planetary governments. Initial attempts to consolidate the greater Patterns together into a more Zhodani-style caste system led to some chaos, largely due to the rarity of psionics among the Clotho. By -4850 the Consulate had instead agreed to the establishment of a more democratic government, although on the Zhodani model. During this period, the only Zhodani citizens permitted to visit Clotho worlds were intendants or nobles who were also trained xenologists.

The next six centuries of Clotho history were devoted to the integration of new technology and the social adjustments brought about by their (initially limited and controlled) participation in interstellar trade. By -4500 Zhodani merchant vessels were operating with Clotho crews between the worlds of the Addaxur Reservation. For trade with the Consulate, Clotho merchant designs were partnered with Zhodani trading combines; their personnel were required to accompany each Clotho trade mission that ventured out of the Reservation into Consulate space.

By -4740, the initial "probationary" period of Clotho integration was deemed over. The Consulate began allowing nearly unrestricted free trade with the Clotho worlds, and Clotho shipyards began producing jump-capable vessels under strict license.

Around -3,900, Clotho trading patterns began to be granted permission to establish mercantile enclaves outside the Addaxur Reservation, usually on isolated island-starports or in orbital habitats. Arrangements with world councils on an ad hoc basis often led to the purchase of additional territory for settlement. Although the Consulate would absorb other non-human races, by -1,500 the Clotho were certainly the most populous alien race of the Zhodani Consulate (though non-Zhodani humans outnumbered them considerably). In 400, the number of Clotho outside their Reservation was slightly larger than the population within it.

PSYCHOLOGY

The three virtues cultivated by Clotho are harmony, neatness and beauty. Violence is seen as both disharmonic and ugly, but if properly performed, violent acts can be tolerated to achieve greater harmony, to acquire, create or preserve beauty, or to eradicate ugliness. For many Clotho, their life's goal is to surround itself with beautiful things. All Clotho cultivate a highly developed aesthetic sense and will take great pains to make, gain or protect something beautiful.

A Clotho has no concept of guilt, only of shame. Any kind of disharmony is considered ugly. An improperly dressed, untidy, unclean, ill or wounded Clotho will try to correct the hideous condition as soon as possible, remaining in seclusion until this has been achieved. A Clotho pair will try not to reveal its personal distress to others, even to denying wounds or fear. If confronted with a mistake or other shameful situation, it will not apologize, but either correct it or remove itself (or eliminate whoever noticed!) so as to avoid further embarrassment.

This has led to an obsession with secrecy: while not shy, Clotho tend to conceal their identity in public (and even in business deals they may identify themselves only through their Design or Pattern). This tendency results in the founding of numerous secret societies, "the Hidden Patterns" in which existing status, rules and conventions are replaced by those of the organization, some of which are highly bizarre. Offering opportunities for advancement otherwise denied to low-status Designs, the Hidden Patterns secretly control much of the Addaxur Reservation's business.

The mind-reading ability of Zhodani made a strong impression on the Clotho. Although Clotho surface thoughts are very difficult for a Human telepath to read, they are not impossible. Clotho who are citizens on Zhodani worlds (where psi shields are illegal) will generally remain scrupulously honest in order to avoid any shame falling upon on their persons or their designs.

The Clotho ethic of neatness and harmony means Clotho will always try to follow a situation through to its ultimate conclusion, usually taking the long view. An elegant solution to any problem is sought, one that weaves together all loose strands. Work is rarely stopped on a project until it is finished; a Clotho would rather destroy everything and begin again later than leave something untidy and unfinished for long. Clotho insistence on neatness has also led to an obsession with legally binding contracts, not only in businesses, but for everything from education to religion.

Among equals, cooperation is important. Clotho in a group will try to reach a consensus before proceeding with a course of action: if there is dissent, before any action can be taken the disharmonious element must either change its views to conform to the rest, convert the others to its own viewpoint, or be forced to leave the group. Those of lower status are expected to contribute advice but follow the decisions of their superiors.

Proper Grooming

Although Clotho have nothing against natural dirt as such, any form of contamination which might ruin their appearance or that of their valued property is shunned. They will do anything to avoid this, even risking personal danger (e.g., refusing to go down a mucky sewer when it's the only way to hide from pursuers). Most Clotho are intolerant of other races, finding them depressingly ugly, but Clotho who adventure with Humans can overcome this, learning to pity other species for their deformities.

Clotho of all social levels, but particularly those of higher status, are extremely vain about their appearance. A good appearance is essential for maintaining status. Fashion in clothing, jewelry, scents, and hair style (for the entire body, not just the head) is complex and variable, though constrained by tradition. Even adventuring Clotho will take care to remain in "proper grooming," a glyph which can simply mean personal appearance, but which refers more generally to a pair's apparent (if not actual) physical and mental state in relation to society's expectations in a given situation. Of course, dress and accouterments for a commando raid differ from a for-

mal ball, but one can be sure the pair will arrive in the best and most rakish of combat fatigues, with stylish and immaculately clean weapons and body hair dyed just so in camouflage patterns!

Clotho who are regularly in contact with other cultures will learn that culture's standards of attractiveness and mannered behavior so as to better judge individual members of other species.

SOCIETY

The building blocks of Clotho society are the family, composed of a sibling pair and their immediate children, and the Design.

Designs are a combination of a group marriage and job. Typical size is anywhere from two to 20 pairs. Designs are not clans – they are actually more like Vargr packs, but all members are, more or less, of similar status and work in the same or complementary fields. A design may be a small business, a workshop, an artist's co-op, professional office, a study group, a ship's crew or a government office. Sibling pairs can and do move into and out of designs about as often as Imperial citizens change jobs; that is, some stick with them for years, others change every few years. Pairs own their own property, although they may also have shares in property owned by the design.

Nevertheless, designs are not simply jobs. Many Clotho invest substantial income in their design, in terms of shares. Physical and emotional attraction is considered as important as professional requirements. Sibling pairs in a design share affections and (if young enough) mate regularly among each other. Clotho cannot understand how aliens can work closely together on projects *without* this kind of intimacy. (Their sociologists believe the Zhodani manage to muddle through using telepathy, and that Imperial Humans and Vargr prove their point . . .)

Applying to enter a design is a combination of courtship and job interview, and requires the unanimous acceptance of all the design's members. Some designs require a financial investment to join (equivalent to buying stock in it). The wealthiest and most successful tend to be very particular, and often the reputation of the design a person was raised in has considerable influence.

Children *do not* enter their parents' design (among other things, this constitutes an incest taboo). Parents will generally try to provide young adults with enough of a stake to either buy into, or acquire through education, the necessary skills. Unattached sibling pairs may be hired as the Clotho equivalent of temporary or freelance workers (often in the hope of impressing a design), or may mate with one or more unattached pairs to form a new design. Most sibling pairs will have either formed a design or joined one after six to eight years of adulthood.

The Addaxur Reservation was not permitted foreign adventures (nor did it have an interstellar navy). As the Consulate discouraged Clotho vessels from exploring unknown space, the Clotho made no first contacts of their own. Some Clotho did, however, engage in voyages outside the Consulate as part of expeditions organized by Zhodani merchant corporations.

For their part, Zhodani merchant-explorers found (and find) having Clotho aboard is useful when making contact with new alien markets: Clotho also made good pilots, while their skills in non-verbal communication were a useful addition to Zhodani telepathy. Although Clotho were not allowed to serve in the Zhodani Navy, Clotho explorers did participate as civilian contractors in the Second and successive Core Expeditions.

Circa -2600 to -2500, Clotho were involved in early contact between Zhodani traders and the Vargr (whose fashion sense they deplored and tried to rectify). Such encounters were generally peaceful and profitable, but not always. In -2540, several ships of the Seven Ecstatic Dancers pattern accompanied one of the early Zhodani trade missions into the Vargr Extents. While retracing their route after a year of successful exchanges they came upon the bloody aftermath of a corsair attack on a trading post they had established during the outward bound of the voyage.

The ugliness of the scene, with bloody corpses everywhere instead of being neatly eaten or cremated, enraged the Clotho, who urged the Zhodani traders into an unofficial punitive expedition against the corsair base. Lacking armed ships, the six hundred Clotho led the ground attack and hand-to-hand fighting, acquitting themselves well in the first paramilitary action involving their race since they entered Zhodani space. After this incident, Clotho trading patterns that operated beyond Consulate borders were granted permission to arm their own ships.

Clotho contacts with the Vilani were very limited, but between 50 and 500, the Clotho participated in Zhodani encounters with the Aslan and Imperial Humans. After initial Consular expeditions, Clotho traders ranged out into Zhodani client states within the Foreven and Far Frontiers sectors. Between the Second and Third Frontier Wars, the first Clotho traders began to venture into the Spinward Marches. The risk of war discouraged any large-scale settlement, but by 1120, some 20,000 Clotho could be found in enclaves on Zhodani worlds in the Cronor and Querion subsectors, mostly in enclaves within Class V ports.

Housing and Cities

The urban dwellings in Addaxur Reservation worlds and on many worlds that have city-sized Clotho enclaves reflect the race's psychological obsessions with neatness and harmony.

Much of any town or city is out of sight, either above the tree canopy or below ground, the Clotho preferring to build vertically rather than horizontally. Clotho enjoy climbing and burrowing, and both individual rooms and whole cities are arranged in three dimensions, with plenty of claw holds, probably because it's the only way several thousand Clotho pairs can have space to weave conversations.

A Clotho city is centered around huge towers, arcologies with as many as 10,000 inhabitants, which rise high above the trees. These towers are owned by one or more Patterns and contain homes, shops, offices or light industry. Below ground the cities are strange and beautiful, and despite having much of the bustle of a Human city, eerie in their relative silence. The many-leveled towers also sink deep into the earth, and individual arcologies are connected by a three-dimensional web of tunnels, illuminated by phosphorescent lichens, many-hued artificial light or the ever changing glyphs.

PATTERNS

Designs typically contract their services to other designs on a short or long term basis. For example, a wealthy design might be composed of business executives. They may run one (or more) companies – perhaps an air/raft manufacturer. Under them would be other contracted designs: one or two of clerical workers, an ad company, some factory worker designs (each contracted to run a different shop floor). A group of designs is known as a pattern. Patterns include corporations, government agencies and even religions. They vary dramatically in size from a few designs to thousands. Designs may belong to several patterns simultaneously. All share one similarity: legally binding contracts specify services provided and obligations.

GOVERNMENT

The government of the Addaxur Reservation worlds (and Clotho enclaves elsewhere) use a system of hierarchical community, city, regional and world councils patterned on that of the Zhodani Consulate. Any design may offer itself up to serve on a council, although a fee is required to appear on the ballot, ranging from Cr 1,000 for local office to Cr100,000 to the Over Council of the Addaxur Reservation. Designs who seek higher office are typically ones that have, in the past, managed successful businesses or held other government positions. Every planetary year (Olympiad on Zhodani worlds) all pairs in a community vote for their choice of design from those on the ballot. Higher councils are elected by vote of the designs at that level, e.g., each of a city's community council designs would get one vote for the purpose of electing a city council. Such elections tend to involve a great deal of intrigue and influence-peddling.

Government will contract with various patterns and designs to provide services from public utilities to emergency services, paid for by taxes on individual, design and pattern income.

RELIGION AND MYSTICISM

Clotho have a bewildering array of religions, many of them being what Humans would call "mystery cults" practiced by individual designs or small patterns. Clotho also tend to collect religions from other planets.

THE MILITARY AND VIOLENCE

The Addaxur Reservation has a Council Fleet of small, lightly armed ships. The fleet performs a mix of courier, revenue collection and search-and-rescue duties and also maintains some space outposts and communication stations. Clotho generally marry into Fleet designs for the stylish uniforms (all, regardless of rank, patterned on those worn by noble officers in the Zhodani Consular Navy), a chance to get into space, and to gain experience prior to marrying into a trading design.

The Consular Navy has the authority to patrol in the Addaxur Reservation, and does so on occasion. Clotho civilian ships are not permitted weapons within the Consulate. Clotho merchant ships operating beyond consular borders may receive a Consular license that permits them to be armed for self-protection.

No Clotho has any interest in being purely a warrior. Though they can and do fight, war is not a profession and anyone who devoted himself to such would be considered strictly lower class. There are exceptions: if a murder is cleanly and tastefully executed with some morbid style or irony, the killer is considered just another artist, and Clotho in need of such activities would prefer to pay for a professional assassin rather than trust an amateur! Such specialists are mainly found in the Addaxur Reservation – it is difficult (though not unknown) for them to operate in enclaves within the Consulate proper.

THE ADDAXUR RESERVATION

The reservation consists of 10 worlds in Tienspevnekr sector, in a rough circle around Addaxur, the Clotho homeworld. Total population of the Addaxur Reservation is 36.2 billion. The other worlds in the sector are under Zhodani jurisdiction, but the majority have one or more Addaxur cities or space habitats.

Addaxur worlds are usually either bureaucracies, representative democracies or corporate states, depending on the degree of influence rich local patterns and wealthy designs have and how responsive the governing designs are to the electorate. All are, at least nominally, representative democracies.

Xboat Lines: Zhodani postal routes run into the Reservation. Addaxur Council Fleet couriers link all 10 worlds.

Naval Bases: There are no scout bases or Zhodani navy bases in the Reservation. The Council Fleet are based on Addaxur.

ADDAXUR

Addaxur is the third planet of a yellow G3 V star.

Starport: Class V.

Diameter: 9,170 miles (14,790 km). *Atmosphere:* Standard oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 70%. *Climate:* Cool. *Population:* 6.5 billion. *Government:* Representative Democracy. *Control Rating:* 4. *TL:* 11.

Addaxur has a single moon, Silvermask, which is about the size of Earth's moon. Most of Addaxur is heavily forested, with patches of arctic tundra and open prairie, and several very high mountain ranges. The Clotho obsession with beauty and cleanliness goes hand in hand with a deep-seated desire to live in harmony with their planet. Despite the planet's sizable population, its cities, agriculture, and industry have been carefully designed (or moved into orbit) to allow much unspoiled nature. The race may change Addaxur's face if necessary, but as much as possible, ecology and natural beauty have been preserved, especially the forests.

CHARACTERS

Clotho can be created using either the template system or the standard *GURPS* rules.

CLOTHO (19 POINTS)

Clotho have normal base attributes but the ST and DX of different arm pairs are increased for certain applications.

Hypersonic subterranean shuttles and high-speed moving sidewalks link more distant arcologies. Between each arcology are miles of parklike forest mixed with tended gardens and belts of farm land, or the green mounds that are suburban burrows. Large areas are untended wilderness left in its natural state.

It need not be said that cities are spotlessly clean, and that improper garbage disposal is a major criminal offense. In the past, criminals performed sanitation jobs; today this is regarded as too cruel, and street sweeping is performed by robots or contracted alien guest workers, depending on the tech level.

Costume and Masks

C lotho need little clothing due to their natural coat of body hair, and except in hostile environments, what they wear is entirely ornamental: silk sashes, multicolored in intricate patterns, hooded cloaks, reversible with different hues to indicate shifts in mood or one's own reaction to others. Costumes are light and easily altered, serving as a means of communication as much as a badge of status. Alien diplomats have gone crazy trying to analyze the meaning of a Clotho pair reversing their clothing, or turning and donning a new mask.

Masking is common, both to preserve secrecy and as a fashion in itself. Masks may be of simple cloth or elaborate semi-solid constructions covering the entire face. These may be abstract or realistic, representing Clotho, animals or rarely, other races. Most own several, and nearly all Clotho living offworld will go masked when in the presence of aliens (masks often include life support, vision or communications equipment). To remove one's mask indicates, depending on the context, either great trust or, sometimes, great contempt, implying that the individuals in whose presence it is removed are so lowly one need not feel shame for any actions.

Trade and Commerce

Traders can do good business in the Reservation . . . if they can deal with native customs. Most off-world commerce is handled through trading designs and patterns, equivalent to Human companies. The Clotho are eager to trade, though they will usually insist on intricate ceremony, long bargaining sessions, and proper manners.

The Addaxur Reservation is famous for its natural and synthetic fabrics, possessing unmatched texture, hue and strength. Some Clotho designs produce Human clothing for export, and these are greatly in demand on many Zhodani worlds (and beyond) with prices that rival the best true leather and natural furs.

Clotho computer graphics software and their holographic systems are also noted for their quality and workmanship. Their laser technology is also highly refined: Clotho equipment is compact, elegant and powerful, though they do not market heavy military weapons.

Their developments in "clean" power technology have found buyers where nuclear fusion is impractical or too expensive: Clotho solar panels and powersats are among the best in Zhodani space, and their engineers build various subterranean constructions, such as underground "geofront" arcologies and geo-thermal power stations. Clotho aesthetics are close enough to Human that much of their art can be appreciated without explanation. A lively trade exists in originals and reproductions, with many Human collectors haunting the tunnels of Addaxur enclaves, searching for overlooked masterpieces.

In return for selling such goods, the Clotho will import advanced electronics, industrial machinery and tools, starship parts and high-tech alloys. Rather than mine their own worlds they will buy rare minerals; however, they meet most of their basic mineral needs through exploiting their own asteroid belt and outer planets. They are always interested in luxury goods, particularly new foodstuffs and rare textiles. They have little need for weaponry or vehicles. The Clotho are interested in original alien art for its status value, although they find it largely incomprehensible.

Advantages

Double-Jointed [5 points].
Claws [15 points]. +2 damage hand to hand.
3D Spatial Sense [10 points].
Enhanced Move (double running move, but only when not using lower arms to manipulate -20%) [8 points].
Extra Legs (lower arms can double as legs) [5 points].
Extra Arms (2 more arms) [20 points].
Fur (very thin) [0 points]. A fine coat of silky fur.
Manual Dexterity (+2 DX, upper arms only) [3 points]. Only applies to tasks requiring fine motor skills.
Modified Arm ST (+2 ST, lower arms only) [10 points].
Longer arms (upper have 2-hex reach) [20 points].
Group Racial skill bonus (Gesture and Sign Language skills) +3 [6].

Disadvantages

Attentive [-1]. Clotho tend to stick with a single task until it's done, getting +1 skill bonus when working on lengthy tasks but a -1 to *notice* any interruptions.
Chauvinistic [-1]. Clotho feel a strong sense of cultural superiority to other races.
Compulsive Behavior ("proper grooming") [-10]. Clotho spend an inordinate amount of time worrying about proper fashions.
Mild Phobia (Dirt). [-10].
Severe Phobia (Separation from sibling, severe) [-20]*. Clotho go everywhere with their sibling; threat of separation is crippling.
Mild Phobia (Squeamishness) [-10].
Proud [-1].
Sense of Duty (Sibling) [-5]*. Clotho are devoted to their sibling.
Mute [-25]. Clotho cannot speak; communication requires gestures.
* If rogue, replace with 25 points of severe mental disadvantages!

Features

A sibling pair may spin colored webs – see *Communication and Language*, p. 115. Modern Clotho webs no longer have any significant trapping ability (about that of a Terran spider web). Cost is included in the racial skill bonuses.

Instead of a normal spoken Language at IQ, Clotho learn Sign Language (Clotho) at IQ+3 (thanks to the bonus).

Double reaction penalties for low Appearance and Physical disadvantages, and double the reaction bonus for Fashion Sense.

Clotho learn verbal languages as if they were one level more difficult (maximum M/VH). *Understanding* the complex Clotho sign language is M/VH for most races; "speaking" it is impossible without technological aids such as graphics packages, though simple glyphs could be painted or drawn.

OTHER ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The following considerations also apply to Clotho:

Ally

The other member of the sibling pair should be bought as an Ally of equivalent point total to the character, with compatible skills and persona, who appears almost all the time (triple cost). Alternatively, he or she can be another player character.

Status

Clotho have no noble titles. A pair's Status is generally related to that of their design and to a lesser extent their parent. The table on p. GT83 is appropriate (read Status 2, 3 and 4 as "low, middle or high official" rather than noble titles).

Fashion Sense

This is a common Clotho advantage!

On the Edge

This disadvantage is appropriate for rogue Clotho.

Psionic Power

No Clotho have more than rudimentary (power 1) psionic abilities. Their thoughts are difficult for most races to read due to their non-verbal, highly iconographic brains. Most non- Clotho using Telereceive will be unable to make sense of surface thoughts; success by 3+ still allows using a Clotho's senses, and success by 7+ gets into the subconscious mind. The same applies in reverse to a Clotho telepath dealing with non-Clotho.

Taboo Disadvantages

Acrophobia, Claustrophobia, Dyslexia, Illiterate and Stuttering are inappropriate. Fat, Odious Personal Habits, Overweight and Skinny are rarer than among Humaniti.

CHARACTER TEMPLATES

Most human templates have counterparts in Clotho society, (not Marine and Army, though). Clotho criminals are rarer, largely due to Zhodani influence, but do exist (not on Consulate world enclaves, though!): they tend toward theft or "white collar" crimes such as computer hacking and fraud. The Martial Artist template makes a good basis for the rare Clotho assassins.

There are several jobs that can lead a Clotho into adventure among humans. A Clotho character may be or have been an agent for a corporate pattern or a trading design, a collector of rare and beautiful things (or even a thief), an explorer, or if wealthy, a wandering dilettante. Some Clotho travelers have been recruited as undercover agents for the Tozjabr (Consular Intelligence).

Technology and Equipment

Clotho technology is similar to that of the Zhodani, with an average TL10, but with a different emphasis. "Soft" materials technology, synthetics and textiles is especially advanced, as is their laser and microwave technology (TL11). The Clotho excel at subterranean construction. Medical technology is not quite up to the Zhodani standard (far too untidy).

Clotho industries are remarkably clean: fusion power is supplemented by wind, tidal and geothermal energy sources. During their early technological age some unscrupulous industrialists hid fission and ecologically threatening fossil fuel plants in desert or arctic zones, but with the development of space travel, all such dangerous eyesores were placed in orbit or deep space.

To enable a computer (with camera, graphics display and speaker) to translate between glyphs and words (for one pair of Clotho and non-Clotho languages) or vice versa requires Interpreter and Optical Recognition software, both Complexity 4 and Cr20,000 (at TL8; halve cost at TL9 and again at TL10+).

Spacecraft

Clotho buy most of their trading and fleet ships from the Zhodani. However, interior designs are often extensively remodeled, leaving three-dimensional mazes of passages, balconies and catwalks, dimly lit yet full of phosphorescent color. For cheap in-system travel (and sight seeing) solar sailing ships – lightjammers – are common.

Weaponry

Clotho who may be involved in violence prefer weapons that produce relatively "clean" wounds: X-ray lasers or snub pistols with drugged or gas rounds, for example. The Clotho consider brutal, noisy weapons such as chemical projectile assault rifles, explosive shells or plasma guns crude and distasteful.

Clotho may resort to tooth and claw in desperate situations, but are generally rather embarrassed afterward. It is much like stabbing a man with a dinner fork – bad form.

The Sheol

Early Signs

The Sheol evolved within the outer gas giant Sheol within Querion system in Querion subsector of the Spinward Marches. The Sheol have no written history, but a lengthy oral tradition that stretches back many tens of thousands of years. Even they, however, have no idea how long they have been sentient.

Human contact began with the settlement of Querion subsector – first by Imperial settlers, then by the Zhodani who came after the Imperials were driven out in the early Frontier Wars.

For centuries, passing starship crews had relayed odd stories of strange, vast creatures sighted within the gas giant, but ships usually skimmed fuel only at the more accessible inner gas giant, and so reports remained rare.

In any case, the existence of gas giant life was not unique. Gas giant atmosphere-dwellers had been previously observed elsewhere in the Spinward Marches, e.g., at Komesh in the Boughene system. While at least one starfaring gas giant race existed (the enigmatic Jgd-Il-Jagd) no signs of a industrial civilization had been detected on Sheol.

The homeworld of the Sheol is a gas giant, an enormous world of crushing pressure and extreme temperatures. But Sheol is not the lifeless world that theory would predict. Whether the result of artificial meddling, or the result of some Promethean process that stirred the organics into complex organic compounds, there exists a complex aerial ecosystem where hydrogen-breathing predators and prey coexist among the drifting ammonia clouds.

Fierce inter-species competition led to the development of intelligence among two of its species. The turning point came when the giant *squid mothers* established a partnership with small but clever *messengers*, seeking allies in a relentless war against native predators. Their relationship evolved into a strange form of aerial civilization in which the messengers' "cities" and "factories" are the bodies of their larger partners and hosts.

PHYSIOLOGY

The squid mothers and the messengers are two distinct races who exist in a symbiotic relationship.

SQUID MOTHERS

A Squid Mother is an spherical creature, 1.4 miles in diameter. Twenty feeding tentacles dangle from beneath this vast body, each one half a mile long and 30 yards wide. A Squid Mother has a coarse, ropy hide, covered in pock-marks, mouths, and gas vents. Beneath its skin is a complex serious of intestinal passages, stomachs, valves and bladders. Much of the Squid Mother's interior is hollow, filled with heated gas. Living balloons, the Squid Mothers float serenely through the ammonia clouds, tentacles questing in search of living prey.

Squid mothers can alter their internal chemical balances to create exotic compounds inside their own bodies. By careful control of this process, they can "wall off" one or more internal stomachs, creating a sealed laboratory where organic molecules can be combined to build complex living organisms.

Gas giants are drenched in radio energy. The squid mothers make use of this abundant energy source for communication and even to power biological processes. Their bodies function as natural radio antennae. A squid mother's external senses are electromagnetic (radar and radio hearing, with a range of up to 30 miles) and tactile, using their tentacles.

The squid mothers use the messengers to aid in reproduction. The relationship is akin to that between bees and flowers: the messengers act as pollinators, carrying genetic material back and forth between different squid mothers. Squid mothers can reproduce by themselves, but messengers make the process far easier and more efficient.

When a squid mother has been "pollinated" it will begin producing offspring – dozens of round, tentacled "hungry seeds" that are scattered to live or die as chance takes them. A hungry seed is about 200 yards in diameter, and is a ravenous predator – which has even been known to eat messengers! After about 19 years of growth (having reached a size of ¾ of a mile across) a hungry seed will develop its radio receptors to the extent that it can "listen in" on the transmissions of adult squid mothers and begin mimicking these sounds. When it finally "learns to talk," it will

be answered by adult squid mothers, and it will soon attract a flock of messengers of its own, joining Sheol society as an adult.

Adult squid mothers live for an estimated 600 years.

MESSENGERS

Messengers are a fully sentient race living in partnership with the giant squid mothers. Although in some ways subservient to the squid mothers, the messengers are intelligent beings in their own right. Because the messengers are much closer to Humans in size and outlook, it is they who are commonly entrusted with the responsibility of dealing directly with other races.

Xenologists consider it likely that the squid mothers deliberately bred the present species of messengers from less intelligent ancestors, perhaps beginning with a simple process of domestication in prehistoric times, and continuing until the present form of the species was developed. It is also apparent that this process continues: although the so-called *adaptives* are the most often encountered race, several other sub-species of messenger have been observed, some showing signs of deliberate biological engineering.

Sheol messengers live inside the squid mother's body, nesting in stomachs and intestinal passages. In addition to their reproductive role, messengers perform other valuable services for their larger partners, ridding them of internal pests and dangerous parasites, and acting as their "hands" when dealing with technology.

A typical messenger resembles a triangular flying wing, six yards wide and 30 inches thick. Their skin has a spongy consistency, resembling an exposed human intestine. Located centrally under their bodies is a nest of four arm-sized under tentacles, each three yards long, which they use to manipulate objects. The base of the triangle, the leading edge of the messenger's wing, contains a two meter-wide mouth slit surrounded by finger-sized tendrils. These mouth tendrils supplement the under-tentacles, functioning as taste-buds and as fingers enabling the messenger to perform delicate functions.
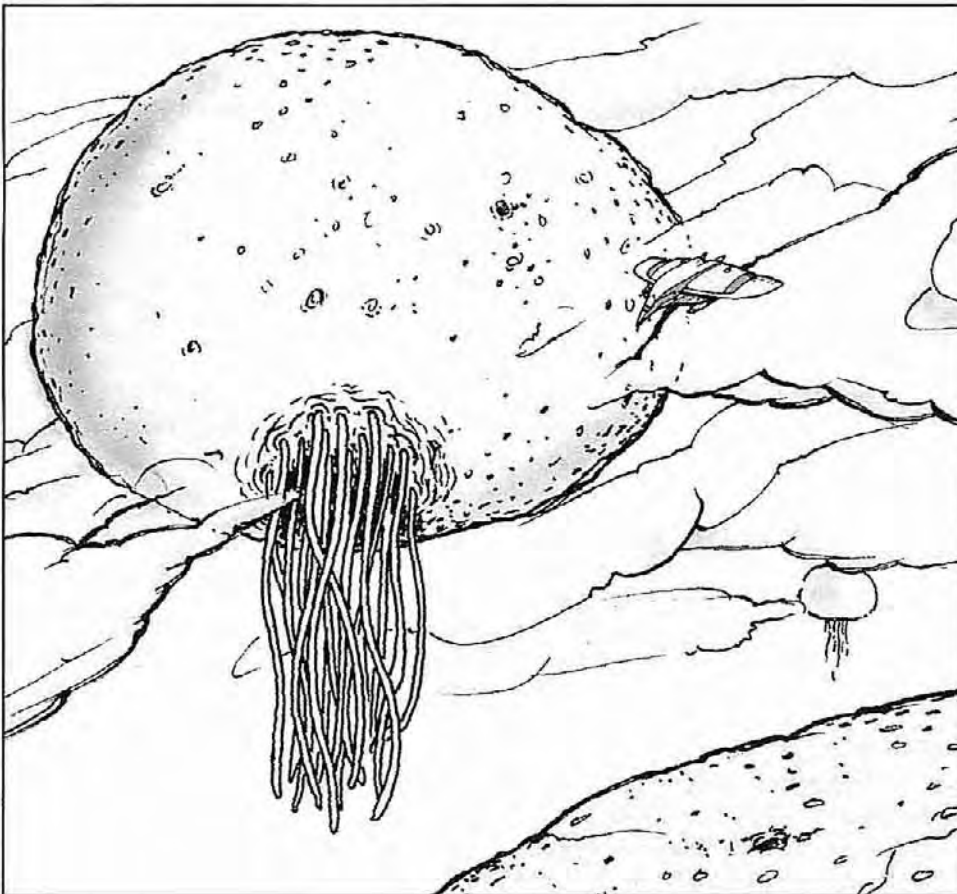
Haunting Thunder

During the Fourth Frontier War (1082-84), the Imperial Navy frontier cruiser *Haunting Thunder* engaged in commerce raiding. Its task force lost in action or reassigned, *Haunting Thunder* was alone when it jumped into Querion just as a Zhodani fleet was concentrating near the system's primary gas giant. Its jump tanks empty, the cruiser maneuvered to Sheol, Querion's secondary gas giant, to refuel. During her fuel skim, she was ambushed by a flight of heavy system defense boats concealed in Sheol's atmosphere. Crippled, *Haunting Thunder* never pulled out of its long dive.

The cruiser's descent did not go unnoticed by the Sheol. In the past, strange, small, swift-moving entities had been observed on and off, but this was the largest object yet. Concerned it might be some mutant form of squid mother, they signaled a second group of Sheol that lay along its glide path. These Sheol alighted upon the sinking vessel. Attempts to retard the ship's fall proved fruitless, but messengers were able to enter through a damaged weapon bay, and recover three vacc-suited Humans: petty officer Yoshi Antonov and spacers Vlen Jamison and Dana Lee.

When Jamison perished after being removed from his suit, the Sheol realized they were not dealing with beings like themselves. His remains were analyzed, and the other captives were studied more carefully. Making a chemical analysis of leakage from the humans' suits, the Sheol came to the astonishing conclusion that these life-forms breathed a poisonous oxygen-nitrogen mixture. With some effort, micro-organisms were developed that could break water and ammonia into their hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen constituents. In a surprisingly short time, the Sheol had created a small enclave capable of supporting terrestrial life, enabling their guests to survive without their suits, whose oxygen supplies had been nearly depleted.

Eventually all three humans died: the Sheol lacked the ability to help them survive the crushing gravity and to synthesize the proper nutrients for them. However, Dana Lee's death took nearly two Earth years, and by then the squid mothers had learned much of oxygen-based biochemistry. From the Sheol point of view, first contact had been wildly successful.

The Sheol Expedition

Through study of equipment in the Naval crew member's space suits, the squid mothers were able to modify some of their Hungry Seeds to broadcast on Imperial radio frequencies. They also began experiments to replicate material preserved from the Humans, which eventually gave fruit to the Interpreter subrace. Although early experiments ended in non-viable sports and monsters, the squid mothers finally produced a Human hybrid that could survive neural linkage and live (with proper life support) more than a few months – if the Humans came again. The Sheol fair noted the region where the *Haunting Thunder* went down, and decided to arrange (as best they could) a watch on that general area. Over the next several years, contacts with other fairs spread their knowledge and the new hybrid species.

Sheol was a backwater in the Querion system: located several hours from Querion itself, commercial ships normally refueled at the system's larger gas giant, while in peacetime, SDB patrols were rare. The fate of the *Haunting Thunder* had been reported to the Imperium during the post-war peace settlement. It was believed by both sides lost beyond any chance of recovery. No chance encounters occurred: a gas giant is large, and in the next 17 years, no ships came near the *Haunting Thunder*, or were encountered by the small minority of Sheol who possessed the new Interpreters.

Then, in 1101, a group of adventurers decided to pay Sheol a visit. Their motive was profit: at the time of its loss, one of *Haunting Thunder's* fighter squadrons were supposedly equipped with the (then-new) Rampart RF-128 fighter, which by now had become a mainstay of the Imperial Navy. The adventurers believed the wreck of the *Haunting Thunder* might have remained intact. While the ship was obviously unrecoverable, one or more intact Ramparts might be salvageable. With tensions growing in the Marches, various governments (such as the Sword Worlds) would pay handsomely for an intact Rampart to examine.

Messengers are eyeless. Instead of sight, they rely on other senses: taste and touch in their mouth tendrils, very acute hearing, and natural sonar as acute as a dolphin's. They also have a limited ability to sense and locate radio waves, although cannot broadcast or interpret them. This sense enables them to home in on the squid mothers or other radio beacons.

Sheol messengers are scavengers, eating their squid mother's leavings and nesting within its body to raise their young. They are highly maneuverable, riding convection currents and swooping or gliding like birds or bats. Inside the mother, the messengers can find shelter from Sheol's furious weather conditions that would otherwise scatter their flocks, much like aircraft riding out a storm beneath the decks of a carrier.

Unlike the squid mothers, the messengers are bisexual, although only another messenger would know the difference. Young are born alive, and live within the squid mother until they are old enough to fly on their own. A messenger can fly after two standard years, and is sexually mature at 10. It lives for an average of 40 years.

DIET

Squid mothers and their hungry seeds are carnivores, while the messengers are scavengers that feed upon their leavings. Nearly invisible in their natural pink, red and violet camouflage, squid mothers are patient fishers, angling for passing flyers or floaters with their long tentacles.

When they catch their prey, a quick flurry of motion results in it being hauled up, torn apart, and the gobbets deposited in one of 10 open mouths in the squid mother's body. Any loose bits that fall free are quickly snatched out of the air by wheeling flocks of messengers, who also deliver portions to those inside. The messengers supplement their diet by eating the smaller pests and parasites that periodically attempt to infest the bodies of the squid mothers.

LANGUAGE

Squid mothers communicate among themselves by high-speed radio transmissions, using a complex and subtle language.

Messenger speech consists of sonar pulses, and many of their words are in fact "sound pictures" that convey the sense of graphic images. In fact, messengers appear to have at least three sonar-languages, one of which is solely used for scientific and technical discourse.

A squid mother speaks to its messengers through a *facilitator,* a specially bred messenger subrace (see *Social Structures,* below). Facilitators are linked directly to the squid mother's nervous system, letting them translate the squid mother's thoughts into messenger language, and vice versa.

HUMAN-SHEOL COMMUNICATION

Direct conversation with either Sheol race is slow and difficult – the symbols and structure of their language appears to be constantly shifting, and share few or no basic concepts with any known human or alien dialects. Any dialogue with Sheol requires access to a computer with a sophisticated Sheol Interpreter program plus a communicator modified to use Sheol radio or sonar frequencies.

The speaker will have to make a successful Xenology roll. In any case, at least one hour of give and take is required to convey or understand even the most simple concepts; failures can result in bizarre misinterpretations.

To ease these problems, the squid mothers used their experience with the facilitator subrace of messengers to create the *interpreters,* a hybrid form produced from human DNA and Sheol biotechnology. Humans can speak directly to the interpreter, either in person or through a communicator. To speak to a messenger rather than a squid mother, a human will address the interpreter who tells the squid mother who instructs a facilitator. Since the facilitator and interpreter are both linked by a direct nerve interface through the squid mother, the process is faster than it sounds.

Use of the interpreters has not totally eliminated conceptual problems when dealing with the Sheol, but they have greatly sped up communications. Although some people find the existence of the subhuman interpreters offensive, their creation opened the way for trade and diplomatic negotiations with the Sheol, and the development of such joint projects as Sheol Station (see p. 127).

Psychology

The strongest characteristic Human observers have noted in Sheol is an insatiable drive to explore their environment. They have created radio telescopes, developed biological probes to investigate the lower depths of gas giant atmospheres, and even sent messengers to visit other worlds. They are fascinated by alien biochemistry, material science, physics, planetology and astronomy. They have much less interest in cultural matters, and appear to find human concepts such as "art" bizarre.

Where Sheol seem to differ most from humans is in their utter lack of any drive to compete with those of their own race. Fellow Sheol are never rivals or enemies, even for mates. But at the same time, the squid mothers are not an especially communal species, and concepts such as friendship, affection or love do not translate at all. Squid mothers possess a strong personal survival drive, and seem to care for their messengers as useful tools. But they have no families, they do not physically mate, and regard propagation of their race as instinct, and education of the young as a casual duty.

The messengers are more social, looking after their children, and working together as a group. But even they have no strong ties, either to specific squid mothers or to individual messengers. Cooperation is fueled by a need to share technological or scientific information: Sheol find the idea of keeping secrets ridiculous.

By and large, the Sheol are more trusting then most non-Zhodani Humanity. Their dealings with humans have been quite open, and no Sheol has ever refused to at least *try* to answer a question asked it by a human. Human conflicts baffle them – an interpreter once rendered "war" as "potential necessity to suppress/eat potentially harmful pests."

Nevertheless, this should not be taken to indicate that the Sheol are harmless pacifists. The Sheol have fought relentlessly against deadly creatures that inhabit their ecosystems. Human xenologists believe that were the Imperium to demonstrate hostility to the Sheol, we would be "reclassified" as a dangerous predator or parasite, fit only for extermination. In view of the Sheol's demonstrated capabilities for biological engineering and scientific aptitude, antagonizing them may not be wise.

Religion and Mysticism

Sheol religious beliefs, if any, remain vague. Messengers questioned on the subject find references to supreme intelligences perfectly reasonable, but claim not to know any beyond the squid mothers. When told such a being could be immaterial, eternal and all-encompassing, the reply was "jump space." Theological discourse with squid mothers has been less informative, but suggests they are empiricists with little interest in abstract philosophy.

Society

Sheol are two distinct races who live and work together, forming a single society. The basic social grouping is a single squid mother and its flock of messengers. The squid mother provides food and shelter, and acts as a source of raw materials.

The squid mothers "rule" the messengers, but no messenger flock is a subject of a particular squid mother, or feels any special loyalty to it. A major reason for this is the nature of gas giant life: with 200-mph winds and anticyclones the size of oceans, it's easy for a traveling messenger to be carried off by an unusually potent storm and never find its siblings again!

Second Contact

Posing as Sword World traders, the team had no trouble entering Zhodani space, since Sheol was not a restricted area. The crew used a modified cutter and special equipment (up-rated grav belts and war-surplus combat armor and battledress) to descend into its clouds where Zhodani records showed the ship had gone down.

During efforts to locate and salvage the *Haunting Thunder's* fighters, the team encountered hostile gas giant predators. While fighting them off, their frantic radio calls attracted the attention of a nearby Sheol fair. To the team's horror, an enormous creature appeared above them, reached down to grasp the team's cutter with mile-long tentacles . . . their terror turned to amazement when it began emitting radio emissions that mimicked obsolete Imperial Navy vacc suit survival beacon distress codes. The desperate adventurers responded on the same frequency – and were answered by a distorted, but near-human voice.

Faced with nearly a hundred messengers, the adventurers chose not to resist, and were taken aboard the squid mother. They were surprised to discover a pocket of oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere. The first face to face meeting with a Sheol Interpreter left them shocked . . . but not for long. As the Sheol explained what they had done, and their interest in further exchanges, the salvage crew saw the opportunities.

One of the adventurers had connections with Arkesh Spacers, a trading corporation that operated along the Imperial border, and whose operations were known to skirt the edge of the law (see p. T:BC20) By 1104, Arkesh ships began accepting a larger than usual number of cargoes bound to Querion, and choosing to refuel at the secondary rather than main gas giant. Only one or two ships every month, but they covertly provided the Sheol with information, biochemicals electronics and meson communicators, and returned with holds packed with drugs, engineered bacteria, and high-temperature polymers.

Profits were enormous – but in 1107, the operation was interrupted by the Fifth Frontier War. It resumed in 1111, but by then, Arkesh was pushing its luck too far. Moreover, Arkesh was now under scrutiny for other unrelated unsavory activities, and the quantity of product that was arriving had begun to attract attention. People asked questions, people talked . . . and in 1118 Imperial Customs Service officials made a dramatic raid on Arkesh's main offices. Along with evidence of other illegal activities, they captured considerable store of contraband biologicals which had been transshipped from Querion. Also discovered were documents indicating the existence of the Sheol trade. With little fanfare, these were turned over to the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service.

Arkesh's silence was bought: in exchange for a lack of prosecution, all data on the Sheol were turned over to the Imperial authorities. Arkesh mostly complied, but the decentralized and irregular nature of its operations meant that certain captains and trade stations continued to make runs into Querion. In late 1118, a Scout Security team raided one base (on an outer world in Attica/Querion), discovering a Sheol messenger in a life pod and evidence of a number of other bases in and around Zhodani space.

The following year, the IISS contacted Zhodani diplomatic and consular navy authorities at Cronor/Cronor and revealed the existence of the Sheol. The Imperium offered an exchange of the 10 years worth of information that Arkesh had gathered on the Sheol, in exchange for formal Imperial participation in any missions to trade with or study the race. Faced with an unknown alien race on the doorstep of one of their subsector capitals, the Zhodani authorities (after a quick naval expedition) agreed, albeit with considerable restrictions on its size and scope.

Messengers retain no special ties with their parents; all within a squid mother form a single "family" group. Messengers joining a new group will have low status until they can demonstrate their usefulness, but are otherwise fully accepted.

The concepts of wealth and personal property are meaningless to messengers: everything is owned by the squid mother, and resources are freely lent to individuals as they need them.

There are many distinct messenger subspecies, the result of biological engineering, each with its own particular role in Sheol society. A few of these subspecies include:

Adaptives

The type of messenger most often encountered by Humanity. They have flexible minds and highly dexterous tongue-tentacles. Coupled with an insatiable curiosity, this makes them the scouts, technicians, and scientists of Sheol society. Adaptives are highly innovative, and their interests sometimes extend to human affairs. They love to tinker with biological and technological devices, and happily dismantle anything they can get their hands on to see what makes it work, regardless of who it may belong to.

Facilitators

These possess extended brain-capacity, visible in the convoluted ridges that run in zig-zag patterns across their upper surfaces. They are designed to act as interfaces between squid mothers and the messengers, communicating with the squid mothers via direct neural linkage. When a squid mother wishes to achieve linkage, a fusion tendril uncoils from the wall-membrane of a coalescence chamber, piercing the facilitator's skin near its major nerve juncture and transmitting signals directly into its brain. The facilitator's body jerks like a puppet on a string, then goes slack, its mind becoming a living channel for dialogue between messengers and squid mother. Due to the stress of linkage, a facilitator can only remain connected for about an hour – any longer puts it in risk of serious damage to its nervous system. For this reason, relays of facilitators are often used.
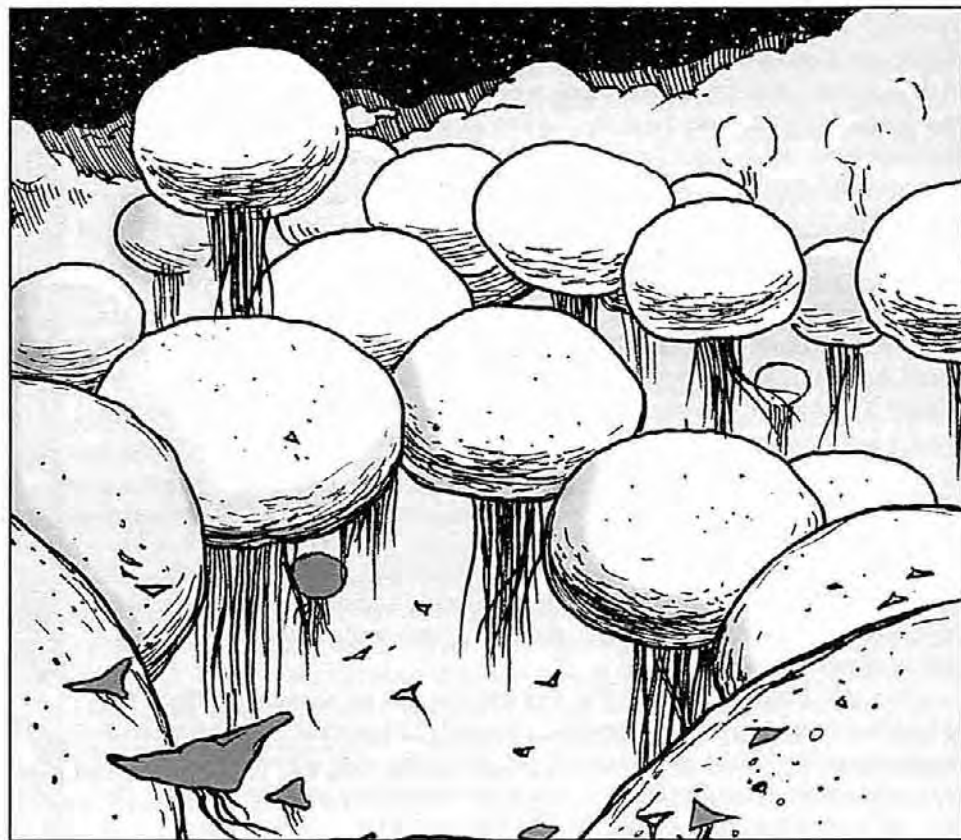
Monitors

These are designed to deal with parasites and predators that threaten the squid mother. Their under-tentacles end in sharp spines which secrete a viral solvent that can eat almost anything organic. They are always vigilant, and make aggressive and deadly fighters, but their intellectual and imaginative faculties are quite inferior to those of the adaptives.

Spinners

These have round, bloated bodies, and spinnerets instead of mouth tendrils. They are builders, manufacturing a sticky paste in their bodies, then weaving filaments of it that harden after a few seconds into a resinous material resembling plastic.

Spinners can build objects ranging from containers to spacecraft hulls, but they are not especially intelligent, and generally do what the adaptives or facilitators tell them to do.

Interpreters

These were created by adapting the structural forms of human DNA to produce humanoids capable of surviving neural linkage with the squid mothers. They resemble naked, blank-featured humans, with underdeveloped, hairless bodies and empty, staring eyes.

An umbilical cord connects them to a pulsing bulge on one of the squid mother's interior walls, and a modified fusion tendril pierces their body near the back of the neck. They are designed to communicate verbally with humans, translating human language and concepts for the squid mothers and messengers, and vice versa. They retain their human intellect, although they are nearly devoid of personality. They are not viable on their own, and can only survive in special enclaves deep within the squid mother.

MESSENGER STATUS AND ACTIVITY

Among the messengers, social status is based primarily on sub-species, with the low-intelligence spinners and the dronelike facilitators and interpreters having the least freedom and spending nearly all their time at work or eating and sleeping.

In contrast, adaptives spend about half their time carrying out the desires of the squid mothers, which may range from conveying genetic material to assisting in scientific problem-solving. While not "at work," adaptives engage in scientific or technical projects, or devote time to conversation, eating, mating or engaging in playful acrobatic flights. The monitors sometimes join the adaptives in physical exercises, but spend most of their free time engaging in martial play-fighting.

SQUID MOTHER SOCIETIES

Squid mothers are not territorial or nationalistic – in fact, the only "territories" to speak of are the squid mothers. Agriculture and herding outside is impossible due to the turbulent weather conditions. Squid mother society tends toward anarchy, with leaders and groups formed for short-term purposes, and disbanding or being replaced when that purpose is realized.

Squid mothers sometimes arrange larger social groupings called *fairs* with as many as 50 squid mothers and a thousand or more busy messengers. Fairs provide opportunities to trade information and technology, and allow messengers to balance their populations, replacing losses due to storms, predators and parasites. Fairs are always temporary groupings, sometimes interrupted by a sudden storm that scatters the participants. The Sheol consider the Human-constructed Sheol Station to be a kind of permanent fair.

It must be emphasized that 90 percent of squid mothers have never encountered humans or other aliens directly, although detailed knowledge of certain off-world life-forms has spread almost everywhere.

Sheol Station

The existence of the Sheol has not yet been publicly announced, but word of them is circulating among high administrative, academic, scout service and naval circles in the Imperium and Consulate. It was decided to establish Sheol Station, a permanent trade and research outpost within the upper to mid levels of the gas giant's atmosphere. A war-damaged Zhodani monitor (a battleship-sized system defense ship) that was scheduled to be scrapped was instead maneuvered to Sheol, and fitted with reactionless thrusters and evacuated buoyancy tanks enabling it to vary its altitude.

Any ship capable of 2 G or better acceleration and with DR 200 or more armor can dock with Sheol Station, although ships are advised not to attempt it during exceptionally bad weather.

Sheol Station became operational in 1120, but it is by no means finished, and is not scheduled to be officially opened until mid-1121. Zhodani workers in battledress and construction robots are working on it now, in conjunction with eager messengers and giant squid mothers. The interior walls, bulkheads and even much of the furniture are being formed with help from the *Spinner* caste, a process which is giving it a unique organic look.

The station is administered jointly by a council staffed by representatives of the Consular Navy and Querion sector council, in conjunction with the prestigious University of Lebeau (Lebeau/Querion)'s xenology department. A small IISS office has also been permitted, with two dozen Imperial diplomats and a selected (and rotating) team of academics and (later) merchants. Similar offices have been permitted for Sword Worlds and Darrian representatives. Sheol Station has a permanent population of 800 alien contact and trade specialists, with as many as two hundred visiting messengers. It is the hub of a "fair" of several squid mothers, and shuttles carry human visitors back and forth.
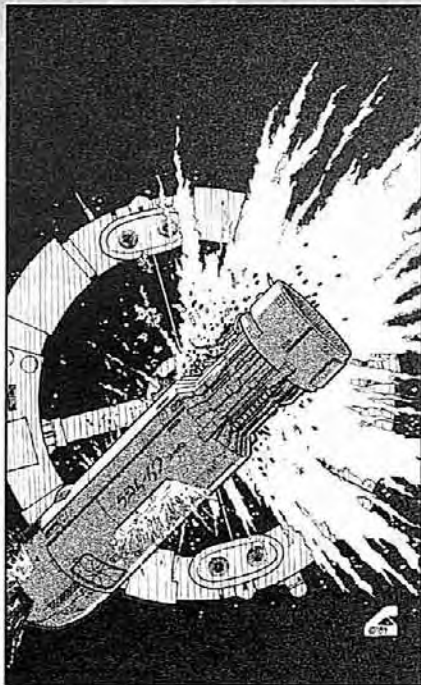
Hazards and Opportunities

The station is divided into Earth and Sheol sections. Since mixing hydrogen and oxygen can prove explosive, careful precautions were taken to prevent accidents. These are not always successful: two years ago, an explosion caused by a faulty electrical circuit ripped through an environmental module, killing 29 humans and a dozen messengers.

There have been some worries that the explosion was the work of saboteurs: despite the efforts of the Querion planetary navy, a few smugglers have still been caught trying to slip into the system. There are other rumors that some years before Arkesh agents may have "kidnapped" one or more Hungry Seeds and a number of bioforms and attempted to "seed" another gas giant, perhaps in the Outrim void. How well Sheol forms would adapt to a different gas giant's ecosystem is unknown, but of interest to the Sheol.

The Zhodani are licensing limited trade and technological exchange. A few messengers are preparing to embark to visit human worlds (and a few more may have been covertly removed by Arkesh agents, and are now wondering why they can't get home . . .) There is talk of a program to build a spacecraft capable of containing a squid mother.

TECHNOLOGY

Squid mothers can internally combine organic molecules to construct living organisms or complex chemical compounds. Given supplies of the necessary chemical elements, squid mothers are capable of rapid synthesis of large amounts of complex compounds, including many drugs and useful proteins. They can even perform "biological engineering" within their own bodies, by creating microorganisms that can themselves alter the development of embryonic hungry seeds and messengers, or even human beings. Sheol biotechnology can produce everything from macroscopic artificial life to living preprogrammed molecular machinery. All but the simplest tools are actually specially bred organisms. For instance, a Sheol surgeon works with bioengineered living creatures, using them to cut open the patient's body, maintain life support, and perform repairs. More exotic biological constructs also exist, like the mutant squid mothers whose bodies were converted into living radio telescopes and biological probes designed to penetrate down to the liquid hydrogen "surface" of Sheol. The Sheol are known to be interested in a squid mother variant that can generate coherent radio-frequency electromagnetic radiation. It has been speculated that with human assistance, the Sheol could eventually develop "living ships."

Although the Sheol are expert biotechnicians, their lack of easily accessible metals and minerals has limited them in other respects, and their physical science is less advanced than that of the Imperium. To build structures outside the confines of the squid mothers, the Sheol make use of crystalline icebergs, manipulating them in ways that are not fully understood by humans. Crystallurgy replaces metallurgy as the primary materials science. At present, the Sheol can produce a limited range of functional non-living tools. They can also use some Human-designed tools.

TRADE

The Sheol appear eager for trade, though the translation they use is "exchange of information" or "voluntary transfer of resources." Ideas such as payment seem less easily understood. Sheol have no concept of private property, and have no compunction about taking whatever they wish as long as it does not seem to be presently being used by someone else. Sheol also find the concept of currency mystifying. Nevertheless, most squid mothers have gained some inkling of the human concepts of "balanced exchange" and a persistent trader can usually make a worthwhile barter.

Sheol are very interested in machinery, especially computer systems, software, gravitic technology, tools, programmable robots, biotechnology and scientific data.

Any gadgets traded to the Sheol will have to be made to withstand Sheol's pressure and atmosphere, which requires special production and increases their cost by 300 percent.

The greatest innovation – and most popular trade item – is the meson communicator (with suitable software). Capable of penetrating through atmosphere and radio interference, it has enabled squid mothers so equipped to remain in contact despite involuntary separation, and for diplomats and traders to locate individual squid mothers and fairs on subsequent expeditions.

What can the Sheol offer in return? Although they produce few material goods that are more than curiosities, squid mothers have proved able to cheaply synthesize complex organic biochemicals, given a supply of basic raw materials such as nitrogen and carbon compounds. This can cut the prices of medical (and recreational) drugs, enabling a canny trader to realize profit. It is possible that they could produce organic computers or other exotic examples of useful biotech, although it may require a special environment chamber to function in.

Querion authorities at Sheol Station impose a 20 percent tariff on any traders, and are on the lookout for those attempting to get the Sheol to synthesize illegal substances. Of course, a merchant doesn't have to deal through Sheol Station – but only the most adventurous individuals will risk Zhodani SDBs and Sheol's weather and wildlife to strike a deal on their own.

MILITARY

Sheol are not territorial and do not fight among themselves. The major threats are various semi-sentient and non-sentient parasites and predators.

Monitors are the warriors of Sheol society, though they are as much biological caretakers as soldiers. They patrol the squid mother's network of passages and vents, always alert for dangerous parasites that might infest it. They use their tongue-tentacles to lick away small barnaclelike encrustations or parasitic growths.

Far more dangerous are infestations by larger parasitic creatures, especially hydrogen wasp colonies or the deadly psychovores. If a psychovore or hydrogen wasp infestation is detected, all monitors mobilize to repel the invaders, and search-and-destroy missions are mounted to eliminate any egg-colonies they may have left behind.

The only time Sheol fight Sheol is in the rare case where an uncontrolled psychovore infestation has penetrated into a squid mother's brain. In the months before its brain is totally consumed by the parasites, the "brainsick" mother will become a berserk predator, stalking and killing anything it can find, and serving as a vector for further infestations. All Sheol consider eliminating such an abomination to be a matter of mutual survival, and several squid mothers may cooperate in the hunt. In combat, Sheol normally prefer to use living weapons, whether it is the crushing tentacles of the squid mothers or the poison spines of the monitors. Adaptives and monitors could wield human weapons, although they would have to be designed to function in a gas giant environment without malfunctioning.

Sheol have also used specially designed biotoxins, with mixed results. Although bacteriological warfare has proven effective against several species of predator, the rapidly evolving psychovores have proven disturbingly resistant, and mutant strains immune to the different plagues have begun to appear.

HOMEWORLD

WORLD DATA

Starport: Class III.

Diameter: 50,000 miles (80,450 km). *Atmosphere:* Exotic (89% hydrogen, 10% helium, and some other gasses, chiefly ammonia, methane, water vapor, and complex phosphates and hydrocarbons). *Surface Water:* None. *Climate:* variable. *Population:* 10 to 100,000,000,000 messengers. *Government:* None. *Control Rating:* none. *TL:* see pp. 128, 131.

Psychovores

ST 25, **DX** 14, **IQ** 7, **HT** 12/15
Speed 3/20.

Skin has PD 2, DR 4. Weight 300 lbs.

Bite for 3d (5) cutting damage in close combat; strike or grapple with tentacles (reach 5) for 5d cr. damage.

Psychovores are the most common of various parasites that prey upon squid mothers. They have a deltalike shape, with mottled purple skins and no arms, instead having twin tentacles sprouting from their wing tips and large mouths with powerful acid-excreting jaws (hence the armor divisor). They hunt via sonar.

Psychovores have two sexes: breeders and assassins. Breeders look like assassins, except that they have semi-transparent abdomens through which can be seen egg-sacks containing dozens of pear-shaped pulsing eggs. Assassins outnumber breeders by five to one (round down).

A psychovore's shape is similar to that of a Sheol messenger, and as a result they can sometimes fool a squid mother into letting them get close enough to enter the mother's body, entering through the same sphincters and gas vents messengers use, fighting their way past any guards.

If the assassins succeed in defeating the messengers, any remaining breeders will make their way into the squid mother's inner chambers, and begin eating their way into its giant brain to find a place to lay their eggs. This takes 100 hours divided by the number of breeder psychovores who survived the battle.

If they reach the brain and lay their eggs, the pain will drive the squid mother insane. The squid mother will live for 80-90 days, when the eggs will hatch. During this time, the squid mother will be a mindless killer that will attack any creatures (including other squid mothers) that cross its path.

Interpreters

These Human/facilitator hybrids (described on p. 127) are simply mouth-pieces of the squid mothers. Use these statistics if necessary:

Attributes: ST 11, DX 9, IQ 8, HT 9.

Advantages: Improved G Tolerance, Language Talent, Radio Speech (same limit as facilitator, -75%), Temperature Tolerance [2 levels].

Disadvantages: Unattractive, Slave Mentality, Unusual Biochemistry (neither Human nor Sheol, require special nutrients).

Skills: Three to six Languages (Human and Sheol)-15.

Sheol and Psionics

Sheol messengers appear to possess the same psionic potential as Humans; all Telepathy rolls to contact them (or vice versa) are at -2 to skill. Telepaths attempting to contact squid mothers via Tele-receive must make Fright Checks at -10 upon contacting these strange, vast, alien intellects.

Sheol is the seventh planet in the Querion system of Querion subsector near the Imperial border. A medium-sized gas giant, Sheol has a diameter of 50,000 miles and an atmosphere of 82 percent hydrogen, 14 percent helium, 4 percent methane and some other gasses, chiefly ammonia, water vapor, and complex phosphates and hydrocarbons. The methane level is unusually high, possibly the result of the processes that create and sustain life within its atmosphere.

Sheol has an estimated population of 10 billion messengers and several hundred million squid mothers, though exact figures are uncertain and may be off by one or even two orders of magnitude. Even the Sheol don't know for sure (and don't care very much). The Sheol live amid the cloud layers of the upper atmosphere, where the pressure and temperature are similar to the ocean depths on Earth.

Sheol's atmosphere is hundreds of miles deep, composed of many layers of clouds. The yellow and white upper clouds are ammonia crystals, stained with red from traces of phosphorous compounds tossed up from the lower atmosphere, with temperatures of about 120° below zero, and pressures of 0.5 to 1.5 atmospheres.

Farther down, the lower cloud belts are a salmon and gray mass, composed of water droplets and ice crystals and drifting ammonia cirrus. Temperatures rise to a comfortable 10° to 30° Celsius, with pressure from two to four times that of Earth's atmosphere. This is the level inhabited by most of the gas giant creatures, including the squid mothers and messengers.

Weather conditions are fierce by Human standards (although winds are somewhat placid for a gas giant). Winds reach 60-120 mph and whip flurries of hydrocarbon sleet or ammonia hail. Vast columns of ascending or descending gas and huge anticyclones form storms the size of entire continents. Occasional violent electrical storms send million-volt lightning flashes through the clouds, and the planet is drenched in constant radio noise. But visibility is surprisingly good. Soft, pearly light illuminates the upper layers of the cloud banks, and at night it becomes a deep purple twilight. Because of the size of the gas giant, the curvature of the horizon is minimal, so at the level of water vapor, the visual range may be up to 10 times that of Earth.

As one descends deeper into the atmosphere, the clouds get ever denser and darker. Finally the clouds form into solid banks, thickening into a billowing mass of pink, yellow and red that never breaks. Sheol can go no deeper than this, for beneath the final cloud bank, the pressure increases rapidly, and temperatures rise dramatically, reaching first hundreds and then thousands of degrees Celsius. The atmosphere finally turns liquid, forming an immense ocean of liquid hydrogen. This is Sheol's "surface," where the pressure is measured in the hundreds of thousands of atmospheres and the temperature in the tens of thousands of degrees. Even deeper down, at a depth of about several thousand miles, the hydrogen ceases to be liquid and becomes metallic, until finally a solid core is reached with a mass many times that of Earth.

INSIDE THE SQUID MOTHERS

The squid mothers' bodies contain the dwelling places, nurseries and laboratories of the messengers. The inside of a squid mother is a maze of undulating veinlike passages connected by expanding and contracting sphincters, and womblike chambers. Vents release pulses of gas at random intervals, and eerie sounds echo through its confines, the products of messenger sonar and the constant life-rhythms of the squid mother.

The interior atmosphere is unbreathable to humans, but the squid mother can create small enclaves with an oxygen-nitrogen environment and tolerable pressure and temperature, and can also synthesize supplies of liquid water. The major problem is preventing hydrogen leakage – any human visitor is cautioned to avoid carrying anything that could make a spark! To avoid these problems, and to move freely through the squid mother, visitors normally wear vacc suits and take along a pressurized shelter and sufficient rations to last the duration of the trip.

BIO-TECH DEVICES

The Sheol level of technology is hard to categorize. They are essentially TL11 in biotechnology and chemistry, giving them the ability to duplicate many other technologies (such as radio) at about a TL6 level despite, in many ways, functioning as a TL0-1 culture.

Some adaptives have learned to operate and maintain, but not manufacture, TL10-12 devices that have been traded to them.

To be usable by messengers, Human electronics (e.g., communicators, sensors, etc.) must be modified to convert audiovisual output into sounds Sheol sonar can interpret. Add Cr4,000 to cost of any software, hardware or crew station.

Sheol Bio-Technology

Sheol possess advanced biotechnological skills that produce various products from secreted resins, as well as specialized biotechnological life-forms. These include analogs of most drugs designed for the Sheol metabolism. Other examples:

Toxic Spraything: A small creature looking somewhat like a spongy, eyeless snake with a flowerlike head. Incapable of movement on its own, it is closer to a plant than an animal. It is carried like a flamethrower and can spray a cloud of gas or corrosive spores (use DX-4 or Guns (Spraything) skill: SS 12, Acc 1, 1/2D 3, Max 5; spores do damage as per a monitor's corrosive attack. 10 lbs., Cr1,000, 10 uses (recovers 1/hour).

Resin Combat Armor: Equivalent to TL9 combat armor, but 1/2 DR and double weight and cost. Used by Sheol monitors.

Medical Drone: A rat-sized multi-legged creature resembling a cross between a centipede and a squid. Natural sonar allows scanning inside patients; its sensitive taste buds can analyze bodily fluids and heat pits can take temperatures. Its teeth, claws and disinfectant saliva can treat wounds, and it has intelligence enough to diagnose and treat casualties (inject drugs with its stinger, functioning as a doctor with a TL11 medical kit). First Aid, Surgery, Physician and Diagnosis-12. ST 1, DX 12, IQ 6, HT 3/12, Speed/Move 3. Cr5,000.

The application to Humaniti has so far been limited by difficulties of adapting Sheol bioproducts from a hydrogen/methane based environment to an oxygen/nitrogen environment. Nevertheless, Sheol's lengthy study of Humans has produced a few products they believe suitable for interspecies exchange:

Medical Rat: Vaguely resembling a cross between the Medical Drone and a ferret, this version can survive in oxygen/nitrogen environment and treat Humaniti. ST 1, DX 12, IQ 6, HT 3/12, Speed/Move 3. Cr15,000.
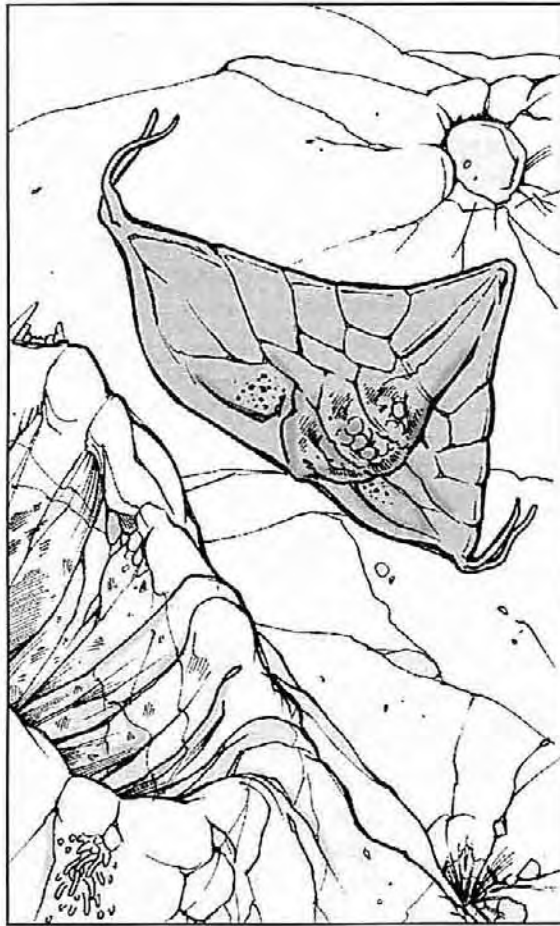
Enshqloral: Zhodani name for a Sheol-developed hormone that enhances neuro-linguistic ability. Two hours after taking it, add Language Talent +5, persisting for 12 hours. Moreover, all study time spent studying languages while under the influence counts double. Side effects: An addictive stimulating drug (p. B30). Cr100/dose.

Sheol analogs of a number of other Human drugs exist. GMs may wish to use *GURPS Bio-Tech* or the various "wonder drugs" described in *Space* or the *Ultra-Tech* books as sources for other biotech possibilities.

Sheol Life Pod (TL11)

Manufactured by off-world technology, this is a grav-supported, vaguely messenger-shaped pod made of multi-layered secreted resin polymers but fitted with human-designed thrusters and grav systems. It is equipped with four robotic tentacles on its underside. It takes a Sheol four minutes to enter, or two to leave; it is operated with Battlesuit skill.

If the pod's body hit points are reduced below 0, it is crippled and half of any further damage is applied to the occupant. Also, it has a hydrogen-methane atmosphere and may catch fire if penetrated (roll 10 or less on 3d to avoid, +4 if a flame attack e.g., plasma gun or explosive). If this occurs, the Sheol takes 2d damage/turn. Built-in suppression system may put out fire (roll 13- each turn). While fire rages, pod may explode (roll 3d: 5 or less each turn: 6d×10 damage). The pod is self-sealing, so any breach will be sealed within a second or so.

Subassemblies: Four arms.

Battlesuit System: (80 lbs., 8 cf, Cr2,750).

Sensors: Equipped with sonar-transparent nose to allow messenger's sonar vision.

Communications: Short-range communicator and translator built in (0.25 lbs., 0.005 cf, Cr250)

Arm Motors: Four ST 10 cheap flexible arms (total 0.6 lbs., 0.012 cf, Cr1,200, 0.2 kW).

Propulsion: Two reactionless thrusters with 27 lbs. vectored thrust each (each 2 lbs., 0.1 cf, Cr200, 1.33 kW).

Lift: Contragrav generator with 2,000 lbs. lift (11 lbs., 0.22 cf, Cr510, 2 kW).

Life Support: Full life support (20 lbs., 1 cf, 0.1 kW).

Power: 4.86 kW power required. 5 kW nuclear power unit with 5-year power supply (20 lbs., 0.2 cf, Cr4,400).

Design: Arms contain arm motors and 0.018 cf empty space, everything else (including the messenger) are in the body.

Body: 9.621 cf, 30 sf area. *Arms:* 0.03 cf and 1 sf each, total 4 sf. *Total area:* 34 sf.

Structure: TL11 heavy robotic (51 lbs., Cr6,800). Hit Points: 6 HP per arm, 90 HP for body.

Armor: PD 4, DR 50 expensive composite (68 lbs., Cr1,020). *Threat Protection:* Sealed (Cr340), Radiation Shielding (17 lbs., Cr170).

Statistics: Empty weight 279.85 lbs., Loaded design weight 479.05 lbs. (pod can still operate under 3 G), Price Cr18,840. Size Modifier +2. *Performance:* Air Acceleration 2 mph/s. Aerial top speed 109 mph (Move 54).

CHARACTERS

Sheol should be created using a combination of the racial template below and individual sub-species character templates. They will usually be NPCs, although the GM may wish to arrange circumstances that would permit an Adaptive to travel with the group.

MESSENGER RACIAL TEMPLATE (78 POINTS)

This is a generic racial template for messengers.

Attributes

Messengers have the same attributes as Humans. Although substantially larger, much of their body volume is gas cells.

Advantages

DR 2 [6 points].

Extra Arms (2 extra arms) [20 points].

Extra Arm (tongue, short) [5 points].

Extra Flexibility [10 points]. All limbs are tentacles.

Flight (Controlled Gliding -45%) [22 points] with Enhanced Move 1 [10 points]. Normal gliding speed is 2×Move (for gliders, Enhanced Move simply halves any sink rate); climb limited to one hex per turn, but powerful updrafts and tailwinds can drastically increase both the climb rate and air speed!

No Neck [5 points]. Can't be strangled.

Radio Hearing [10 points].

Sonar Vision [0 points]. Messengers see through sonar. Perception is limited to a 120-degree frontal arc.

Stretching (×2 reach) [30 points, ×2 reach]. All tentacles can stretch out two hexes.

Pressure Support [15 points]. Survive in a gas giant.

Temperature Tolerance (10 levels, +/-100 degrees) [10 points].

Disadvantages

Anaerobic [-30]. Cannot survive in oxygen/nitrogen atmosphere without special suits (1d damage/turn).

Blindness (use Sonar Vision instead) [0 points].

Inconvenient Size [-10 points]. Fill 3 hexes; cannot use human-average furniture, etc. without modification.

Increased Life Support (one level) [-10]. Sheol require specialized gas-giant environment pressurized area to survive on Human worlds or ships.

Short Lifespan (level 2) [-10 points]. Mature at age 10; aging rolls per 6 months by age 27, per 3 by 39, per month by 50.

Semi-Upright [-5]. -2 to Move on the ground unless going on "all fours" and not holding anything in tentacles.

NOTES ON ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Status and Rank are largely meaningless to Sheol. Messengers joining a new flock are Status -1 until they prove themselves; highly respected Adaptives who sometimes act as leaders or diplomats may be Status 1-2. Wealth is applicable to a Squid Mother (usually Very Wealthy or better) and can also represent the amount of resources assigned to a flock or individual to perform its duties. A Squid Mother doesn't usually count as a Patron (any more than a mayor of a town would to a city employee), but Messengers normally have a Duty to it.

CHARACTER TEMPLATES

The different messenger castes are shown below. Point cost of the template does not include the racial cost.

Adaptive   32 points

When squid mothers deal with aliens, they will typically assign adaptives to act as liaisons or diplomats. Such adaptives, singly or with other messengers, may even be sent to travel off Sheol on fact-finding, trade or diplomatic missions.

Attributes: ST 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 12 [20], HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Manual Dexterity +1 DX [3 points]. 20 points of: Charisma [5/level], Diplomatic Immunity [20], Empathy [15], Language Talent [2/level], Status 1-2 [5-10], Wealth [10-20]**.

Disadvantages: Curious [-5], Nosy [-1] and -20 points of: Age [varies], Extremely Curious [extra -5] or Insatiably Curious [extra -10], Duty (to squid mother) [varies depending on mission], Gullibility [-10], Kleptomania [-15], Sense of Duty (friends and companions) [-5], Truthfulness [-5].

Primary Skills: Diplomacy and Xenology, both (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; two languages, each M/A IQ [2]-12.

Secondary Skills: Survival (gas giant) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11. Any two of: Biochemistry or Genetics (Genetic Engineering), both (M/VH) IQ-2 [2]-10, Chemistry (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11, Piloting (Contragravity) (P/A) DX [2]-10, Naturalist, Electronics Operation (Communications), Leadership or Xenobiology, all (M/A) IQ [2]-12.

Background Skills: Two points in Brawling (P/E), Dancing, Sports or Sex Appeal (P/A), First Aid or Scrounging (M/E), Vacc Suit (M/A).

**Represents credit and resources assigned to the adaptive.

Facilitator   20 points

These handle squid mother-messenger communications, and also assist them in scientific research.

Attributes: ST 9 [-10], DX 9 [-10], IQ 12 [20], HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Radio Speech (must "plug in" to squid mother to receive, make HT roll or take 1 hit damage per hour after the first connected, -75%) [6].

Disadvantages: Fanaticism (serve squid mother) [-15].

Primary Skills: Two Languages, each (M/A) IQ+3 [8]-15.

Secondary Skills: Survival (gas giant) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-9. 12 points of Science skills.

Background Skills: None.

Monitor   90 points

Messenger warrior caste; a few of these may travel in the company of adaptives as bodyguards.

Attributes: ST 12 [20], DX 11 [10], IQ 8 [-15], HT 11 [10].

Advantages: Alertness +2 [10], Claws (spines on tentacles, +2 damage) [15], Venom (corrosive, 4d*) [60], and 15 points of: Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Fit [5], High Pain Threshold [10], Resistant to Poison [5].

Disadvantages: Duty (to squid mother or flock, 15-) [15], Intolerance (non-Sheol) [-10]. Pick 20 points from Bloodlust [-10], Impulsiveness [-10], No Sense of Humor [-10], Overconfidence [-10], Sense of Duty (comrades) [-5], Shyness (mild) [-5], Truthfulness [-5].

Primary Skills: Brawling (P/E) DX+1 [4]-12.

Secondary Skills: Survival (Gas Giant) and Tracking, both (M/A) IQ+2 [2]-9. Any one of Guns (Spray or Light Assault) (P/E) DX+1 [2]-10, Stealth or Wrestling, both (P/A) DX [2]-11.

Background Skills: None.

*After a hit damage continues at 1d less per turn until number of dice reaches 0, and DR is -1 each turn; washing the corrosive venom off requires a gallon of liquid and one turn.

Spinner   5 points

Attributes: ST 12 [20], DX 9 [-10], IQ 9 [-10], HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Web Spinning ("web" actually secreted resin that is used in construction) [20].

Disadvantages: Duty (to squid mother or flock, 15-) [15], Hidebound [-5]; One of Truthfulness [-5] or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Professional Skill: Resin-Shaping (eqv. to Carpentry) (M/E) IQ+4 [8]-14.

Secondary Skills: Survival (Gas Giant) (M/A) IQ [2]-9.

Background Skills: None.

SQUID MOTHER

Due to their immense size, squid mothers are only appropriate as NPCs. No point total is listed, but these advantages and disadvantages give a rough idea of capabilities:

ST 100,000 [30,093], DX 10, IQ 14 [45], HT 15/100,000 [499,985].

Advantages: Ally Group (messenger flock, large group, almost all the time) [90], Composed [5], Doesn't Sleep [20], DR 100 [300], Drug Factory (20 drugs) [210], Eidetic Memory level 2 [60], Extra Arms (18 more) [180], Extra Flexibility [10], Full Coordination (10 attacks) [500], Flight [40], Longevity [5], No Neck [5], Radio Speech [25], Pressure Support [15], Wealth (Filthy Rich) [50].

Disadvantages: Anaerobic [-30], Inconvenient Size [-10], No Fine Manipulators [-30], Fragile (variant, -50%) [-10]. Flammable structure; double damage suffered from fire/heat attacks..

Racial Skills: Biochemistry and Genetics (Genetic Engineering), both (M/VH) IQ+11* [13]-25, Chemistry (M/H) IQ+6*[6]-20, Survival (gas giant) (M/A) IQ+5* [3]-19.

* Includes bonus for Eidetic Memory.
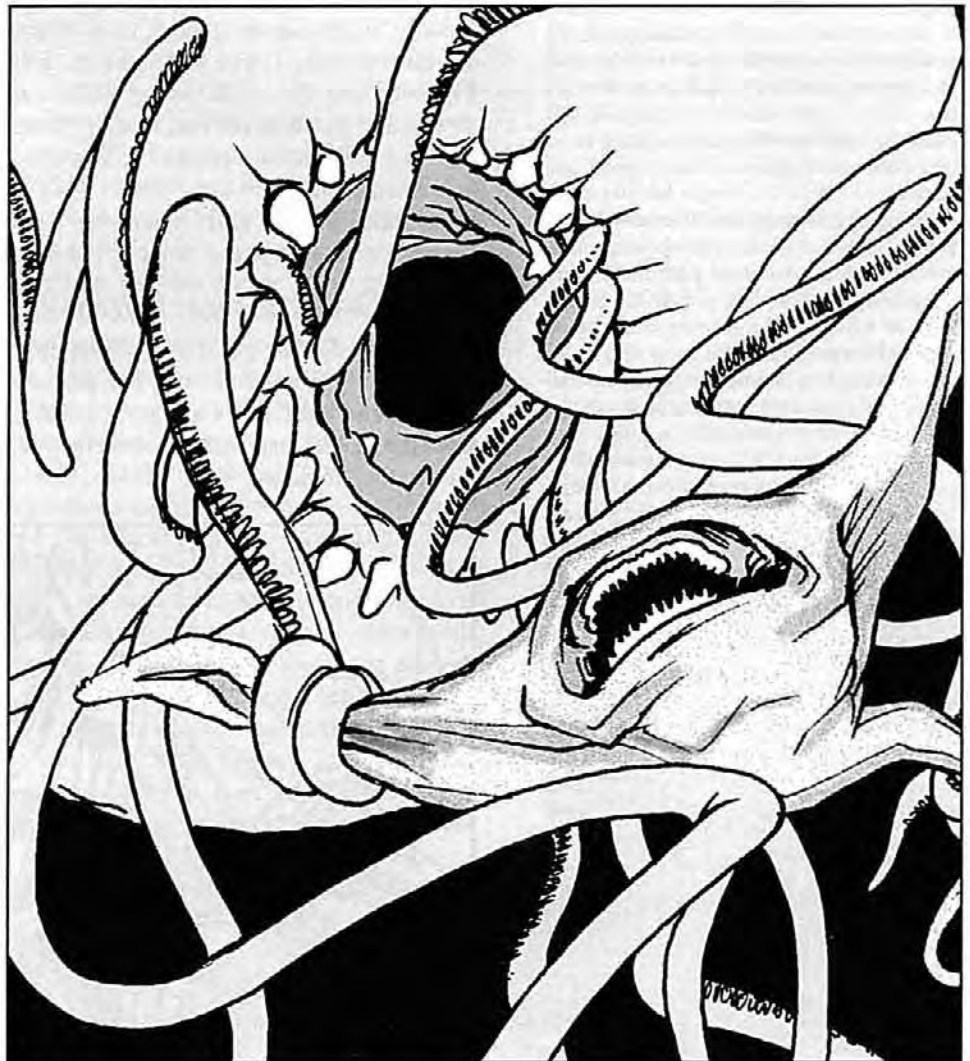
Psionics

Psionic Powers

This section expands on the rules for creating psionic characters found on p. GT84.

A starting character may be created with any power level in Telepathy, ESP, Psychokinesis, Healing or Teleportation. This does not require an Unusual Background – only starting with psionic *skills* requires one! (The only exception to this is if their race is specifically lacking in psionic power.)

Limitations may be taken on these powers. In particular, individuals with Healing *must* take the limitation "the psi can only use the power on himself" (⅔ cost). Individuals with Teleportation must take "objects retain vector and speed" (½ cost).

A character may take Unusual Background (Special Powers) [10 points]. This enables him to, with GM permission, buy psi powers *not* listed on p. GT84, or lacking the mandatory limitations described above. However, the GM may veto powers that seem inappropriate or unbalancing, or require different limitations in the place of the more standard examples.

Deterioration: Characters who buy powers but who lack formal psionic training (see below) will find their powers deteriorate with time. If they are 18 or over, *one level of power* will be lost from *each* power every four years until they receive psionic training at a psi institute (p. 138).

Note that a character who lacks training is unlikely to have been tested – as such, a player character would not actually know what powers he has, or indeed, whether he has any. This can be role-played, or the GM may require the player simply put aside a pool of points, and leave it up to the GM to choose the powers.

Psionics: The criminal use of mental powers for the manipulation of matter and energy and for communication. It has been demonstrated that minds (Human or non-Human, conscious or unconscious, intelligent or unintelligent) contain some capacity to operate without apparent use of physical facilities. For an individual to seek such training is a criminal act.

– Imperial Encyclopedia library data entry

Psionics: The ability of living things to remotely manipulate matter, energy and space/time through mental techniques. The responsible use of psionic techniques is vital to the establishment and functioning of a mature society.

– Zhodani Consulate library data entry

Who Is Psionic?

Studies conducted by the Zhodani and by Imperial psionic institutes prior to the Psionic Suppressions suggest most Humans have measurable psionic strength in one or more powers (such as telepathy, ESP, healing, psychokinesis or teleportation). This strength, known as *power level*, can be measured and tested. Both power possessed and power level vary widely from individual to individual.

The majority of Humaniti and most alien races are born with very modest power levels in a single power. Powers vary in frequency: telepathy (the most common) psychokinesis and ESP (nearly as common), healing (uncommon), teleportation (rare). Various very rare "special" abilities are also documented.

How Do Psionics Work?

Where do psis get the power to do what they do? There are many popular theories, ranging from near-mystical extra-dimensional energy fields to so-far-undiscovered psionic particles ("psions") generated by psi-active brains. Some people even theorize that human psis are somehow tapping the powers of hidden "god machines" left by the Ancients.

Some theories attempt to explain ESP or telepathy as electromagnetic waves or subtle quantum interactions generated within the brain. It is known that telepathic powers can be blocked by machines that generate electromagnetic fields at certain frequencies and devices can be built which can sense telepathic contact. What is puzzling is that these devices only seem to react when the telepath is aware of them and attempting to provoke just such a reaction. All theories flounder when it comes to explaining how a telekinetic can lift a 100-pound weight by concentrating on it, or a man can teleport himself through space in an instant.

Zhodani Consulate researchers, who have probably given the subject more thought than anyone else over the last 5,000 years, long ago fell back on what amounts to "because they do."

Psionic Training

Psionic powers are virtually useless without *psionic training*, a lengthy regime of special exercises and stimuli (which may include telepathic instruction). These techniques are believed to create new neural connections in the brain, similar to those established when learning a language. The later in life training occurs, the harder it is to establish these pathways: if not established by late adolescence, power begins to fade.

In Zhodani society, all hereditary nobles and intendants undergo training from early childhood. Proles are also tested for psionic abilities. If they display unusually high power levels (in game terms, 45 or more points worth of psionic powers) they are raised to intendant status and trained. Other Proles are not trained; like anyone else who does not receive early training, their unused psionic potential will deteriorate with age.

Psionics and Biology

No one has ever firmly pinned down a hereditary genetic basis for psionic power. Nevertheless, evidence, mostly gathered by the Zhodani Consulate, suggests that the odds of having high psionic power are a combination of "nature" and "nurture." The possession of a particular power and its strength appears to be based on a combination of complex recessive genetic inheritance and a favorable pre-natal and early childhood environment.

The child of two trained psis is almost certain to have one or more powers of similar strength to his or her parents. The child of a psi-trained mother is likely to develop powers of some sort, often similar to his mother's, regardless of who the father is. The son of a psi-trained father and a mundane mother has only a somewhat higher than normal chance of having greater than average potential. Artificially gestated children – those not brought to term in the mother's womb – are far less likely to develop powerful abilities even if their genetic parents had them.

Any child has a better chance of developing into a high-power psionic if he is raised from early infancy to adolescence in a psionic household, especially a telepathic one. The constant use of psionics stimulate the child's own talents.

In the Zhodani Consulate, certain powers, and even recognizable combinations of powers, are known to recur in noble families over the centuries. Some such families' "signature" abilities appear mainly or only in one sex; others are not at all sex-linked. But nothing is certain. Sometimes the ability is not always passed on, or something suppresses the potential. Extensive experimentation has determined that prole orphans, adopted into noble and intendant families at infancy, are much less likely to display a usable talent than orphans whose parents were psi-trained nobles or intendants. This is true whether or not the children, or their new parents, know the children's origins.

Everything else being equal, happy and healthy children have a better chance of growing up strongly psionic. Still, some of the strongest psis of history have come from unhappy backgrounds (among the Zhodani, typically noble families with hidden insane criminal behavior), but those strong psis have as often as not been troublesome, unhappy, even dangerously insane. Most useful citizen-psis come from happy backgrounds.

Psionic Training and Psionic Skills

New characters may only begin with *psionic skills* (or learn them during play) if they have an appropriate Unusual Background. There are two Unusual Background options here:

Unusual Background (Incomplete Psionic Training) [10 points]. This means the character has been tested and proven to have power, and has had some training, but it was either incompetently done or never finished. He may buy those psionic skills listed on p. GT84. However, he may only *use* psionic abilities as if he had Power 1 and possessed the Unreliable limitation. (He gets no points for this limitation.)

Unusual Background (Formal Psionic Training) [15 points]. The character received formal training, e.g., attended a psionics institute's course, grew up in a family of trained and experienced psis, etc. He may purchase any of the psionic skills on p. GT84, and use his powers normally.

If the campaign is set in the Zhodani Consulate, all Zhodani characters possessing both Status 2+ and psi powers have formal psionic training without having to buy an Unusual Background. Similar benefits may accrue to other psionic races, e.g., Droyne.

A character with formal psionic training can additionally take Unusual Background (Special Skills) [5 points]. This enables the character to buy one or more psi skills that are *not* listed on p. GT84, such as Telecontrol or Pyrokinesis. The PCs' character story should justify this training; it is up to the GM what and how man skills are available. The advantage can represent family techniques, secret agency training, etc. In general, being caught training others in these skills may attract the ire of whatever agency taught them to the character.

Psionics Rules Changes

Certain psi skills work differently in the *Traveller* setting. This does *not* alter their point cost.

Telepathy

Telepathy transcends linguistic and species barriers despite significant differences in brain structure and lack of shared language: a Human can read a Droyne's mind, and vice versa, for example. However, *very* alien species with radical differences in the way races think can make comprehension harder or impossible – see the Sheol and Clotho racial descriptions.

Teleportation

See p. GT84-85 for restrictions. Also, the Exoteleport skill only serves to enable extra weight to be carried. It doesn't bring objects to the user, or teleport objects away from him.

ESP Skills

The ESP psi skills Clairvoyance and Clairaudience as described in *GURPS* are dramatically shorter-ranged than those in the *Traveller* universe. As the established Zhodani commandos and psion detachments require long-range clairvoyance abilities in order to perform as described, GMs should make the following changes to bring these skills in line:

Clairvoyance: Calculate range using the Telepathy table, not as (power squared) inches. Instead of a viewpoint limited in radius, the view is what the esper would have if his field of vision were displaced to that point. That is, he sees as if his head occupied that point. The esper may rotate the viewpoint each turn, as if he was looking in another direction.

Clairaudience: Calculate range using the Telepathy table, not as (power squared) yards. The user hears just as if he were in that location.

Life Detection and Telescan

GURPS Traveller mentions one talent, "life detection," not described in the *Basic Set.* It is available as a Telepathy psi skill:

So, there is a weak genetic basis for psionics . . . but obviously the prenatal and infant environments are also vital, and clearly other factors, as yet unknown, are at work. Most psionic researchers have concluded the only way to reliably produce a competent, powerful psionic is to have two trained psionic parents produce a naturally born child, raise that child in a happy family environment where psi is in daily use, and give that child lots of training from an early age. That this is the very system that Zhodani nobility use is no coincidence at all.

The Numbers Game

High Power levels and multiple powers are rare. Among psis tested by or before late adolescence, Power levels 1-3 seem about equally common. Power levels of 4+ are rarer: Power 4 psis are twice as rare as power 3, power 4 are four times as rare, etc.: each increase of +1 power halves the frequency of occurrence. Note, however, that these numbers are simply averages across society – if someone is born into a psionic family (see *above* the odds change dramatically.

Multiple powers tend to follow a similar curve. One ability is common, two are about twice as rare, psis with three about four times as rare, etc. It should, however, be emphasized that these ratios do not hold for the number of *trained* psis in a society. Individuals who are tested and show high powers or multiple powers are far more likely to get training, either by society (like Zhodani intendants) or by personal choice. Moreover, once trained, psi power has been known to increase.

PSIONIC INSTITUTES

Psionics Institutes are organizations established to study, test for, train and research psionic abilities. They flourished legally (many under Imperial Charter as educational or research institutes) in the early years of the Third Imperium, until a wave of anti-psionic prejudice (circa 772-800) and allegations that many were fronts for Zhodani subversion led to their suppression. A history of their rise and fall is given on pp. GT27 (Crisis of '99) and GT54. Today, the few remaining psionics institutes in the Imperium are clandestine underground organizations, carefully hidden.

Many underground institutes operate in remote areas. There are two reasons for this. First, many psionic adepts find it is easier to concentrate on abstruse mental disciplines in quiet areas far from the distractions of urban life. Second, new psis often have limited control of their abilities. It is wisest to teach them in regions where any psionic training accidents (for example, teleporting to the wrong place, or sending a thought instead of reading it) are unlikely to be noticed by outsiders.

Most psionics institutes that survived the Psionics Suppressions took on cover identities to mask their true natures. In general, most are set up in such a way that they can receive new candidates without arousing suspicion. Some institutes now exist within monasteries or isolated religious retreats: students may pose as pilgrims or novices. Others are disguised as exclusive holiday resorts or health spas, or as private schools. In areas where psionic suppressions were particularly harsh, institutes may operate in an even more secretive fashion.

Modern institutes vary greatly in size, but those with more than a dozen full-time, psionic staff are rare. However, many institutes have a large network of associates (all the people they have trained) which they can sometimes call on for help.

LOCATING AN INSTITUTE

Most institutes are found on worlds with high population (a billion or more). This need not be a universal rule, but these worlds have the most students in need of training, and an isolated monastery or resort stands out on a world with few people. On a high-population world there are likely thousands of health spas, monasteries and similar private organizations . . .

What can an individual do to find a psionic institute?

Old Records: Library databases may have news reports dating back to the period before the Psionics Suppressions. These can show the location and fate of an

institute. If one existed then, it may have gone underground or moved to an adjacent world. Many institutes closed prior to 800: the Suppressions were preceded by decades of unrest, giving canny institutions ample time to close or fake their own destruction in arson or bombings.

New Records: Searches of more recent news reports may turn up information on psis discovered in more recent times. If they escaped or vanished, it might be that a local institute helped them. There may be authorities or witnesses to interview.

Direct Questioning: Most Imperial citizens are sensitive on the subject of psionics, especially in the Marches after the Fifth Frontier War. They usually react at -4 if questioned about them (-6 for worlds attacked by Zhodani). Why? Suggesting psis or a psi institute exist on a world can be taken as a slur against the patriotism and morality of its citizens, much as if the interviewer inquired about sexual perversion or "Zhodani solidarity" movements. Also, evil psi institutes do occur in fiction: a suspicious local may believe the questioner is a psionic seeking training or (on repressive worlds) a police informant and report him to the authorities. On some worlds (especially in the Marches) vigilante lynch mobs may exist.

Subtle Questioning: Interviews with people living where psi institutes once stood or descendants of psis (or their persecutors) could be helpful. Leading questions about historical facts discovered during earlier research may provide useful clues. An appropriate cover can avert suspicion, e.g., a journalist researching a holovid on local or planetary history, or an individual seeking to nail down a family tree.

Physical Searching: At some point, questers should uncover a number of locations they think may be connected with reports. Investigating these should eventually convince them that there is no psionic institute, or lead to solid clues of one's existence. If there *is* an institute, searchers that have been this persistent will likely find it.

Contact: Prospective students may ask the question "if we could find the institute, why haven't local or Imperial authorities?" There are usually two answers. On some worlds, organized anti-psi activity died down long ago – now, no one is looking. On other worlds, once the searchers near the area where the institute is actually located, their inquiries will be noticed by those staff responsible for security. They will use Telereceive and determine if the group's intentions seem honorable. If so, they will allow the institute to be "found," even planting a suggestion in the mind of the searcher or a person that the PCs are interviewing. If the searchers appear hostile, the staff may avoid contact, attempt to lead searchers astray, temporarily relocate, or take active measures to eliminate them. It's proverbial that the best way *not* to find a psi institute is to search while wearing a psionic shield.

INSTITUTE SERVICES

Institutes offer testing and various types of psionic training. When not doing these things for strangers, the staff of many institutes are engaged in efforts to protect other trained psis on the world, improve their own skills through study, perform general research on the nature of psionics, or keep up whatever "cover" activities conceal the institute's nature. On worlds where psionic suppressions remain active, they may even operate as an "underground railroad," smuggling psis off those planets and into safer havens or even the Zhodani Consulate.

Psionic Testing

Institute staff can administer a battery of laboratory tests to determine a subject's psionic potential. A subject is given various exercises to perform; as he does so, very subtle changes in his brain's electrical state are monitored. Other tests may involve measuring for psi power that is presently so weak as to be unnoticeable (e.g., TK of objects at microscopic distance).

Tests take a period of two weeks. Most institutes charge Cr5,000 to cover their expenses. When aspirants visit a psionic institute to test one of their own or an NPC, GMs may wish to require skill rolls rather than assume the test is conclusive.

Using GURPS Psionics with Traveller

The *GURPS Psionics* rules are not necessary for a *GURPS Traveller* campaign, but selective use of them can make adventures featuring psionics much more interesting. Others, however, can easily unbalance the game, making psis too powerful.

Powers and Skills

It is suggested that all powers and skills except for Astral Projection and the Telepathy skills Mindswitch and Mindsword be permissible for characters with appropriate Special Training or Special Power unusual backgrounds. The GM may wish, however, to restrict certain powers to NPCs, notably Electrokinesis power and Healing, unless given the first or third limitation; both can adversely affect game balance.

GMs should feel free to adopt the percentage based enhancement/limitation system and those listed in *GURPS Psionics* instead of the fractional *Basic Set* system.

Advanced Techniques: Most of the Advanced Techniques are reasonable for *Traveller* campaigns and add considerable flavor. It is recommended that the GM forbid Gestalts and Telepathic Area Attacks, but allow other techniques (except those relating to the banned Electrokinesis power).

Psychic Phenomena: Out of body experiences, the astral plane, beings of pure force, kirilian photography and ectoplasm do not exist within *Traveller* (except as superstition). "Ghosts as psychic residues" is on the borderline – it provides a scientific explanation of hauntings that makes sense within *Traveller's* assumptions, but the very concept may be detrimental to GMs who enjoy a more hard-science approach. The other psi phenomena, and in particular rules for animal psi and spontaneous psi powers, can enhance a psi-oriented adventure.
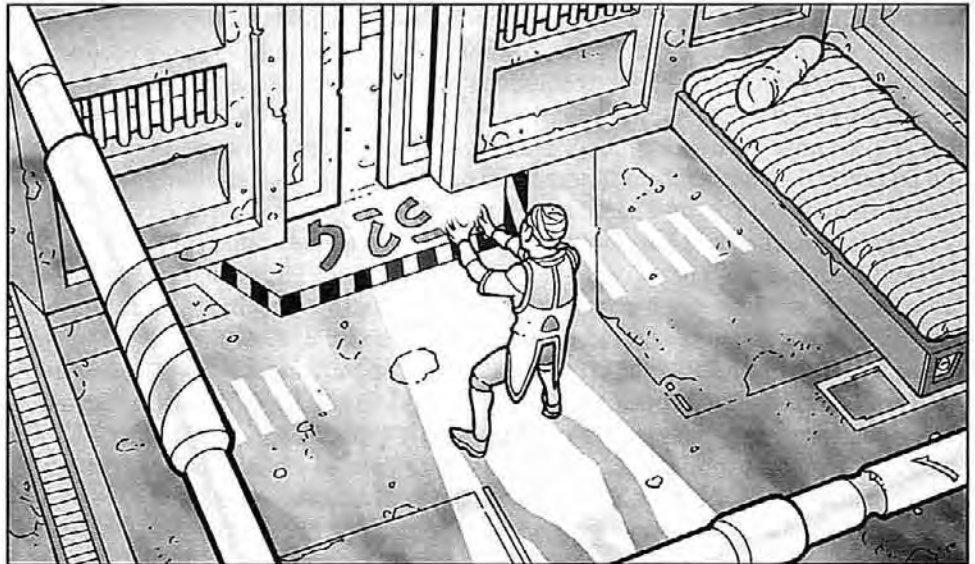
Tests require someone trained in Psionics skill (the scientific study of psionics; M/VH, p. CI158) and the use of psionic testing gear (p. 140). A single researcher can only test one person at a time, although most institutes have a number of research staff with Psionics-15+.

The subject must be conscious and must co-operate (or be threatened into co-operating). After the test program ends, roll against the tester's Psionic skill.

Success means the subject's powers and power levels are accurately estimated within about 10 to 20 percent (critical success means they are spot on). If the character has put any character points into buying psionic powers, he may now receive training. If he has not, he is one of those individuals whose powers have either deteriorated through age, or who, despite their youth, just never developed any measurable potential. In the case of NPCs with unknown potential who have just been tested, see *the numbers game* and *psionics and biology* for the likelihood that they will have powers; individual who have the Age disadvantage are unlikely to have retained measurable power.

Failure means the tests are inconclusive. The fee will be refunded unless the user wishes further attempts; pay another CR 5,000 (non-refundable this time) per try. Critical failure means a misdiagnosis of power levels, or possibly some sort of mishap in testing.

A subject can try to deliberately give false results. Roll a contest between his IQ or Psionics skill and the tester's skill. Success means he can fudge a power he does not possess at Power 1-5, or pretend one or more powers are lower in ability then they actually are, or non-existent altogether.

Psionic Training

Individuals who have been tested and found to have psionic power can ask for training. They must have measurable psionic power, i.e., at least one psionic power at level 1 or better.

Training requires four months. It's customary for institutes to charge about Cr100,000; for those who lack this fee but who have 45 points or more in psi powers, the institute may instead accept 95 percent of their assets (or some kind of favor). The institute staff can read minds, so deception is pointless.

The training program gives anyone who takes it the equivalent of the 15-point Unusual Background (Trained at a Psionic Institute). Individuals who already have the Unusual Background (Incomplete Psionic Training) upgrade to this at a cost of only 5 character points; others pay 15 points.

Someone who leaves halfway through may be permitted to buy the Unusual Background (Incomplete Psionic Training).

Teaching Psi Skills

Psionics Institutes may also provide teachers for individual psi skills, using the *Improvement Through Study* rules (p. B82). Not every institute will have teachers available for every skill: GMs should feel free to have an institute send a student seeking an unusual skill on a lengthy quest to find a retired psi-adept. Typical fees charged are CR 5,000 *per month* per teacher.

WORKING FOR PSI INSTITUTES

Not everyone can raise the fee institutes ask for training. Adventurers typically have special talents or resources, so some institutes will waive part or all of the fee in exchange for a favor. For example, they may want a captured associate to be broken out of a well-guarded and psi-shielded jail, acquire a shipment of psi drugs picked up and smuggled to the institute, or provide transport and bodyguards for a researcher on a trip to another institute.

Performing tasks for the psionic institute may earn its trust and lead not only to testing but to an invitation to join it as full or part-time staff. Institutes rarely pay staff; fees go toward cost-of-living, equipment upgrades, security costs (or bribes) and other expenses. Characters with a scientific orientation may participate in psi testing, training or experiments; others may be asked to assist in providing security for the institute, i.e., monitoring and contacting bona fide students and misdirecting or eliminating potential enemies.

Zhodani Connections

The Consulate's interest in the Imperium's psionic institutes is not all propaganda. A substantial minority of psi institutes, especially in the Spinward Marches, have ancient grudges against the Imperium; many of these believe that a Zhodani military victory would be a very good thing indeed. Such institutes may provide havens or recruit spies for the Zhodani Tozjabr, or support anti-Imperial guerrilla cells.

PCs who locate a psionic institute and receive training may subsequently have their names passed to Zhodani agents, who can use the threat of revealing their psi training to coerce them into performing jobs for the Consulate. More subtly, those who accept an offer of "favors in exchange for training" may be sent on covert missions that they believe further the psi institute's goal, but are actually supportive of Zhodani operations.

Some psi institute staff may be actual Zhodani agents. Not all Zhodani are tall and swarthy . . . during the psionics suppressions, the Consulate accepted several thousand psionic refugees from the Marches in rescue operations managed by the Tozjabr. This created a bond between some Psionic Institutes (especially those closest to the Zhodani border) and the Consulate intelligence service. These refugees have long since been assimilated into Zhodani culture, but some descendants retain the "look" of non-Zhodani and can easily pass for Imperial citizens. They also tend to make motivated agents.

AN UNDERGROUND PSI INSTITUTE

Junidy/Aramis, in the Spinward Marches, is a small world with a sizable (28 billion) population (the largest in its subsector). Historical research in planetary records will show that a psionic institute was established in 640 under Imperial Charter and shut down in 803 in the height of the Psionics Suppressions, its lands and assets forfeited to the Imperium. After 50 years, they were transferred to the University of Junidy, the old institute grounds and buildings becoming part of the campus.

Another record exists in planetary data banks: the Final Report for the Commission for the Suppression of Psionics (dated 888). The report consists of three parts: part 1 is a general indictment of psionics, part 2 details the organization of the institute, its training and activities (presented in negative terms), and part 3 has details of the eradication of the institute and the imprisonment or execution of its members.

Psychotronics. In general, it is not recommended that any of the post-TL7 technology (except items already presented in this book) be used for anything other than TL13+ Ancient artifacts, such as the Zhodani "starmap" artifact. For example, the "Empathic Lock" on p. P65 (which opens when a certain emotion displayed) resembles an artifact in the old GDW *Traveller* adventure *Twilight's Peak*. Used judiciously, a few items of psychotronic technology can be useful McGuffins for any Ancient site. GMs worried about game balance may be well advised to make items run on "unrechargeable and irreplaceable" TL13+ power cells.

Bio-Psi Technology: The psi drugs can make interesting (if dangerous) experimental alternatives to those given here. GMs wanting a more horrific flavor can have psi-borgs used by criminal psionic institutes or secret Imperial research station. The other bio-psi technology generally assumes that psi power is genetic in origin; as this is not the case in the *Traveller* universe, the remaining technology is inappropriate.

Other chapters contain campaign ideas; these can be used by the GM in creating worlds in which psionics are treated in a different way than in either the Consulate or the Imperium.

A Puzzle

"One of the chief obstacles to the scientific study of psionic powers is the fact that we have no real understanding of exactly how it operates. Telekinesis, telepathy, and clairvoyance, for example, each violate at least one major law of physics as we presently understand them. This is not as crippling a disadvantage as it might first seem to be. In the past, many scientists went decades without full knowledge of their field, but this did not prevent them from making advances."

– *Georg hault-Houtan*
"Wild Talents: A Foundation for Psionic Studies"

Racial Psionics

Humaniti. All Human major races seem to have the same potential for psionics. No far-ranging study of Human minor races has been completed. Anecdotal evidence exists of some minor races with more or no potential, but this may simply reflect prevalence of training procedures or even environmental factors (e.g., local plants that are natural psi drugs).

Vargr possess exactly the same psionic potential as Humaniti. Due to the chaotic nature of Vargr society, no organized embrace or prejudice against psionics exist. Vargr cultures bordering the Zhodani Consulate tend to have more psionic institutes, psi-using religious cults, etc. Vargr fees for psionic training are highly variable; many Vargr psi-institutes will waive the usual fee in exchange for the user serving as an experimental subject for a year. The GM should determine the effects, but any new powers gained should be more than balanced by additional mental or physical disadvantages . . .

Drakarans did not invent a reliable means of psionic training on their own, but seem to have about the same potential as Humans once trained. A few legendary Drakaran mystics performed feats that may have been psionic. Since contacting the Vargr and Zhodani, the reality of psi is reluctantly accepted, although the physics of it offend Drakaran sensibilities. Conservative clans view it with suspicion (and are importing psionic shielding); more forward-looking families have sent individual Drakarans to Zhodani or Vargr psi institutes.

Clotho have almost no psionic potential, as described in the chapter on their race.

Sheol psionic abilities are idiosyncratic; see their own racial description.

Psi aptitude of other major and minor races will be covered in future *Alien Races* sourcebooks.

A final appendix indicates that the Commission still exists, albeit in skeleton form under the control of the Psychology Department of the University. Thanks to its continued vigilance, no serious psionic problems have been experienced on Junidy for centuries.

Individuals hunting for a psionics institute may feel a desire to stay well away from the University psychology department and the Commission. In fact, the Psychology Department and Commission *are* the Junidy psionic institute, and always have been. When the suppressions started, they were poorly organized. It was easy for the institute to insert some covert members into the commission. While some institute members were tragically martyred to the cause, ever since, the psionics institute has existed in safety and has protected, sheltered and trained psionics, under the guise of keeping watch against them.

OPEN PSIONICS INSTITUTES

Non-Imperial powers vary in their attitude to psionics, often leaving it up to planetary authorities. Some accept it, others suppress it as a threat, or attempt to control the institute. Sometimes the psi institute *is* the government.

In Zhodani client states (whether Human, Vargr or other) psi institutes can and do operate openly. Most are actively supported by Consulate funding, and often have visiting Zhodani academics (usually Intendants specializing in psionic training). Imperial propaganda claims that these institutes psionically "re-educate" students to follow Zhodani ways are usually untrue. Their goal is simpler: to train as many young people as possible (especially children of the ruling elite) in order to bind that world more closely to the Consulate. Another Imperial charge claims psionic institutes on pro-Zhodani border worlds are "guerrilla universities" for training groups like the Ine Givar in "psionic terrorism." Most institutes do not have that as a prime purpose, but a minority of institutes are Tozjabr fronts . . .

Psionic institutes may be established on neutral or unaligned worlds or confederations along the Imperial-Zhodani border. These are wary of Zhodani involvement, fearing the political cost to their neutrality of being branded as a Zhodani "front" organization. On such worlds, psionic institutes must live with the threat of crackdowns from the authorities, should the faction or party in power choose to lean toward the Imperium.

PSIONIC TECHNOLOGIES

A variety of technological means exist to artificially test, enhance or suppress psionic powers, or integrate them into technological devices. This field is still in its infancy, although the Zhodani are acknowledged leaders in it. It is known that the Ancients were masters of psionic technology. Most psionic drugs and equipment are illegal in the Imperium and allied states (roll vs. Streetwise skill, minus CR of the world, check each week). The exception is psionic shielding equipment. The reverse is true of the Zhodani consulate and its clients.

LAB EQUIPMENT

This gear is used for psionic testing and training.

Portable Psi-testing Gear: This can be used to perform psionic testing. It weighs 400 pounds and takes up 13.5 cf. It requires an hour to set up. Cr100,000. TL8.

Psionics Laboratory Modules: Starship lab modules (see *Modular Starships* in GT) can be configured as psionic testing and research laboratories. These modules or equivalent ground labs allow psionic training and add +2 bonus when testing.

PSI DRUGS

Biochemical methods are the easiest known method to enhance psionic ability. Psi drugs known to current science are intricate proteins that stimulate the production of various hormones in complex sequence. Laboratory studies show subtle changes in the electrical activity of the brain, but the exact relationship between the biochemical activity and psionic power is mysterious.

GMs may limit the availability of psi-drugs by deciding they require rare plant or animal compounds and complex refinement. A few "natural" psi drugs may also exist – the leaves of certain plants, rare herbs, or animal venoms could have similar capabilities, giving primitive societies unusual abilities.

Three psi-enhancing drugs are known to modern science, referred to as *Booster, Double,* and *Special*. One psi-damping drug, *Blocker,* is also known. All are very expensive due to their complex refinement process. All can be injected via needle or pneumospray hypo. Booster, Double and Blocker can be taken as oral pills or nasal sprays also.

Taking more than three doses of any psi-enhancing drug without 72 hours to flush the system can cause overdose. Roll vs. HT+2 for each extra drug taken after this: failure causes to 3d damage. Critical failure also causes a permanent -1 to power level of all psi powers (no character points are "gained back" – rather, point total is reduced.)

Booster: A basic, safe psi-drug. It adds +3 to *all* the user's psionic power levels for one hour. If the user is fatigued when the drug is taken, it only adds +2. Exception: if the user has no power, booster will not increase it. Extra doses of the drug give no benefit. Cr 500/dose, TL8.

Double: A more potent psi drug. Identical to Booster but with a +6 bonus (+4 if taken while fatigued). Cr 2,000/dose. TL9.

Special: The rarest psi drug. It increases all psionic power levels by one level every 1.5 hours for 15 hours. The power remains at +10 for four hours, then declines at the same rate. As usual, someone with no power at all will not gain a power. The user must also make a HT+2 roll each time it is used. Failure means he loses one level of power permanently from *all* abilities. Cr 5,000 per dose, TL10.

Blocker: Divides user's psi power by 5 (round all fractions down) for 24 hours and imposes a -5 on all psi skill use. After 24 hours have passed, roll vs. HT daily to recover. Repeated doses have no cumulative effect, but mean that there is no chance of recovery if administered daily. Cr 500/dose, TL9.

All psi drugs except Blocker are illegal in the Imperium; Blocker and Special are illegal in the Zhodani Consulate, and other psi drugs are only available to intendants or nobles. For illegal drugs, double the price to get black market costs.

Some Imperial megacorporations, notably SuSAG, manufacture psi drugs outside Imperial space for sale to non-Imperial worlds where psionics are legal. Via pilferage or bribery they may reach Imperial other black markets. The main black market buyers are illicit psionic institutes and psionic criminals or outlaws.

ANTI-PSIONIC & PSI-DETECTION DEVICES

These devices are generally legal everywhere but in the Zhodani consulate and similar pro-psionic states. (Zhodani security and intelligence agencies may still possess them.)

Psionic Shield Helmet: Lightweight helmet (PD 0, DR 1, covers brain only). Protects against any use of Telepathy, friendly or hostile, against or by the subject, exactly as if it were a Mind Shield used by a telepath with a skill of 3 and a Power of (TL-2) × 2. A rechargeable B cell powers it for 3 months. 1.5 pounds, Cr1,000, TL8.

Psionic Shield Circuits: An identical system can instead be designed into an existing vacc suit or combat helmet. Adds one pound to weight; costs Cr1,000 if designed into helmet or Cr1,200 as a retrofit. (Similar circuitry can be built into a spaceship, vehicle or walls to interfere with use of Telepathy through them: MCr 0.0001 and 0.00005 tons times area in square feet covered; a typical cell might require 600 sf.) TL8.

Psionic Activity Detector: A handheld sensor. It lets the operator detect psi activity (displaying it on a screen) as if using Psi Sense (p. B167) operating at Power 10, but using Electronics Operation/TL12 (Sensor) skill instead of Psi Sense skill. Ignore results greater than "succeeds by 5" on the table. The psionic activity detector uses a rechargeable B cell for one month of continuous operation. Cr10,000, 4 pounds. TL12.

C apture and escape are an important part of adventures, but keeping a psi prisoner can be difficult! Characters clever enough to keep their powers secret deserve to be able to use them to escape. But when a jailer *knows* his prisoner is a psi, he will take measures to keep him under control. In a high-tech setting, the GMs should make liberal use of psionic activity detectors, psi shields on guards and drugs such as Blocker.

What if the psis are captives on a low-tech world? Their powers may be taken for magic, but that won't keep the jailers from taking precautions. The psis could be drugged into unconsciousness, but that isn't much fun for a player. Perhaps the natives have doctors or magicians who could hypnotize the prisoner into thinking his ability was gone, or are able to brew homemade psi-damping drugs from local herbs. Lobotomy is another possibility, but one few characters will care to face.

Many psi abilities are most effective if the user knows who he is using them on. Cells may use one-way glass or television monitors so that the subject can be safely observed. A cheap alternative is to blindfold the prisoner. A teleporter can be told (truthfully or not) that he is some distance above or below ground. Should he try to escape to a remembered location, the energy differential may prove dangerous.

Standard procedure used by the Imperium with Zhodani captives, if drugs are not available, is to place them in a cell watched by both local guards (with psionic shields) and hidden observers using TV monitors.

Why?

"Why do normals fear us? If only one in a million was a psi, I would understand, but every human being is born with at least the potential. Do we persecute those who have a superior sense of smell, or taste, or sight? If you have perfect pitch, must you hide all traces of it?

"The answer is simple. We are afraid. We think things we should not, and we are afraid for them to become public knowledge. We are afraid that someone will kill us by pinching a coronary artery with the power of their mind. We fear the thief who can see into a lock and open it without touching it. We fear a Svengali will enslave our minds, without our knowledge.

"But there are those who kill by physical means. It cannot be fear of death alone that makes us persecute psis. If a man comes at us with a knife or a gun, taking us unawares, we will die just as fast as if killed by a thought. We trust the trained martial artist not to kill us with a blow. We should trust the trained psi to be as moral."

– Georg hault-Houtan
"Wild Talents: A Foundation
for Psionic Studies"

PSYCHOTRONIC TECHNOLOGY

This technology uses special psi-sensitive circuits. It is used by Zhodani, some Droyne worlds and in some Ancient sites.

Flicking and Telepathic "Switches"

These are simple electronic devices sensitive to telepathy, each with their own distinct mental signature. They resemble small circuit boards, and may be built into electronic devices. To use one, the telepath must know (or guess) where a particular switch is located, and what device it controls. He then sends a single Telesend message – either "on" or "off" (no finer control is possible) – the switch senses the message, and the device turns on or off. This technique is known as "flicking." The system is so sensitive that, provided Telesend skill is possessed, no skill roll is required. Even a non-Telepath who is trained with another psi power and is aware of the switch can activate it by touching the location and thinking about it.

Telepathic switches are mounted in systems such as lights, car ignitions, or electronic doors. They may replace or supplement the normal manual on/off switch. They can turn on, but not control, most electronic devices, from TVs to computers. Other uses: activate or deactivate electronic detonators or timers for explosives; to activate or deactivate a hidden security system; to trigger a single "hot key" sequence in a computer that then activates a more complex program. Several switches may be built into a single device to turn on or off different functions.

Zhodani make extensive use of telepathic switches for the residences and personal equipment of nobles and intendants. Some gear and places are designed with *only* telepathic switches for extra security. This can be disconcerting to an intruder trying to use doors, elevators or even appliances, or who acquires a noble's sidearm! Bypassing a switch in a may require cutting open the wall, device or console and using an electronics tool kit to install a manual circuit; this takes several minutes and a successful Electronics Operation (Security) roll.

Arrays of sensitive telepathic switches can be built into control panels or consoles. For instance, if built into a computer keyboard, each switch may correspond with a single key.

More secure tele-switches are possible, e.g., combination of switches that require a certain sequence to open a door.

A tele-switch runs off building/vehicle/ship power or an AA cell for a year, and costs Cr200; the weight is negligible. Adding banks of telepathic switches throughout vehicles or spaceships generally costs Cr10,000 per crew station so equipped. TL10.

Psibernetic Web

This device is built into Zhodani Guards combat armor and battledress. It enables the user to Autoteleport without counting the weight of the suit. (It is a limited version of the system found on *GURPS Mecha* p. 104, built at TL11 and identical except it only works for teleportation, but does not require an interface.) Similar systems can be added to other armor: for non-battledress suits, assume it weighs 5 lbs. and costs Cr5,000.

WE'RE ON THE WEB

Two Major Races . . .

In contrast to the Imperium, the human-descended **Zhodani** have long embraced psi powers. Within their vast interstellar empire, crime is almost unknown, workers are uniformly happy in their jobs, and mental illness is as easy to cure as a paper cut, thanks to advanced powers of the mind . . . and periodic visits from the Thought Police.

The Vargr are a race of aliens descended from transplanted Terran canines. Removed from Earth hundreds of millennia ago, the Vargr have continued to develop on worlds millions of miles away from their planet of origin, and now control hundreds of worlds, under almost as many separate governments.

Both are formidable rivals to the Third Imperium. *Alien Races 1* for *GURPS Traveller* has everything you need to set a campaign in the Zhodani Consulate or Vargr Extents. It includes starship deck plans and vehicle designs, weaponry, rules and templates for creating player characters and NPCs, up-to-date history and cultural information, and much more.
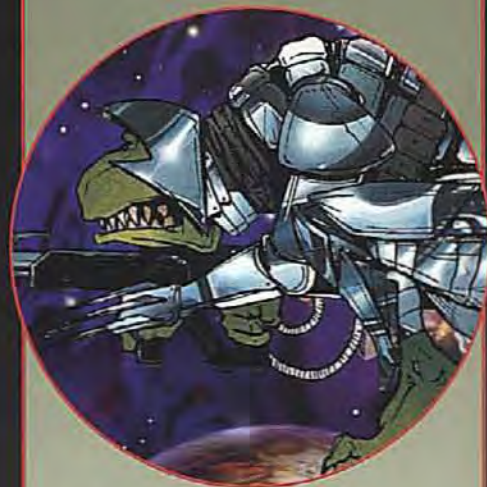
Three Minor Races . . .

Presented here for the first time are three significant "minor races" from Zhodani and Vargr territory: the tyrannosaurian **Drakarans,** the arachnoid **Clotho,** and the newly discovered, enigmatic **Sheol.** Almost unknown in Imperial territory, these races are growing powers in the Zhodani Consulate and the Vargr Extents.

Endless Trouble!

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