

SOUTHERN LEAGUEBOOK THREE

DP9-036

MEKONG DOMINION



FOUR...
ATSI...
TN 590...
BROTHERHOOD...
1531...
MEKONG DOMINION ESTABLISHED...
TN 1936...
CONCORDAT GRANTS THE TERRA NOVA CORPORATE...
HIP ENDEAVOR... TN 08 FIRST SETTLEMENTS... TN 45...
TN 580 EXPLORATION BROTHERHOOD ESTABLISHED...
TN 798 NEW OSAKA FOUNDED... TN 913 THE EXPLORATION...
TSANG FOUNDED... TN 1526 REVOLT OF THE PEACEKEEPERS... TN...
THE MEKONG ALLIANCE... TN 1552 SURRENDER OF... TN 1562...
TN 1913 MEKONG/WASHINGTON OFFENSIVE...
TN 1935 SECRET MEETING IN WASHINGTON...



NO GUARD THE DRAGON LAND OF THE DRAGON

HEAVY SOURCEBOOK

GEAR



DREAM POD 9

SOUTHERN LEAGUEBOOK THREE

MEKONG DOMINION

Taipan Arron Logan inserted the datachip into the reader slot that had silently opened on his previously featureless desk. He turned to face the large holoprojector set into a corner of his spacious office. The light dimmed as the windows autopolarized to filter out the rays of the sun.

The report was brief and to the point. The short film of orbital workers unloading shuttles and securing the supplies within the holds of a Southern long range ship matched the description he had received from his agent at the Port Oasis spaceport. He pondered the information for a moment.

"Your instructions, master?"

The shadowy figure had remained perfectly silent and still up to now, barely noticeable in a dark suit of conservative cut. Logan turned to face him.

"Ensure that the next launch encounters an... incident." He smiled slightly. "Then let it known that we have an opening in the schedule of our own factory."

After all, he thought, why be satisfied with just the planet when one could sell to the whole system?

While the majority of the planet is bracing itself for what seems like an inevitable conflict, the Mekong Dominion is already engaging in all out warfare. Merchant princes send forth their delegations deep within the Dominion's neighbors, entrenching themselves in the financial heartland of both enemies and allies. Deceit and trickery are seen simply as the cost of doing business. While the rest of the planet steels for the coming battles, the Dominion is making itself wealthy.

The viciousness of the jungle creatures is matched by the ruthlessness of the Dominion's corporations. Survival of the fittest is not only a fact of life — it is policy. This sourcebook includes:

- A complete history of the league
- Information on the powerful Mekong corporations
- Details on the Dominion underworld
- Full writeups and maps for all seven Dominion city-states
- Sample campaign set-ups
- New equipment

**HEAVY
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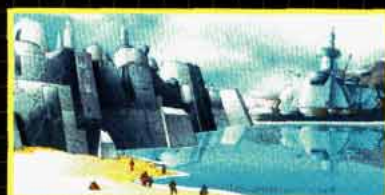
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LAND OF THE DRAGON

HEAVY GEAR™

agricultural

light industry

Mekong Dominion — Behind the Scenes

A strong sense of duty and spiritualism are probably the two traits which have become part of the Western perception of the Asian people. In writing the Mekong Dominion, we wanted a population on Terra Nova to represent those people, those representatives of the oldest civilizations on Earth. We wanted to take them to Terra Nova and see how they would adapt to a new, hostile world. Paralleling Earth's own history, we chose to make the city-states of the Mekong Dominion among the oldest cities on the planet. On Terra Nova like on Earth, the Asian civilizations were the first to get organized, to walk the world as a strong people.

As Asian Societies have on Earth, the Mekong has carried the long and honorable traditions of their ancestors, but adapted several of them to the specific conditions of Terra Nova. Many of the spiritual traditions that have marked Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Thai history find their way into the daily lives of the Mekongese — and don't you dare call them Dominionites — although they have evolved to accommodate the realities of a hostile planet, filled with vicious and lethal life forms. For all their spiritual enlightenment, however, they have become a people driven by money and power, and have become quite good at business. Their reputation precedes them wherever they go on Terra Nova, and they are very proud of it.

As you become immersed in the Mekong Dominion, it will quickly become apparent that it is a league of extremes, of stubborn dedication and unbridled passions, of disciplined tenacity and unpredictable betrayals, of immense wealth and appalling squalor. They do not make a spectacle of their emotions, but it would be a mistake to believe they have none. They may appear arrogant and haughty, but they merely acknowledge their own superiority; they do not flaunt it. Behind the lavish celebrations and carnivals which a tourist may notice in the city streets, there is a delicate and subtle pattern of goals and loyalties which is not apparent to the naked eye.

Mekongese have two visages, and it is a wise man who always knows which one he is looking at. In the Mekong Dominion, some faux pas can kill.



MOGGARD THE DRAGON
AND THE FO DMBT



DREAM POD 9

O T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

Dream Pod 9 Team

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Darren Rider Additional Writing

Jean Carrières Senior Editor

Marc-Alexandre Vézina Line Editor/Developer

Philippe Boule Storyline Editor

Pierre Ouellette Creative Director

Production

Pierre Ouellette Art Director/Designer

Jean-François Fortier Layout Artist

Ghislain Barbe Illustrator/Colorist

Normand Bilodeau Computer Illustrator/Colorist

Charles-Emmanuel Ouellette Computer Illustrator/
Colorist

Administration

Robert Dubois Marketing Manager

Stéphane Brochu Sales Manager

Silhouette

Gene Marcil System Designer

Stéphane I. Matis System Designer

DEDICATION

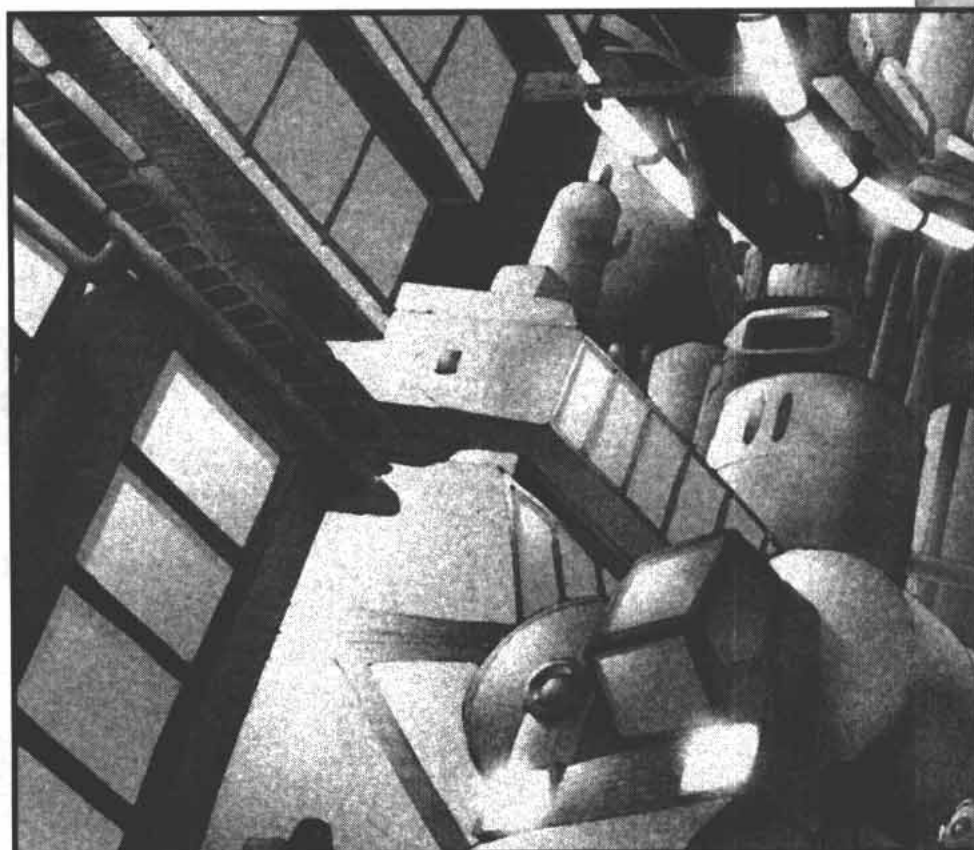
To Nigel Findley:

Who contributed so much to so many games.

His work shaped many of the worlds we all play in and he will be missed as a writer, colleague, mentor and a very dear friend.

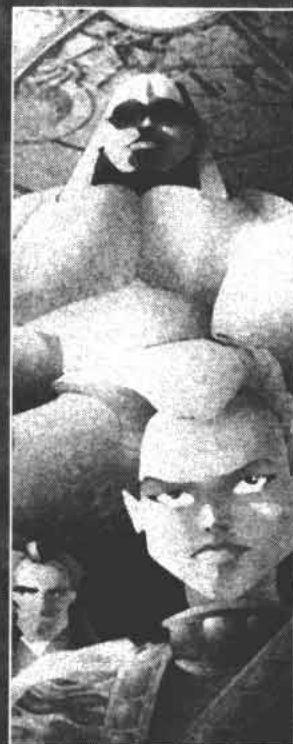
—Andy

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Dream Pod 9 can also be reached through the internet. Check the rec.games.mechanics conference for support and information about Heavy Gear. You can also visit our World Wide Web page at <http://www.dpg.com/>.

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A NEW BEGINNING

Yuri sighed deeply as she gazed across the densely packed fernwood below her. The jungle was so beautiful at this time of the cycle. It was hard to believe that soon she would be leaving it, perhaps forever.

The small agricultural commune had been her home ever since her parents had died — was it so many cycles ago? — and she would sorely miss it. It was a shelter against the jungle of human society as well as the flora and fauna. The kind peasants of the village had accepted her into their lives, raising her in their traditions, teaching her, giving her love and support as she grew up to womanhood.

But most of all, she would miss grumpy old Sang, her foster father. He had taken her in, giving her food and a room to sleep in while he slept on the floor by the cooking fire. At first she had felt guilty for taking his bed, forcing him to lay upon the cold floor. Smiling, she remembered that first night and the controlled, indignant anger in Sang's eyes as she meekly refused the offered bed. How was she, a mere child of four cycles, to know how badly she had insulted her guest by refusing? Over time, things had settled down. The commune women had taught her the customs of her new land, and gruff old Sang had taught her a profession.

Sang was a trapper, one of the brave souls who ventured into the depths of the Yung An jungles to harvest the resources they contained. She was a good student, and he was eager to pass on his knowledge and love of the forest. He showed her which vines made good rope, and which when cut provided drinkable water. He pointed out the medicinal fungus and the dangerous and poisonous plants. Together, they trapped deadly scorpion serpents to sell to traveling convoys and even stalked fearsome pack lizards, whose vicious temper flared even brighter than their rainbow scales. They traveled together often, visiting little-known places of great, almost magical, beauty. Even when his health started failing him, he insisted that they still trek together to find new wonders, his shrunken frame leaning on a gnarled walking stick. Yuri thanked his memory deeply for the joy of the hunt and for sharing the wonders of the jungle with her.

She looked back at Sang's grave, where he laid with his ancestors and the rest of the village's inhabitants. The gruesome task of gathering and preparing the bodies had taken her most of the day. She worked without conscious thoughts, oblivious to the unnatural silence of the forest.

She brushed dark mud from her hands and intoned a brief prayer to the ancestors and the spirits of the forest to protect their new charges. Thin, aromatic wood strips burned slowly above the rough stones, the smoke rising in thin wisps in the still, humid air. The smell of it clung to her dirty gloves; she brought her clasped hands to her lips, reminding her of the blacked, charred commune now hidden within the jungle's depths. A single tear traced its way through the soot encrusting her face, fatigue and grief finally making their way out from under her hardened facade.

She hefted her travel pack onto her shoulder and straightened her rifle's strap. The day was just beginning, and she had much hunting left to do: the soldats wouldn't come to her. A grim smile creased her lips.

In spite of her anger and the loss she felt, she couldn't help but look forward to the hunt.



1.1 LAND OF THE DRAGONS

The Mekong Dominion is a large, economically driven league that covers a large area of the southern hemisphere. Cunningly mercantile, it has grown steadily stronger throughout its history by its trade relations with the other leagues of the Antarctic. Its corporate government has perfected the art of backroom politics, and the Mekong merchant-politicians are master at turning a profit and making others do their work for them. But while the Dominion presents a united front to the outside world, the league is constantly divided by power struggles, lobbying and corruption. It is a land of extremes, where unbelievable wealth exists side-by-side with abject poverty and misery.

The Mekong Dominion is unlike any other leagues on Terra Nova, both culturally and politically. The customs and procedures of the land will pose new challenges for all outsider, for the Dominion people are drawing upon an extensive and complex cultural background that reaches as far back as the vanished civilizations of ancient Earth. Traditions and rituals are enmeshed into everyday life, giving the people of the land a unique outlook on their existence and creating intricate social relationships. In a country where criminals are as frequently rewarded as punished, where peasants and squatters share the streets with merchant princes and spies, anything is possible.

Indeed, life in the Dominion is anything but simple. Even the lowly peasants living in the countryside near the city-states are cunning businessmen and traders. The viciousness of the creatures that populate the Mekong wilderness is matched by the ruthlessness of the Dominion's corporations. The fight for survival in the league is brutal and unending, be it in the boardroom, the street, the battlefield or the underbrush. Here, survival of the fittest is not only a fact of life — it is policy.

While the majority of the planet is bracing itself for what seems like a drawn-out conflict between the polar confederations, the Mekong Dominion is already engaging in all out warfare. Merchant princes send forth their delegations into the hearts of the Dominion's neighbors, entrenching themselves in the financial heartland of their enemies and allies alike. The Judas Syndrome is alive and well in this league where deceit and trickery are seen simply as the cost of doing business. While the rest of the planet steels for the coming battles, the Dominion is making itself wealthy.



1.1.1 CONTENTS

The **Mekong Dominion Sourcebook** gives Heavy Gear Players and Gamemasters insight into the culture and makeup of the economic powerhouse of the Allied Southern Territories. This sourcebook provides enough information to fully flesh out any campaign based in this league. Gamemasters will find enough information on each of the fully detailed city-states to base an entire campaign in any one of them. They will also find enough information on the surrounding areas — both developed and wild — to provide a wealth of information for a campaign outside of an urban setting. Players will find enough cultural and political information in the sourcebook to add a new level to their roleplaying campaign.

Chapter 2 introduces the unique environment of the Mekong Dominion, expanding upon the geography, history and economics of this powerful league. Gamemasters and Players will be interested in the particulars of this chapter, which contains much potential campaign material. Chapter 3 examines the way the Dominion conducts its business within its borders. To outsiders, the Mekong appears to be united with a common goal of controlling the entire planet through sheer fiscal power. This chapter reveals the actual state of affairs within the league and exactly how precarious its unity is. The foreign policies of the Dominion are disclosed in Chapter 4. Most Terranovans only know the people of the Mekong through their aggressive external policies. All mercantile corporations are expected to follow the dictates of the Mekong Assembly; this chapter elaborates on these policies and details what sort of behavior to expect from a Dominion corporation outside of the league.

Chapter 5 elaborates upon the basic information on the city-states of the Dominion provided by the **Life on Terra Nova** sourcebook. An in-depth examination of the various cities of the league — including the free state of Hsi Tsang — and the political and social powers that govern them provide a wealth of information for Players and Gamemasters. Chapter 6 introduces the rich cultural heritage of the land and its people. The league can directly trace its heritage to its Earth oriental ancestors, and while it has retained much of their original culture, it has over time adapted this legacy to its people's new home.

The final two chapters provide Gamemasters with important aids to assist the running of a Mekong campaign, including new archetypes unique to this league, important NPCs and indigenous wildlife.

INITIATION

"Keep it tight Yuki," Sergeant Hikaru Leung whispered over the radio, "we've come too far to let them get away from us now that we're so close." The intermittent position blip in his Head-Up Display moved slightly closer, correcting the neat triangle formed by the three Gears that were point on this sortie. Hikaru's squad had been hunting the brigands through the heart of the Mekong jungle for the better part of a week. It looked like they'd finally got the jump on them, and none too soon. The old peasant's intel was right on the kronar, though: the Oni did have a staging compound in this sector.

Yuki's voice crackled over the radio, interrupting his thoughts. "I can see it. The compound is surrounded by a wooden stockade, probably to keep out the pack lizards, with no obvious defenses or fortifications. Two guards, light weapons, no obvious problem."

The barely restrained enthusiasm in Yuki's voice told him that she was little more than a green recruit — a child at best. How she had managed to draw this type of assignment was beyond him. She must have made some powerful enemies to draw jungle patrol as her first duty. After a few more weeks of this deep jungle he doubted she'd be as enthusiastic. She probably believed that engaging bandits was bound to be more exciting than trudging through the territory looking for Rotud monks or Mercantile Federation smugglers. Hikaru envied her innocence. Had he ever been that young?

"Sergeant Leung?"

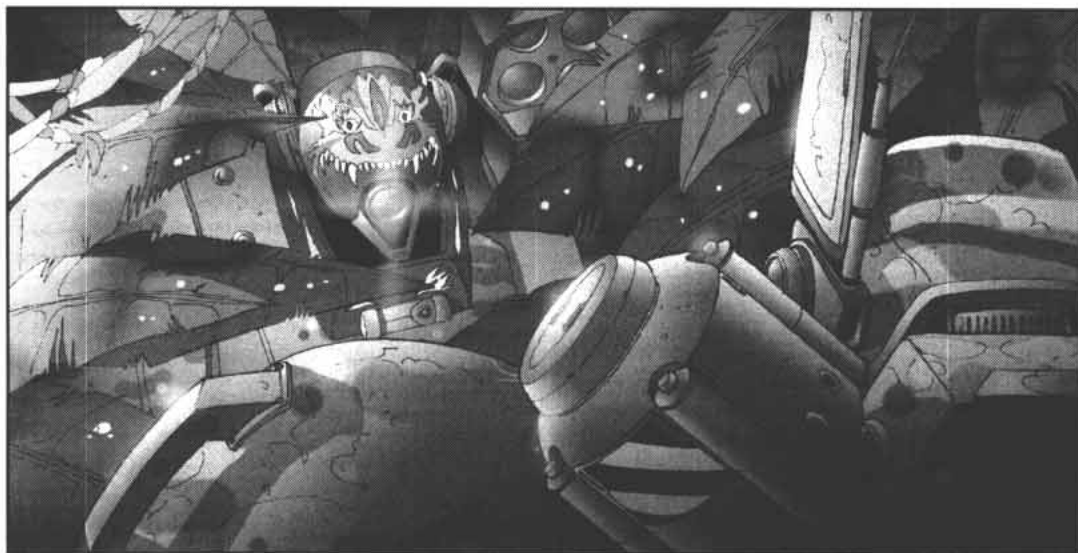
Hikaru snapped out of his reverie and returned to the monitor displays of his Gear. He must be losing his edge, daydreaming in the field. Dangerous, that. All readouts showed green except the air recycler gauge, which had long since been overloaded by the sweltering humidity of the jungle. Adjusting the cloth band that kept the sweat from his eyes, Hikaru adjusted his light helmet and steeled himself to give the order to advance.

Just then, he caught a slight hint of movement in the fern trees to his left and a glimpse of polished metal. His instincts took over and he rolled the Gear to the left just as a barrage of rockets incinerated the vegetation that formed his hiding spot.

"Fall back! Fall back!" Hikaru shouted into the radio, struggling with the control yokes to raise his machine from the ground.

From the jungle before him emerged the large, hulking form of the Gear which had attempted to roast him: a Spitting Cobra, the demonic visage of a snarling Oni demon painted on the broad forehead panel. Its large caliber gun was trained on his cockpit, and the glowing omnicamera held him paralyzed under its evil glare. Somewhere behind, a massive explosion rocked the trees, spooking countless birds and flying lizards. The murmur of the comm signals in his ear filled with static.

There was nothing else to do. Sighing deeply, he raised his Gear's manipulators high into the air and dropped its autocannon rifle to the ground. In the back of his mind he hoped his new master wouldn't make him work in the jungle. He was sick to death of the jungle...



2.1 GEOGRAPHY

Geologists often describe the Mekong as a hodgepodge of some of the finest rock formations on the planet. The league encompasses all the major environmental zones common to Terra Nova, with three mountain ranges subdividing the league into three roughly equal areas. These ranges are largely responsible for the Mekong's climate and ensure that there are enough water pools into the basins and MacAllen belt to feed the rapacious flora or the jungles. The weather patterns are as volatile as anywhere else on the planet and the Dominion sees its fair share of flash storms and tornadoes. They also experience an inordinate number of lightening storms along the western plains. Lightning storms are caused by high pressure ridges moving across the Ngoc mountain, which strip them of their precipitation. These dry storms build intense electrical potential as they move across the plains at high speeds, occasionally discharging their static potential in huge bolts of lightning. These bolts can produce severe property damage as well as raging forest and brush fires.



2.1.1 THE MEKONG AND YUNG AN JUNGLES

There are two jungle basins in the Dominion, the huge Yung An to the south and the Mekong to the north. Many Northern citizens believe that Mekong City is located in the Mekong Basin, when in fact it is carved out of the jungle of the Yung An Basin. This is because the first explorers to set foot in this area noted its similarity to the Mekong river basin back on Earth; it was much later that the Mekong City was founded.

Sheltered between the Southern Alps and the Ngoc mountains, the Mekong basin is a natural depository for run-off from the mountains as well as for the water tapped from the deep MacAllen cave network. The mountains penetrate deep into the crust of the planet, disrupting the flow of the MacAllen belt. Water disturbed by the ranges pools into the Mekong and Yung An basins, saturating the soil and encouraging the growth of lush vegetation. Water is abundant and river system are common. Since the water source is largely subterranean, however, these river networks are transient and can move unpredictably. A base camp built on the edge of a jungle river one day may be surrounded by jungle a week later, with no river in sight. This characteristic, compounded by the density of the plant life, makes traveling in the jungle very hard; only an experienced guide is able to find his way without sophisticated global positioning equipment.

Another hazard of traveling in the league's jungles are the morass. These unpredictable patches of water or saturated soil covered with a moss-like growth which blankets most of the jungle floor, resulting in a trap similar to quicksand or even open water. Many travelers are claimed by morass, and even Earth hover tanks were occasionally swallowed up by especially large morass during the War of the Alliance. The Yung An basin is riddled with the remnants of the siege of the Dominion and a lucrative (if dangerous) trade in war salvage has become popular among mercenaries and peasants.

► FLORA AND FAUNA

The flora and fauna of the jungles are rich and varied, but can also be very dangerous. Snakes and other reptiles flourish in the basins, but none are more feared than the vicious pack lizards. Naturalist expeditions estimate that over a million undiscovered species may be hidden in the Yung An basin alone. Pools of open water are frequent if transient elements of the jungle. Many of these pools are filled with aggressive serpents and microscopic organisms, any of which can kill a foolish explorer.

Fresh water supplies can be located near clumps of filter reeds. These reeds feed on microorganisms through a process of osmotic filtering. Once a reed filters all the organisms in its area, it dies, but not before sending its seeds into the waters. As the groves of filter reeds grow, they create pools of fresh water surrounded by the young plants. These pools are generally a safe source of clean water; without those, travelers must rely on expensive filter canteens and antibiotic pills. The reeds are quite poisonous, but the waters are a source of life for the many agricultural communes in the jungles.

► WATERWAYS

The Dominion has four permanent bodies of open water. The largest is located in the middle of the Yung An Basin and is called the Yangtse; few people travel to this inhospitable area and its shores are relatively untouched. The hazards of traveling this deep into the Yung An basin are well documented and discourage most explorers. A second lake is found between Yung An and Mekong, and is simply called Lake Yung An. The Maglev line passes near its shores and provides a very scenic view of the area. While the lake may offer a breathtaking vista, it is also infested with dangerous microorganisms, and swimming is prohibited. The other two lakes are reasonably safe, except for seasonal fluctuations in microbe levels. Ngorongoro is situated on the shores of Lake Shuswap, which enhances the city-state's recreational appeal. The last lake, Heliosphora, is located south of Hsi Tsang and is used to provide irrigation for the communes surrounding it.

2.1.2 WESTERN AND EASTERN PLAINS

On either side of the Ngoc mountain range lie the Western and Eastern Plains. The largest of the two is the Eastern Plain; the city-state of Olduvai is built near its northern edge. The majority of the plain is dominated by rolling hills covered in thin stalks of grass and the occasional groves of fernwood. Open water is uncommon, but the steady winds of the region carry evaporated moisture from the Mekong Basin over the Ngoc mountains to the savannah. Clouds are common, but rain is rare on either plain. The difficulty involved in crossing the Ngoc has made trade in this area difficult. Few enclaves are built in the Eastern Plain, but many communes and almost a fifth of the league's population are spread across the area. Most of these communes survive by herding Mekong barnabies and have little more than a subsistence economy. A few enclaves have become wealthy exploiting the numerous oil fields located in the Plain. Most of these are small, self-sufficient communities, owned and operated by one company or another. The population is low and consists almost exclusively of corporate employees. One notable exception to this trend is the fledgling city of Mirat (see page 64 in Chapter 5 for a complete description).

The Western Plain is much smaller and gradually turns into the Mekong Basin as one travels south. The closeness of the jungle has resulted in an abundance of petroleum resources. In the ancient prehistory of the planet, the Western Plain was once a huge swamp. Subsequent tectonic movement and a general change in global weather have resulted in a sift of the jungle to the south and the creation of huge oil reserves under the savannahs of the area. Most of the communes there exploit these deposits in some fashion. The Western Plain is also the gateway to the Badlands, and many trade caravans cross it. Military patrols are frequent, but the area is huge and difficult to cover. Chung Tang is a major strategic site in the Western Plain and the Dominion depends upon it to be one of the first line of defense against any aggression originating from the Badlands and beyond.

2.1.3 MOUNTAIN RANGES

The Mekong Dominion has three large mountain ranges within its borders, all of which have contributed to the lushness of its jungles. The Ngoc range is the largest of the three and the most active. Southern mountains are not known for their volcanic activity, but the entire Ngoc range was very active in the prehistoric past. Ash and volcanic debris from this activity have provided the Mekong jungles with the nutrients which have made them so incredibly fertile. The Mekong has two large volcanoes, Mount Kandrasar, near Ngorongoro in the southern Alps, and Mount Ida, in the Ngoc.

Mount Kandrasar is located in the southern part of the Ngoc range, where it intercepts the southern Alps. The latter are the southernmost mountains of the Dominion, and are renowned for their impassability. Like all southern mountains, they begin with gentle slopes and rolling hills, which soon become jagged outcroppings of rock. Crossing the Alps is very hard and can only be accomplished by experienced guides using sturdy pack animals. The high peaks of the range are impassable to vehicles. Though Gears fare much better in the unforgiving terrain, they are unable to cross the peaks. Air traffic is also difficult, but possible. Luckily, a natural break in the range between the cities of Loyang and Mekong allows for traffic trade routes between the city-states; needless to say, this pass is quite important to the League.

The third and final range is the Northern arm of the Serpentine range which forms the border between the Dominion and the Eastern Suns Emirate. The mountains are not high and many passes of various sizes allow travelers to cross through them. ESE rebels and Dominion brigands are abundant in the area, and few trade caravans will risk traversing the border without military escort. The prevailing winds from the south of Loyang carry a horrific amount of pollution from the industrial city, over the range to the emirate city of Smyrna. Incidents between the two cities are common and occasionally violent. Regiments based in both cities will take every opportunity to duel their rivals.

Dragon Mountains ◀



The territory that is now part of the Mekong Dominion was once part of a very active region, as exhibited by the presence of large mountain chains and the rich soil, but it is geologically relatively calm today. Only a few areas remain classified as active, and no volcanoes have erupted in the time that Mankind has inhabited the planet. Nevertheless, the Mekong folklore contains many legends about how the Terranovan Dragon breathes through the ground, its exhalations emerging through the local crust as tiny wisps of smoke and vapors and the occasional rumbling tone. Offerings are regularly left in small shrines at the foot of the mountains to appease the beast and thank it for sparing the countryside.

Of the two main Mekong volcanoes, Mount Kandrasar has been active for most of the last millennium, but has not erupted since before the colonization of the planet (and quite sometime before, according to geologists). Mount Ida is far less active, but some geologists forecast that it will suffer a catastrophic eruption within the next century. Luckily, Ida is one of the more inaccessible peaks of the Ngoc range. A few hardy souls seek out the peak and, after a torturous climb up the treacherous slope, enjoy the scalding hot springs on the summit. Many Shinto priests will travel to the springs of Ida in their youth, and a small Shinto shrine has been erected to honor the spirits of the mountain.

2.2 HISTORY OF THE LEAGUE

The history of the league is one of persecution, betrayal and perseverance. The moral lessons of the past are often the subject of sermons by the clergy or trideo performances, and are quite popular with the public. Of all the people on Terra Nova, the Mekong are the most respectful of their ancestors as well as the least likely to idealize them. The past is just as important to the citizens of the Dominion as the future or the present, and the dishonorable actions of an ancestor can taint a family's honor for centuries.

The history of the Mekong Dominion is one of the most revered subjects taught in Dominion trade schools. Unlike Southern teaching, the Dominion sees no need to embellish its history with political rhetoric, and rarely interferes in the historical curriculum of the schools.

2.2.1 THE TERRA NOVA CORPORATE FOUNDATION (TN 02)

The Founding corporations were composed of hundreds of Asian companies loosely grouped by geographic areas. This massive financial entity was second in power only to the Human Concordat itself and was watched very carefully by Earth's official government.

They renamed themselves the Terra Nova Corporate Foundation, shortened over the centuries to the simple title of "the Founders." A group of seven corporate associations coordinated the financial power of the various companies making up the Foundation. The seven groups were renamed after seven ancient gods of fortune: Hotei (Serenity), Jurojin (Longevity), Fukurokuju (Wisdom), Daikoku (Farming), Ebisu (Trade), Bishamon-tenno (Warriors) and Benton (Wealth). The seven gods of luck are now indistinguishable from the Founders and it is unclear if Dominion citizens pray to the gods of luck or their Foundation ancestors.

When the Human Concordat began auctioning the geographic areas of newly discovered Terra Nova, the area which was to become the Mekong Dominion was purchased by the Founders. Only a group with their financial power and size could afford the cost. The Concordat breathed a collective sigh of relief at the news; they were quite pleased that a potential competitor was leaving Earth. The Founders, on the other hand, were responding to increasing prejudice inspired in part by the mistrust of the Concordat.

The majority of the colonists were drawn from the member corporations, and for this reason almost 99% of the initial colony was composed of colonists who could trace their ancestry to the ancient Oriental nations. During the genetic mixing which occurred during the Ice Age, these areas of the planet retained an oriental way of life even if their genetic makeup shifted towards the planetary norm; even then, the Asian genotype is common where the Founders originated from. Today, about 30 to 45 percent of the Mekong population exhibit the slight oriental features of their ancestors to various degrees.

In 4755 A.D., the Concordat granted the Terra Nova Corporate Foundation a berth on the Gateship *Endeavor*. 250,000 colonists, provisions and equipment crammed the holds of the immense ship as it set out for Terra Nova; nearly two years later, the first scouting party set foot on the surface of their new planet. Under the guidance of Commodore Takayuki Kashiwaki and led by the legendary explorer Jonathan Sewell, the initial survey revealed that the land was as fertile as the Concordat had promised and the abundant natural resources were untouched. Within three months, twelve small settlements were established in the north and three in the southern jungles. The timber attracted the Founders, but the carnivorous flora and fauna proved to be fatal for many settlers. They persevered, and after building stockades and learning which animals were poisonous, they settled into their new environment.

► Yonekichi Katsumata

Though few solid records of this era survived the transition from Earth to Terra Nova, those that do generally credit CEO Yonekichi Katsumata with the honor of establishing the consortium that would become known as the Foundation. His vision and drive spearheaded the push to create the Mekong, not so much as an adventure in colonialism, but as a push out of the Earth system to protect his corporation's financial assets and ensure its future.

Centuries before, a similar corporate entity had participated in the Argos project by committing resources and people to the STL Argo-class generation ships. Yonekichi emphasized the successes of recent Gateship travel and the fact that colonizing Terra Nova was not as much of a risk. In fact, he rationalized the entire venture as a mere reallocation of resources from one planet to another where property and resource costs were significantly reduced. His staff of economic/financial advisors quite creatively produced report after report to support the viability of the project.

In the end, only a few large consortiums (mostly Japanasian) and a scattering of smaller businesses supported the plan, but their combined assets were sufficient to fund the expedition that would establish the new colony on Terra Nova. Katsumata himself did not live to see this, however, for he died two years after the *Endeavor* left its moorings in Earth orbit.



2.2.2 THE FIRST SETTLEMENTS (TN 08/4758 A.D.)

The majority of the settlers remained hibernating in orbit while two thousands brave souls prepared a landing site under the leadership of Commodore Takayuki Kashiwaki. The Founders intended to approach the settling of their new planet in an organized, logical manner: they conducted exhaustive tests and feasibility studies from orbit, mapping and cataloguing the resources of the area, creating a grand plan for the exploitation of the land. A year later, the first city was ready for its new inhabitants. A grand celebration was held when the landing craft left the *Endeavor* to form the backbone of the first city, Yung An.

Many smaller settlements flourished under the guidance of Yung An, and in a few cycles the city and its resources were transported across the southern hemisphere to fuel the development of the other struggling colonies. Capital from Yung An was pivotal in the development of the southern maglev line and thousands of Founders worked to make it a reality. By 5110, raw materials produced by the new colony — such as lumber, rice and steel — were being shipped across the south.

• ATSI

Atsi's growth was largely due to its importance as a refining center for the rich fossil fuel deposits to the north. With this growth came a sense of importance which the inhabitants of the town demanded be recognized. Fearing a fracture within the colony, Commodore Takayuki, now an old man, granted the town independent status as an equal of Yung An (for many cycles, there was a large degree of animosity between Yung An and Atsi residents over the issue). Many historians applaud this visionary approach which successfully defused many of the political problems the other colonies were facing. It was decided that a formal contract would be drafted, allowing any settlement of over 60,000 people to declare independence from the control of the Founding corporations; existing contracts and trade agreements would be unaffected. Perhaps Takayuki knew that the Foundation was not equipped to provide an effective government, but merely the basis of one.

The Founding companies did not disappear right away but lingered for decades, slowly losing power and prestige in the face of the aggressive new companies being born in the area's many settlements. Eventually, the Founders were less a central government and just seven of the largest corporate entities within the area. Corporations flourished in this frontier environment; much of the capital which spurred on the growth of the settlements was due to trade with other colonies. Throughout this age of growth, the Founders adopted an isolationist attitude which distanced them from the other colonies on Terra Nova. Trade was one thing, but mingling with the other colonies was discouraged.

• MEKONG CITY

The wealth of the jungle was attractive to the early colonists, but the hazards were real and lethal. The size of settlements was limited by the need to protect the inhabitants from the carnivorous fauna. Eventually, it was recognized that it just was not cost efficient for each small agricultural commune, logging camp or pharmaceutical harvesting station to be expected to ship its products alone. A central shipping point was required, and the Mekong settlement was created.

As a center for the development of the jungle, Mekong was a huge success, setting an unprecedented rate of growth which it sustained for well over three decades before leveling off. More importantly, the city demonstrated what the concerted cooperation of varied business interests could accomplish. The lesson set the tone for the future development of the area. Trade agreements between corporations were merged into city-states created to develop the resources of a given area and distribute the profits throughout the corporate entities involved.

The Exploration Brotherhood ◀



Yong Gas & Oil, a petroleum exploration encampment, came into conflict with Agricultura Nova, a rice growing commune which occupied a vast oil-rich area. Trade negotiations which had been going on for weeks broke down and smoldering frustration erupted into violence. When the smoke cleared, three hundred oilmen and nearly two thousands farmers were dead. The brutality of the conflict rocked the fledgling colony to the core.

In response to the threat of growing lawlessness, Yung An, Atsi and Mekong put together a think tank of psychological experts to study the problem. Out of this council came the Policia system of law enforcement which the Dominion still uses to this day. Major settlements commissioned a constabulary of Policia to watch over their citizens and to ensure the lawfulness of their city-state. Bringing law to the smaller settlements posed a different set of problems, however.

The solution came with the establishment of the Exploration Brotherhood in TN 589 (5172 A.D.). Rugged individual were selected by the council and deputized as traveling constables. All of the new deputies were required to undergo severe personality assessments before being commissioned and were always subjected to intense scrutiny to ensure their honesty and loyalty. The majority of these constables were drawn from the seasoned ranks of the caravan jungle explorers and the descendants of the Founders' survey corp. The brotherhood evolved into the rigidly disciplined Peacekeeper organization which has become a legend in the development of the Mekong Dominion.

2.2.3 GRAND EXODUS (TN 590/5176 AD)

With the founding of the Exploration Brotherhood, the people of the Mekong became obsessed with the glamour and romance of the wilderness. Thousands of citizens left the stifling environment of their home cities and struck out into the jungles and savannas to seek their fortune. Unfortunately, these settlers were completely unprepared for the rigors of nature; many fledgling settlements were destroyed, others were never heard from again or degenerated into a primitive tribal existence. The Exploration Brotherhood tried to assist as many of these misguided pioneers as they could, but there was simply too much ground to cover. Small villages are still being stumbled upon even in the present day, many of which have completely lost touch with their origins and developed local customs.

• LOYANG AND NEW OSAKA

In TN 630, Loyang became the fourth city-state to attain independence as a distinct entity. This city was different in that it was built around one basic industry, ore refining. There were and still are a number of other industries, but none were controlled by the paramilitary Loyang Refining Conglomerate. This corporate entity was one of the most aggressive company to ever exist on Terra Nova. LRC pursued an almost warlike approach to business which quickly absorbed the majority of the other businesses in the city, all under the pretense of consolidating financial power for the betterment of the state and the people.

As more of the area surrounding Loyang came under the influence of the LRC, a backlash of corporate hysteria forced the creation of a standing military in the other three cities. Loyang responded by arming their Policia in a escalating arms race. The region entered a period of corporate cold war which was not relieved as was hoped by the extension of the rail system from Atsi to Loyang. Investment in the northern region started to slowly swing away from the Loyang-based LRC and towards the friendlier southern states.

New Osaka, founded in TN 798, flourished in the era of instability created by the hostility of Loyang. Situated midway between Atsi and Loyang but further to the north, the settlement was ideally located to take advantage of the rich oil fields of the area as well as launching trade expeditions into the Badlands. The settlers established an investor's council which served double duty as the municipal government and a makeshift brokerage house. The new council attracted investors worried by the militant LRC and the city grew rich and large, inspiring the envy and resentment of Loyang.

• THE PEACEKEEPERS

The growth of the Exploration Brotherhood had slowed with the founding of Loyang and the establishing of secure caravan routes. There seemed to be little use for a society of explorers when the cities had no interest in venturing into the wilderness any longer. The livelihood of the brotherhood was in danger of being destroyed. Many of their members were drifting to other fields of work while others lingered staying only for the prestige of the title and the small stipend that came with it.

In TN 913, the Exploration Brotherhood filed for incorporation as a corporate entity which would then offer its services as a freelance exploration, law enforcement, security force. The elders had extensive political contacts which smoothed the incorporation process and resulted in a number of lucrative contracts for the new corporation. The reputation of the brotherhood for fairness and equality went a long way towards establishing a good working relationship with the general population of the colony. The sterling reputation of the Peacekeepers would remain intact to the present day, though somewhat tarnished by what would come.

► Rosita Perez

Rosita Perez, an Emirate refugee, is remembered as the most outspoken proponent of the Grand Exodus. Her televised seances & communion with the spirits gained her a legion of followers, while her church's practice of free love and ritualized (free) drug use enticed the younger audience. Her message of peace, prosperity and profit through listening to the voices of your ancestors, was extremely popular. By the age of twenty five she was a force to be reckoned with on the political scene of the Mekong colony. At twenty seven she was religious movement unto herself and had made powerful enemies among the corporate and spiritual heads of the colony. In spite of intense political pressure and polite warnings, Santa Rosita continued to built upon her power base.

Many theories abound concerning what happened next. Some believe that the civic heads of Mekong City threatened religious genocide, others believe that Rosita's lover was murdered in a botched assassination. Whatever the underlying causes, Rosita's message abruptly changed to a dire warning of a coming apocalypse. She prophesied the doom of the colony, that angry spirits would fall upon the cities slaughtering the sinners. The only hope of salvation was to flee the cities and return to the simple life of our ancestors. She gathered her flocks and led them into the jungle never to be seen again, though her legacy is perpetuated by the forgotten villages scattered across the Dominion, where the simple statue of Santa Rosita, patron saint of the pioneer, is discreetly worshipped.



2.2.4 TERRA NOVA ON ITS OWN

The creation of Hsi Tsang in TN 1458 was a direct result of Earth's abandonment of the colonies. The antipathy of the Human Concordat towards the colonies was mirrored by a distrust at home of the corporations which had formed the Terra Nova Corporate Foundation. Economic persecution soon convinced the Earthbound Founders that they had to do something. A second expedition consisting of eighty thousands settlers and a vast array of equipment and wealth was prepared for transport to Terra Nova. Unfortunately, the conglomerate's petitions to the Concordat fell on deaf ears and a berth on an outgoing Gateship was denied.

At the same time, the Earth government was also cracking down on organized criminal organizations. Decades of persecution had taken their toll and they were but pale shadows of their former selves. The Mafia, Tong, Yakuza and other organizations of ages past had been significantly changed over the centuries and had merged into a loose association called Aegis. While this syndicate bore little resemblance to its precursors and had only a fraction of their influence, it was still very wealthy and powerful. In desperation, the Founders sought out the syndicate for assistance. In return for twenty thousands berths for their use, the syndicate would "procure" a Gateship for the journey.

On December 7th, 5792, the syndicate seized control of the Gateship *Colossus*, forcing its crew to secretly load the personnel and assets of the Terra Nova Development Foundation and their criminal associates. The plan went off with out a hitch until the *Colossus* attempted to leave orbit; an intense running battle with the Earth Stellar Navy ensued. The ship was severely damaged but managed to activate the Gate. Battle damage and resulting instability in the Tannhauser jump contributed to the loss of half of the equipment loaded in the cargo bays and 25,000 casualties amongst the colonists. The ship was barely functional as it limped into the Helios system, its distress beacon screaming for help. Eventually, an agreement was reached. The colonists were forced to purchase the landing site and surrounding area at an exorbitant price which drained much of the capital and equipment they had managed to salvage from their damaged cargo holds. The landing site was called Hsi Tsang.

Initially the remnants of the Aegis syndicate were in disarray, lost in their new environment and demoralized by the destruction of their carefully laid plans. Into this confusion stepped a young syndicate captain by the name of Franklin Miyazaki. In a bold move, he summoned the remainder of the syndicate leaders to a conference in which he laid out a new order. The syndicate would reorganize itself along the lines of the ancient Yakuza clans. The structure and discipline could be the last hope for the syndicate to survive on Terra Nova. Of the forty-seven leaders Franklin invited to the meeting, only five gave him their unconditional support. These five formed the inner cadre of the Miyazaki clan. The remains of the others are reputed to be in the foundation of the Oyabun's palace. The Miyazaki dynasty had begun.

● DISCORD WITHIN THE PEACEKEEPERS

Perhaps the greatest test of the Peacekeepers came in TN 1526. Sous-Marshal Tyler Kuroski was the center of a corporate scandal involving kickbacks to the elite Peacekeeper division, in exchange for certain favors granted to the Miyazaki Yakuza clan. Sous-Marshal Kuroski had specially selected each member of his detachment and formed them into an elite fighting unit which was loyal only to him. With the assistance of an entire Peacekeeper division, the Miyazaki clan was able to establish a stranglehold on Hsi Tsang.

Once the scandal became public, the city-states around Hsi Tsang demanded action. Every council of elders, from the largest city-state to the smallest commune, believed that what happened in Hsi Tsang would happen in their own city. Civilians and corporations armed themselves thinking that a military coup was about to engulf the region. Tensions were rising and clashes between civilians and Peacekeeper forces escalated.

Meanwhile, Peacekeeper CEO Robyn Tokuyama convened a council of all twelve marshals to discuss the crisis. The troops of Hsi Tsang were renounced as traitors to the ideals and spirit of the organization. An amnesty period of two weeks was announced, in which any soldier could surrender their arms to civilians, who would escort them to a pre-determined location where they would receive a fair trial. Any who stayed past the deadline would be judged guilty of treason and war crimes against the people of Hsi Tsang, the sentence being death. Ten thousand Peacekeeper troops were mobilized to facilitate the removal of Sous-Marshal Kuroski.

Some of the Hsi Tsang Division relented, but the majority stayed; two weeks after the ultimatum, the troops moved on their renegade brothers. It took three weeks of brutal urban fighting before Kuroski's army of five thousand was finally routed from the city. More than half the renegades died in the fighting and six thousands of Tokuyama's troops. Four thousands civilians were killed and a further fifteen thousands rendered homeless. The severity of the conflict and the baseness the Kuroski's betrayal threatened to shatter the Peacekeepers and irreparably tarnish their honor.

Over the course of three seasons, the survivors of Kuroski's forces and Tyler Kuroski himself were tried by a court appointed by the Peacekeepers. The court was composed of three city elders from Hsi Tsang, and two each from Mekong city, Loyang and Yung An. CEO Tokuyama presided over the court and personally handed down the sentences and implemented all the recommendations of the court. Tokuyama also personally administered the sentences of those convicted of capital offenses, operating the guillotine herself per established tradition. The recommendations of the court would later become the guiding principles which generations of Peacekeepers would rigidly adhere to.

2.2.5 ERA OF STRIFE (TN 1531-1562)

The largest threat to the security of the Founders descendants came in the Spring of TN 1531. Hostilities between Loyang and New Osaka had been escalating ever since the incorporation of the younger city. Loyang became much more aggressive after the power of the Peacekeepers was radically reduced. Exploiting a trumped up legal dispute over a small oil field, Loyang sent troops against its smaller neighbor. New Osaka had little in the way of a standing army save a small detachment of Peacekeepers and an ill-equipped local constabulary. With a few days of vicious house-to-house fighting the city was occupied by Loyang who declared it a vassal state.

As news of the violence filtered in from the north, the other city-states feared that they would be next. A hurried conclave was called in Mekong to discuss the problem. Each of the cities sent a delegation, even the sullen Hsi Tsang which up until the recent crisis had been isolated from political affairs in the region. The decisions reached in this historic conference would set the tone of politics for the region for generations. The conclave decided to combine military elements from each of the member states in an alliance named after the city it was formed in. The Mekong Alliance of TN 1532 consisted of over 100,000 combat troops and equipment from the member states. A blockade was established around Loyang; the Alliance hoped that the trade embargo would convince the LRC to release its hold on New Osaka.

• THE DESTRUCTION OF NEW OSAKA

Three seasons into the blockade, the Alliance decided to move its troops into New Osaka. They expected resistance but were unprepared for the ferocity of the LRC soldiers. Initial losses were heavy, and they were again forced to siege the city-state. The second siege lasted for well over a cycle before the Alliance succeeded in finally taking New Osaka. When the LRC army realized it was defeated, however, it enacted a sinister plan. The fleeing troops had mined the oil refining stations and holding tanks, and scattered tanks of nerve gas across the city, backed by hair-trigger booby traps. As the Alliance army entered the city, they were expecting a hero's welcome; what they encountered instead was a hellish pit of destruction. The firestorm raged for three days. The few citizens who remained in New Osaka when Loyang invaded were either scattered into the wilderness or killed outright. Within hours, 80% of New Osaka had been destroyed and the remainder was contaminated by nerve gas. Tens of thousands of civilians and Alliance troops had perished in the assault. The city was abandoned; today the jungle has reclaimed it but the ruins still contain numerous deadly traps.

With renewed determination, the Alliance turned its attention towards Loyang itself. Careful not to repeat the same mistakes, the Alliance settled down for a long blockade which lasted for seven cycles. During the blockade, Loyang was subjected to periodic bombardments, commando raids and continuous psychological warfare. Food and fuel rationing made life unbearable for the average citizen while LRC troops kept a tight reign on the population. Eventually, the siege ended with the assistance of Yakuza mercenaries from Hsi Tsang, who worked their way into the city through the sewer system. The team successfully assassinated the entire board of directors of Loyang Resources Corporation. With the head of the Loyang serpent severed, the people of the city rose up and threw the gates open for the Alliance troops.

• THE SURRENDER OF LOYANG (TN 1552, 5860)

The unconditional surrender of Loyang was celebrated throughout the Mekong Alliance. People danced in the streets of every city, even Loyang itself. In spite of the estimated 200,000 dead, great rejoicing filled the air. Amid the celebrations, the Alliance decided the future of the city-state. LRC was disbanded and its assets distributed amongst the corporations which made up the Mekong Alliance. The city of Loyang and its people became the property and vassals of the Alliance. Life began returning to normal but the Alliance remained intact as a military economic and governmental presence to safeguard its members.

Delegates from every city-state traveled to Mekong City where the nuts and bolts of the permanent Alliance would be ironed out. Only Loyang was excluded due to the fact that it had many cycles of rebuilding ahead and the Alliance feared a renewed militancy from it if they turned their backs on the city. The Peacekeepers were restored to their former size and invested with the defense of the new alliance from any aggressors. The Mekong Alliance was formally announced to the world as a political alliance of city-states dedicated to freedom and security. It formally adopted the Contracts of rights and profits created so long ago by Commodore Kashiwaki as its political mandate.

• MEKONG DOMINION FORMED (TN 1562, 5867 AD)

Loyang was finally judged politically and economically stable enough to regain its independence the Alliance council which substituted as the city directors returned control to the local companies. The city was once again allowed to develop as an independent entity. It was invited to join the Mekong Assembly as a full fledged member of the Alliance. Loyang accepted but on one condition that the Alliance be renamed. Many citizens of Loyang still feared the name due in part to the intense psychological warfare used during the siege. The Alliance agreed, recognizing the fact that a simple name change was nothing compared to the wealth of industrial power Loyang could contribute to the new league.

The Mekong Dominion was born.

2.2.6 AGE OF ALLIANCE [TN 1681-1933, 5952-6132 AD]

When the Southern Republic approached the Dominion with an offer of alliance, the Dominion was at first against the idea. The Mekong Assembly did not trust the Republic in the slightest and agreed to certain trade contracts but nothing more. Then the wargames began, troops massed on the Dominion border in an blatant show of aggression. Border skirmishes broke out on a regular basis and once the first agricultural settlement was "accidentally" burned in a "regrettable incident" the Dominion made its decision.

The Mekong Dominion joined the Republic in founding the AST in TN 1681. The lessons of the war with Loyang were well learnt by the Dominion and a war would not be good for business. After an initial show of force by the Republic the Dominion welcomed their new allies with open arms; of course they intended to eventually buy them out through fair business practices rather than military might, but there was no need to advertise this agenda.

2.2.7 MEKONG/ASHINGTON OFFENSIVE [TN 1913, 6118 AD]

The opening shots of the Earth invasion nearly spelled the end of the Mekong Dominion. As the Southern alliance's economic powerhouse, the Dominion was a prime target along with its Northern counterpart, the UMF. A massive assault force landed in the Badlands in Spring (TN 1914) with the intent of blitzing into the South and capturing the wealth of resources contained within the Dominion to fuel their conquest of the planet. The unprepared frontier cities fell quickly in the assault, but were able to warn the capital in time to organize a last ditch defense.

Atsi, Yung An and Ngorongoro fell to the invaders during the initial strike. Luckily, during the initial push the defensive positions of the MILICIA and Peacekeepers were sufficient to stop the invaders from taking the capital. The invading army was forced to siege Mekong City, a situation the Dominion was familiar with from its experiences during the War for Loyang four generations previously.

The Earth forces were isolated from their supply lines in the jungles around Mekong City and vulnerable because of this. They required a base of operations closer to the action than the occupied city of Yung An. Hsi Tsang was perfect for the part and in the summer of (TN 1914) it also fell to the invaders. Unlike the other occupied cities Hsi Tsang had plenty of time to prepare for the assault, for all the good it did them. Two seasons of brutal fighting decimated the population and destroyed much of the city. Hsi Tsang became the center of Earth's army besieging the Southern alliance it also became the center of most intelligence operations in the area. The Yakuza grew rich and powerful playing both sides against the other while skillfully avoiding the purges and atrocities the occupation forces were heaping upon any resistance groups.

From here the Earthers laid siege to Mekong City and later in the Spring of TN 1916 to Loyang. Loyang was the best prepared of all the Dominion city-states to weather a prolonged siege; even the Earthers grudgingly acknowledge the fact that Loyang was barely affected by their effort to starve it into surrendering. From early in the invasion to the surrender at Westphalia, the battle lines varied little. An occasional sortie was launched by one side or the other, but in general the lines remained static for the duration of the Mekong offensive.

• THE POST-WAR EVENTS

With the exodus of the Earthers Hsi Tsang was left with a gap in its political structure a vacuum happily filled by the Miyazaki Yakuza. Miyazaki declared the city-state's independence from the Dominion, claiming it was abandoned during the war and left to fend for itself. This was essentially true, but Hsi Tsang was built in an indefensible area while the jungle around Mekong city gave it strong natural fortifications. Miyazaki used the logical military decision to play upon the natural distrust and dislike of Hsi Tsang's citizens for other Dominion citizens. The Oyabun was proclaimed Hsi Tsang's new leader and he proceeded to declare the city-state's independence from the Dominion.

Mekong City reacted with outrage, assembling its Peacekeeper and MILICIA units to teach the upstart a lesson in loyalty. Miyazaki had anticipated this, however, and had already taken measures to avoid losing his newfound political power. When the Mekong forces arrived they found the city occupied by the Lord Chancellor and his personal garrison. Apparently Lord Chancellor Etienne Durocher believed he could best serve the Lord Protector from a luxurious palace in the new free city of Hsi Tsang. The Dominion troops withdrew, but the treachery of Miyazaki is anything but forgotten by the powers that be in Mekong City.

Recently, Taipan Logan of MDC has begun expanding his operations to gain influence over smaller corporate houses, and has also apparently been able to find connections to the Badlands transport network of the Forzi smuggling cartel. Both would be valuable if he wished to establish his own contacts north of the Badlands by circumventing the usual channels. Logan's influence seems to extend into Eastern lands as well: he has visited the rebel lands in Okavango on several occasions. MDC has financed several lesser nobles trying to make a splash in Strathclyde, and one can assume these rising emirs will be indebted to Logan when the time comes. That Taipan Logan brought up the subject of the North with powerful nobles suggests that he has moved aggressively to extend contacts in the Arctic and has great plans for them. Only time will tell what Logan is planning, and whether he will succeed.

2.3 ECONOMICS OF THE LEAGUE

The Mekong Dominion is governed by the pursuit of money through trade and its political structure and ruling Assembly is designed to facilitate the free movement of trade and commerce. Each sector of the league is structured to allow ease in manufacturing and shipping trade goods around the Dominion and exporting them outside of it. 78% of all good created in the Mekong are for export with much of the Dominion's resources is devoted to transporting these good outside of the league.

The hub of these Trade routes is the city of Yung An. It is here that the Dominion rail system intersects the Maglev system, allowing relatively easy access to any potential market on the surface of Terra Nova. Petroleum refined into rolls of polymers from Atsi, manufactured goods and fernwood lumber from Loyang various smaller manufactures along with raw power from Ngorongoro and of course the influential travelers from the economic center of the Dominion Mekong City. The rail system links Loyang Atsi Ngorongoro and Mekong City to Yung An and from there hooks into the global Maglev rail. True the Maglev system actually terminates at Mekong City but this is mainly for passenger traffic as the export/import concerns of the Dominion are dealt with by the huge shipping depots of Yung An.

The other cities are linked by a rudimentary road system which is designed for the movement of raw materials such as minerals and fernwood lumber via huge container trucks and lumber hauleders. These roads are cut through the Terrain and jungle of the Dominion with little thought to the environmental impact of their construction. The roads are poorly maintained due to the extensive cost involved in keeping them clear of encroaching Jungle fauna. Every half cycle or so a work party will travel along the length of each road clearing any new foliage. Trucks with huge mechanical scythes and blades strip the road surface of any new plants then groups of workers spray the remains with a highly corrosive substance which burns and liquefies the vegetation. A strong polymer is applied to the pulpy mass, solidifying it into a rock-hard surface within a few hours.

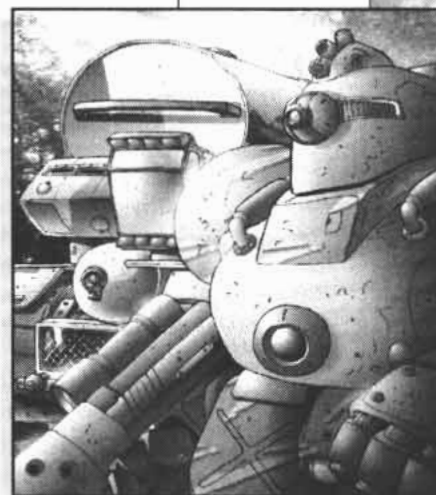
Parties such as this can clear and resurface a three mile stretch of road in a single day but the effects on the area bordering the road are horrendous. Unsightly masses of putrefied fernwood are commonly deposited along the side of newly cleared roads and can last for seasons before the rain finally washes them away. The roads are not immune to the effects of the environment either and are subjected to a constant beating by the weather and flora, requiring constant upkeep to maintain. The only difference with Mekong roadways is that the Dominion does not upkeep the roads as much as they should. Consequently the state of most roads outside of urban areas are quite poor. Huge potholes are common and the road itself is occasionally overgrown with vegetation and washouts are frequent.

As a major industrial center and manufacturing region, the Dominion enjoys a high level of economic prosperity. Next to the Southern Republic the Dominion is the most prosperous league in the AST. Financial analysts believe that were it not for the political and military domination of the Allied Southern Territories by the Southern Republic the Mekong Dominion would soon become the leading force in the southern hemisphere. Southern politicians watch the Dominion very closely wary of the immense fiscal power of the league. Tariffs against Mekong exports are steep and shipping costs meant to slow down the economic growth of the Dominion only serve to intensify the deviousness of their mercantile traders. The occasional trade embargo only serves to hone the bargaining skills of Mekong corporations and pose no serious impediment to business as usual.

► Rugged Mechanics

Off-road vehicles are the preferred type of transportation as nothing else can survive the rigors of the Dominion road system. Most Dominion trucks and transports have oversized wheels to soften the jostling of the poor roads. Transportation between major centers can be hard to come across, as passenger travel is not common. Many of the agricultural and logging villages have no regular transportation system other than the occasional supply or trade caravan. Convoys of trucks are usually escorted by corporate employees in armored vehicles and hired Gears to discourage the brigands which prey upon them. Rural life in the Dominion is like stepping back in time to feudal China: getting to an out-of-the-way community can occasionally mean hiking dozens of kilometers from the nearest road across terrain accessible only by foot or Gear.

Basin Cartage is a typical example of the transportation companies active in the deep countryside of the Dominion. The company is named after the Yung An basin, where it began as a small family business owned and operated by the Ling family. The small trading firm began with two Manx barnabies and a single donkey, working the trade routes between Hsi Tsang and Ngorongoro. Today, six generations later, Basin Cartage is the premier cartage firm in the south of the league and is still run by the Ling family. Over the cycles, Basin Cartage has expanded its service and now includes a fleet of massive caravan trucks (many copied on northern chassis) and five cargo planes. The bulk of its employees, however, still ply the jungle trails leading caravans of Barnabies and horses. Basin Cartage guides are in great demand amongst jungle travelers for their intimate knowledge of the southern jungles. They are also greatly prized for the companies policy of not dealing with brigands or slavers, unlike less reputable firms. The tithe required to obtain safe passage through a bandit's territory is included in passenger fare, though, and Basin guides usually maintain good relations with gangs on their routes whenever possible. Basin employees enjoy a reputation for straight deals and honesty, which by all indicators will push the corporation to second tier status within the next two cycles.



2.3.1 THE MEKONG STOCK EXCHANGE

The Mekong stock exchange is the largest of its type in the AST and lists every major company in the southern hemisphere and many from the north as well. To succeed in the AST a company must be listed on the Mekong exchange much of Terra Nova's wealth passes through this exchange everything from small mom & pop grocery chains to Paxton arms and other multi billion dinar companies trade here daily. National companies maintain office building in Mekong City to watch and trade on the exchange which consists of only 50% Dominion companies the remainder of them being foreign listing. Since this foreign list encapsulates the remaining AST members and many Northern and badlands concerns it is easy to imagine the sheer size of the Dominion's influence over financial matters.

Dealers working from Mekong City can put together trade deals which span the globe without leaving their office. The immense scope of the exchange's dealings is mind-boggling and can be incredibly intricate. For instance if Dominion Motorworks requires a specific capacitor assembly for a new model of their highly successful Hydra automobile, a Mekong merchant/politician may put together a deal which includes purchasing slaves from Hsi Tsang and shipping them to a small village in the ESE in exchange for Bauxite ore. The bauxite is then moved to Loyang where 25 mm HEAT rounds are purchased; the arms are then taken to a Badlands town along with tankers filled with water. Here a trade delegation from the UMF exchanges the water for the capacitors and a trade caravan is set up. Such an intricate trade deal is not unusual and can change on a daily basis. Mekong dealers are experts in tracking and modifying these shipping schedules and other states pay handsomely for their services.

A common trade practice of the Dominion is to set up a number of large trade deals to a specific location in the Badlands. Traders are scheduled to meet the caravan at the specified location at a certain day with their goods. A large number of traders may be scheduled to meet at a number of different locations over a week or so. When the caravan arrives it is huge and always escorted by the *Oasis Jumper*, one of the Dominion's three landships. The *Oasis Jumper* has been stripped and modified to become a floating storehouse meant only to ship good in safety from the many rendezvous sites across the caravan route back to the Dominion. This military escort is enough to discourage most pirates; while its the armament is not as formidable as other landships, the *Jumper* is more than capable of defending itself. It is similar in performances to the Norlight Confederacy's Vortex-class landcarrier, though it has no gun turrets and only half as many laser and missile turrets. In addition to the immense cargo capacity, the landship includes a number of smaller cargo tenders which can also carry merchandise.

Many other smaller trade caravans ply the Badlands but none match the sheer size of the *Oasis Jumper's*. Traveling the wake of the *Oasis Jumper* caravan are a great many entrepreneurs and the entire procession appears as like a huge transient bazaar. It is well known that almost anything legal or illegal can be found in or around the caravan as well as the best prices on the planet.

2.3.2 THE 1ST DOMINION BANK

The first Dominion bank (1DB) is the only authorized lending facility in the Dominion and its rates are strictly regulated by the Assembly. There are a number of smaller banks which offer competitive loans but none are as stable as the 1DB. If your venture is too risky to interest the huge 1st Dominion you may be forced to look towards the smaller institutions - or the Yakuza. All Mekong communities have a branch of the first Dominion Bank though the smaller ones consist of a single part time employee with a personal computer. The bank is involved in all aspect of a communities life and reports only to the Assembly and the Policia. Hiding any relevant information from the bank is considered a breach of Mekong law and carries a severe fine.

The Mekong Assembly uses the 1DB as a vehicle to facilitate an aggressive foreign policy. By investing heavily in foreign corporations the assembly has attempted to seize financial control of some of the largest mercantile entities on Terra Nova. It is unknown how many companies have been taken over by Dominion interests as they board of director's are usually quietly replaced by Dominion employees. From then on it is business as usual except that the majority of shareholder profits are funneled back into the Mekong Dominion and special preference is given to Mekong trading partners. Hand in hand with this enterprising investment policy is the financial venture capital the bank makes available to outside interests. In exchange for voting shares the bank will give huge loans to even the riskiest of ventures. A lot of foreign companies have taken advantage of these loans allowing the Assembly, through the 1DB, to gain a foothold into their company.

1DB Taipan Gustav Cheung is one of the wealthiest men on the planet and also one on the most closely watched. The Assembly allows the 1st Dominion Bank to operate on a very short leash. Nearly a complete regiment of Peacekeepers from the Protocol Enforcement section are kept busy reviewing the activities of the 1DB, guaranteeing that the bank is pursuing the best interests on the nation. In recent cycles Speaker Sogabe has lightened some of the restrictive legislation governing the bank, to make it more receptive to smaller businesses & individuals. In public Cheung has applauded the action as 'historic' and 'a forward thinking trend in Mekong finance'. Privately however, he believes that Miyako is placing the league in a precarious position by shifting the wealth of the country from the corporations, where it rightly belongs, to the peasants.

2.3.3 DAILY TRADE

To many external observers, money would seem to be the sole source of life in the Dominion. It is constantly flowing through the markets and exchanging hands, and its presence is felt at every juncture of everyday life. Despite this, the people of the Mekong treat money simply as a tool, a mean to an end, and have no particular feeling toward it. Wealth is as much a state of mind and a social status as a pile of money in the account. Bank notes and electronic credits are spent, earned, gambled and lost with no particular emotion; the shrewd knows he can recoup his losses easily through the multiple opportunities that present themselves daily.

The Dominion recognises both the kronar (see below) and the southern dinar, but almost any kind of valid currency is accepted in all of the major city-states; every shop generally has an electronic board listing the daily exchange rates for all currencies. One is advised to check the rates independently, however, since many shopkeepers blatantly adjust the exchange rate in their favor. Most transactions can be processed using dinars and prices are usually listed in both kronars and dinars.

Recently the Assembly has levied a 10% surcharge on transactions using dinars in an attempt to curb the booming black market. Illegal and black market transactions use the dinar exclusively, since all kronars are marked. The imbedded data strip in all Kronars (or the coded key in the electronic equivalent) allows the Assembly to track the kronar movements within the Dominion banking system.

• DOMINION CURRENCY

The official currency of the Mekong Dominion is the kronar (abbreviated Kr), whose value has been stable at 0.5 dinars for the past 100 cycles in spite of market fluctuations and increasing inflation. The Assembly and the Mekong Stock Exchange pride themselves on maintaining this 2:1 ratio through aggressive use of money markets and the Assembly gold reserves. The lower value of the kronar is considered especially advantageous to Dominion trade practices.

All kronar bank notes contain a magnetic strip which allows the Civil Service to accurately track the flow of currency within the Dominion, making counterfeiting impossible through computerized record keeping of all kronar serial numbers. The analysis of this flow allows diplomats to track the economy in ways that other leagues are extremely envious of, and also give the Peacekeepers an additional tool in locating and tracking criminal activity. Because of this electronic database, the thriving Dominion black-market prefers the AST dinar (or, more rarely, the Northern mark) for illicit purchases. Coins are divided into demikronar (abbreviated Dk) with denominations between 1 and 50 Dk (100 de equaling 1 kronar). Demikronars are minted in a silver polymer, while kronar coins are golden. The Dominion does not produce 1 kronar bills, maintaining that coins are more durable.

► Dominion Coins

Denomination	Heads	Tails	width	thickness
1 Dk	Dragon	Fernwood tree	15 mm	0.8 mm
3 Dk	Dragon	Cawfee plant	15 mm	0.8 mm
10 Dk	Dragon	Mekong Lotus	17 mm	0.9 mm
30 Dk	Dragon	Creeper vine	17 mm	0.9 mm
50 Dk	Dragon	Amber plant	19 mm	1.0 mm
1 Kr	Crane	Sunshadow	21 mm	1.1 mm
2 Kr	Crane	Pack lizard	22 mm	1.2 mm

► Dominion Bank Notes

Denomination	Front	Back	Color	Length	Width
5 Kr	Standing Crane	Rice fields	Green	10 cm	5.4 cm
10 Kr	Standing Crane	Assembly Hall	Green	10 cm	5.4 cm
30 Kr	Standing Crane	Stonehead	red	10 cm	5.4 cm
100 Kr	Flying Crane	Jungle sunset	red	11 cm	5.6 cm
300 Kr	Flying Crane	Mount Kandasar	blue	11 cm	5.6 cm
500 Kr	Flying Crane	Colony ship	blue	11 cm	5.6 cm
1000 Kr	Crouched Dragon	All three moons	yellow	12 cm	5.8 cm
3000 Kr	Crouched Dragon	Mekong City	yellow	12 cm	5.8 cm
5000 Kr	Standing Dragon	Yung An	violet	12 cm	5.8 cm
10000 Kr	Springing Dragon	Terra Nova	crimson	12 cm	5.8 cm



PUBLIC SPEAKING

Yan walked quietly towards the speaker's chambers. He tried to look confident as he passed the politicians and merchant lobbyists of the capital. Despite his outward mask, the elaborate golden columns and marble corridors of the assembly seemed to whisper to him of the futility of his quest. Yan cradled his datapad close to his chest, his simple peasant garb completely out of place amid the splendor of the Assembly Building. The salvation of the Po Kang village was in Yan's hands — literally.

The datapad contained an innovative plan to revitalize Po Kang from a mere subsistence economy dependent upon the rice paddies and the weather to a thriving industrial center. The elders had worked for whole seasons on this proposal and the entire village had contributed to provide the capital to finance the venture. With this, Po Kang could become a valuable member of the Dominion instead of a mere farming collective.

He and his wife Peng had come to Mekong City almost twelve weeks ago. At first it had seemed a simple enough matter to visit the Agricultural section offices to acquire the necessary permits and register the project. He already knew which person to see, and which papers to submit. Even the offerings to the local temple — for luck — had been taken care of.

Yan soon discovered that the government's established procedures and the actual way things are done in the capital were very different. The money Yan had brought to provide for himself and Peng was soon spent to "facilitate" the review of the village's proposal. Numerous gifts had to be made just to seek audiences. But they had faith in the Dominion and knew things would work out. They had to — the village depended upon them. Now, after many meetings with richly dressed officials in elegant offices, Yan had finally been granted an audience with the industry review sub-committee. It looked as if all his efforts and the many kronars he had spent were about to pay off.

Yan, his confidence somewhat regained by these thoughts, strode towards the assembly chamber beyond which the fate of his village would be determined. While he was proud of the Dominion and its government, he held nothing but contempt in his heart for the dinar grubbing administrators he had been forced to appease and cajole these past weeks. Their hardened faces seemed to mock him, and some had held outright contempt at the pitiful gifts he was barely able to afford. His faith in the league, however, was reaffirmed by the sight of the doors to the assembly towering before him, their fernwood surface embossed with the stylized corporate logos of the Founders.

As he approached the chamber he noticed two Policia constables seated beside the great doors. They rose as he came closer.

"Yan Kong Lee?" asked the tallest of the two.

Yan, confused, stopped in his track and slowly nodded.

"You are under arrest for violations of corporate law. Come with us."

Sometimes, faith is not enough.



3.1 MERCANTILE OLIGARCHY

The Mekong Dominion has developed a system of government unique to Terra Nova. As a mercantile oligarchy, the Dominion has retained the decision-making system and the structure of its corporate Founders. Each mercantile corporation is allowed a seat on the Mekong Assembly if its net corporate worth exceeds 100 million dinars. The corporate entities generally encompass a vast array of business interests. A common misconception is that a large corporation, such as ICP, is only interested in what its name indicates (in this case, consumer products). Nothing could be further from the truth, and many a corporate ally of the Dominion has regretted this assumption. For instance, Mekong Rail is renowned for the size of its intra-league rail system and transportation facilities, but also includes a variety of other industries, from oil refining to textile production.

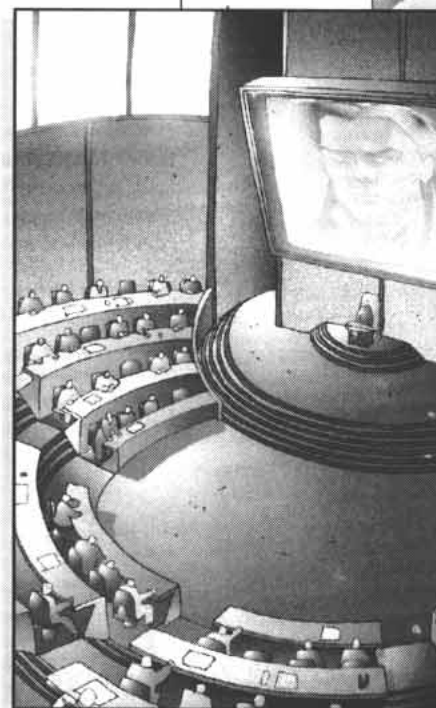
Once a corporation's holdings exceed 100 million dinars within the Dominion, it is given a seat in the Assembly. Corporate holdings are determined solely upon facilities built or merchandise stored within the Dominion's borders. Each 100 million dinars in net worth is called a "voting asset," allowing a corporation one vote in the assembly and thus the affairs of the state. At present, the Mekong Assembly is comprised of 374 Voting Assets distributed among 65 mercantile corporations. The allocation of seats within the Assembly is determined solely upon the fact that a corporation has exceeded the 100 million dinar mark. All members of the assembly use their voting assets to vote on legislation. This type of voting block approach is designed to discourage foreign-owned corporations from entering the Dominion and subverting the government through their votes in the Assembly.

The architecture of the Assembly Chamber is strongly influenced by ancient senate rooms and places the representative of the top five corporations (the inner tier) on prominent seats. These five individuals, led by the Speaker, are among the richest and most powerful people on Terra Nova. Of lesser importance are the Taipan of the middle tier (all corporations with at least two voting assets), followed by those of the outer tier (the remaining corporations). The assembly functions along elaborate protocols designed to give all a proportionate time to vote on new laws, air their grievances and suggest new courses of action. Since the Taipans and their staff must answer to the shareholders — in this case, the citizens who own stocks — the system works not only on the behalf of the corporations but also the people that live under their wings.

A corporation whose Taipan sits on the inner tier may add three rings of gold around its corporate logo to indicate its political prestige. A middle tier corporation may add two rings of silver around its logo, while an outer tier corporation has a single bronze ring. Earning an additional ring (or just earning a ring at all) is generally celebrated with a week-long festival paid by the corporation for its employees.

► Prominent Members of the Mekong Assembly

Inner Tier	# of Voting Assets
ICP	71
MDC	62
Krellen Foods	51
Dominion Motorwerks	45
Mekong Rail	40
Middle Tier	# of Voting Assets
Northern Energy	11
Calliope Research	10
Mekong City	7
Erosteck	5
Ramonair	5
Genesys	4
BSP	3
Mekong Stock Exchange	3
Loyang	2
Yung An	2
Atsi	2
Ngorongoro	2
Dominion Shipyards	2
Outer Tier	# of Voting Assets
47 various companies	1 each
Total Seats	Total Voting Assets
65	374



3.1.1 RUNNING THE ASSEMBLY

Each corporation may send as many representatives to the Assembly as it holds voting assets or as few as one. Most corporations prefer to send merchant/diplomats to govern the everyday affairs of the Dominion. Only when very important issues are being discussed will a Taipan or CEO of a corporation attend the Assembly. It is not uncommon to see Assembly Pages rushing to their corporate headquarters to inform their comptrollers that a Taipan is attending a particular meeting. The appearance of an inner tier Taipan at the assembly will frequently cause fluctuations in the Dominion stock exchange and is not to be taken lightly.

Once a cycle, the Civil Service reviews the assets of all Dominion corporations. These arbitrators usually accept the profit/asset reports of a mercantile corporation at face value, but are empowered to conduct random audits to ensure the veracity of the reports. It is rare for a Dominion corporation to falsify a profit/asset report because of the very large fines for doing so as well as the fact that most corporations are riddled with the spies of their competitors. To protect themselves from these spies and the interference of the government in the smooth running of a corporation, the Dominion legal system consists of three levels: Civil, Corporate and Governmental. Only the city Policia have a mandate to pursue corporate crime. This ensures that the Dominion's Peacekeepers cannot be used as a tool by the Speaker to regulate the Assembly members.

3.1.2 THE DOMINION CIVIL SERVICE

The Dominion Civil Service acts independently from the Assembly, but is controlled by the Speaker of the Assembly. The Speaker is appointed by the Assembly solely upon the net worth of his home corporation. The Speaker also continues to function as the Taipan of his corporation. One might expect the Speaker to use his position to feather the nest of his home corporation, but such is rarely the case; doing so would violate corporate laws governing fair trade practices. For this reason, the Policia have been given authority to pursue corporate law while the government-controlled Peacekeepers have not. Awarding a government contract to a home corporation while excluding a rival whose proposal was obviously superior would be grounds for a corporate suit against the government. If found guilty by the Policia judges, the Speaker's corporation would be forced to serve the sentence or suffer the financial sanctions involved. The Speaker holds the position until he chooses to abdicate the position or is deposed as Taipan of his home corporation.

The Civil Service is a model of efficiency, and is composed of some of the finest officials in the Dominion. The task of interfacing with the corporate structure of the Speaker's corporation makes the Civil Service highly adaptable and extremely efficient. None of the Assembly's Taipans wish to waste their corporate resources by propping up an inefficient Civil Service which generates no income for their stockholders. This has evolved the Civil Service into a remarkable structure which operates under the watchful eye of the Peacekeepers and the Policia, and which remains relatively uncorrupted.

The Civil Service consists of a number of sections which interface with the Speaker's corporate structure while maintaining a discreet distance from the actual workings of the corporation. The various Corporate Sections are: Defense, External Policy, Internal Policy, Industry, Agriculture, Transport, Stock, and Research. To facilitate this interface, the Civil Service provides a board of section liaisons to advise the Speaker and carry out their orders. The actual day to day workings of the Civil Service and the Dominion in general are left to the Civil Service, while general policies, proposed legislation and budget allocations are brought before the Speaker via the Liaison Board. The Speaker's corporation maintains a Liaison Board which mirrors the Civil Service's and assists the interfacing of the government with the corporate structure. All major corporations in the Dominion are made up of the same sections as the Civil Service. The similar corporate structure of all organizations makes it easy to interface with each other, with the government and with the Civil Service.

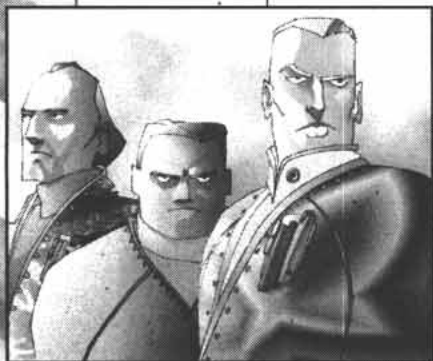
Civil Servant Ranks ◀

There are three types of civil servants, each of which have different duties. They are the Pages, the Lobbyists and the Arbitrators. Within each Civil Service are four ranks, from the lowly 1st class to the very powerful 4th class.

Pages are the servants that work exclusively for the Assembly members, expediting their requests. The lowliest run errands for the member corporation employees while the higher ranks participate in trade negotiations and assist in setting everyday Dominion policy with the Assembly Taipan.

The Lobbyists are paid representatives. Average citizens, foreigners and entrepreneurs seeking to do business in the Dominion require such an advocate to interface with Assembly members and other Dominion merchants. 1st rank Lobbyists issue transient stock to travelers, while 2nd and 3rd rank Lobbyists act as advocates for those seeking to do business within the Dominion. 4th rank Lobbyist are sought out by Taipans to negotiate allocation of resources across the League.

The Arbitrators are the watchdogs of the merchants of the Dominion. 1st rank Arbitrators analyze all the stock manifests for their region. The 2nd rank may conduct random inspections of facilities and records. 3rd rank Arbitrators fine offending corporations and oversee the day-to-day affairs of the Mekong Stock Market. The 4th rank Arbitrators may call in the Peacekeepers to seize and reallocate the resources and facilities of corporations which violate the Contracts of the Dominion.



3.1.3 CITIZENSHIP

The whole Mekong Dominion is a corporate entity in its own right, although it is not permitted seats on the assembly. It is essentially a purely fiscal entity with no leadership other than simple economics and stock fluctuations. In all other respects, the Dominion is treated like any other mercantile corporation. Taxation within the country falls under the jurisdiction of the Stock Section, which also doubles as a social services department. The Stock Section taxes each resident of the Dominion 10% of their yearly income. In exchange, the resident receives shares of Mekong Dominion stock. Only citizens are allowed to purchase stock in the Dominion and every citizen is required to purchase stock with 10% of his annual income. Once a citizen purchases his first Dominion share, he is given a Portfolio Identification Number (or PIN) to access his stock portfolio. All corporate stock is registered with the Arbitrators of the Civil Service. Failure to do so is considered a very serious criminal offense. Each citizen is issued a PIN card which contains relevant personal information such as height, weight, eye color, blood type, birth date and a recent picture. The PIN can allow access to the citizen's stock portfolio via the Mekong stock market database.

To qualify as a Dominion citizen a resident must own at least 10 shares of Dominion stock; without this minimal portfolio, a resident is not entitled to the privileges of citizenship. These privileges include freedom of movement within the state and the protection from local laws. While this may appear unimportant, it should be noted that slavery is not illegal in the Dominion and that a citizen may not be charged with crimes committed against non-citizens. It is not uncommon for children to receive Dominion stock as birthday gifts, though they are not considered citizens until their portfolios reach 10 shares. Speaker Sogabe has recently pushed a motion providing honorary citizenship to children under the age of five cycles, but this move has not endeared her to those who profit from the Hsi Tsang slave market. Few peasants are considered citizens and live in constant fear of being abducted by slavers. A common practice among slavers involves tricking peasants into signing an employment contract with their corporation, promising a profit-sharing program which will provide them with Dominion stock. Unfortunately, the peasants do not realize that they are signing themselves into indentured servitude and that it may take up to twenty cycles to amass 10 shares and qualify for citizenship. Until that time, they belong to the corporation, body if not soul.

Regular Dominion stock serves a dual purpose. By keeping track of citizens, it monitors the population in the Dominion and provides a pension system for the elderly. Once stockholders reach 45 cycles of age, they are entitled to the dividends derived from their portfolio. Until they reach the age of 60, their dividends are used to purchase new shares. An employee of a major corporation may also purchase corporate stock in addition to the Dominion allocation. By retirement age, a prudent citizen's portfolio should easily support him for the decades to come. Unfortunately, the temptation to sell the stock entices many of the middle class population, leaving them penniless in their declining cycles. Mekong itself has the largest population of elderly people eking a meager existence from the streets of the city and living in the sprawling shanty towns of the ghettos.

To travel through the country without fear of molestation, a visitor is required to purchase transient stock. Transient stock affords the owner all the privileges of Dominion citizenship for a period similar to other leagues' visas. A three-week transient stock usually costs between 10-15 dinars and may include restrictions imposed by the Stock Section, such as being only valid for a specific city-state. Transient stock can only be issued by Lobbyists of the Civil Service, which shares information on transient stockholders with the AST, Mekong Assembly, Peacekeepers and city-states Policias.

► Dominion Citizenship

"Contrary to popular opinion, the Dominion is not populated entirely by corporate slaves and pirate raiders. It is the Norlight propaganda machine which describes our eastern brethren in such derogatory terms. And it is the North which has popularized the term Dominionite for the noble inhabitants of the Dominion. They attempt to dehumanize our allies by painting them with the same prejudicial brush as they paint our glorious Republic as a snake's nest. They revile us as cold-blooded killers as opposed to noble lords of our realm, as the true nature of the snake.

"The Northerners use similar demagoguery in their depictions of the Dominion. Labeling our allies as Dominionites only serves to diminish them in the eyes of the entire planet. It brings images of domination and subjugation, both of which are patently out of place in that peaceful and hard-working league. Looking into the rich culture of the Mekong, I have discovered three terms that they use for themselves and others.

"Shimin for citizens owning stock in the Assembly or for members of a Dominion Corporation. Jumin for the unemployed or for those without the required shares in the country to qualify for citizenship. Homon for those who are visiting — a particularly rude visitor may be called a Hae, which roughly translates <cough> as a bothersome fly.

"I beg you, gentlepersons, to keep these terms in mind so as not to further the ends of the Norlights by alienating our allies in the Mekong."

— PR rep. Franklin Ohm Gil addressing the Southern Republic officials on his first and only appearance before the Senate.



3.2 MEKONG CORPORATIONS

The mercantile corporations of the Mekong Dominion are some of the largest nexus of money and power on the planet. A middle tier corporation is easily the equal of a large Badlands city-state, and is capable of calling on considerable resources in a short span of time. Few businessmen would openly defy a Dominion corporation's wishes and orders.

Each corporation is run in much the same manner as a city-state and operates on a similar infrastructure. For instance, ICP will maintain a telecommunications system which is distinct and separate from the one owned by MDC, while smaller corporations like Ramonair must lease part of a larger corporation's system. The same holds true for internal security and data services. The paranoia of Dominion corporations is legendary and wholly justified, but it does give the league one of the most durable infrastructures on the planet due to the massive duplication of services within the corporate world.

Dominion corporations are known to be voracious and aggressive and are always on the look out for new business opportunities. As a result, the consortiums are always highly diversified. In order to protect themselves against hostile takeovers and other hostile actions (such as wars), they have many different holdings scattered across the planet. All corporations, however, maintain a head office in the capital, Mekong City. This is where the real business of the Mekong is conducted, and much of the remainder of the planet for that matter.



Speaker Miyako Sogabe ◀



Besieged on all sides by enemies, the young university student has become a hardened business woman over the cycles. She has been forced to leave behind much of her idealism and many of her principles during her tenure as the head of ICP and the Assembly; the stress and the worries show in the fine lines that have started to etch the skin around her eyes. Despite her best efforts, she has not succeeded in fully getting her children back into her life. Given the current turmoil and political conflicts in which she is enmeshed, she considers that perhaps this is for the better. The additional stress of dealing with rival MDC's Arron Logan is proving to be an unbearable burden, pushing her to take ever more drastic solutions to what she now sees as her personal nemesis. Most her efforts are concentrated on the shadow front, since it is crucial that the world at large remain unaware of the strife between the Dominion's two biggest corporations. Her objectives coincide with those of the league, for now, and so the inner circle of ICP let her be — for now.



Taipan Arron Logan ◀



Cool and ruthless, the Taipan of the Dominion's second most powerful corporation is an ambitious man who lust for power and control over the enterprises and the people of the league — and quite possibly beyond it. Despite his actions, he does not see himself as an evil or soulless man, merely one that lives the principles espoused by his compatriots (albeit taken to extremes). Logan already secretly owns many small companies in the Southern Republic and elsewhere in the Southern leagues, and regularly trades in favor with other powerful people to create a large network of contacts and informants. His campaigns of increased contacts in both the North and the Badlands have lead many to assume that, not content with being master of the Dominion, he would like to take a hand in the affairs of others as well. This would make him a danger to the established order of the league and to the AST, and he will have to tread very lightly indeed in order to escape their attention for a while longer — or at least until he is powerful enough to be able to ignore them.



Hitani Yang ◀



To the world at large, she is an exquisite dancer leading one of Terra Nova's most famous artistic troupes. Few in the intelligence community, however, realize that she is also a master spy in the service of ICP Taipan Miyako Sogabe. For the last few cycles, Yang and her dancers have been engaged in a covert conflict against MDC, ICP's main rival. A tangled web of intrigue has given rise to frenetic undercover (and very discrete) battles between ICP and MDC, even forcing her to shoot her lover, southern agent Paul Berthyo, at one point. The war had more casualties than what mere numbers show. The acts she has been forced to carry out during these operations have affected her more than she likes to admit, particularly the episode with Paul. Her work is now performed more out of duty to her superiors than because of personal conviction. Only time will tell if the hairline crack in her mental armor will cause it to shatter.

3.2.1 INTERNATIONAL CONSUMER PRODUCTS

It is often said that International Consumer Products was built upon the works of great men, and to a certain extent this is true. ICP is the quintessential model of a Mekong Dominion corporation. International Consumer Product is a vast, diversified empire with offices in every major city in the south. It has grown from humble beginnings to a huge economic juggernaut, and for the last 5 cycles has been the Dominion governmental head. To this end, ICP has absorbed, overcome or ruin countless competitors, and today the corporation is highly diversified, with interests in every aspect of the consumer market. The corporation has assets producing an immense array of products, from baby clothes to ammunition, pulp and paper mills to clothing, fusion reactors to pharmaceuticals.

ICP's success is attributed to the aggressive application of its corporate motto: "Through Quality Comes Excellence." ICP maintains an impressive research and marketing division whose sole purpose is to identify new trends and new needs in consumer purchasing (and, in many cases, create them if they do not exist). This division locates potentially lucrative opportunities or markets, and develops one or more products to fill this niche. In many cases, there will already be another company catering to this market. In such cases, the competing product is brought in by the research division and mercilessly analyzed. Within a week, ICP factories will be churning out better-designed, better-engineered and better-constructed versions of the same item.

ICP advertisers will push the new version of the same product at a price which undercuts the competition. After a cycle or so, the competition usually goes bankrupt or is absorbed by ICP, the ICP product becomes the standard, and the price increases significantly. Other corporations have tried to adopt similar marketing strategies, but none have been able to match the sheer size and power of ICP, or their ruthlessness. Several legal attempts have been made to curb this kind of corporate abuse, but so far the mercantile attitude of the Dominion culture have made these impossible to win in most cases (though ICP has been known to pay the occasional fine).

In spite of their ruthless marketing practices — or perhaps because of them — ICP is well regarded in corporate civilian and governmental circles. The present Taipan is Miyako Sogabe, who also functions as the head of the Mekong Dominion league state. Her duties as the Speaker of the Mekong Assembly consume a lot of her time, so much of the day-to-day management of ICP falls to her second-in-command, Xing Ho. Xing has a reputation as a notorious bean counter, and many believe that the tenuous social reform initiatives begun by Sogabe would be cast aside if he ever rose to the position of Speaker.

► ICP Vital Statistics

Voting Assets:	71
Headquarters:	Mekong City
Taipan:	Miyako Sogabe
Goals:	Raising the quality of living for all citizens

► Organization

As the present head of the Mekong Assembly, ICP maintains strong ties with the Peacekeepers and the Civil Service. This has made the structure of the corporation more military based than other Dominion companies. Sogabe runs ICP as tightly as a Southern Prefect; she holds each employee directly accountable for his actions and does not allow for failure in her economic planning. Many believe that the rigidity with which she runs the corporation is directly related to her reputation for liberal reform, for which she is often criticized by the Assembly. Every ICP office is required to openly report its activities to her office, a policy which has reduced the autonomy of the branch offices and created further discontent within the corporation.

While the inner management circles may be dissatisfied with Sogabe's decisions, the last three cycles have recorded undeniable record profits for the corporation. In accordance with Dominion traditions, this ensures Sogabe's position as Taipan for the foreseeable future.

► Current Concerns

Sogabe is directing a considerable amount of ICP's intelligence assets towards the UMF, and has openly declared that the real reason behind this is her own business. It is unlikely that the small amount of technology being filtered back to ICP is the real reason behind such a large allocation of resources. In fact, the only really useful technology recovered by the ghost squads sent into Mercantile territories were promptly sold to Dominion Motorwerks, emphasizing the fact that ICP intelligence are operating within the Mercantile Federation in accordance with the Speaker's secret political agenda.

On the home front, ICP is making great strides in reducing the prices of its local products and is spearheading a citizen movement to increase funding to the Peacekeepers to relieve the Brigand problem. Whether they will succeed is another matter completely.



3.2.2 MEKONG DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

This corporation is easily the most powerful of the Assembly members after ICP, holding an impressive 62 Voting assets of the Mekong Assembly. The humble origins of this behemoth are frequently cited as an example of effective corporate management by experts in the field. What would later become the MDC was initially just another section of the Mekong government whose mandate consisted of law enforcement and prison reform. The original reforms proposed by the review board formed the backbone of the Peacekeepers and City Policia. The section soon grew into a major financial concern and in TN 1642, its income topped 200 million dinars.

The government's fiscal report of TN 1642 was the topic of heated debate in the Assembly. Many believed that the prison reform was nothing but a thinly veiled attempt by the government to fleece the people of their freedom and rights. Many critics asked whether the government should earn profits from a system which provided nothing more than slave labor, especially when inmates were being trained at the people's and corporations' expense. They cited the fact that over 87% of inmates were given government jobs upon release from the retraining institutes, while only 5% were hired by the corporations. The political scandal was played up by the media, resulting in a season of complete social mayhem. In a swift move, the government rushed new legislation through the Assembly which privatized the Dominion's prison section, effectively creating a new corporate entity. While the Assembly was not entirely pleased by the move, its reluctant members were placated and forced to recognize the newly born corporation, the Mekong Development Corporation.

The MDC now allows any corporate or political corporation to recruit from its retrained inmates, and serves as a dual function of criminal incarceration and educational center. Today, retrained inmates — commonly referred to as resources by the corporations and MDC guards — find employment upon release 80% of the time, a figure comparable with the Dominion Education section. Being so closely associated with the city Policia and the Dominion corporations gives the MDC a very powerful political presence in the assembly, one that competes with the prestige of the larger ICP.

MDC employs approximately 12,000 soldats & owns 500 Gears of various models. Paradoxically, many of these soldats are drawn from the population of the institutes. The atmosphere of the institutes is more like that of a school than the prison it is. Incidents of violence within the institutes are rare, perhaps because of the automatic 100 demerits for violent activity or because of the corporation's positive outlook on criminals, who are considered recoverable resources. Many of the institutes' personnel are drawn from the inmates themselves; the MDC is usually the first to offer a soon-to-be-released resource a position. Particularly promising resources are offered early release in exchange for signing on.

MDC Vital Statistics

Voting Assets:	62
Taipan:	Arron Logan
Headquarters:	Loyang
Goals:	To manage the natural and human resources of the Dominion

Organization

In addition to its many retraining institutions, MDC has vast holding in every aspect of the league commerce. To facilitate the overseeing of this corporate empire, the company has a specific division design to implement the policies of the Governing Board. At the urging of Taipan Logan, the Board has recently endorsed a change in the so-called guidance division, making it accountable to the Taipan first, then the board. This has given Logan unprecedented control of the corporation and little or no accountability. Guidance officers are present in every MDC office and have been given sweeping powers within the corporate structure. While profits are increasing and it appears that MDC may eventually assume control of the Mekong Assembly, it is also evident that tensions within the corporation are reaching critical levels.

Taipan Logan has also instigated the acquisition of a number of high tech corporations into the MDC and devoted the majority of the company's black ops budget into these facilities. It is presumed that Logan is hoping to rejuvenate the flagging weapons development division with an influx of new personnel.

Current Concerns

Taipan Logan is attempting to expand MDC's political influence across the planet by negotiating lucrative trade contracts with various influential corporations. Dominion Rail, Shaian Mechanics, Aardman Electronics, Ramonair and PX Couriers are just a few of the organizations to profit from the generous contracts negotiated by MDC Guidance officers on behalf of Logan himself. The exact contents of these contracts is known only to Logan and the Guidance division higher personel, but they generally involve very generous terms and profit margins which verge upon profiteering. It is well known that Taipan Logan is envious of ICP's relationship with Etienne Durocher and is directing much of the company's intelligence towards finding some leverage over the Southern Chancellor.



3.2.3 MEKONG RAIL

Mekong Rail remained the preeminent railway within the Dominion until the War of the Alliance shattered its infrastructure. During the occupation, Dominion Peacekeepers and Terran soldiers destroyed much of Mekong Rail's assets, including the Hsi Tsang Rail Yards, which have never been fully repaired. After the War, Mekong Rail found itself demoted from a multinational corporate entity to little more than a backwater cargo hauler. Still even in its decimated condition, Mekong Rail remained the largest, railway within the Mekong, but with a great deal of ground to recover.

Analysts expected Mekong Rail to be swallowed up by one of the inner tier corporations, or picked apart by smaller concerns. What actually happened was a complete surprise to everyone. The Southern Republic offered an aid package of 25 million dinars to rebuild Mekong Rail assets and purchase new equipment in exchange for becoming a division of Southern Rail. In spite of a last minute opposition from the Mekong Council, the deal was completed and Mekong Rail, a division of Southern Rail, was born again. The merger was one of the few occasions that Republican investors beat the Dominion mercantile at its own game. Mekong Rail is officially owned by Southern Rail, but is allowed to operate as a separate corporate entity to better compete in the cutthroat Dominion market. Critics and competitors often point to the ease with which Mekong Rail can call upon Republic and MILICIA troops to protect its assets as evidence of foreign interference with the Dominion's business system.

To do business in the Mekong, one must deal with Mekong Rail, a state of affairs which has put the corporation in an unparalleled position of power — and vulnerability. Mekong Rail is often held accountable for any difficulties with its shipping schedules. In the high stakes, high pressure world of Dominion finances, any delay can spell death for a company. While Mekong Rail may be the only game in town, it is not assured of this position. Mekong Rail is huge, employing well over 10 million citizens and foreigners, making it the most labor-intensive company in the Dominion. Even with such manpower to draw upon, Mekong Rail is woefully strained to adequately provide the services required by the companies it services. The transport giant is caught in the unenviable position of allocating its insufficient resources to either the many small companies which are its lifeblood — and which, if alienated, could appeal to the Speaker under fair practices legislation — and the inner tier corps, whose political power, if provoked, could destroy Sakurada's empire. Mekong Rail has a great number of clients who rely upon its resources for the transportation of their goods. The allocation of these resources falls to Kin San Lo, scheduling director. Lo runs his section with the iron grip of a tyrant. He is a political savant, with few equals in the business world. It is common for his section to adjust shipping schedules based solely upon the size of the bribe delivered to his office.

► Mekong Rail Vital Statistics

Voting Assets:	40
Taipan:	Keiko Sakurada
Headquarters:	Mekong City
Goals:	Safe and reliable transportation of goods and citizen

► Organization

Mekong Rail is a division of Southern Rail, but retains a separate organizational structure from its parent company and is given almost complete freedom to determine policy within the Dominion. Only the highest level of the corporate structure is required to answer to the Southern Rail, which rarely exercises its control over Mekong Rail. There is little love lost between Kin San Lo and Taipan Sakurada, and neither makes much of an attempt to disguise their mutual distrust, which verges upon open hatred. Lo is assumed to be gunning for the position of Taipan while Sakurada is wary of losing her power. A novel theory hints that there is far more to this antagonism than either lets on, citing a cycle-long sabbatical which Sakurada took three cycles ago. When she returned, it was with the previously unknown Kin San Lo as her new Scheduling Section Head. It is well known that Lo was born in Hsi Tsang and often visits his many friends still living there. The basis of his strange relationship with the Taipan is subject to hot debate within the company hierarchy.

► Current concerns

One major cause of concern for Sakurada's company is the existence of the Brigand gangs. These heavily armed pirates account for a net profit loss of over 6 million kronars per cycle, not including the losses suffered by the clients. To protect their assets and those of its clients, Mekong Rail has created an standing army of armored trains and special convoy trucks. The majority of rail and truck shipments are still sent by conventional cargo planes and drone trains, but special vehicles are used for high security shipments. Using her authority, Taipan Sakurada has signed a controversial transportation contract with the MILICIA. The agreement gives AST troops priority scheduling while in pursuit of Brigands or protecting Dominion shipping. The Southern Republic Army tends to abuse this privilege and provides free passage to its high-ranking officials, who frequently bump corporate shipments to reach their favorite vacation spots. This practice, while infuriating, is overlooked by most Mekong Rail executives, who don't want to antagonize the troops guarding their assets.



3.2.4 KRELLEN FOODS

Krellen Foods is the largest food and pharmaceuticals producer in the League. It owns vast tracts of arable land which it either leases out to peasants or harvests with convicts hired from MDC. Twenty-five percent of these plantations are based around each of the city-states of the league while the remainder are agricultural communes carved out of the wilderness. These settlements are run and supplied by Krellen Foods as independent entities. Life is hard for the peasants working in these settlements, but ingenuity and innovation is prized by the Taipan of Krellen Foods.

Unlike most other Dominion corporations, Krellen Foods allows peasants to advance to powerful positions within the corporate structure. This policy is considered progressive by its proponents and subversive by its critics. There seems to be little common ground between the two points of view and the floor of the Assembly is often the site of animated debates over the merits of Krellen Foods' peasant-loving policies. Taipan Mondee Redman, head of the corporation, firmly believes that giving working class peasants a voice in the running of her company and offering them a chance at real advancement contributes to the loyalty of the masses who work for her. Her critics — MDC Taipan Arron Logan being one of the most vocal — are convinced that her policies are compromising the traditional way of life of the Dominion. Were the peasants to attain real political power, the authority of the Assembly could be threatened.

At thirty-four cycles, Mondee is the youngest Taipan in the Assembly and also one of the most strikingly beautiful. Onlookers should not let that distract them, however. Mondee's mind is as sharp as her exquisitely tailored wardrobe, and more than one unsuspecting Taipan has fallen into her elaborate political traps. She has no qualms about making the hard decisions required by her position and is ruthless in pursuit of her goals. Her agenda seems to include bettering the standard of living for the average Mekong citizen, but then when it comes to corporate politics, things are rarely as they seem. She keeps her agenda to herself and even her closest staff are not aware of her true goals.

The best-known division of Krellen Foods is the Weird But Tasty fast food franchise. Control of this section of the corporation has been the responsibility of Vice President Sang Lee for the last five cycles. Under Lee's command, Weird But Tasty has doubled its profits. The franchise came into its own during the darkest days of the siege of Mekong City, when food supplies were running low. Krellen Foods took to serving innovative meals using the local flora and fauna. Strangely enough, the food became very popular even after the war ended. The "Snake-a-ghetti," a noodle stew with chunks of snake meat, is the house's specialty.

Krellen Foods Vital Statistics ◀

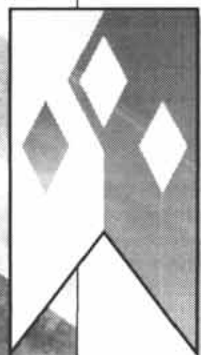
Voting Assets:	51
Taipan:	Mondee Redman
Headquarters:	Mekong City
Goals:	Prosperity through corporate excellence

Organization ◀

Krellen Foods has always invested a lot of the corporation's resources on training its lower-ranking personnel. The prospect of a mere peasant advancing to the rank of Taipan is quite attractive to the working classes (even though this has not occurred for over a hundred cycles) and the fact that the corporation was created by a mere peasant during wartime has inspired much loyalty within the ranks. Taipan Redman has further strengthened this loyalty by encouraging Krellen executives to accede to the demands of its workers whenever possible. Short of unionizing the company — an illegal activity within the league — Krellen Foods has the most responsible management in the league. Sweeping changes within the structure are fairly common, and while this reduces profits, it also increases worker loyalty. Needless to say, working conditions at Krellen Food plantations are the envy of other peasant farms.

Current Concerns ◀

Mondee is one of Speaker Miyako's staunchest supporters and the support of the Krellen voting block has been instrumental in passing some of the Speaker's more controversial reforms. Unfortunately, this has placed a great deal of pressure upon Taipan Redman and forced her to back down on a number of important internal decisions within Krellen Foods to appease the board of directors and retain their support. Mondee believes that the benefits to the entire Dominion offset any loss in political stability she may have experienced. Unbeknownst to Mondee, her most vocal critic, director of research Lex Heibert, is an covert agent of MDC. Heibert has destabilized Mondee's power base within Krellen Foods, forcing her to agree to a number of concessions. Among those, she has agreed to a joint research program with Kali Development to investigate the feasibility of webbling guidance systems for munitions. Mondee is vehemently opposed to any weapons research, but has been forced to concede that the joint project has the potential to be very profitable. She is unaware that Kali Development has been quietly absorbed by MDC and is now controlled by her political nemesis, Taipan Arron Logan.



3.2.5 DOMINION MOTORWERKS

Dominion Motorwerks is ranked as the sixth largest manufacturer of industrial civilian and military vehicles on Terra Nova. The company's prominence in its field is not surprising considering that it was created by the Southern Republic for just this purpose. DM was a small automotive manufacturer specializing in cheap automobiles, such as the rugged Python convoy transport or the sporty Hydra. With the formation of the AST, the Republic bought out the small business with the intention of using the vast resources of the Dominion to fuel their own military/industrial state.

The plan was foolproof. Using the Mekong stock market and the Dominion's thirst for foreign investors, the Republic slowly bought up stock in the small company. Secretly, Republican investors assumed the reigns of control and, using all their political and fiscal might, they propelled the small firm into the big leagues. Within a few cycles, Dominion Motorwerks had obtained military contracts from the AST that its larger competitors could only envy. The growth of the company was a textbook case of what an aggressive corporate agenda, backed by the fiscal might of a powerful nation, could achieve. The Southern Republic's financial experts were justifiably proud of their success — until the Dominion brokers took notice.

The Republic's planners were no match for the combined might of the Dominion's brokers. Almost as soon as the stock exchange took notice of DM, it was already being divided up amongst dozens of Dominion corporations. The carefully crafted structure of the Republic's puppet company was ripped apart by corporate traders like a carcass being shredded by piranha worms. The capital infusion, which had spurred the growth of the company, had attracted a feeding frenzy of speculators and merchant princes. When the dust settled, Dominion Motorwerks had become a multi-corporate entity, as much Dominion as Republic. An uneasy trade alliance had been formed, with the Republican management wary of its new stockholders and the original owners, represented by Josef Godson, wary of both. The shaky truce has lasted for six cycles, but is constantly on the verge of collapse.

Much of the day-to-day operations of the company are in the hands of Akiko Godson, the granddaughter of Josef Godson. The Godsons' reputation as legendary managers is well earned and Akiko is no less a Godson than her grandfather. Not only has she kept the Republic and Dominion from going at each others' throats, but the company has consistently reported record profits. Under her direction, it has expanded to become the primary manufacturer of Gears in the Dominion, most of which are exported to the Republic for use by the entire AST MILICIA.

► Dominion Motorwerks Vital Statistics

Voting Assets:	45
Taipan:	Akiko Godson
Headquarters:	Mekong City
Goals:	To become a major competitor in the Gear development market

► Organization

Due to the military nature of many of the Gears and equipment manufactured by Dominion Motorwerks, the Republic keeps a close watch on the corporation. The watchdog appointed to oversee the manufacturing secrets of the Southern Gears is Sous-Adjudant Marcus Krauseman of the Republic's secret police, the feared SRID. Krauseman is diligent in his work and commands a force of 300 SRID troopers scattered about the League, each of whom may call upon the Southern MILICIA to support his actions. Plant shutdowns and interrogations of workers and managers are commonplace. Marcus takes his work very seriously and is apparently incorruptible, which he has taken great pains to demonstrate by publicly flogging two ICP brokers who had reputedly approached him with bribes. Were it not for the tireless efforts of the Godson family, Dominion Motorwerks would have long since been torn apart by internal rivalries. Only time will tell whether this is fortuitous or not.

► Current Concerns

The internal strife which is an everyday occurrence at Dominion Motorwerks leaves Taipan Godson little time for the political concerns of the Assembly. Still, she has initiated private dialogue with Speaker Sogabe and Peacekeeper Cranston to discuss how she may be able to remove the SRID from her company. Short of leaving the AST, there seems to be little that either can do to alleviate the problem.

One stopgap solution involves the production of new military Gears for the Peacekeepers. The newly overhauled Guardian and Tanuki lines, home-built version of existing designs such as the Jäger and other simple Gears, have been nationalized by the Assembly, effectively removing them from the jurisdiction of Sous-Adjudant Krauseman. Cranston has moved Peacekeepers into the factories to guard these "national resources," a decision which has placed Mekong Constables and SRID troopers in direct conflict on a number of occasions. On the more positive side, it has reduced the number and intensity of SRID abuse of DM workers.



3.3 OTHER GROUPS OF INFLUENCE

Corporations direct the destinies of the Mekong Dominion, but they sometimes have to contend with the activities and power of other non-corporate groups. The social traditions of the Mekong people encourage the regroupment of like-minded people, spurring the creation of multiple associations and clubs dedicated to a large variety of goals and subjects. These can be found at every level of society, from the exclusive gardening club of the rich to the ad-hoc sokar leagues of the shanty towns.

Private organization must be in good standing with the government, with no seditious activities or causes permitted; there are otherwise few other limits, and little legislation to control or shape the structure of the groups. Most of the groups have little or nothing to do with politics and concern themselves only with a daily activity or special interest. Very few have any true political power, since most citizen's associations cannot match the influence and sway of corporate-sponsored professional lobbying groups. Some can and do get their voices heard, however, usually through family or business connections. Gentleperson clubs and elitist private associations sometimes create nexus of power within corporations because of the number of managers and executives within their ranks.

Only four large groups have such influence over the daily life and activities of the Dominion that they are well-known abroad. These are the Peacekeepers, the brigands, the Yakuza and the mercenaries. Among those, only the Peacekeepers (and, to a certain extent, the mercenaries) have a legal standing in the league, the others surviving only through their own power and efforts.

The Peacekeepers are the most important non-corporate organization within the league and are known as the Dominion's guardians. They are renowned for their skills and integrity throughout the land, and sometimes beyond. Peacekeepers maintain a large military presence throughout the Mekong Dominion with the exception of Hsi Tsang, where they are not welcome. While the focus of the Peacekeeper regiments is upon maintaining law and order throughout the league, they are also given extraterritorial Dominion authority by the Assembly while pursuing criminals. It is unusual but not unheard of for a Peacekeeper to travel deep into the Badlands and occasionally even through the CNCS in the pursuit of justice. The Peacekeepers also serve as military defense regiments and are respected by friend and foe alike as honorable opponents. During the War of the Alliance, many Peacekeeper Gear pilots served within northern regiments as a liaison between the two forces.



Chief Constable Francis Cranston

Chief Constable Francis Cranston is the current head of the Peacekeepers. The old man has a reputation for being extremely stubborn and bullheaded, especially when he's right. This reputation is completely justified and often emulated by his troops. Trying to change the mind of the "gray old fox" — as he is affectionately referred to by his men — is like hugging a pack lizard. Once Cranston has decided upon a course of action, he will pursue it to the best of his ability, regardless of the odds.

During his 15 cycles as leader of the corps, he has seen combat against a variety of enemies within the Dominion and in the Badlands. He has been decorated for valor in combat more times than any other Peacekeeper in the history of the Corps, but manages to retain an aura of humility. Under his guidance, the purity and purpose of the Constabulary have remained intact: the Peacekeepers are synonymous with justice, not only within the Dominion, but across the entire planet.

Shrine of Light & Shadow

The Shrine is one of the major symbols of the Peacekeepers' duty to the people of the Dominion. CEO Tokuyama ordered the building of a monument outside Peacekeeper Headquarters in Mekong City after the original Peacekeeper Revolt. The monument was named the "Shrine of Light & Shadow" and honors heroes of the Corps as well as recognizing its traitors. A white curving wall is embossed with the name and accomplishments of each and every Peacekeeper who has died in the line of duty or been honorably retired. Especially notable accomplishments are described at length with a holographic plaque containing a detailed account of the officer's feats.

The opposite side of the same spiraling wall forms the shadow and is where the names of the dishonorably discharged Peacekeepers and their traitorous activities are immortalized for all to remember and revile. Imbedded within the wall are the severed heads of any traitor convicted of High Treason, preserved within a solid block of transparent polymer for future generations. First amongst these is the head of Sous-Marshal Kuroski, who betrayed the Corps for power and money.

The Shrine embodies the virtues of honesty and accountability that all of the Peacekeepers espouse. By praising the integrity of the Peacekeepers, while graphically acknowledging the existence of evil — even within their own ranks — the original builders hoped to instill a sense of duty in future generations of Peacekeepers. The trust that the people of the Dominion still have in the honesty of the force emphasizes the success of their work.



3.3.1 PEACEKEEPERS

Originally formed as a loosely organized mercenary force hastily assembled to protect trade caravans and exploration parties, the Peacekeepers were known as the Warders. As the Dominion grew and the city-states were established, the Warders solidified into the modern day version of the Peacekeepers. The stability provided by the Peacekeepers provided became a rallying point about which the Dominion formed. The turquoise tunic with its distinctive crimson ribbing and the pants with their crimson stripe represented the authority of the consortium of companies which would later coalesce into the Assembly. The unofficial motto of the Peacekeepers is "Stability through order," words by which each Peacekeeper lives and dies.

The Peacekeepers are split in two groups: the Warders, who handle logistics and support, and the Constables, who enforce the law. When addressing Peacekeepers, it is customary to use either their rank alone, their division alone, or their rank followed by their division. Mixing up a Peacekeeper's title is rude but excusable. For example, a maintenance technician with the rank of sergeant could be called Sergeant, Sergeant-Warder, or simply Warter, but never Constable, which is reserved for the law enforcement officers and front line troops.

The training of a Warter focuses on bureaucracy, data management and a great deal of technical expertise. Constables are trained in equal parts of combat, security measures, law and ethics. Warders are occasionally selected for the rigorous training of a Peacekeeper which involves intensive military tactics and emergency measures. Constables live apart from Warders in spartan accommodations that isolate them from worldly vices. Their austere cubicles contain simple bed, a trideo computer and a few personal items. Freed from the trappings of modern temptations, a Constable is molded into the embodiment of law. Zentai Monks see to their spiritual needs, while intensive classes drill the fundamentals of Mekong Civil and Governmental law into them.

After three cycles of training, the Peacekeeper is ready to assume his duties as a Constable. Every half cycle, the academy in Mekong City holds a ceremony announcing the assignments of its new graduating class. During this ceremony, the crimson tunics of the cadets are exchanged for the turquoise of a Constable and the traditional Tanto (knife) is presented to the new Constable. The public is encouraged to attend this function, which always becomes a wild party celebrating the passage of the cadets into the constabulary. It is also a fond farewell to comrades who will soon be going to new assignments with other units and cities.

► Peacekeepers Vital Statistics

Legal Name:	Peacekeepers
Headquarters:	Mekong City
Director:	Grand Marshal Francis Cranston
Goals:	To protect the interests and citizens of the Dominion

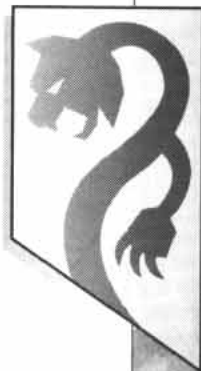
► Organization

The Dominion Peacekeepers are organized much like the Southern Republic Army, with different rank names. Grand Marshal Cranston, the high commander of the Peacekeepers, answers directly to the Speaker and the Mekong Assembly, and is accountable to the Defense council, which is made up of the combined Field Marshals of the Peacekeepers. There is one Field Marshal in each city-state of the Dominion. In addition, there is one Field Marshal assigned to each of the three landship task forces and one assigned to all Badlands activities. There are also three other Field Marshals on the council whose mandate covers Protocol enforcement, Ghost Squad deployment and Off Planet development. This council of Twelve officers advises Cranston on all important matters, and ensure that his decisions filter down to the organization.

► Current Concerns

Cranston has been petitioning the Assembly to increase the funding to the Peacekeepers in preparation for the upcoming war, that he is convinced will erupt soon. To date, only token increases have been authorized by the Assembly, but ICP has secretly initiated a R&D program to update the equipment of the army. Speaker Sogabe is a staunch supporter of the Peacekeepers and has exchanged useful information with them on numerous occasion, and while Cranston does not agree with every decision of the Speakers, he recognizes the sincerity of her concern for the nation.

The Defense Council have noted a number of hot spots which are swiftly escalating in violence, chief among these are the border conflicts between the ESE and the city of Loyang over environmental conditions. Loyang is becoming increasingly restless, presumably due to the influence of Emirate agents, and secession from the Dominion is becoming a real concern. Also, corruption within the Policia is at an all-time high and investigation has indicated that an agenda of subversion by one or more corporations may be guiding it. Finally, the Brigand problem, which has plagued the league since the end of the War of the Alliance, has yet to be resolved, reflecting poorly on the ability of the Peacekeepers to protect the Dominion.



3.3.2 BRIGANDS

Brigand gangs vary greatly from one another in outlook, size, methods and objectives. Their majority consists of ragtag bands of ruffians and criminal fugitives who have banded together in gangs to prey upon simple peasant folk and the occasional convoy. These vary in size from twenty to eighty men, with the odd gang exceeding a hundred strong. The brigands are led by a warlord who will generally build a small base somewhere within the jungle, and raid outlying farming communes or prey upon travelers. Occasionally, rival gangs will clash in bloody confrontations which inevitably lead to the destruction or absorption of the weaker one. Authorities usually stay out of these turf wars, waiting until the dust has settled before (sometimes) mopping up the survivors.

Not counting the petty ruffians who act independently, it is believed that approximately 40,000 brigands operate within the Dominion's borders; some observers place this as high as 200,000, but few people believe these groups to be in excess of 80,000, given the resources available to support them. Experts believe the impact and size of the brigand population to be artificially inflated by some sources, suspecting the latter of having vested interests in exaggerating the threat of these so-called pirates.

The Mekong Dominion does not openly acknowledge the magnitude of the brigand problem, often dismissing it as unimportant. The fact remains, however, that these marauders have a great impact on Dominion life outside the territories controlled by each city-state. It is entirely possible, some say, that Northern interests — most likely Norlight zealots — might be providing some of the larger gangs with the means to disrupt the Dominion, jeopardizing the league's budding relationship with the United Mercantile Federation. These observers figure that national pride prevents the government from admitting just how much they are hurting.

Brigands tend to operate in the southwestern region of the Dominion, near Mekong City, and along the border with the Badlands. The undeveloped jungles of these areas provide ample space for the gangs to conceal their activities while a large number of trade caravans draw their thirst for booty. Hsi Tsang provides a perfect venue for a brigand to fence his ill-gotten gains. In spite of intense pressure from the Mekong Assembly, Oyabun Toshiro Miyazaki refuses to take any affirmative action against them. The Lord Protector has assigned the 223 regiment, known as the Red Lion, to rid the league of this problem. To date, the Red Lions have arrested or eliminated over twenty-five gangs, an estimated total of nearly 1,400 brigands.

Vital Statistics

Legal Name:	N/A
Headquarters:	No central location
Director:	No central authority
Goals:	Pillage and crime

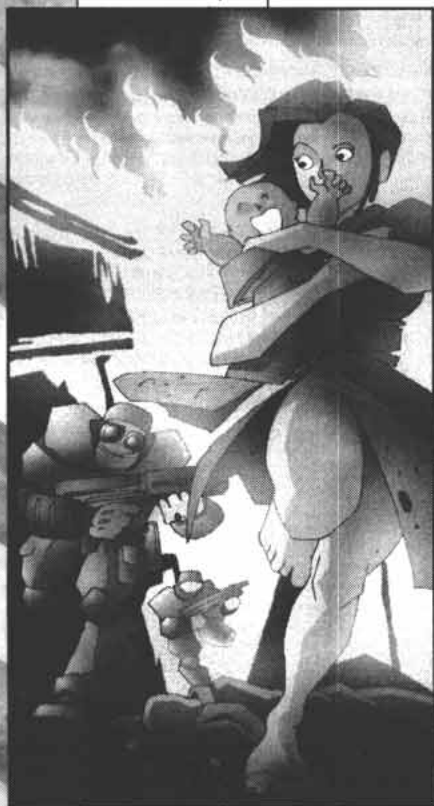
Organization

The largest brigand gangs can be very well equipped, including weapons and even the occasional jury-rigged Gear. Smaller gangs only use side arms and a few rickety vehicles, but they limit their activities to raiding small merchants or demanding tribute from helpless farming communes. These gangs have a negligible impact upon the trade interests of the Dominion and little manpower is expended pursuing them. The corporations are more concerned with the larger, well-equipped and well-organized gangs. These brigands can have a profound impact on shipping and pose a significant military threat to the Dominion. The three largest gangs are the Reapers, the Oni and the Red Cohort. Each gang controls a different geographical area of the Dominion and they prudently avoid each other.

Current Concerns

Brigands are sometimes seen more as a force of nature than groups of outlaws. Many see them as a natural by-product of Mekong society and simply take security precautions against banditry, just like they would check the weather report for tempest warnings. It seems unlikely that unless a concerted (and constant) effort is made, or that Dominion society changes drastically, the brigand gangs will never be completely removed from the jungles of the Mekong. There are simply too many poor and desperate people ready to take up arms to steal the living they cannot earn.

The only type of bandits that receive regular attention are the political ones, the revolutionaries. The forces of the Allied Southern Territories, in particular, expend a great deal of resources and military manpower in vain efforts to root them out of their secret bases and hidden camps in the mountains. They intend to destroy the leaders of these groups before they are able to recruit more of the simple peasant class to their cause, which often opposes the ASTs and the corporations. These revolutionaries are assumed to have an infrastructure throughout the Dominion, and are proving very tenacious.



● THE REAPERS

The Reapers number in excess of two hundred and own over thirty Gears. They operate north of Loyang and attract the worse of Mekong criminals. They are led by a certain Khan, a ruthless man who relishes in acts of pure savagery. There are rumors that he is an expatriate Easterner — some even hint that he might be a relative of Patriarch Masao who fled his kin — although much of his background is sketchy, overshadowed as it is by his current acts of bloodthirsty brutality. Aside from his three lieutenants, no one has met Khan and lived to tell the tale, but his deeds are felt across the north. Farming enclaves are burned to the ground and simple folk are sold as slaves in the Badlands. Trading caravans are pillaged and their guards killed to the man.

So far, the Reapers have thwarted the concerted efforts of the Southern MILICIA and the Peacekeepers to put an end to their reign of terror. Several intelligence experts suspect that Khan might have an inside informer in the Peacekeepers warning him of upcoming operations against his gang. Another possibility might be that he has enlisted the aid of some military specialists who can accurately predict the standard operations of the MILICIA and plan accordingly.

● THE ONI

The Oni operate in the northwest region of the Dominion and consist of some sixty troops, a quarter of whom have their own Gears. Most of their poorly maintained vehicles are of Northern origins, possibly scavenged from the battlefields after the War of the Alliance or bought through illegal channels. They are well connected and while they lack the trained specialists to properly repair their vehicles, they are not lacking in supplies and spare parts. As a result, their Gears and trucks look worn out, patched up and obsolete. Still, against travelers who have no more than hand pistols and rifles, these are more than adequate.

The Oni consider themselves to be honorable bandits, taking no more than what they need to survive. Led by Chang Hak Lee, they attack shipping convoys and unwary travelers who enter their territory, but rarely assault the resident peasants. They do levy a small protection fee from the homesteaders on their "fiefdom" — about 50 kronars per family member per season, either in hard currency or in supplies — but do not respond with violence every time a farmer refuses to pay the tax. Instead, it has become Lee's policy to simply withdraw and let it slip to the smaller local gangs that said farmer is — unfortunately — no longer able to afford his protection. In most cases, the prospect of being left at the mercy of less scrupulous gangs has been enough to encourage peasants to pay the small tax.

Lee's band is something of an enigma. It is composed of the same dregs of Mekong society as the Reapers, yet under his command they have become folk heroes to the simple farmers in the west. When an epidemic of Mekong Influenza struck the area, the Oni rallied to the people's assistance, traveling into the Badlands to secure medical supplies for the beleaguered people. Most people had to pay for the medication, but it was at a very fair price, especially considering the alternative. Regardless of whether the Oni were truly altruistic, their efforts endeared them with the local homesteaders and contributed to their good reputation. As a general rule, the populace prefers the local brigands to the league's meddlesome Peacekeepers, and it is not uncommon for peasant settlements to conceal Onis from Peacekeepers.

● THE RED COHORT

Once much larger than present, the Red Cohort was decimated four cycles ago by the MILICIA strike force which would later become the 223 Red Lion regiment. The MILICIA reports that the Red Cohort once consisted of a thousand troops, two hundred armored vehicles and a hundred Gears, all well maintained and well armed. When it became apparent that the brigands would not collapse from internal dissension, the MILICIA and the Peacekeepers decided to take matters more seriously and crush them in one fell swoop. Fortunately for the Red Cohort, they did not get all the leaders. The latter reorganized themselves and began their piracy anew. Today, they are little more than a handful of men and women hiding out in the Ngoc mountain range, but even though the power of the Red Cohort gang has been broken, the MILICIA considers them the more dangerous of the three larger brigand gangs.

The danger the Red Cohort poses is a pernicious one. Many of its members are political dissidents and subversive union leaders who intend to spread their treasonous ideals to the population of the Dominion. They would have everyone believe that the Dominionite way of life is corrupt and exploitative, that peasants and homesteaders do not benefit from all the advantages which citizens receive in the city-states, and that the Red Cohort has a better way of life to offer. Because such a high percentage of the peasant population lives under the poverty line and have nothing to lose, the Cohort's discourse is not falling on deaf ears. Although they were recently defeated, the Red Cohort's rani's are swelling once again, causing great worry in the Assembly.

Benjamin Loranger, the infamous Mekong terrorist, is known to be a member of the Red Cohort and is considered public enemy number one by the Assembly. Military analysts believe that the original Red Cohort was an army assembled to usurp the Mekong Assembly's power through a spectacular coup d'état, but it appears the Red Lion's intervention nipped it in the bud.

3.3.3 YAKUZA

When the Founders sought to rekindle their ancient cultures on Terra Nova, they brought with them the best parts of their societies and amassed vast amounts of wealth. While doing so, they attracted the attention of the criminals within their culture. Many ancient organizations had survived the social, political and geological upheavals which had occurred on Earth over the centuries. A few, like the Mafia and the Triads, had perished in the new world, but others like the Eurasian Yakuza, Indochinese Tong and the relatively young Noffrican Zulat were absorbed into the Aegis.

The surviving Aegis bosses from the Gateship *Colossus* joined forces and formed a new organization based upon the ancient Eurasian Yakuza. A new clan was to be formed from elements of all the participants. This clan, christened the Miyazaki dynasty, left with the Founders' ship and made a fresh start on a new world. Booking a passage on the colony ship had been extremely expensive, providing the necessary funds to start a settlement. In the confusion resulting from the near disastrous escape from Earth, the Aegis syndicate colonists were in disarray until Miyazaki reformed them according to his personal vision of a Yakuza clan. On Terra Nova, the Yakuza grew and prospered, reviving the ancient ways of their distant ancestors. The Yakuza eventually became an integral part of Mekong society and were accepted. With the War of the Alliance, the Yakuza became a powerful economic and military force (at least in the intelligence department).

Toshiro's clan is frequently marked for special attention by the Peacekeepers — Grand Marshal Cranston bears no love for the Yakuza, probably because Hsi Tsang has no Peacekeeper garrison. The city-state has become a haven for fugitives from the Peacekeepers, a fact which the Mercenary Guild and the Miyazaki dynasty are quick to exploit. Outside of Hsi Tsang, the Yakuza are forced to operate in the shadows for fear of being targeted by the Peacekeepers. The Miyazaki clan rarely commit violent crimes and tend towards "harmless" theft or extortion, and do not appreciate the persecution of the law. Toshiro's clan is by far the largest and most powerful of Yakuza, but the Oyabun has allowed a number of smaller clans to exist under his watchful eye. Most of these are treated as smaller arms of the Miyazaki dynasty, but a few among them openly vie for power against Toshiro. These reckless few become less numerous each passing cycle, however, as they draw unwelcome attention from Miyazaki's lieutenants.

Vital Statistics

Legal Name:	N/A
Headquarters:	Hsi Tsang
Oyabun:	Toshiro Miyazaki
Goals:	Control of the Underworld

Organization

The Yakuza maintain as rigid internal structure similar to a military regiment, consisting of Oyabun generals, lieutenants, soldiers and informants. Seventy-five percent of the clan consists of informants (spies), who fuel the intelligence network upon which the clan relies for most of its income. The remaining twenty-five percent makes up the head and arms of the clan, and includes specialists in extortion, gambling, prostitution and kidnapping operations. Within the hierarchy, a rigid code of honor is maintained; failure to adhere to that code is punished by cutting off one's finger in atonement, or in death for the more extreme cases. Success within the clan is measured by the number and type of tattoos — called marks — a clan member wears. A common means of punishing failure is the removal of a Yakuza's mark with a surgical laser. The process is purposely painful and a distinct discoloration of the flesh reveals the criminal's shame.

Markings serve as a criminal resume. A cherry blossom indicates that the gangster has brought in 25,000 kronars to the clan. A dragon means that the member is a lieutenant; two dragons mean a general. A fox signifies that he has performed a theft of at least 500,000 kronars. A drug dealer or manufacturer would wear a lotus for each 10 clients he supplies. Geisha tattoos are worn by members who run brothels, while their comrades in the slave trade wear the tattoo of a samurai; both have one mark per 10 clients. A moneylender sports the mark of a stylized tsunami (a tidal wave). A viper signifies an enforcer while an assassin wears an Oni (demon) tattoo. These last two marks are among the most feared and prestigious of marks; even the most courageous Policia can be intimidated by the very sight of a demon mark.

Current Concerns

The present head of the Miyazaki Yakuza clan is Toshiro Miyazaki, whose title of Oyabun carries a great deal of power. His residence in Hsi Tsang is expensively decorated and his harem is second only to that of Lord Chancellor Etienne Durocher. Toshiro is known for his brutal efficiency and his iron grip over the clan, which his son twelve cycle old son Akira is destined to inherit. Toshiro maintains a love-hate relationship with Lord Chancellor Durocher. While the Chancellor's taste for decadent entertainment is quite profitable for the clan, his vengeful temper has caused the Oyabun to lose face on a number of occasions. Still, Durocher controls the MILICIA forces within Hsi Tsang garrison, and until that situation changes, the Oyabun is forced to bear the humiliations the governor regularly heaps upon him.



3.3.4 THE MERCENARY GUILD

The Mercenary Guild's headquarters are located in Hsi Tsang, but its influence can be felt across Terra Nova, especially the Badlands. Anyone looking for a life of action and skilled enough to be successful at it can become a member of the guild for an annual fee of 200 kronars (100 dinars). A guild member is given a weekly update of available work and is allowed to bid on these jobs via a computer network. Any business or individual can post jobs on this network free of charge. The mercenary must pay a 3% advance to the guild once the job is accepted and an additional 2% once the job is completed. There are absolutely no restrictions to the type of work that may be offered, but the risks and rewards of the job must be truthfully disclosed, let the employer being barred from making further offers. Some contracts may be refused for fear of offending a more powerful entity (such as the Yakuza), but this is rare.

The computer network is easily accessed via the extensive Dominion communication satellite network, but the guild member's personal code-word is required to respond to the posting. Fraudulent use of a member's code-word or forging a code-word is dealt with very harshly (sometimes lethally) by the guild. Most other city-states frown on the guild's activities, viewing them as little more than hired thugs for the Mekong government. Regardless of the political pressure upon the Assembly, the guild is far too useful to Mekong corporations to ever be disbanded. Industrial espionage is so prevalent in Dominion corporations that the guild will always have clients.

The Guild enjoys a good working relationship with all Dominion corporations, with the Civil Service, the Mekong Assembly and even with a few non-Mekong city-states. The ESE executes guild members on sight, aware that many work the rebels in their League. This does not stop people from posting jobs which are in the ESE or from stopping mercenaries from accepting them, but it does make them more cautious. Many guild members are also Yakuza gangsters, and as such may access the extensive intelligence network of the Miyazaki clan. This intelligence network also makes the guild a clearinghouse for other people's secrets. Of course, for the real dirt one has to go to the Yakuza themselves or else hire a Mercenary to get the required information.

► Vital Statistics

Legal Name:	Mercenary Guild
Headquarters:	Hsi Tsang
Director:	Guildmasters
Goals:	No job too dangerous or dirty to earn a dinar

► Organization

Many Badlands communities also employ members of the Mercenary Guild, and about half of their current members operate in one Badlands settlement or another. Guild jobs can be as simple as doing bodyguard duty for a dignitary or escorting caravans, or as dangerous as assaulting a rover camp. Other jobs involve stealing industrial secrets from rival companies or even other leagues. Dominion law allows guild members to plea bargain with the Policia if convicted of such crimes by offering money or services to the offended party. Foreign governments, on the other hand, view such acts as espionage or treason, often executing the guilty party. It is always in a Guild member's best interests to flee to an area governed by Dominion law if their mission goes bad.

The Guild house is a fortified building situated Intown Hsi Tsang. Armed guards and the odd Gear patrols ensure the security of the building and the surrounding compound, which also serves as a repair and supply depot for guild members. A high level of security is necessary to ensure the privacy of the members and clients, many of whom live in other nations and risk imprisonment if exposed. The building is dominated by a sophisticated satellite uplink system, which allows it to communicate with the rest of the world. Many of Hsi Tsang's local business exist solely to service the members of the guild, especially the Hsi Tsang slave market, which is dominated by guild interests.

► Current Concerns

The Guild sees the renewed North-South conflict as a mixed blessing. On one hand, the battles in the Badlands means more job opportunities for its members, but on the other fighting in a full-fledged war is substantially more dangerous than protecting a village from badly equipped and ill-trained brigands. What's more, the temptation is always present for regular army officers to use mercenaries as expandable troops, despite the loss of the equipment supplied to them.

The Guildmasters have their hands full coordinating contracts and ensuring that their troops do not end up fighting one another in the field. They must also make sure that contracts are respected — something that is easier said than done when dealing with the governments of the South. They may well see the war as an opportunity to get rid of two problems at once.



GHOST STORY

"They don't call us Ghosts for nothing; our lives carefully erased from any record. It's funny here. I sit among people who do not exist, no family, no friends, but my four colleagues do not share my amusement. I'm in the observer position this time out. I can afford to daydream, they're in the thick, they can't.

"We're on another mission, interception or whatever today's politically correct word for it is. How could I even crack a smile, knowing I'm deep in NLC territory. If thing go wrong I'll simply be forgotten, like the rest of us. Our mission's simple, as always: we've got a picture and an address, the rest is at our discretion. He looks like a regular business man, just another poor slob the Dominion wants out of the way. Don't know why. Maybe he bought too many stocks somewhere, maybe he markets a better product than we do. Better off not knowing anyway; sleep better that way.

"The wait is what really gets to you. Sitting in a bush waiting, waiting. Then the moment arrives and all of a sudden you're thrown into action, then an instant later, it's all over. This time I'm forward observer, calling the shots from a fernwood overlooking the road. We planned the hit for here, because it will be easy to lose ourselves in the mountains to the west. Where's here? That's 'need to know,' pal, and you don't need to know. Anyway, my staff is in place. That's how we like to refer to ourselves, 'the staff:' social relations consultant and hand-to-hand expert Pretty Boy; our Gear expert, Orlov; Yovan, demolitions; and today's sniper, Adjanni.

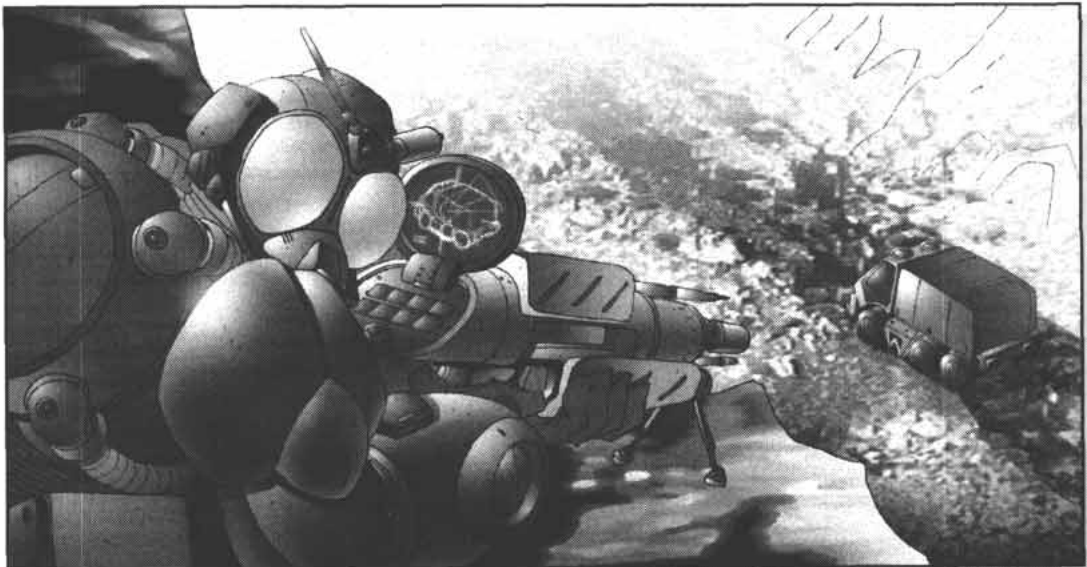
My name's irrelevant, but you can call me Bolt. My staff think it funny that they named themselves after CNCs officials. Whatever, I say; jokes aside, everyone's a professional. When it comes down, I don't think twice about my back being covered.

"Time slips by. It is maybe a couple hours before I heard the trucks. Time to be sharp. A quick hand signal to Pretty Boy to alert the rest of the squad and the show is on. One truck, one van, just as expected. Our man has his window down on the west side of the road, just as we hoped. Great — Plan Beta. I call the play, a single, straight up the middle, and we're out of there. As I run through the cover of the trees, I hear the van climb the hill. Adjanni will be putting a bullet through our target's head any second now. I reach rendezvous, and the mine goes off right on schedule.

"Things *are* going well, I know the mission is accomplished. Our man is dead, but these things don't always go as planned: there's always the chance of a wild card being played. Air cover, wouldn't you know it. One hopper with searchlight and minigun. Unexpected but not disastrous — divert to the second rendezvous site — but we're still in the game, just means we'll have to hustle.

"I thought everything was accounted for, you know. Sure didn't expect to lose most of my staff. Let me make it short. Nobody was at the second or third rendezvous. My team might be alive, somehow, somewhere, but it's not my job to know. So are you still interested in special ops — you think you're good enough to be Ghost material, or are we done here?"

— Ghost operative Dale Bolt, covertly interviewed by ISN



4.1 ALLIED SOUTHERN TERRITORIES

The alliance of the southern hemisphere leagues under the banner of the Allied Southern Territories is seen as an excellent vehicle to further the Dominion's political and economic agendas — for the time being. The Assembly's relations with each of the other AST member-states are largely colored by what they can contribute to the Mekong economy and future plans. For example, to the corporations the Southern Republic is nothing more than a large, opportunity-rich market to conquer from within. In the AST council chambers, high placed Assembly members are making proposals to transfer large areas of the Eastern Suns Emirates to Dominion control in order to "better exploit their natural resources for the benefit of all citizens of the South." Only the increasingly militarized Humanist Alliance is becoming a major cause for concern for Mekong military analysts, despite the long time good relations between the two leagues. As long as the AST remains stable and profitable for the Dominion, however, the Taipans will support the political solidarity mandated by the Southern Republic.

The Taipans of the Assembly may universally praise and support the Allied Southern Territories in public and in front of Republican officials, but behind the closed chambers of the Assembly Hall in Mekong City intense debate is focused upon the viability of the Southern alliance in future cycles. For now the AST is stable, but some factions within the Mekong government are already looking to establish new alliances with other national powers. They hope to create alternate plans and escape routes to preserve the Dominion structure. Much of the Assembly's discussions currently revolves around the Basal uprising, many seeing it as typical of an ever increasing trend towards instability and revolution in the Southern hemisphere. Should true revolution occurs, or the conflict with the North be lost, these events could prove to be remarkable opportunities for the Dominion. It would be a perfect excuse to increase its trade with the Emirates' people and later expand the borders to include vast portions of the neighboring territory. Both the Humanist Alliance and the Republic would be kept busy elsewhere.

4.1.1 SOUTHERN REPUBLIC

The Southern Republic is the Mekong Dominion's greatest stumbling block on the road to total financial domination of the planet. The Republic's firm controls of the Allied Southern Territories' government and military does not leave the Dominion much room to maneuver (except diplomatically, but then again the Dominion is less of a nation of diplomats than of businessmen). The Southern Republic encourages free and open trade within its boundaries, confident that its political strength is sufficient to discourage any unfair trade practices among AST members. Many analysts believe the Republic may have given the Dominion enough rope to hang itself, and will soon force the league back into line — others believe the opposite may be true. The Dominion's trade interest in the Republic are extensive, far more than Republican investments in the Mekong.

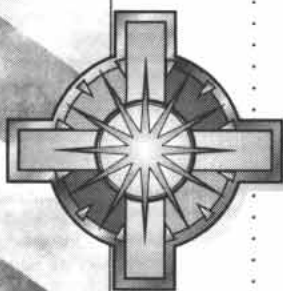
Over the cycles, the Assembly has taken full advantage of this by openly buying into the Republican corporations or silently acquiring stock through dummy holding corporations. In fact, very few Southern consumers realize how many companies they support are Dominion owned (in whole or in part), or how much of a Republic company may be foreign owned. One common strategy involves subverting the board of directors of a target company and directing their policy towards producing merchandise inferior to a similar Dominion-produced product. Either the company folds and the local company picks up the slack, or stock in the Republic corporation falls and the Dominion quietly buys it up — in both case, the Dominion profits.

The Southern Republic's political heads are obsessed with maintaining a popular public image. Political figures will do almost anything to increase their popularity in the public eye. This often leaves Republican figures open to blackmail or coercion, a weakness the Dominion is willing to exploit. On several occasions the Dominion has gotten its way by indirectly threatening the SR's public officials. The Dominion is not always this devious. Sometimes it will help political officials become popular through sheer financial donation or anyway else they can; usually some favor is asked in return. It is also common for a Dominion agent to ask the official to do a favor which will bring them into direct conflict with another Republican of equal power. Dominion agents are quite skillful in choosing rival politicians of equal power, the rationale being that the conflict between the two will continue for many cycles before one or the other is destroyed. The more fragmented the Republic's government is, the more freedom the Dominion will enjoy to pursue its own agendas.

The Southern Republic's military strength is what really concerns the Dominion. Taking care of this issue is very difficult outside of the league's borders, so the Dominion invites foreign investments from the Republic. The more citizens who have assets tied into the Dominion's well being, the more secure they are from invasion. The Dominion is also attempting to undercut the military supply industry, and hence the ability of the Republic to wage a prolonged war. If they control the food and ammunition of the AST, they rationalize, they will be able to control how long they can stand in a siege, especially if the league they are besieging is the one that provides them with these supplies.

The Mekong Dominion is always looking to get ahead in the Southern Republic. Eventually, when the time is right, the Dominion plans to strike. Not with its admittedly large military presence but with the strength of its economy and the political heads of state they secretly own within the Republic's Estates General.





4.1.2 EASTERN SUN EMIRES

The Mekong Dominion and the Eastern Sun Emirates do not share good public relations. The ESE and the Dominion compete in many areas of commerce, especially mining and finished metal production. The competition between the two leagues is aggressive and confrontational, even violent on occasion; careful disinformation ensures that skirmishes are not widely announced. The Dominion has an extensive intelligence network operating within the Emirates, keeping the Assembly apprised of current trends within the league, especially social ones.

The ESE is at a brink of a new age: the Patriarch's subjects are beginning to realize the oppressiveness of their lives compared to their neighboring leagues. Riots and demonstrations are frequent and three major Emirates city-states are now in all out revolt. ESE or MILICIA troops built ups just seem to escalate the problems. The Dominion keeps a close eye on these developments, encouraging the instability of the Emirates. The Dominion has covertly armed rebel factions within the league. The Assembly believes that the ruling class of the Eastern Sun Emirates is unforgivably decadent and that a social upheaval is coming and unavoidable. In the midst of this turmoil the Mekong Dominion expects to go in and take what they want, expanding their borders in the ensuing chaos.

Dominion agents have been responsible for many Emirates uprisings few riots and have financed training camps for the more organized of the rebel groups. Of course, the Mekong arms dealers are making a stunning profit from arming the rebels. The ESE has filed diplomatic protests with the AST's Curia, but has so far been unable to provide concrete proof of these agent's activities or even their existence. The ESE security services are aggressively seeking out these Dominion advisors and a vicious secret war is underway between the intelligence communities of these two neighbors.

The Dominion is watching the ESE very carefully waiting for the Emirs to slip up. When this occurs the Dominion intends to liberate the rightful people of the Emirate or support a new government, which they believe will become a member of the Mekong Dominion. Public opinion within the Dominion believes that the Emirates will self-destruct within a few cycles and that the league's territories will become a part of the Mekong — probably with assistance from the Dominion MILICIA and Peacekeepers. The people see themselves as liberators of the oppressed and the Assembly has no qualms about using military force to help their neighbors. Only political pressure and military threats from the Republic senate have stopped the Assembly from outright invading the Emirates. They are content, for the moment at least, to watch the Emirs lose control over their people, and foster the brewing civil war. The Dominion intends be there to pick clean the bones of the ESE when it dies.

Most Mekong corporations do not invest in the ESE due to its instability and the foreign policy of the Assembly. Stock in the Eastern Sun Emirates is classified as unsanctioned stock and possession of such stock is treated as sedition by the legal system of the Dominion. The fall of the Emirates is expected to be catastrophic, but also highly profitable for the league as a whole.

4.1.3 HUMANIST ALLIANCE

With all the double dealing and deception the Mekong Dominion is famous for, it is a wonder they have any allies at all. The Humanist Alliance is the closest ally the league has, perhaps because they are the only league that the Mekong Dominion is not actively trying to undermine. The Humanist Alliance is seen as a spiritual brother of sort that shares many of the qualities Mekong citizens appreciate: respect for the authority, productivity, spirituality. The Dominion can relate to Humanist culture on many basic levels: the Humanist's scientific approach to life is in a sense very similar to the Dominion's business views. Not only do the Dominion respect the Humanists' breakthroughs in science, they also see them as philosophical equals and possible partners in the reformation of the South.

On a purely business level, however, the Alliance is seen as little more than an extension of the Dominion itself — less of a partner and more of a resource. The Dominion frequently trades materials and products for all types of new technology. Students are also commonly exchanged with the universities of the Alliance to gain additional training. The Dominion schools do not emphasize philosophy or higher sciences, preferring to concentrate upon more practical fields. The Dominion also encourages exchange programs between the two leagues' universities. This allows Mekong scientists to study in more prestigious universities than their own.

Mercantile spies are not common in the Alliance; it is more economical to simply purchase the knowledge, which is the Alliance's stock and trade, than to steal it. Before the formation of the Allied Southern Territories, the Dominion and the Alliance had a non-aggression pact, which has not been violated by either side in centuries. Recently this pact has been secretly formalized into an agreement between the Alliance and the Assembly to share certain technological developments, especially those with military applications.

The Dominion dedicates few troops to defense against an attack by the Alliance, allowing them to keep a large presence on the border with the Eastern Sun Emirates. An invasion from the East is unlikely, but the pragmatic Dominion still remember the suddenness of the Mekong-Ashington Offensive and are unwilling to allow any avenue of approach to be overlooked.



4.2 CONFEDERATED NORTHERN CITY-STATES

The Mekong Dominion turns a large profit with their trading to the Northern city-states, but competition is extremely fierce. The Dominion is not above sabotaging trade negotiations or ambushing rival employees when dealing with Northern companies. They intend to have their products on the Northern market by any means necessary. The Allied Southern Territories have recently assumed an extremely aggressive foreign policy. Military actions within the Badlands and troop movements across the AST's northern borders are common. Political tension is high and it is believed that it is only a matter of time before open warfare erupts on Terra Nova.

The Republic allows the Dominion a lot of leeway when it comes to dealing with the CNCS. Ghost squads operate with complete freedom in the North and mercantile spies have standing orders to sabotage CNCS companies. Theft, sedition, murder and conspiracy are standard operating procedures for Dominion agents in the North. Ghost squads and hired mercenaries disrupt trade routes while strong-arm negotiations tactics steal valuable contracts and assets from the North. The CNCS is well aware of the proliferation of Mekong agents within their borders but seem to be powerless to stop them. Hampered by the lack of an official war with the AST, the Northern government is forced to deal with the Dominion on their own terms, that of financial terrorism. It is well known that only the UMF is even remotely equipped to compete on this level, and hence is the focal point of Dominion activities.

4.2.1 NORTHERN LIGHTS CONFEDERACY

Dominion citizens have been branded heretics and primitives by the religiously intolerant rulers of the Northern Light Confederacy. Even though trade is high between these two leagues, public relations are not. The Dominion takes every opportunity to discredit the Confederacy, and the NLC returns the favor. Openly the two leagues dispose each other, yet trade between the two is at an all-time high. This strange relationship exists because of the enormous profit each league makes from the other. The corporations of both nations are committed to maintaining this highly lucrative relationship, in spite of the political posturing of both of their governments.

The Dominion always has some type of covert military operation going on inside the borders of the NLC. Sabotage, assassination, blackmail; are all activities that the Assembly encourages agents to use within the Northern Light Confederacy. The Dominion's mercenary guild has a standing contract for any intelligence from within the Norlight Confederacy and an effective spy network has been set up on a freelance basis. The spy network has sold the Dominion business plans, new technologies of all sorts, and privileged stock information. Also through the spy network, the Mekong MILICIA gains information on Northern trade routes. They use this information to disrupt the caravans, with military action.

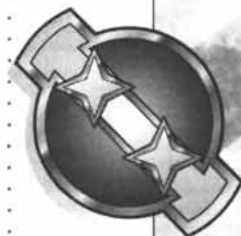
One of the biggest assets the Dominion maintains in their war with the North is a covert military force called the Ghost Squads. The Ghosts are small elite squads of well trained soldiers who operate exclusively outside of Dominion borders. Many are found within the borders of the Northern Lights Confederacy. Some of the soldiers in these Ghost Squads are ex-Legion Noire commandos, recruited to perform duties for the Dominion. Ghost Squads often work in conjunction with mercantile spies and can be called upon to assist in may unseemly missions. Most of these squads are found in the UMF, but some operate in every other league on the planet including the Dominion's allies.

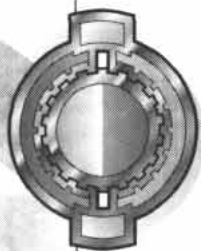
► Intrigue in the North

Despite the mutual dislike between the leagues of the North and the South, the Dominion has always kept trade going between the city-states. Differences in personal philosophies should not stand in the way of business, though they need not be accepted at face values either. The Taipans are well aware that, given the chance, the northerners, especially the Norlights, would like nothing more than take control of the entire planet and submit it to their own view of what "proper mores" are like. In accordance with the dictum "the best defense is a good offense," the Mekong Assembly has approved a long term campaign of assassination and subtle sabotage designed to destabilize the arctic league and ensure it remains in a non-threatening position. The northern corporate security agencies, as well as NorPol and NISA, are aware of this and have been largely successful in protecting potential targets, though only by investing significant resources.

Niklas Jiang, the senior executive of International Consumer Products' Valeria bureau, is the current director of ICP's covert operation program in the North. A close associate and friend of ICP CEO Miyako Sogabe, Jiang was the power behind the Mekong Embassy in Valeria for the past ten cycles and led the Dominion business delegation who took care of trade along the beta maglev. By cultivating alliances with many of the large commercial brokers of the Norlight Confederacy, he made himself a man of influence and prestige while gathering intelligence on economic weaknesses and other potentially useful secrets.

With hostilities brewing up between polar forces, however, Jiang now finds himself in an untenable position. His activities make him persona non grata in Valeria, but he knows that to leave the safety of his fortified embassy compound is to invite death. He feels it is only a matter of time before he is forced to evacuate. Two of his contacts have confirmed that teams have been assembled and dispatched — but from both the NISA and the Mekong.





4.2.2 UNITED MERCANTILE FEDERATION

The United Mercantile Federation is the largest stumbling block to the Dominion's financial control of the entire planet. The UMF is an economic juggernaut easily the match of the Dominion. The Mekong is engaged in full scale war economic war with the UMF. Both leagues have set very strict trade embargoes against each other's products, leaving little to no room for trade or profit. With such strict sanctions, smuggling has become an extremely profitable activity for both leagues. The Dominion has gone to the extremes of smuggling products into the UMF because of the high prices they can fetch for their products.

The Dominion's most successful operation in the United Mercantile Federation is the creation of a company that exists only on paper. The company is called Ultra Trade. It even has UMF citizenship, and buys elector vouchers every cycle. Through this company, the Dominion smuggles its product onto Northern markets masquerading as locally manufactured goods. This is not the only way Mekong gets their product into the Federation; it will also sell it to traders in the Badlands who will then smuggle it into the Federation themselves.

The Assembly also promotes the purchase of and investment into Northern companies that are not subject to Mercantile federal sanctions. These companies are used as a clearing house for the goods the Dominion cannot otherwise smuggle into the UMF. The profit margin is far less, but the Dominion is willing to take a loss if it means glutting the UMF with their goods and hopefully bankrupting an enemy corporation in the process. UMF stock is regarded as treasonous for Dominion citizens to own, but the Assembly does maintain a significant stock portfolio with which it attempts to destabilize the UMF market through Ultra Trade.

4.2.3 WESTERN FRONTIER PROTECTORATE

The Dominion regards the powerful clans of the Western Frontier with tentative avarice. The business opportunities in the league are very attractive but the closely knit communities and families of the Western clan structure make it very hard for Dominion agents to infiltrate. Another aspect of the Western families that discourages activity within their borders is the ferocity with which they pursue a vendetta. A family that believes it has been wronged in a trade deal, will often go to extreme lengths to exact revenge. While this hasn't stopped Mekong companies from investing or operating in the WFP, it has made them more cautious, and perhaps a little more honest, in their dealings.

The Mekong Assembly and the corporations recognizes the worth of allies in the North, regardless of whether the rest of the planet may be on the brink of war. The Dominion has invested huge amounts of money and resources with certain clans in the West in an effort to gain support. Most Westerners are quite happy to accept lucrative bribes and trade deals with little respect for the Dominion merchant or company who provides it. Other clans are more respectful of such financial and political favors and are staunch supporters of the Dominion's aggressive foreign policies. The few clans whose loyalty the Assembly can be assured of are used to subtly influence the policy of the WFP, in an effort to keep it favorable, or at least neutral, towards the Dominion.

With hostilities declared between the forces of the North and South, the corporations are no longer sure they can deal with the clans, even covertly. It is doubtful they all would willingly deal with what has become the enemy, especially the most patriotic or religious ones. On the Dominion side, connections with Protectorate clans might be seen as treason by the AST masters in the Southern Republic.



Tomas Rankin

Tomas Rankin is the vice-president of Ultra Trade and is responsible for a great many of the corporate decisions made by its board of directors. He is currently answerable only to the Chairman, and no others. Rankin is a suave, well dressed man in his late sixties that prides himself on his ability to get the job done while not break a sweat doing so. Within the corporate culture of Ultra Trade, Rankin is widely regarded as the hatchetman of the Board — whenever he arrives at a problematic corporate depot, heads tend to roll. His reputation among the personnel ensures that his every order is obeyed without question.

Tomas Rankin is also secretly an operative of the Mekong Assembly. He is charged with controlling the board of directors through their figurehead chairman, Franklin Pollard. Pollard is a doddering old man of 87 cycles, and is easily influenced by Rankin. Pollard is well aware that he is little more than a puppet for Tomas, whom he has begun to suspect is not the patriot he pretends to be. Recent decisions to undercut their competitors price on various consumer goods, combined with a sudden influx of capital orchestrated by Tomas (with no clear source), have led Pollard to suspect that vice-president Rankin is some sort of scam artist or, worse, a fiscal saboteur.

Pollard's granddaughter, Jennifer, has recently been awarded a scholarship to the prestigious Mekong Academy of Sciences, where she is being groomed to one day enter the corporation in a high ranking position. Rankin has operatives constantly watching her in case a hostage is required to ensure the continued support and good behavior of her grandfather.



4.3 BADLANDS

The Badlands policy of the Dominion combines the best in military extortion, political blackmail and financial persuasion. Most of the Southern diplomatic mission is composed of Dominion employees, whose skill with political manipulation is well recognized. Coordinating the aggressive military presence of the MILICIA with the hidden agenda of the Dominion is very challenging for these diplomats. Luckily, they are provided with a support network of mercantile spies and Ghost Squads to enhance their efficiency. The Southern Alliance Party is thought to be little more than an extension of the Dominion's political arm. This is not actually the case, the reality being that the Dominion is merely a staunch supporter of the movement and a valuable financial and political ally. Corporate interests within the league provide a lot of financial backing for the movement and are quite vocal in letting others know of their support for unifying the Badlands with the Allied Southern Territories.

4.3.1 PEACE RIVER

Paxton Arms and its associated business interests are a juicy target for Dominion agents. The city-state is the main stumbling block to the Dominion's domination of the Badlands and a major concern for the Mekong Assembly. The corporations like to send covert missions into the Badlands to destabilize the area and perhaps spur the Republic to invade the fledgling league and end its rise to power.

So far the influence of the Dominion in encouraging border skirmishes and political strife has remained unknown to the Curia and the CNCS. Many believe it is only a matter of time before the AST can be convinced to invade Peace River, ending its threat forever.

4.3.2 PORT ARTHUR

The entire Mekong Dominion, from the lowliest of peasants to the most powerful of corporate Taipan, remember the War of the Alliance and the brutality of the Earth forces. Port Arthur is a thorn in the side of the Mekong Assembly and is considered the greatest threat to the Dominion and the entire planet. The Assembly chambers are the site of many angry tirades on the abomination that is Port Arthur. The memory of the terrible atrocities suffered during the war by Dominion citizens are not easily forgotten. The league believes that the Earth settlement must be either destroyed or conquered or war may once again erupt across the face of Terra Nova. Letting the GRELS and their masters maintain a beachhead on the planet is an affront to the tens of thousands of Dominion Citizens wiped out in the war.

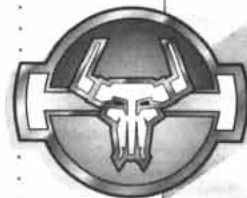
On four occasions Dominion cadres have assaulted Port Arthur intent upon destroying this threat forever. Each time the settlement has been able to repulse the attacks, the final time MILICIA troops sent by the Republic were required to end the confrontation. The Assembly officially declared the cadres renegade and publicly disciplined the troops involved. Privately however, they applauded their actions, which has infuriated the Southern Republic as well as the residents of Port Arthur. The Assembly has never apologized for these incidences and refuses to remove its military presence from the area; short of military orders from the AST, it is unlikely that the troops will be withdrawn. Many of these soldiers have taken to inscribing the slogan 'Never Again' on their vehicles and Gears, in reference to the occupation of their homeland. Terrorist groups devoted to eradicating GREL and Earth war criminals are also funded and armed by the Dominion.

► Security Concerns

"Mercy's real identity is unknown but his actions have been highly publicized and he is believed to be a dissident Peacekeeper suffering from extreme trauma. What little is known of him has been interpreted by his actions. To date he has infiltrated four Republican garrisons and executed high ranking officers stationed at each location. He is also believed to have been responsible for the execution of three civilian businessmen and two Nortlight officers. Mercy exhibits extreme cunning and foresight in the execution of his goals and Legion training has not been ruled out. You should be prepared for anything in the pursuit of this target as he has single-handedly taken down targets in Gears. Caution is advised, but high command has authorized extreme latitude in pursuit of the target. Don't be afraid to drop a few civilians if you get a viable shot.

"There is also the matter of the terrorist group Kaze no Shi, whose name translates as "wind of death," which is very active throughout the Badlands. This group is a highly trained and well armed terrorist force, which sprang into existence during the War of the Alliance. The official mandate of the group is to punish suspected collaborators and ferret out Terran spies. The group's new leader, known only as "Kaiser" has strong ties to the Forzi cartel and seems to be establishing Kaze no Shi as some sort of enforcement arm for the Wounded Knee group. These terrorists do not answer to the Assembly, but seem to be a wholly autonomous organization. The group has recently turned its attention to the Northern bandit fiefdoms of the Mekong in support of the Forzi cartel. There are many rumors of Kaiser's ambitions, some even linking him to a mysterious Taipan who supports the group with arms in exchange for his aid — only Kaiser himself knows the truth."

— Legion Noire briefing, TN 1939, somewhere in the Badlands.



TRIBUTE

"Hey! Easy there," Makoto sniped at the chauffeur. "I want to get there in one piece."

"My apologies, mistress, but the roads out here aren't up to the standards of Mekong City," the driver replied, turning slightly to smile back at her. "I guess Hsi Tsang has more important things to do than repair its streets."

Makoto sighed deeply. He's right, of course, she thought to herself. If my meetings with the Oyabun told me anything, it was that this city is on the verge of change. He didn't come right out and tell me that, but I've learned a thing or two about body language in this job. She reclined back into the limousine's plush seat, determined not to let the roughness of the trip disturb her.

"That's okay, Ikeda-san. Please proceed to the Lord Chancellor's chosen meeting place."

Of all her duties as MDC liaison to Hsi Tsang, she hated this one the most. Kowtowing to that bloated pig of a man was futile — didn't the head office realize that he would never support them regardless of how many kronars it gave him? She looked at the case sitting on the leather upholstery next to her, then through the smoked glass of the car's windows to the city beyond.

The morning sun was just peeking above the horizon, bathing the buildings in a warm golden light. The sunrise only served to emphasize the dilapidated condition of the Midtown buildings. Peeling gray paint covered most of the tenements, and here and there you could still see remnants of the destruction caused by Earth's occupation. To the right, a line of bullet holes peppered the side of a local grocery shop and on the left they passed an apartment complex with a huge hole gaping in its side, as if a massive, hungry animal had taken a chunk out of it. Someone had blocked the opening with an old tarp.

"Mistress Kashiwaki, we have arrived." Ken announced, pulling the limousine into the parking area of a battered department store.

The area was deserted except for a large black van parked across. A chill ran down Makoto's spine as she stepped from the car, adjusting her smart business suit. From the corner of her eye, she noticed a small group of workers studiously ignoring the expensive luxury car as they quickly crossed the street away from her. She looked over towards the van, vaguely catching a glimpse of movement within.

"Damn it. This just isn't the way business is supposed to be done," she murmured. Backroom lobbying she could deal with, but this was unacceptable. "I'll have to talk to Head Office when I return."

She knew that MDC could not be linked to the Lord Chancellor, but this level of paranoia was uncalled for, even in Hsi Tsang. Steeling herself, she reached back into the car to retrieve the case she was here to deliver.

"Please be careful, mistress." Makoto looked towards the chauffeur, surprised by the level of concern barely concealed in his voice. For the first time, she noticed the massive automatic pistol nonchalantly cradled in his lap. Somehow, it made her feel better.



5.1 MEKONG DOMINION REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Mekong Dominion and the United Mercantile Federation were the targets of major offensives during the war with Earth, and both had a number of cities occupied over the course of the conflict. CEF mines and booby traps are still being found hidden in refineries, factories, hospitals or scattered across the plains and jungles. The scars shared by both leagues from this conflict have brought these rivals closer together than at any time in their past. While corporate and government interests clash, the common people of each leagues respect the sacrifices and scars of the other. Unlike the Federation, however, the Dominion has not completely recovered from the devastation of the war, due in part to internal disputes and national apathy.

Each city-state maintains a number of governmental bodies, municipal, national and corporate, none of which are willing to assume the cost of rebuilding the league's infrastructure. Further complicating matters is the fact that each city-state has a Peacekeeper marshal overseeing military concerns of that single prefecture, as well a second marshal responsible for the rural prefecture surrounding it. A rural prefecture may cover thousands of square kilometers with little or marginal rail development, unlike the corresponding city-state with its municipal/corporate funded transportation system. Marshals are reluctant to commit manpower and their scant budgets to rebuilding roads, especially those in command of southern prefectures where crime is rampant. Some members of the Assembly believe that a major national cause would spur development of the outer regions of the league and increase the profit of the nation as a whole by uniting its people once again.

The lack of a good rail system has resulted in a great developmental gap between the small rural communes that are home to the bulk of the population and the prosperous city-states of the league. Logging, agriculture, trapping and other such subsistence activities make up the bulk of economy of these communities and luxuries become more scarce the farther you travel from rail depots. In some cases, communes exist at a bronze age level of technology (with a social structure to match) deep within the jungles, and occasionally become the focus of wilderness tours for city dwellers. The Assembly prohibits interference as past interactions between these "primitives" and tourists have resulted in bloody clashes which have disrupted trade in the area. Assembly approval is required before interacting to any large degree with these cultures.

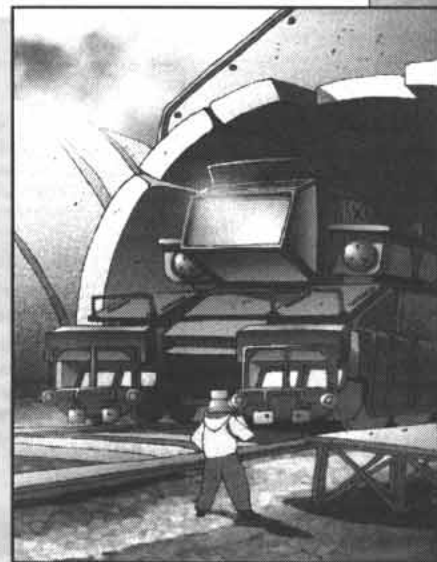
Brigandry is a major concern within the Dominion. The ferocity of assaults has reduced in recent cycles, due in large part to the establishment of a tithe system between communes and the brigands who accost them. Many of these pirates are deserters from the War of the Alliance and are well trained in military tactics and deployment, further complicating their capture by Peacekeepers. Many of these gangs view themselves as warlords and have staked claims to vast areas of the league, extorting tribute from the simple folk who live there. These gangs have inhibited the rebuilding of the infrastructure of the southern parts of the league, hobbling its development. The assignment of additional forces to the brigand interdiction campaign will hopefully change this, but the gangs' skill at jungle combat and their knowledge of the area has made the impact on the problem marginal so far. On the other hand, the Peacekeepers have been very successful in the northern plains, reducing brigand attacks by 60% in the four cycles they have patrolled there and accounting for 26 confirmed kills and 109 arrests in the last cycle alone.

► Rails Across the Dominion

Considering that the Mekong Dominion is one of the largest trading powers on Terra Nova, the quality and speed of travel across the league is remarkably inconsistent. Maglev lines are the heart of the rail system and are always well maintained, carrying the latest in engines and suspension. Maglev routes account for approximately 60% of all import/export movement, and 90% of all trade with Northern leagues. Maglev travel is fast, easy and relatively cheap.

The same cannot be said for transportation through the rest of the Dominion. The rail system between the city-states is prone to extended delays as well as the predations of jungle brigands, who destroy lengths of track to stop or derail intercity trains. Tracks must also be constantly cleared of encroaching vegetation, which is an ongoing struggle for maintenance crews. Spur rails to large settlements are slightly better maintained as the existence of entire communities depend upon the free movement of produce. In rural areas, rail traffic is much slower than in other leagues; spotters must look for track breaks or tree falls and, occasionally, armed outriders or modified engineering or military Gears will precede locomotives to scout for bandits as well as breaks. Spurlines tend to use much older locomotive models designed for economy and ruggedness as opposed to speed or efficiency.

An extensive road system links the city-states of the Mekong with smaller arteries feeding the communities of the interior. The northern system is very well maintained, owing as much to the climate and the lack of aggressive vegetation common in the south as any concerted maintenance program on the part of the government. Travel through the southern prefectures is a grueling task, owing to the generally poor maintenance of the roads. Vehicle travel consists mainly of caravans and trade expeditions; lone vehicles are uncommon. Experienced travelers will utilize vehicles capable of off-road travel and equipped with survival and road clearing equipment. Many travelers forego the use of vehicles altogether in favor of pack animals such as Manx Barnabies or Springers.



Atsi

5.2 ATSI

Atsi is dominated by its main industry, the refining of petroleum products. The city-state produces most of the raw materials required by the heavy industrial center of Loyang but does not share the same environmental hazards of its sister city. Much of the petroleum piped from the rich northern reserves is refined into polymers and plastics before being either shipped to Loyang to become manufactured goods or exported out of the Dominion via Yung An. The economy of the city revolves around the polymer raw materials.

The citizens of Atsi work as hard as any other Dominion citizens, yet their accomplishments are overshadowed on the business scene by those of the manufacturers that use these very materials. Simple sheets of polymer are essential in the production of most of the merchandise the Dominion exports, yet the price of these raw materials is quite low, creating a gulf between the price of the end product and the raw materials used to create it. The general feeling amongst the majority of Atsi's residents is that they are being taken for granted or even exploited by the other city-states. This is especially pronounced amongst the younger generation. Political rallies to change pricing structures and tariffs are common in Atsi but are usually peaceful.

What is more troubling to the city council is the despondent attitude of Atsi's youth. The younger generation has seen their parents struggling to make a living against rising inflation and the artificially devalued raw product the city depends upon. Many young locals do not see the point in buying into a system which will only exploit them. They take the menial labor jobs which they are offered and work only hard enough to survive and enjoy themselves. Precious few of Atsi's children have the same drive as other cities', which has given them a reputation for being lazy.

Body piercing and sculpting is one of the ways these malcontents exhibit their disapproval of Mekong society. Another recurring trend among adolescents is the defacing of government and corporate property. Touted as art, political slogans and pictures are appearing across the city, stenciled with paint over city landmarks. The most notorious of these new "artists" is Bunny. Bunny's identity is known only to his or her young accomplices, but she has become something of a folk hero to the citizens of Atsi of all generations. Bunny's art features a huge pink bunny complete with a wood balloon spouting political slogans. The rabbit questioning the lineage of the Lord Chancellor, which appeared on the Mekong Rail depot last cycle, is perhaps Bunny's best known work since it was plastered across the front page of every AST newspaper. The Assembly, acting upon the orders of the Lord Chancellor, has commanded the Atsi Policia to stop Bunny at all costs. The Policia have pursued him (or her) half heartedly at best, as many of them are among his or her greatest admirers. Beside, the Assembly has few friends in Atsi.

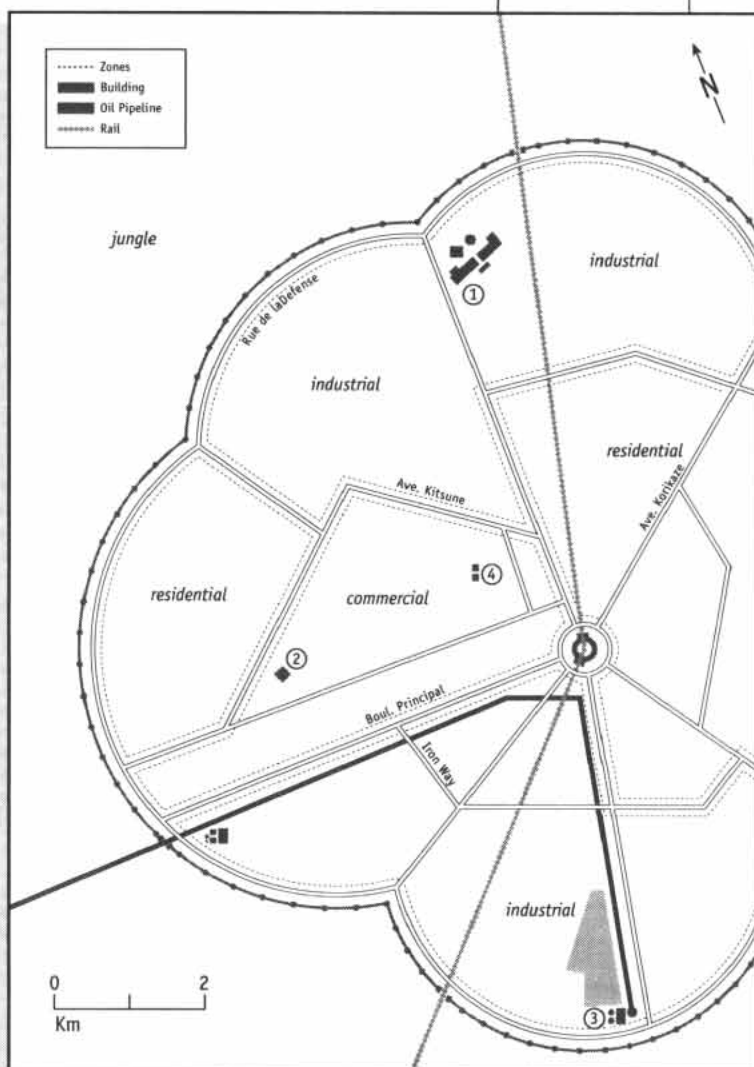
Vital Statistics

Founding Date:	TN 45
Joined MD:	TN 1532 (Mekong Alliance); TN 1562 (Mekong Dominion)
Method of Government:	Mercantile Oligarchy
Head of Government:	First Citizen Kwang Lee
Population:	2.4 Million (official census), 3.1 Million (estimated)
Principal Industries:	Refining



► Map of Atsi

Location	Description
1. Calliope Research	Security at this sprawling compound is extremely tight due to the sensitive nature of the research conducted here. The main building is huge as it houses the polymer manufacturing center and furnaces; it can accommodate the specially designed rail cars which enter the building at one end and leave the other stacked with finished polymer products. In the rear of the main compound are the research labs, where Calliope develops their new technology.
2. Atsi Amphitheater	This huge theater is the best venue for classical performances in the Dominion, its vaulted theater being among the most impressive architectural design on the planet. The outer chambers incorporate the best aspects of an art gallery with a natural history museum, allowing visitors to gaze upon famous artworks while winding their way around the chambers that surround the inner stage. A broad grass area to the rear of the building serves as an open garden and an outdoor theater for the occasional free musical performance.
3. MR Sub-Depot	The depot has been plagued with bad publicity for the last two cycles. A squad of security inspectors found a gang of youths loitering in the depot; in the ensuing scuffle, three of the teens were killed. Since then this depot has been the target of numerous acts of sabotage, vandalism and four assaults. While the city's outrage has cooled, the conflict with the youths seems only to be escalating.
4. Rusty Bayonet	To those in the know this club/boutique is the place to be seen. The club often hosts body sculpting competitions. Two thirds of the warehouse which houses the club consists of a circular stage and professional quality audio system, with small bars and patron seating scattered haphazardly around it. The rest of the club is taken up by a beat up MASH trailer containing a sophisticated surgical bay where customers can indulge in the latest fashions. The owner, Tuan Tran, supplies medical service to criminals, up to and including facial reconstruction.



● CALLIOPE RESEARCH

The current first citizen is Kwang Lee, CEO of Calliope Research, one of the Dominion's smallest military contractors. This company is 85% owned by various Southern Republic companies, giving it an unusual position in Asti's political scene. Calliope is a staunch supporter of the present inter-city tariff structure, which keeps the price of raw materials artificially low. Lee has few supporters on the city council and maintains his position only due to the political, military and economic power of the Southern Republican investors backing Calliope Research. He is ruthless in exercising his power and has been known to have powerful influence over the affairs of other companies across the Dominion, mainly through the political power of his Republican masters. This has not endeared him to the people of Atsi or the corporations that make up the rest of the city council.

Calliope Research is one of the largest polymer producers in Atsi and contributes over 60% of all the polymer materials that the Dominion uses to build civilian and military Gears. Only 10% of their resources are devoted to the civilian market. This has given the company a huge stake in the present military build up within the Allied Southern Territories, especially with the Southern Republic's legions. They are also known to be researching new highly advanced polymers which may be used in a new generation of Gears. Rumors of strange devices being tested at a secret proving range indicate that there may be a certain amount of truth to these claims. No one can as yet verify the sighting of mechanical silhouettes moving silently about the range, their shapes strangely distorted from that of any other Southern Gear designs. Whatever research is going on at the Calliope proving range, the level of security about the area bears mute testimony to its importance.

5.3 HSI TSANG

Hsi Tsang's recent history is one of bloodshed and betrayal, a perception it has never been able to shake. During the war with Earth, the Mekong-Ashington offensive was designed to seize the major production areas of the northern and southern hemispheres. The invading forces did penetrate deep into the heart of the Dominion. After their defeat at the very gates of the capital, the CEF retreated to establish a lines of defense centered around the four Mekong cities already conquered: Olduvai, Ngorongoro, Atsi and Hsi Tsang.

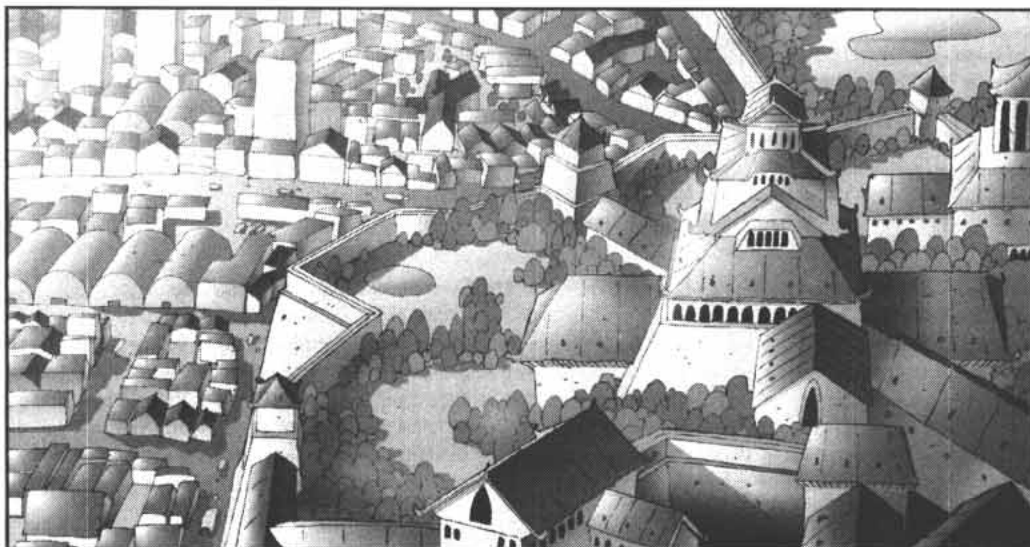
For three cycles, the occupied cities were the site of many resistance movements. Munitions depots and barracks were looted or destroyed by an unlikely alliance of the Yakuza and Hsi Tsang corporations. The Earth commanders feared that other cities under Terran control would likewise begin to revolt, and decided to make an example of Hsi Tsang. Overnight, every major company in the city was systematically purged of its leadership and suspected terrorists were killed outright. Blood flowed in the streets: over 10,000 men and women were killed that night and buried in mass graves outside the city. In the face of such brutality, the other occupied cities had little choice but to comply with their new masters. Even the Yakuza were forced to relent. The resistance movement did not die, but it was forced to choose less overt means of resistance than guerrilla attacks.

Hsi Tsang became very important strategically and the Yakuza soon was a clearinghouse for military intelligence for both sides. The gangs, united under Toshiro Miyazaki, owed allegiance to the Dominion but believed the city had been sacrificed as a pawn to preserve Mekong City itself. Many crucial military actions were determined solely upon the strength of the intelligence gained from these petty criminals, and even the CEF forces paid handsomely for their services. Under the iron grip of the occupation forces, the people turned to Miyazaki and his men for protection, which he provided — for a price.

Three cycles later the Earth army left in full retreat. The Miyazaki clan stepped into the political void. Toshiro used his extensive wealth to rebuild the battered city and its local enterprises. Soon, the Miyazaki clan was ensconced in every major business in Hsi Tsang and the citizens were indebted to the clan. The city-state of Hsi Tsang is now the personal empire of Toshiro Miyazaki, but maintains extensive business and political relationships with the rest of the Mekong Dominion. As a free city, Hsi Tsang has a reputation for being lawless, but this is far from the truth. The Yakuza and the mercenaries they pay maintain firm control over the population and come down hard on anyone who disturbs their interests. The Yakuza's political and economic power is hard to define, but its presence is felt everywhere and is second only to that of Speaker Sogabe or the Lord Chancellor himself.

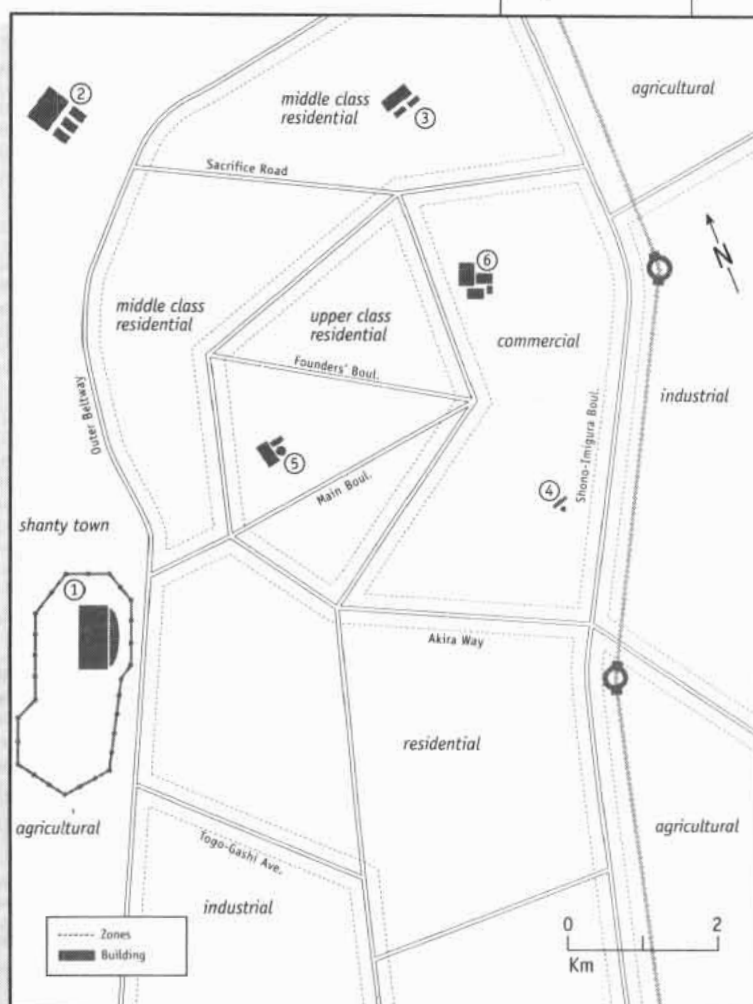
Vital Statistics ◀

Founding Date:	TN 1458
Joined MD:	TN 1532 (Mekong Alliance); TN 1562 (Mekong Dominion)
Method of Government:	Oligarchy (clan based)
Head of Government:	Oyabun Toshiro Miyazaki
Population:	2.7 million (estimated)
Principal Industries:	agriculture (official), criminal activities (unofficial)



Map of Hsi Tsang

Location	Description
1. Palace	The Palace is the largest private residence in the Dominion and is also home to Durocher's private guard. Its opulence is a marked contrast to the deserted residence and business buildings which surround it. Only the truly desperate or ambitious of citizens ever seek entry to the palace, and few that do so without official business there ever return.
2. Internment Camp	This camp was the site of the pogroms and purges which the CEF occupation forces inflicted upon Hsi Tsang. Pilgrims and survivors occasionally visit the camp to grieve for the loss of relatives. The camp remains deserted except for the mass burial mounds and rusting hulks of Terran equipment.
3. Mercenary Guild	Arguably the most heavily fortified building in the city, the guild hall is a squat bunker with most of its bulk underground. Tunnels cut through the rock allow access to various secret entrances, while concealed gun emplacements protect the bunker itself.
4. Servant Market	This small compound is the site of the Dominion's booming indentured servant trade. The elegance of the place is reminiscent of Romanesque architecture and a testament to the money invested in the market.
5. Miyazaki Residence	The official residence of the Miyazaki clan is a broad, sprawling home fit for an ancient samurai lord. It is famous for its beauty, particularly the gardens and ponds of the inner courtyards. It is here that the Oyabun conducts his official business, though recently his paranoia has forced him to avoid such an obvious location.
6. Central Market	In spite of continuing hardship, the people of Hsi Tsang continue to peddle their wares at the central market. In addition to the everyday fruits, vegetables and meats that the peasants sell, one can purchase almost anything for the right price.



THE SERVANT MARKET

Slavery and indentured servitude are a Hsi Tsang practice closely associated with the Yakuza and the Mercenary Guild. It is also one of the most repulsive Dominion practices for the rest of the planet. At the market an auctioneer, usually a guild official, auctions the servitude contract of each person involved. These people are usually non-citizens who have committed some sort of crime, citizens with huge debts, or unfortunates who have no other source of income. The purchaser is entitled to any service the bonded servant can perform. The servant on the other hand has to be given lodging, food, a minimal wage and can expect the protection of his new master. It is usually rare for bonded servants to be grossly mistreated, though within Hsi Tsang itself the reverse is too often true.

A typical contract of bonded servitude can last as little as three weeks or a whole lifetime, but the most common term is three cycles. Servant brokers, usually hired through the guild, are constantly scouting out new contracts and are frequently found traveling though the interior of the Dominion and the Badlands looking for new prospects, both to sell and buy contracts. A three cycle bonded domestic servant contract can be bought for as little as 10 to 20,000 kronars, while a mining industry worker's can be as high as 1,800,000 kronars. Because of the high cost of hazardous duty contracts, owners tend to overwork these servants, while domestics and personal assistants are less abused due to their lower cost. It is considered bad form to mistreat bonded servants, and Speaker Sogabe is attempting to reform the bonded servitude laws governing the practice. She is, however, meeting intense resistance from those Dominion corporations that rely on this cheap source of labor, such as the logging industry.

True slaves — women, children and some men kidnapped from various locations — are also unfortunately available. These captives do not have the minimal protection afforded by servitude contracts and are offered for sale at lavish private auctions. Invitations to these are difficult to acquire and may only be obtained after an average of three established customers vouch for the new client.

• THE LORD CHANCELLOR'S PALACE

Lord Chancellor Etienne Durocher's residence is built in the western section of Hsi Tsang's Midtown. In fact, the palatial estate is so large that it encompasses most of the western sector. The Oyabun allows the Chancellor's guards to run the sector as his personal empire in an effort to distract Durocher from his interests in the rest of the city. The Lord Chancellor has given free reign to his paranoia and west sector residents are under constant surveillance by SRID agents. It is not uncommon for a state of martial law to be declared at a moment's notice. A razor wire fence separates the civilian population from the grounds of the Lord Chancellor's residence, leaving an open area dominated by a deep moat before reaching the outer limits of the compound.

An ornately engraved wall cuts off the inner compound from the rest of the city and heavily armed guards patrol the wall from reinforced towers. A standing honor guard of 2000 combat troops and hundreds of Gears ensure that the palace is well guarded and conduct random inspections of the surrounding area for subversive activity. The distinctive black uniform of the chancellor's guard is well recognized in Hsi Tsang and these troops have a reputation for brutalizing anyone who stands in their way. On occasions, Durocher will send his guard into the city to enforce his will or to escort diplomats to his estate. Frequent visitors to the estate include representatives of ICP, who appear once every three weeks.

Behind the compound's wall lies the palatial estate of Etienne Durocher. A huge manicured garden and cherry orchard covers the grounds in a lush display of wealth. Many of the plants are from Earth; they have not been adapted to the soil of Terra Nova and thus require intense care to survive in their new habitat. The cherry orchard alone necessitates a staff of ten slaves to maintain. A total of thirty gardeners, all of whom are bonded servants, work day and night to keep the garden alive and thriving. Last cycle, a careless servant accidentally let the Chancellor's African violet bed wither, resulting in the beheading of three slaves and the caning of the entire gardening staff.

The centerpiece of the estate is of course the manor house itself. The building has only three floors but contains sixty-seven rooms in all, each one more opulent than the next. Grand ballrooms, audience chambers and guest quarters are furnished in the latest Republican fashions, imported at great expense. Expensive tapestries cover the walls with the exploits of Durocher's family during the colonization of the planet and various wars. The majority of these tapestries are spun as much from the imagination of the Lord Chancellor as from any fabric, but to mention this in his presence is to risk his violent and unpredictable rage.

Durocher is especially fond of his bed chambers, which occupy a full third of the manor house. These are home to his personal harem of concubines, all of whom are indentured servants. The concubines are mainly drawn from the underground slave market and are forced to sign a legally binding contract to serve the Chancellor's every whim. Stories of Etienne's carnal excesses are the source of much amusement to Hsi Tsang's residents, but few who enter this suite of rooms emerges unscathed. On occasion the Lord Chancellor will invite friends to join him in his chambers; wise guests diplomatically find excuses. The harem usually consists of twenty or thirty women and men of all ages, nationalities and races. His favorites are a pair of GREs and a captive Sand Rider whom he likes to hear scream.

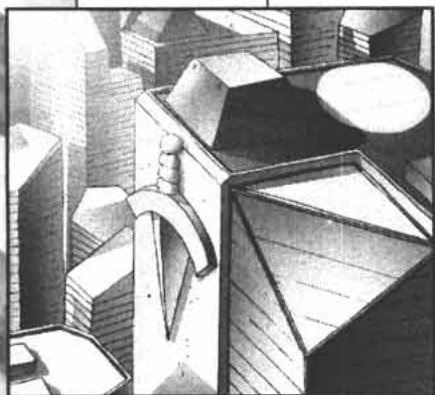
The servant quarters, on the other hand, are little better than simple stone rooms. In fact, the stables housing Durocher's prized stallions are better suited for human habitation than the slave quarters. The estate is home to at least a hundred and fifty slaves at any one time. These poor souls are housed like cattle and are regularly beaten for minor transgressions. Defiance often results in death and at the first sign of disease the slave is isolated until the illness runs its course or the slave expires. Durocher only accepts beautiful young servants; at the first sign of aging, the slave is thrown from the walls into the moat beyond, usually breaking at least one leg in the process. Needless to say, Durocher's compound is constantly in search of new personnel.

The Mercenary Guild ◀

In addition to the Lord Chancellor's honor guard, Hsi Tsang is home to a second military force — the Mercenary Guild. While not the only mercenary brokerage firm, the Mercenary Guild is by far the largest with over 80,000 members, nearly 13,000 of whom live in the city. Its size and Dominion-wide influence gives it a stranglehold on the industry, and smaller firms are forced to offer highly specialized services in order to compete. The Guild's closest rival is "Skips," which specializes in bounty hunting. Their sophisticated intelligence network has given it a reputation for quick and reliable location of targets. Jeffrey Thompson, the present Head Guildmaster, has made numerous attempts to buy out or acquire "Skips" but has been unsuccessful so far.

The Mercenary Guild accepts any skilled professional into its ranks for a yearly fee of 200 kronars. A member is given a weekly update of available work and is allowed to bid on these jobs via a computer network. Any business or individual can post jobs on this network free of charge; 3% of the mercenary's fee, however, is required to be paid up front to the Guild once the job is accepted, and a further 2% once it is completed. Any type of job, anywhere on the planet may be posted. The risks and rewards of the job must be truthfully disclosed in the posting, at the risk of being censored in the future — or worse.

Guild members can be contacted in every major city in the AST and many members have traveled to the CNCS pursuing contracts. The North takes a very dim view of Southern mercenaries operating within its borders and treats them as terrorists.



5.4 LOYANG

First Citizen Hiroki Nakano must surely be wondering which gods he had so offended in a previous lifetime to be assigned to Loyang. Hell is said to have nine levels; Hiroki firmly believes that if Loyang is not one of them, it surely must provide the air conditioning. The city-state's reputation of having the worse pollution problem in the Mekong, perhaps even the whole of Terra Nova, is well deserved. The city elders will not openly acknowledge the situation but it is well known that the city should be declared a disaster zone. Were it not for the efforts of the elders on behalf of the Loyang corporations (consisting mainly of extensive bribes to the Mekong environmental review board), it would have.

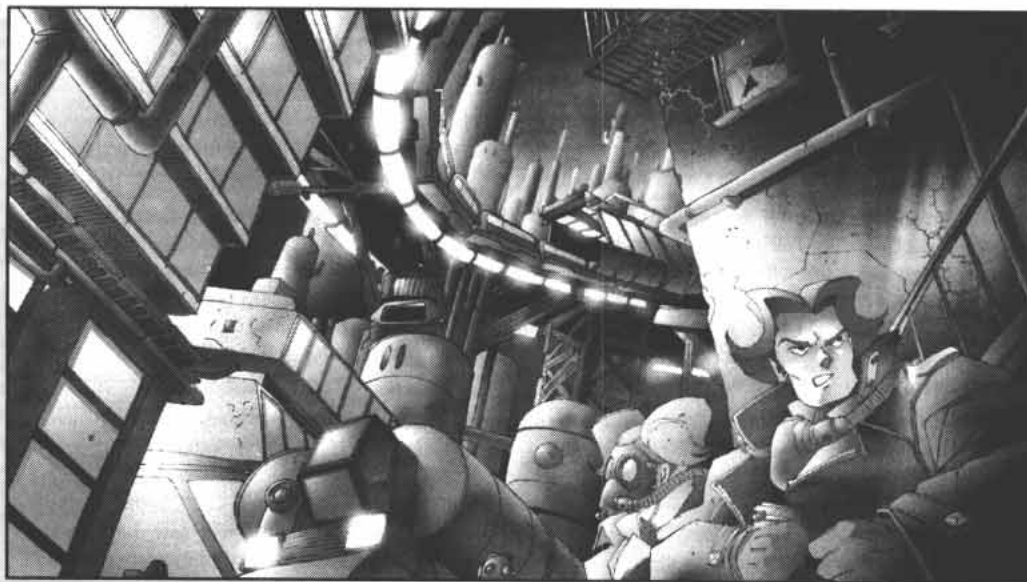
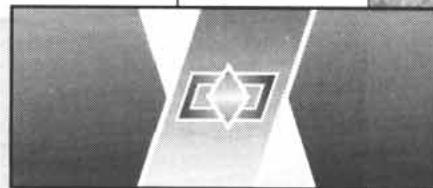
Loyang emerges from the land like a great spiked beast, its horns and teeth countless processing towers, exhaust stacks and high-rise buildings. The sky overhead is often obscured by a dense smog cloud. The belching of multiple plants create strong convection currents over the city core, making flying over this sector dangerous and contributing to the maintenance of the fog cover. Thin rain drizzles over the city on most days, the result of a micro-climate created by the interaction of the local winds with the factories' exhausts. Everywhere, chemicals have seeped into the ground around the main plants and all corporations maintain a large contingent of firefighting Flammjägers close at hand to battle the frequent chemical fires that spring up. The few green spaces left in the city are green in name only. The numerous billboards and public access terminals are encrusted with a patina of indetermined origin, and frequently flicker and short out.

The city-state is governed by a board of elders made up of the twelve CEOs of the city's major corporations. The First Citizen is always the CEO of the Loyang bureaucracy. While the system is supposed to mirror the Dominion's highly successful political system, it is little more than a forum for the corporate elite to divide up the resources of the city. The board of elders is dominated by four individuals: Tio Martinez, owner and operator of the Martinez Lumber cartel; Rui Jian Hong of Mekong Metals; Jessica Peters of Loyang Petroleum; and Kwang Lee of Northern Energy. First Citizen Nakano is well aware of the fact that he is considered a mere figurehead by Loyang citizens, while the elders treat him as their personal lackey and occasional scapegoat.

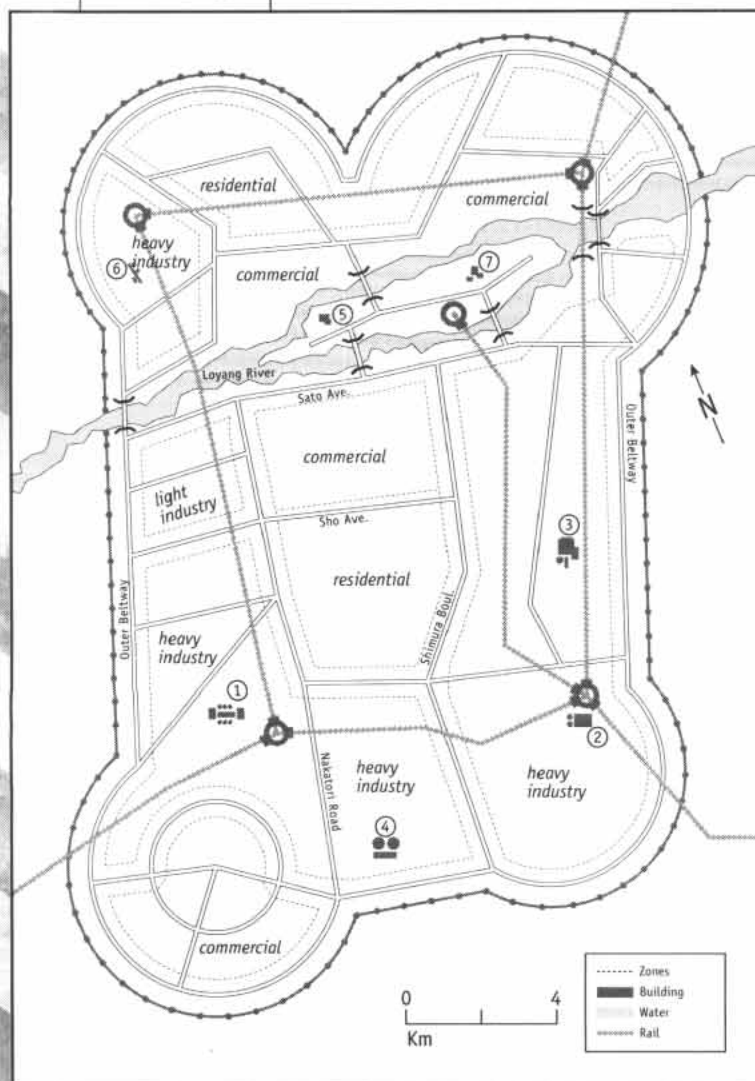
Shanties are constructed in public places and between the feeder pipes that run throughout the city-state. The city's Outtown keeps growing and has started to encroach on Midtown. The higher-ups appear oblivious to the wretched conditions of the work force and seem to believe that urban renewal projects consist of constructing more elevated gangways to avoid the huddled masses, or to increase security sweeps.

► Vital Statistics

Founding Date:	TN 630
Joined MD:	TN 1552 (Mekong Alliance); TN 1562 (Mekong Dominion)
Method of Government:	Mercantile Oligarchy
Head of Government:	First Citizen Hiroki Nakano
Population:	2.8 Million (official census), 3.3 million (estimated)
Principal Industries:	Resource development, refining, lumber



Map of Loyang



Location	Description
1. Martinez Lumber	The sprawling Martinez Lumber compound consists of massive buildings dedicated to the processing of fernwood and related lumber products. Processing chemicals have seeped into the ground of the complex rendering it extremely toxic and the bark mound very flammable.
2. Sub-Depot #2	While the Main Rail Depot is a model of efficiency and logical design, sub-depot #2 has more in common with a military garrison. Traveling through the area is a trial in itself. The facility incorporates the Loyang Interleague Aerodrome.
3. Mekong Metals	Dominated by huge smelting plants, the Mekong Metals compound is a sprawling monstrosity that seems to have been created as a technological version of hell itself. Massive smelting plants heat the surrounding air while metal stacks thrust into the air to vent hazardous or flammable gases.
4. Northern Energy	The trio of cooling towers of the fission generating station are the largest buildings within the city. Deep wells ensure access to enough water to be prepared for any contingency. Local residents maintain permanent protests outside.
5. Elders' Hall	This building resembles a military bunker more than the city's municipal council. The Board has permanently stationed two cadres of Policia riot Gears outside the hall and thirty Peacekeeper soldiers within the building itself.
6. Motorwerks	Judged the best corporate citizen by the Loyang Council of Business Promotion, the Motorwerks facility is a showcase of modern assembly techniques. The twelve-floor building combines five floors of offices with seven semi-automated factory floors built directly into the ground.
7. Sub-Station #24	Even among Loyang cops, the callousness of sub-station #24 is infamous. This detachment is outfitted with the latest in riot equipment and maintains four cadres of Black Mamba MP Gears. It is not uncommon for a suspect brought in for questioning to simply disappear or to be found the next morning floating in the river.

● CIVIL UNREST

Lung cancer, emphysema and birth defects run rampant in the work force, which consists mainly of MDC convicts or indentured servants whose contracts have been purchased by one Mekong corporation or another. Loyang is home to 2.8 million people, only 1.2 million of whom are free citizens. The few park lands in the area died centuries ago and have been claimed by migrant workers, who have erected shanty towns wherever open space can be found.

Because such a large portion of the population has been relocated to this urban hellhole, Loyang maintains one of the largest and best equipped Policia forces in the Dominion. Standard equipment for a Loyang constable consists of body armor, sidearm, assault rifle and an assortment of grenades. Riots and demonstrations are regrettably common within the Loyang work force and are dealt with very severely. This has not had the desired effect, merely increasing the frequency and escalating the level of violence of these confrontations. Within the last two cycles, three separate groups have launched terrorist attacks on the Elder hall, the most notable of which was the rocket attack which killed Elder Donovan Oaks, the representative of Mekong Rail.

Hiroki has tried to curb the riots by instituting new anti-pollution guidelines but has met strong resistance from local businesses. Retooling factories, eliminating emissions and shipping garbage outside of the city instead of dumping it into the Loyang river would be far too expensive to justify in their eyes. The air is of such foulness that citizens are forced to wear goggles, acid resistant outer clothing and respirators when walking outside. The air and rain is of such acidity that all of the buildings have acquired a dull brownish complexion while the residents are uniformly pale due to the ever-present chemical mists which wreath the city.

● INDUSTRY & ECONOMY

Martinez Lumber, run by Tio Martinez, is the leading producer of fernwood lumber in the city. Based in the Southwest sector, Tio and his smaller competitors process the rich lumber resources of the league's northern border into building material as well as pulp and paper. The northern logging camps are periodically visited by the huge vehicles of Martinez Lumber which bring the raw lumber to Loyang for processing and treatment. The competition for resources is intense and occasionally violent, forcing lumber haulers to occasionally be escorted by armed vehicles. Logging camps are persuaded, bribed or forced into trade alliances with Loyang fernwood refiners, who will also promise protection from their competitors. The rapid growth of the Martinez Lumber cartel can be attributed to the aggressive tactics of its twelve directors, all of whom are members of the Martinez family.

The Eastern sector of Loyang is dominated by the Mekong Rail shipping yards and the smelters of Mekong Metals and other smaller metal refineries. Massive semi-automated smelters refine the raw minerals mined in the Badlands before shipping the metal to Yung An for manufacturing. Rui Jian Hong runs this sector like a military camp; Mekong Metal Policia patrol this sector from Outtown inwards to Midtown, treating any infraction very harshly. The smaller industrial centers in the area are all patrolled by Mekong Metal troops and are charged an exorbitant fee for the service. Some of the smaller ones have refused to hire MM troops to patrol their facilities. These few are regrettably easy targets for terrorist acts which some say are actually covert operations staged by the same MM Policia that is supposed to protect the area. The Dominion allows Mekong Metals to field a substantial military force because of the importance of its refineries to the military might of the league and turns a blind eye to the excesses of these same troops.

The northwest sector of the city has a very distinctive skyline, often touted as being the ugliest on the planet. Immense pipelines crisscross the ground, forcing local transit to find convoluted routes around the monstrous lengths of pipe which lay everywhere. The many petroleum refineries are constructed between these pipelines in a haphazard fashion determined by the availability of land and corporate whim. Periodic venting of gases produce fireballs of immense proportions which explode into the sky to great heights. Air travel in this sector is rare because it is very dangerous due to the severe air convection currents.

The combination of intense odors from the petroleum refining process, little available land and excessive heat and light — not to mention the deafening sound of the periodic gas detonations — makes this sector seem uninhabitable. Nevertheless, many of the refinery workers actually live nestled between the pipelines and refinery complexes. Only the most destitute reside here, many of whom are on the run from the city's Policia or criminal elements. These unfortunates provide a source of cheap and exploitable labor which Loyang Petroleum and others corporations are quick to take advantage of.

The southern Sector is the site of Loyang's oldest, most profitable and most dangerous industry — nuclear power. Northern Energy's fission reactor facilities occupy a mere 4 square kilometers of land, yet are capable of producing enough electrical power to supply half of the league's energy requirements. Over the last decade Northern Energy's fortunes have been on the decline and while it is still a powerful figure in Loyang's political and corporate arena, its power is negligible outside of the city-state. The decline of the popularity of fission generated power resulted in a huge loss of revenue for Northern Energy over the past cycles, causing it to fall from a first tier corporation to second tier. The present CEO, Kwang Lee, has instigated an aggressive program of diversification and layoffs in order to stop the downward slide of his company. Sacrifices have been made to ensure the company survives, the most significant of which is the reduction of maintenance and safety checks in favor of staff cut-downs. It is common knowledge that Kwang Lee is walking a dangerous tightrope between financial survival and nuclear meltdown, which has not improved the general attitude of Loyang residents towards him.

● HEALTH HAZARDS

Water is piped into the city from three miles up the Loyang river from where the industrial plants begin their constant discharge into the waterway. The water is carried by an ancient pipe system which is so badly in need of repair that the water it carries is little cleaner than the industrial sludge further downriver. Leaking water pipes allow numerous contaminants into the water supply, including mercury, industrial waste, untreated sewage and bacteria. Each sector of the city can be distinguished by the ailments caused by its contaminated water supply. Health authorities have declared Loyang's water unfit for human consumption. In an effort to prevent an epidemic from sweeping the population, they have issued strict guidelines and safety measures, though not all can follow them for lack of money. Water is to be boiled, filtered and special antibacterial pills added before consumption to prevent illness.

The Intown sector of Loyang is populated by the skyscraper office complexes and homes of the corporate elite. Here, the atmosphere of each building is carefully filtered and purged of contaminants. Water is either distilled or imported, and painstakingly sculpted parks are cradled within the depths of each structure. The luxuriance of the Dominion Motorwerks offices are among the most extravagant of these buildings, a distinct contrast to the hellish metal refineries surrounding the city-state. The excesses of the corporate hierarchy are not lost on the lower classes and random acts of violence and sniping are not uncommon. Because of this, travel Intown is strictly regulated; the Loyang Policia are quite militant in upholding the peace in Intown while neglecting the skyrocketing crime in other areas of the city.

MEKONG CITY

5.5 MEKONG CITY

Mekong City is the most powerful city-state in the league and serve as its *de facto* capital. The isolated Intown sectors are occupied by the towers of the rich mercantile corporations, the Mekong Assembly stock market and the buildings of the civil government. Together, these organizations control every aspect of the Dominion's internal and external life. Antennae and satellite uplinks dot the structures, linking the corporations with their subsidiaries everywhere. Much of the day to day business of running the league takes place in the corporate headquarters as opposed to the Mekong Assembly, and it is not uncommon to encounter couriers and pages shuttling important dispatches between these buildings. The high concentration of corporate, financial and political power in this one district dwarfs that of entire leagues. Its heart is of course the Dominion stock exchange and associated corporate entities.

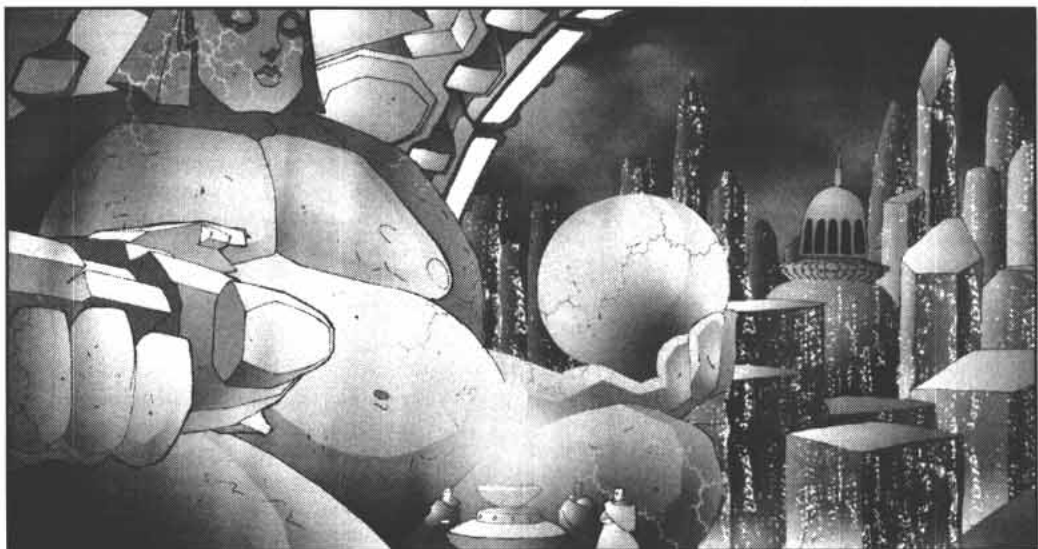
Mekong City also houses the Peacekeepers' central command, the Prime Enclave. From here, foot, cruiser and Gear patrols throughout the city are coordinated. The roof of the enclave holds a large heliport, nestled between the bulges and turrets of the regional point defense system. A portion of the heliport is devoted to the patrol dirigibles used to watch over the populace from the air. Prime Enclave is home to three regiments, including the 32nd Mekong Anacondas. It is also home to the Academy of Law, which is one of only five facilities in the league authorized to train Warders for Constabulary duties. One of the most tightly secured levels of Prime Enclave is the infamous fourth floor, where the city surveillance systems are watched day and night by Peacekeeper data analysts.

The districts of the city are surrounded by the old stone ramparts which were first erected by the Founders centuries ago. The ramparts were originally constructed to keep out the carnivorous pack lizards, common in the Mekong jungles. Since then the city-state has outgrown the constricting original battlements and new ones are constantly being built to safeguard the new developments. The older walls are still maintained and provide a boundary between Intown and Midtown, while an electrified fence circling Outtown keeps the Pack lizards at bay. Here and there, discrete towers and surveillance posts complete the defense system.

Beyond the Outtown fence are the rice patties and the other fields of the agricultural sector. Peasants tend these fields during the day and at night return to the relative safety of Outtown. Each collection of fields is tended by a grouping of families who travel and work together. One peasant will be given the job of overseer and given a high powered rifle to watch over the workers. This may have the appearance of a work party on release from a penal institution — an image the CNCS likes to exploit in its propaganda — but in fact the overseer is on guard for Pack lizards and other beasts who may occasionally attack the peasants while they toil.

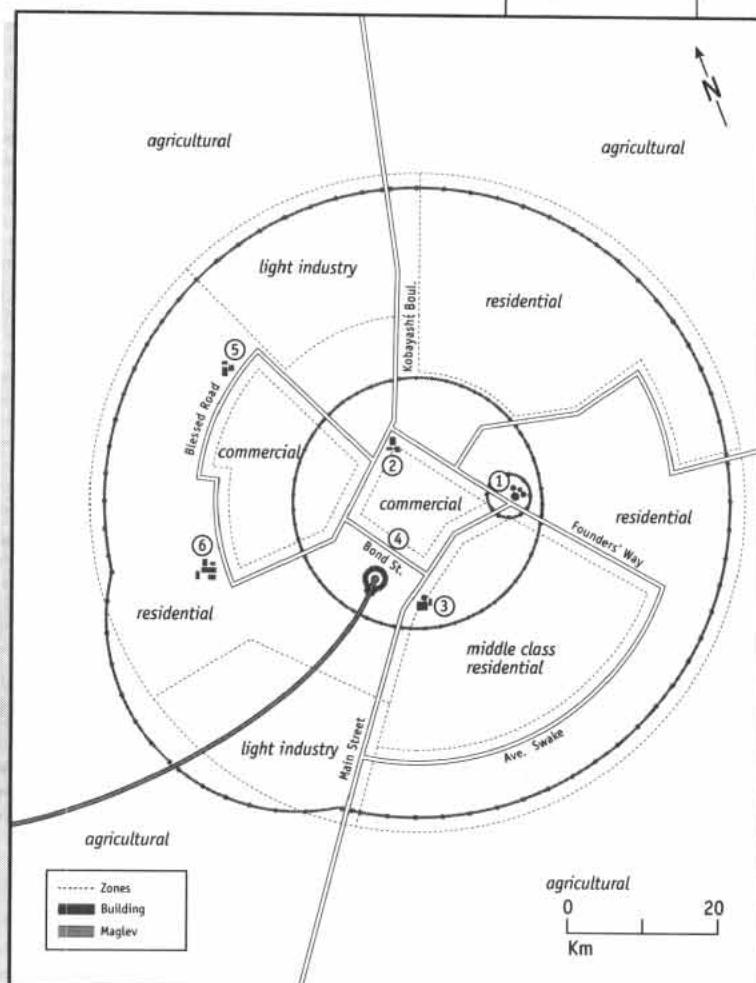
Vital Statistics

Founding Date:	TN 550
Joined MD:	TN 1532 (Mekong Alliance); TN 1562 (Mekong Dominion)
Method of Government:	Mercantile Oligarchy
Head of Government:	First Citizen Pablo Guerra
Population:	3.0 million (official census); 3.5 million (estimated)
Principal Industries:	Civil government, stock market, various industries



► Map of Mekong City

Location	Description
1. Assembly House	This building's huge domed roof appears squat and tiny beside the massive corporate towers. The architecture of the Assembly hall is reminiscent of ancient Terran cathedrals. Foundation park sprawls around the hall separating the building from the city center, showcasing the prestigious Fount of Good Fortune. A small honor guard of Peacekeepers patrol the area.
2. ICP Headquarters	The tri-towers of the ICP building encircle the beautiful Freedom Plaza, which contains some of the finest walking gardens in the league. The tri-towers also incorporate a lush indoor shopping center which puts the shopping district of many city-states to shame.
3. Prime Enclave	At only ten stories high, Prime Enclave is dwarfed by the corporate headquarters of Bond Street, but is no less important. Much of the building is devoted to command and communications with the huge Peacekeeper organization, while also serving as a fully functional police detachment.
4. Bond Street	This district houses various corporate headquarters and national embassies. Bond Street workers take the moving slideways for granted, while tourists marvel at the sheer extravagance of the whole system.
5. Golden Temple	Mekong citizens revere the site of the conclave of the pious that created Zentai Buddhism and the neo-Shinto religion. This massive temple is easily the most opulent building within the league. The first temple was destroyed during the War and this massive edifice has been built to replace it.
6. Academy of Science	Nestled within the residential area and close to a small strip park, the Academy's huge ivory towers and distinctive hexagonal roof makes it seem alien to the small houses it dominates. Graduates are notorious for their arrogance.



● ECONOMY & INFRASTRUCTURE

Mekong City has two major economic sectors, the first being agriculture (rice production and lumber harvesting), the second being government. Mekong City is the capital of the Dominion and the center of an economic empire which spans the globe. A common saying in the Dominion is that "all roads lead to Yung An, but the kronar stops in Mekong." In fact, the capital may well be the largest concentration of wealth on the planet. Every major corporation in the South and the North either has an office building here or is represented by brokerage. All seven leagues maintain an embassy in the city and the comings and goings of the powerful are commonplace. First Citizen Pablo Guerra has established an unofficial motto of "if it can't be done in Mekong City, it can't be done at all."

Guerra's job is to ensure that the city is run in a manner which facilitates commerce, which has given him broad discretionary powers. He is the head of the Dominion-wide civil service, which is presently serving Speaker Sogabe, CEO of ICP. He has a vast amount of power at his disposal, which he uses sparingly. The status quo is one of the prized philosophies he lives by, believing that any disruption of the existing system would be bad for business. He has reservations concerning Sogabe's social programs, but is trying to implement them to the best of his abilities without disrupting the city or the entire league.

Mekong City does not maintain its own Policia like the other city-states of the Dominion; instead, it has a large Peacekeeper presence. Because of its importance as the trade center of the southern hemisphere, the city's security is always a prime concern for the ruling corporations. With such a high number of Peacekeepers present, Mekong City has the least amount of violent crime of any Mekong city. It does, however, have the highest rate of corporate espionage in the hemisphere and a concentration of Yakuza second only to Hsi Tsang. Corporate crimes are generally dealt with between the two mercantile entities involved or brought before the Assembly; only rarely will it escalate into outright violence. In these cases, the Speaker will order the Peacekeepers into action using the discretionary powers at her disposal as head of state. Such incidences are rare, as the Peacekeepers are known for being especially harsh in their treatment of warring corporations.

• TOURISM

Mekong City is popular with tourists. The greatest attraction, on the list of nearly all visitors, is the Founders' Pavilion. The Pavilion is a three story museum built around the remains of a Founders' colonizing shuttle. The natural history of the Dominion and Earth is detailed here through the use of sophisticated holographic displays and artifacts.

The Peacekeepers' Prime Enclave is also a common stop. This ten story edifice is the home of the Peacekeepers and is the symbol that every Dominion citizen associates with law and order. During the War of the Alliance, the original building was razed to the ground. Today, the reconstructed headquarters incorporates state-of-the-art fortifications and is said to be impregnable. Guided tours are conducted once every two weeks, though all visitors are subjected to close scrutiny. In spite of this, the landmark is very popular.

The recent construction of an ornamental park surrounding the Mekong Assembly has made this building more appealing to visitors and common peasants. They come to enjoy the park and no longer view it as a symbol of unattainable riches. Corporate climbers are still drawn by the sheer magnitude of fiscal power represented by the Assembly building. A detachment of Peacekeepers ensures the local security.

Zentai Buddhism maintains the richly adorned Temple of the Traveling Buddha close to the Mekong Assembly. It is said that immortality awaits those who traverse the thousand steps to the shrine with a single crane to be burnt within the torches on either side of each step.

A final point of interest is the MD Stadium, home to the Dominion Bluejays, a moderately successful Batte team. They have been playing in the Southern Republic's professional Batte league for the last five cycles. The Bluejays have not been able to conquer the title from the powerful Republican teams, but Dominion citizens take great pride in their performances and have great hopes for the future.

• 32ND PEACEKEEPER REGIMENT — ANACONAS

The present day 32nd regiment has evolved around the survivors of the siege of Mekong. Early in the Mekong-Ashington offensive, the CEF forces reached as far as the capital of the Dominion, battering the walled city with intense artillery bombardments. The Prefect charged with the defense of the city counterattacked, using the regiment in a desperate attempt to destroy the firebase supplying the guns that were pounding the city into rubble. The firebase was near the edge of the regiment's operational range and they knew the mission was tantamount to suicide. Even if they succeeded in breaking through the heavily fortified lines, it was entirely likely that they would be stranded without fuel or support behind enemy lines.

Against all odds, the 32nd completed their mission, although they suffered appalling casualties. In the aftermath of the battle, there were barely enough intact Gears remaining in the regiment to fill out a single section. In spite of this, the ranking officer, Sous-Commandant Leung, ordered the regiment back into action, this time behind enemy lines. Scavenging equipment and fuel from damaged friendly and enemy units, a mere forty-three Gears set off to relieve their home city.

Without the support of their firebase, the Earth troops were forced to assault the city directly. Once the hover tanks and GREL troopers entered the dense jungle surrounding the capital, they soon became bogged down, their mobility severely hampered. They were still able to renew the bombardment but were unable to actually break through the Dominion fortifications. The siege continued for two weeks, during which time the remnants of the 32nd regiment stalked the Earth forces in some of the fiercest jungle fighting of the entire war.

An Earth hover tank was no match for the maneuverability of a Gear in the thick foliage of the Mekong jungle. Leung's simple hit-run-trap-and-hit-again tactics were extremely effective against the CEF, which was committed to a bombardment of the city. A season later the attackers were forced to break off the siege. With their supply lines cut, food, spare parts and ammunition running low, and over 500 casualties, the CEF retreated to the edge of the jungle, abandoning a concerted assault of the Dominion in favor of the war of attrition which it eventually lost. Of the forty-three Gears under Sous-Commandant Leung, less than twenty emerged from the jungle victorious.

The regiment's present Commandant, Sadeo Takayama, continues the training initiated by Sous-Commandant Leung. His Anacondas are renowned across Terra Nova as the finest jungle fighters on the planet. Members of this regiment are specialists at close in fighting and all their Gears carry the bayonets which characterize their preferred trade. The Dominion recognizes the debt it owes this distinguished regiment and its Gears are always the newest and best maintained of any Peacekeeper force. The regimental motto is "Victory at any cost."

Anaconda Gears are usually painted dark brown with irregular patches of green and gray. The current Regimental Duelist is Keiko Leung, the granddaughter of the almost legendary Leung. She dislikes dueling, regarding it as an unwanted distraction from her duties as a Peacekeeper. Her Long Fang Gear is kept in peak operating condition, but is usually always dirty from her deep jungle assignments. In her opinion, the added layers of dirt aid the camouflage scheme. Her regimental superiors and other Duelists regard it as an affront to their collective dignity, but there is no arguing with her effectiveness in the field and the duel ring.

5.6 NGORONGORO

Ngorongoro's economy is composed of a highly diversified number of corporate entities. Many of the local industries are subsidiaries or full sections of some of the Dominion's largest Mercantile Corporations, and while their parents may be massive, they themselves are not. No industry dominates the city's economy or is in a position to irreparably harm it if it left. This has given the city a unique atmosphere, devoid of the rivalries and machinations so common in the corporations of the larger city-states. The lack of rivalry has led to the city's reputation as a resort community. True, the majority of Ngorongoro's income is derived from industry but it does benefit greatly from the tourist trade.

Many small resorts and hot springs are scattered about the area, catering to the rest and relaxation needs of visitors. In Ngorongoro resorts it is said that the Taipan of Dominion corporations can rub shoulders with the lowliest of employees from any other corporation. Most Taipans travel with extensive security precautions, but the fact remains that in Ngorongoro corporate barriers are lowered between citizens, giving rise to an environment free from the taint of business rivalries.

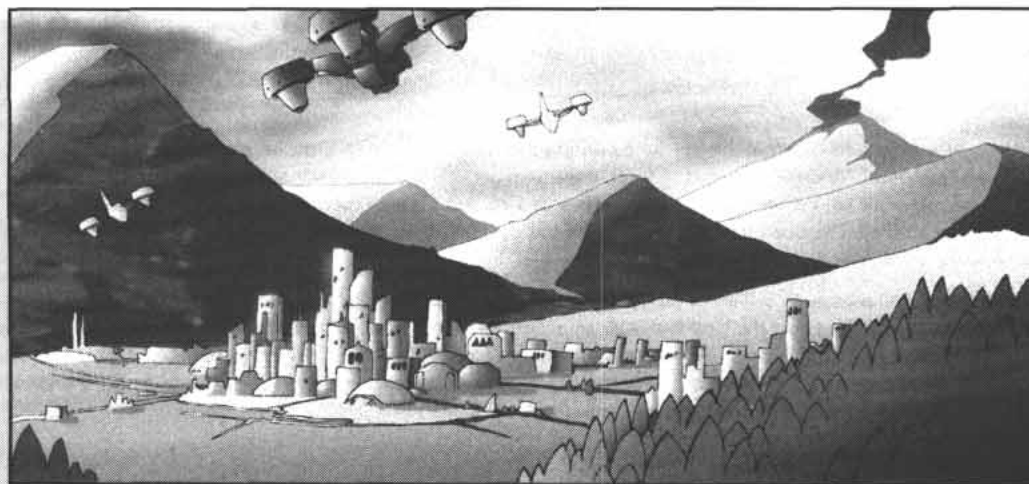
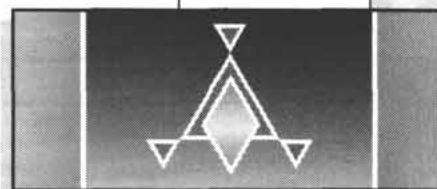
Ngorongoro is renowned for the spectacular beauty of the surrounding mountains, in particular Mount Kandrassar, the Dominion's only active volcano. High up its slope is a massive building employing over 3000 people. This facility is ICP's answer to the energy needs of the Dominion. Huge pipes snake out from this building to a number of fissures in the volcano. Pressurized water is pumped in to be turned into superheated steam by the magma lying a mere hundred meters or so below the surface. The steam is then expelled at great pressure through a second system of tubes and into turbine generators producing electricity. This energy is sufficient to power the entire city-state of Ngorongoro and it is estimated that only six more facilities would supply the entire Dominion.

Recently, director Darnel Ridley has been pushing the facility to the limit trying to produce more and more energy. This is because he has been exporting energy to the city of Hsi Tsang. The profit involved is not huge because the power being sent is radically underpriced, leading to many assumptions as to the exact motives of the director or the specifics of the trade deal. Many workers have expressed concern over the safety conditions within the plant. Darnel stresses that the facility needs to expand in order to fulfill its energy quotas but his pleas have been ignored by the city council.

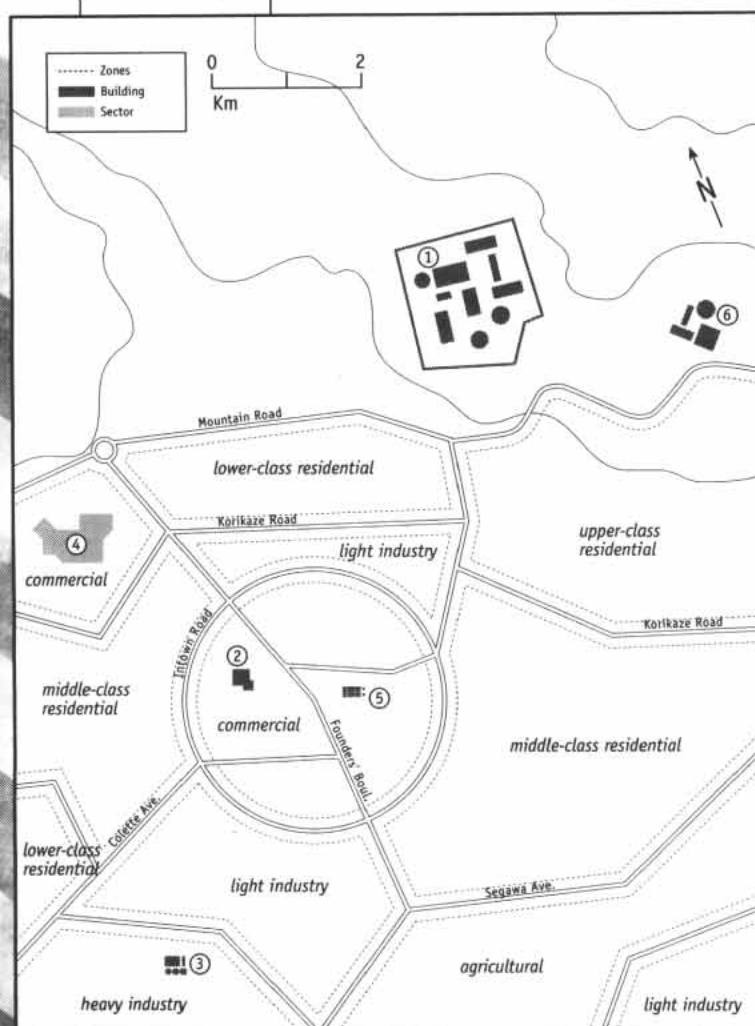
The directorate council, headed by Director Thomas Wiebe, is nervous about expanding the plant due to the recommendations of a small group of scientists who have also made a home on the slopes of Mount Kandrassar. The small research facility houses approximately 30 scientists and graduate students from the University of Mekong's geology faculty. They generally keep to themselves but can occasionally be encountered fetching supplies from the main city. They believe that the invasive geothermal techniques proposed by Ridley may destabilize the volcano. While the city is some 30 km away and there have been no significant eruptions in centuries, the city is wary of allowing the geothermal facility to expand until they get all the facts.

► Vital Statistics

Founding Date:	TN 1601
Joined MD:	TN 1601
Method of Government:	Mekong Dominion Directorate Council
Head of Government:	Director Thomas Wiebe
Population:	1. 4 million (official census), 1. 6 million (estimated)
Principal Industries:	power generation, various smaller industries



Map of Ngorongoro



Location	Description
1. Zoo Compound	This zoo is the only place on Terra Nova where many old Earth animals are kept in captivity. The sprawling enclosures are home to tigers, bears and alligators, among 200 different animals. There is a Terranovan section which contains 300 separate species.
2. Pip's Café	Pip is well known in the city as a distinguished animal trainer and retailer, and her shop is typical of a Ngorongoran pet café. Residents bring their pets with them to enjoy local cuisine and each other's company. Small perches are provided for parrots and tamed sunshadows, while well trained pets are allowed to roam free.
3. Kang's Tanning Yard	The yards are a major supplier of pelts and skins for the Mekong fashion industry. The outer compound of his tannery is filled with drying racks loaded down with skins. As a sideline, the carcasses are either butchered for pet food or used to create glue, causing a lingering, pungent odor. Kang is reputed to have ties to the Miyazaki clan.
4. Animal District	This part of the city is filled with large and small shops, some reputable, others not, but all filled with an amazing variety of animals. Exotic creatures can be found here — for a price.
5. Glorious Dragon	From the massive lobby to the stadium-sized casino, the Glorious Dragon Hotel emphasizes size and opulence. No expense was spared on the décor, which puts even the opulence of an emir's estate to shame. Celebrities are common guests at the Glorious Dragon and the hotel staff are trained with service, security and silence as their watchwords.
6. Magical Empire	Sparky and his cousins Slappy and Scrappy Springer are the hosts of the Dominion's #1 adventure/theme park. Children of all ages can experience adventure rides based on popular trideo series. Robotics bring these rides to life and roam the park as characters of the popular show "Sparky Springer's Treehouse."

LOCAL FAUNA

Trapping and exporting live animals is a major industry in the Mekong Dominion, not only for farming and clothing purposes, but also for the entertainment and culinary sectors of the economy. This remains true for Ngorongoro and the surrounding area, particularly since many species of beautiful and diverse animals can be found in the region and nowhere else. Foremost among these unusual creatures are the varied forms of flying reptiles and imported birds which are constantly seen darting about in the sky overhead. Residents of Ngorongoro are so enthralled with the local fauna that almost every house is home to at least one pet. These animals are treated no differently than any other member of the household — and occasionally, better.

Pets are such an important part of the city-state's society that each day after work, the head of the household or one of the elder children will take the pet out for a stroll to the local pet café. The owner will take the opportunity to show his love for his pet while enjoying a cawfee or other drink with his friends. It is considered poor form for a pet to misbehave while in one of these cafés and it reflects badly upon the owner. Common Ngorongoro pets include parrots, sparrows, sunshadows and various breeds of dogs.

Few Earth animals are able to survive in the Terranovan biosphere, for they often have no place within the Terranovan ecology and cannot always eat the local fare. Mekong people are traditionalist, however, and like to have a link to the past. The Council Zoological Compound is a huge nature establishment where many terrestrial animals are kept in captivity. These animals were force grown from cryogenically preserved embryos imported at great expense by the Founders. Small dedicated plantations keep them supplied with the proper food.

5.7 OLDUVAI

The city-state of Olduvai is located in the foothills of the Ngoc mountains, on the shores of Lake Van Ness. The region was originally settled as one of Terra Nova's scientific centers, with many of the early planetary exploration and survey parties having camps and supply depots in the area. For this reason, the region is best known as a treasure trove of early colonial cultures and has attracted a fair share of attention from historians over the cycles. One of the most famed local discoveries is the skull of a millennium-old male Terranovan, affectionately known as "George," discovered by accident in TN 1529. George was likely one of the early Human Concordat surveyors who never made it back to the base. Other discoveries, such as tools and ground vehicle hulks, help the modern Terranovans understand the mindset of their pioneer forebears. To the ancestor- and tradition-conscious Mekong, such links to the past are an essential part of their identities.

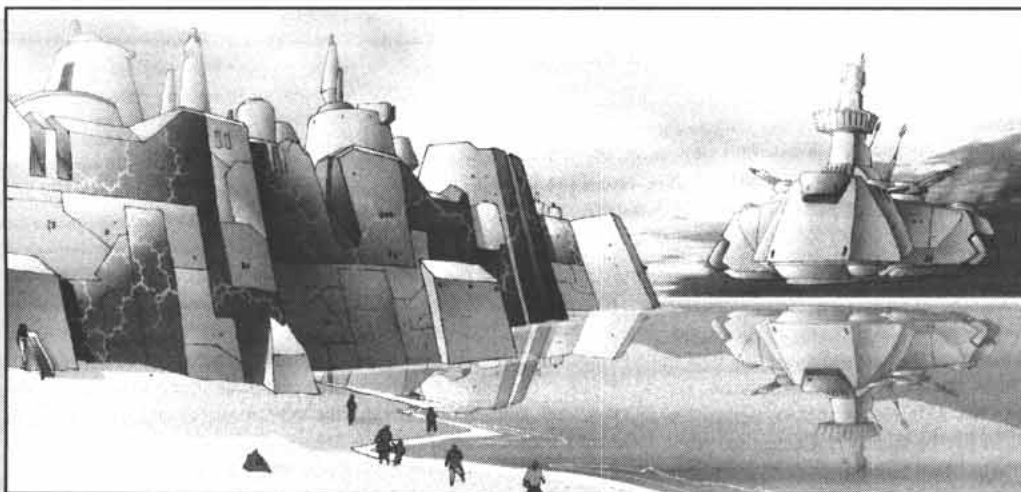
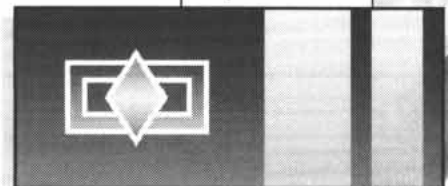
This city-state is little more than a collection of archeological sites and the small community which has sprung up around them. The settlement is also one of the closest Mekong outposts to the Badlands, and as such, contains many businesses and facilities devoted to travelers and caravans. Like Hsi Tsang, Olduvai is a free-wheeling and sometimes dangerous city, especially outside the walled compound. Were it not for a large military presence, Olduvai would be little more than anarchy. A small council of governors administer the city and provide a certain amount of structure to the chaotic sprawl of buildings which comprise the city-state.

Most of the planet's universities have established research annexes here and are required to contribute to the municipal coffers. As these archeological expeditions are usually operating on a shoestring budget, the contributions are minimal at best, often little more than a simple donation to the council treasury. The governors are elected yearly by the residents of the city; anyone who has lived in Olduvai for one complete cycle is entitled to vote in these elections, with the exception of foreign military personnel. Elected governors are drawn from the ranks of the universities or local businesses. Most of them are generally too preoccupied with their full time jobs to care much for the mundane, day-to-day running of the city, which is overseen by the head of the council, the Rector. Pending approval on major decisions, he handles most of the paperwork as well.

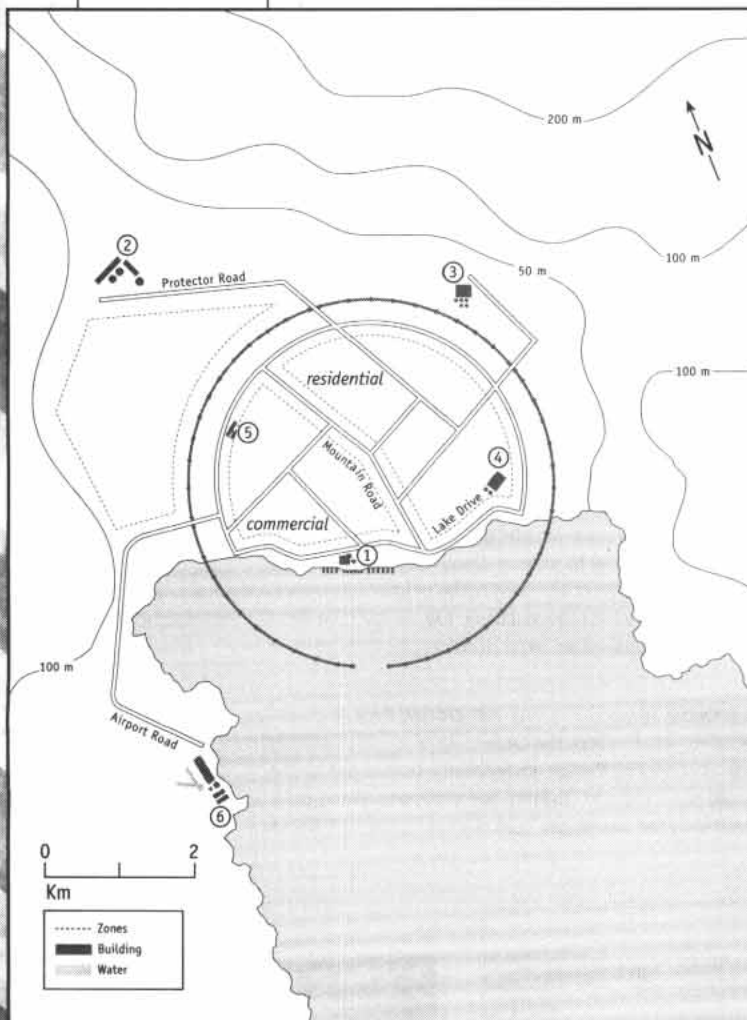
Fifty cycles ago, the city built a wall to encompass the foreign scientist living in the city and protect their work and laboratories. MILICIA guards patrol outside the district to ensure safety and to check the credentials of anyone entering or leaving. Within the walls, private guards secure the various annexes funded by foreign governments. Were it not for the splendid gardens and beautiful architecture of the district, it would seem like the students and professors living there were little more than prisoners. The students in particular are offended by the impromptu searches conducted by MILICIA patrols and have organized protests on a number of occasions.

Vital Statistics

Founding Date:	TN 1528 (modern city)
Joined MD:	TN 1562
Method of Government:	Corporate Democracy
Head of Government:	Rector Nicole Lindberg-Fong
Population:	280,000 (estimated, no official census)
Principal Industries:	Academic research, caravan supplies



Map of Olduvai ◀



Location	Description
1. University District	With high walls and armed guards at the gates, it seems more like a foreign city than a suburb devoted to the universities. Unfortunately, colonial artifacts have always been a valuable item to collectors and scholars alike. Over the cycles, Brigands have repeatedly raided the archeological collections of Olduvai scholars.
2. MILICIA Garrison	The garrison's duties consist mainly of customs inspections and Badlands patrols. There is also a series of heavily fortified bunkers containing stockpiles of fuel and fissionable material for the landships that sporadically visit the garrison. The remainder of the buildings are little more than an artillery firebase and barracks for the regiments stationed there.
3. The Parched Throat	Sammy's place is a fixture of the community: roadhouse, casino, brothel and occasional opera hall, all rolled into one central location. The establishment tends to be frequented by a less cultured clientele, drawn by the gambling, bands, dueling pit and exotic dancers.
4. Colonial Museum	The majority of the archeological artifacts discovered by Dominion expeditions are housed here. Much of the building was destroyed by CEF bombardments, along with much of its contents. This has spurred an archeological revival as museums and universities across Terra Nova try to rebuild their collections.
5. Olduvai Textiles	This small enterprise is run by Tetsuo Katsumata and is one of the few industries thriving here. The factory makes use of the cottonweed plants, which are common in the area, to weave cheap bolts of cloth for use in the garment industry.
6. Ramonair Aerodrome	The company shares space with a MILICIA patrol squadron, which occasionally creates friction between the staff and the military pilots. In addition to a dozen or so privately owned aircraft, the hangers house a small fleet of three long-range passenger aircraft, which are overworked and dangerously under maintained.

• RECTOR NICOLE LINDBERG-FONG

The present Rector, Nicole Lindberg-Fong, is determined to encourage the growth of her small city-state. In her four consecutive terms in office, her initiatives have sparked an unprecedented 12% increase in immigration to Olduvai. Chief among her concerns is the fostering of a cultural identity for the city; she sees Olduvai as the spearhead of a cultural revolution in the league. Unfortunately, the bulk of the city's population is comprised of professors, soldiers or shady traders, most of whom regard her initiatives as futile and a little flaky. Interestingly, Nicole was not born in the Dominion and only emigrated from the United Mercantile Federation recently. The widespread Mekong dislike of outsiders would seem to preclude her from rising to the position of Rector, but not in this city-state. She is well respected within the community but has difficulty commanding respect from the rest of the Dominion. If it was not for the fact that her husband Miyamoto Fong is Commandant of the Olduvai Policia, her job would be far more difficult. It is well known that Nicole has extensive contacts throughout the Badlands and beyond, which has assisted her in ensuring the city-state's prosperity.

Nicole's husband is far less successful at his chosen profession. As the Commandant of the local Policia, Miyamoto has the dubious honor of policing the city's population. His rank is equivalent to that of a regimental commander, which hardly does justice to the meager resources at his command — the Policia squadron consists of a mere hundred men, only thirty of whom are constables qualified for field work. Miyamoto's duties include acting as squadron commander, public relations official, MILICIA liaison, quartermaster and circuit judge. In the absence of any large corporate headquarters in the city, Fong has been forced to draft representatives from small local businesses and the military to act as a judging board. Mediating the squabbles which arise within the board occupies much of his time. The remainder is taken up trying to stop local political tensions from erupting into bloodshed. To this end, the city has purchased three Jägers for its troops; somehow, Fong has acquired a Strike Jaguar as his personal Gear.

● COMMANDANT SUSAN THOMPSON

The Fong family try to provide the cultural and legal structure that the city-state is sorely in need of, but Olduvai is still very much a frontier town with a frontier mentality. No one knows this better than Susan Thompson, the Commandant of the MILICIA garrison stationed in Olduvai. Her rank is effectively the same as that of Miyamoto Fong, but where he commands four Gears and a hundred men she can summon nearly 500 troops and up to 90 Gears. It galls her to no end to have to recognize Fong as an equal, yet over the cycles a grudging respect has developed between the two. The scuttlebutt about the city talks of a romantic relationship, but luckily this rumor has not been shared with Thompson — who is not known for her sense of humor.

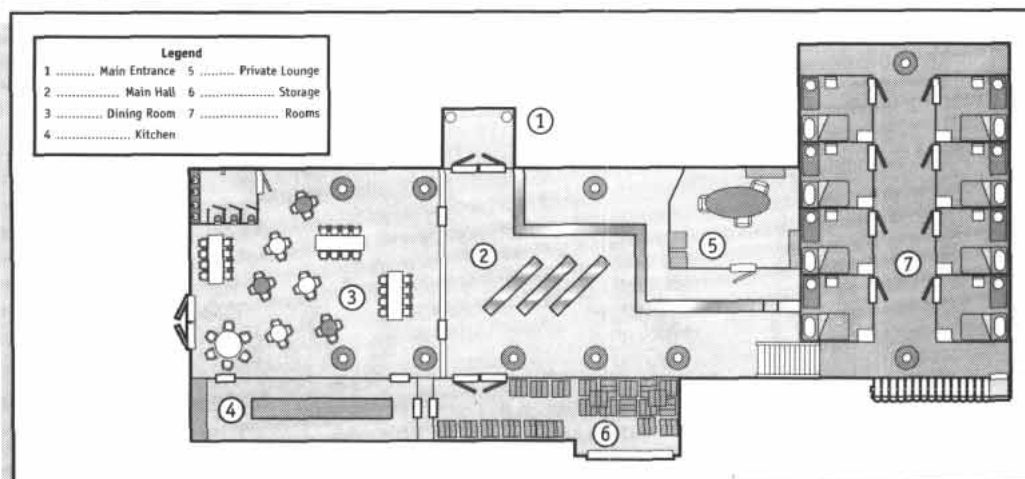
The MILICIA garrison, like Fong's Policia, is massively overworked. Their duties include protecting the various archeological sites scattered over a 30 square kilometers area, escorting AST caravans, guarding the border and conducting customs inspections on incoming and outgoing trade caravans. At any one time, fully two-third of the regiment may be away from the base. In the even of a full scale attack, it would be unlikely that Thompson would be able to protect the city; it is, after all, little more than a collection of prefabricated houses and rudimentary research complexes. She tries her best to keep the garrison at peak efficiency, ready at all times for the assault she always expects, but she lacks the resources to keep it up. The recent escalation in tension between the North and South have alarmed the politicians in Mekong, who view Olduvai as a clearing house for CNCs spies. Thompson's orders now include random security sweeps of foreign nationals, increasing the tension between the two factions of the city. Incidences of violence between MILICIA soldiers and locals are increasing, despite her and Fong's best efforts. Olduvai is a powder keg of political tension just waiting to go off — and Susan knows it.

● THE PARCHED THROAT

Olduvai is the last outpost of Mekong civilization before entering the savannahs that lead to the Badlands. A major industry in the city revolves around servicing the vehicles that risk the hazards of the equatorial region and the men who pilot them. Foremost amongst these merchants is Sui Cheng "Sammy" Leung operator of the notorious Parched Throat. The Parched Throat began its life as a humble diner when Sammy's father built it over thirty cycles ago. Today, it is a huge complex, incorporating the functions of general store, refueling station, hotel, casino and brothel. Sammy's products are inexpensive and plentiful, and his selection is amazingly diversified. His favorite slogan, "if it ain't here it won't be anywhere else," is surprisingly accurate. For those needing a new actuator for their Rabid Grizzly or the latest in Badlands fashion, the Parched Throat is the place to go.

Fong's Constables are constantly finding irregularities in Sammy's stock manifests and while this does not prove he is a pirate, it is a good indicator. Sammy has never admitted to knowingly purchasing any goods from known brigands, of course, but it is commonly assumed that he is the local clearinghouse for hot merchandise. The Policia generally turns a blind eye to such activities as Sammy's fines provide a good source of income for the city treasury. Sammy's business also provides an invaluable R&R service for the local garrison, always sorely in need of diversion. His house concubines are reputed to be the finest in all of the Mekong and are treated quite decently in spite of their indentured servitude. Occasionally, an incident will arise over a servant who is identified as a survivor of a Badlands rover raid. Sammy is ordinarily quite congenial about the whole thing and will usually allow the contract of the servant in question to be bought out for a reasonable fee. It is widely acknowledged that Sammy has strong ties to Toshiro Miyazaki, the Oyabun of Hsi Tsang.

► Map of the Parched Throat Diner



5.8 YUNG AN

The Yung An city-state is often called the "city with three souls" by its inhabitants, referring to its influence on Mekong agriculture, industry and culture. Much of the efforts of its population goes towards feeding the behemoth Mekong City, giving it a sort of motherly outlook towards its sister city. Recent statistics indicate that much of Yung An's production, be it rice, automobiles or literature, is shipped to sustain the three million inhabitants of the capital and the regions around it. The strategic importance of the city-state to the well-being of the league thus necessitates a large military presence and the infrastructure to support it.

The city is governed by a small council headed by First Citizen Lillian Ng. Like most Mekong government, the council is composed of business interests and generally stays out of local affairs. First Citizen Ng is appreciated as a competent but unimaginative leader, one that keeps the show running but little more. The real authority lies elsewhere: it is common knowledge among government bureaucrats that Port Director Ryosuke Kami controls the inner working of the city. He prefers to let Ng deal with the boring and politically unthreatening business of city ordinance, however. Kami also lets him deal with the peasants.

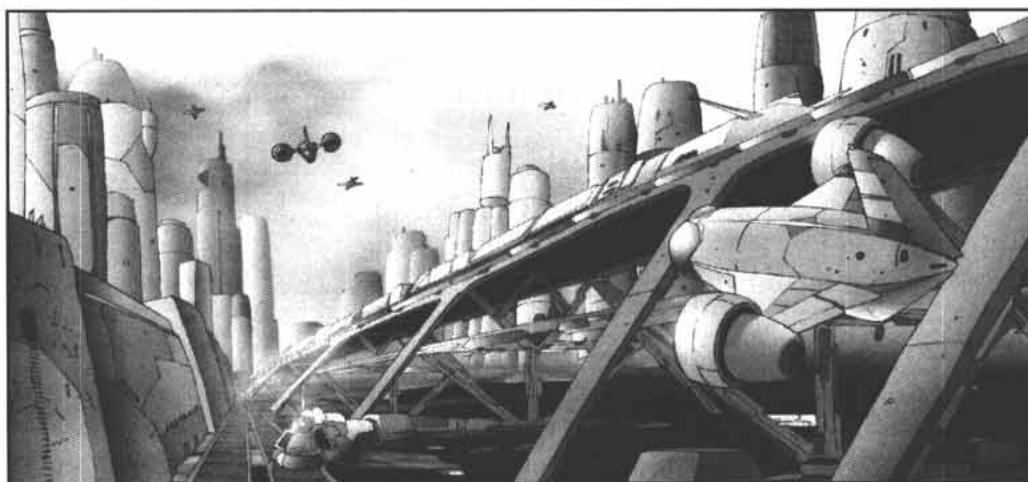
Yung An is one of the central hubs of the Dominion's rail system, with major lines converging upon it from Atsi, Loyang and Ngorongoro. It is also traversed by the maglev line that comes from the Emirates before heading to Mekong City. Local gangs have taken to partying near the junction where the garrison's spur meets the main railway. When the youths spot MILICIA Gears scrambling from the garrison, they will jump into their cars or bikes and race the soldiers along the length of the rail for as long as they can. The soldiers enjoy the good natured competition and many of the Gear pilots have made friends with the youthful racers.

Yung An is the site of the original landing by the Founders and houses a famous monument to their memory. A triangular park is nestled between the remains of each of the three Founder landing craft and is a popular meeting place for the city youth. In the middle of the park, an elaborately engraved obelisk is placed at the center of a carved black marble table. A water stream runs down the sides of the obelisk, then along the jet black table to cascade seemingly into the ground itself in one thin unbroken sheet of water. The water, the ground and the obelisk symbolize the ideals of the Dominion: Peace, Prosperity and Providence.

A visit to Yung An would be incomplete without a stroll along the Rue de la Muse. It is here that the league bares its artistic soul. Even such esoteric items as antique Earth era paperbacks (sealed in vacuum chambers to avoid corruption) to the latest in self-published games and novels inspired by popular trideo programs can be found in the stalls and shops that line the sidewalks. On rainy days, the cafés are filled to capacity with fledgling writers and poets enjoying impromptu readings by their idols.

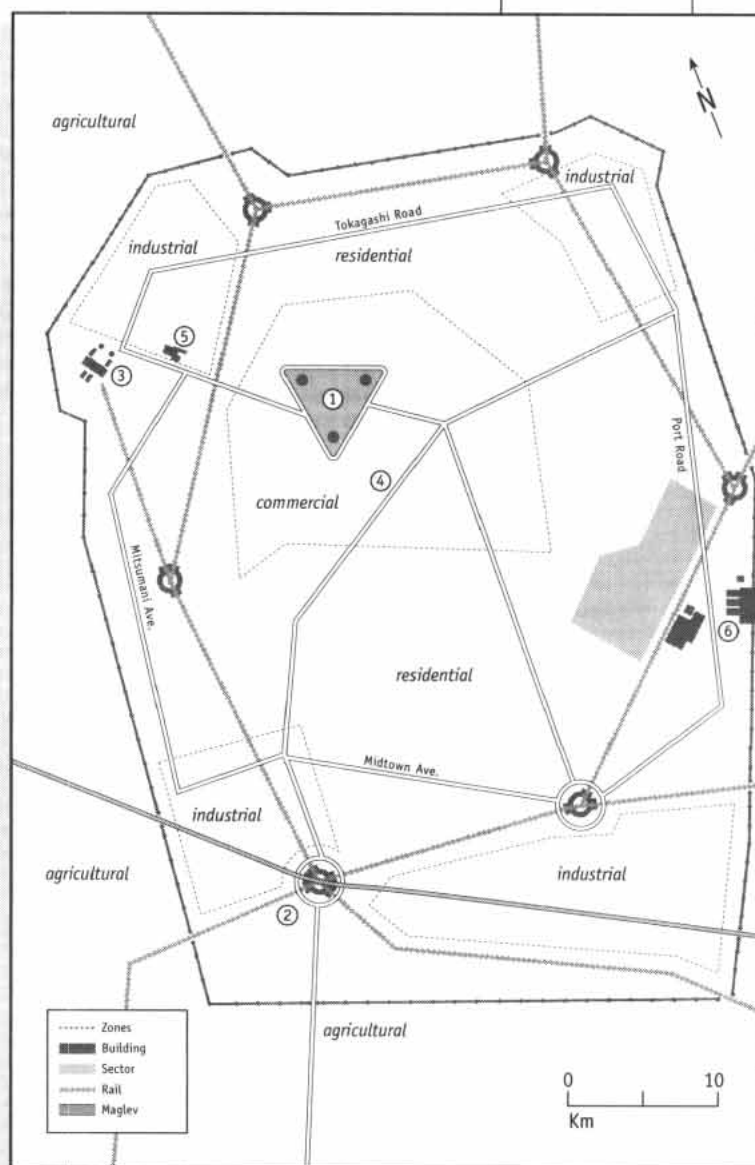
Vital Statistics ◀

Founding Date:	TN 10
Joined MD:	TN 1532 (Mekong Alliance); TN 1562 (Mekong Dominion)
Method of Government:	Mercantile Oligarchy
Head of Government:	First Citizen Lillian Ng
Population:	2.9 million (official census), 3.6 million (estimated)
Principal Industries:	Shipping, agriculture, various industries



Map of Yung An

Location	Description
1. Colony Triangle	The three original colony landing craft which descended from the <i>Gateship Endeavor</i> to found the Dominion make up the three points of this national monument. The craft themselves are closed to the public, being structurally unsound and quite overgrown by vegetation.
2. Main Depot	This sprawling junction is occasionally referred to as the unforgiving steel heart of the city-state. The depot is a nexus point for Dominion commerce, serving as a link to markets across the planet. A huge landship dock is nestled outside the rail yards, providing a port of call for the Third Dominion Naval Task Force. Security in the depot is provided by a joint force of Mekong Rail Security, MILICIA troops, Yung An Policia and league Peacekeepers.
3. MILICIA Garrison	The MILICIA regiment have been provided with a small spur rail depot. The depot has been modified into rapid deployment barracks for the regiment by adding fortifications and a small landing strip. From here, the Red Lions patrol the region in search of bandits.
4. Rue de la Muse	The street's numerous cawfee houses and streetside cafés cater to the artistically inclined. Vehicle traffic is prohibited along the Rue de la Muse, except for the Peacekeeper bicycle patrols. On a nice day, the wide street is filled with artists and merchant selling their wares; everything from original paintings to new trideo games can be found in this open market.
5. Territorial Arms	This huge factory complex produces a variety of Gear components for the Dominion and foreign markets. The factory is a large employer in Yung An, but has been continually plagued by work shutdowns and internal strife. Despite the absence of trade unions within the Dominion, civil service arbiters have repeatedly been called in to adjudicate disputes in the plant.
6. Dominion Shipyards	The enormous complex consists of three civilian construction docks, four military docks, and two repair docks. The military docks are separate from the remainder of the complex and enclosed by massive hangars to guard the sensitive projects they protect. The third dock is committed to the construction of the behemoth class petroleum/ore transport <i>DCS Agora</i> .



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Yung An prides itself on being the cultural capital of the Dominion. It boasts the most theaters and playhouses of any city-state in the league and is also the center of a diverse and thriving entertainment industry. The largest production house is Sterling Endeavour Productions, which specializes in inexpensive productions for export across the planet. SEP also has a large domestic market which is also quite profitable and might allow the company to attain outer tier status within the next two cycles. The business is controlled solely by Katherine Sterling, whose family has run the corporation since its birth 65 cycles ago. The AST's longest running soap opera, *Southern Nights* — starring the ravishing and highly popular Robyn Stewart — and the highly respected investigative news show *Dominion Report* are among its many accomplishments.

Dominion Report's simple name belies the hard hitting news coverage its reputation is built upon. The show's anchor Francisco Harrison, a Norlight's ex-patriot, takes an active role in the show's coverage, stripping the veil from the otherwise respectable Mekong Dominion. His favorite targets are the MILICIA garrisons, MDC, the Mekong Assembly, Lord Chancellor Durocher and of course Toshiro Miyazaki. The last two are believed to have placed a substantial bounty on Harrison's head, which has in no way diminished his journalistic resolve. The Southern Republic views the show as a subversive influence but its popularity has protected the show so far.

• INDUSTRY

Yung An is also an important agricultural and industrial center. The outlying areas of the city-state are dominated by the rice paddies and plantations of the peasant communes. Approximately a third of the league's rice is produced in these fields, which are run by the city council. The peasants working the fields may have lived there for generations or even own the land themselves, but it is the council that regulates which crops are to be grown. This system ensures that the land is not being stripped of essential nutrients by peasants only growing crops that have the highest sale value. This allows the city to accommodate fluctuations in demand for produce, keeping a steady output for domestic use as well as export. The system is not well liked by the peasant class, but is well balanced and highly flexible, which has attracted the interest of other city-states. Occasionally peasant associations will protest the system — usually peacefully, but occasionally the Policia are forced to quell the odd riot.

Territorial Arms maintains a large factory here to produce military and civilian Gears and to provide necessary maintenance parts. The industrial sections are centered around the massive rail yards and highway system which cross the city like so many asphalt and steel ribbons. It is said that "if something wasn't made in Yung An, it passed through it." Reflecting its importance as a major hub of shipping, Yung An has a large force of overworked and underpaid officials who regulate the movement of trade goods and resources. These civil employees are under the direct command of Director Ryosuke Kami, who sees them as his personal army.

Kami is arguably one of the most powerful individuals in the Dominion, due to his position. Corporations and civil servants alike curry his favor and the city council is little more than a puppet to his whims. As the size of his palatial home will attest, he is quite wealthy — far more so than any other civil servant in the league. Kami has a unique relationship with Mekong Rail, his main client. The Taipan of the corporation has openly announced Ryosuke as his successor, further consolidating Kami's present position. Very little goes on the city which Kami is not somehow involved in or at least skimming a profit from.

• FOUNDER'S DAY

An important national festival is held in Yung An. The Founder's Day festival celebrates the arrival of the Founders on Terra Nova. The site of the week-long festival is Colony Triangle. The triangle is a massive public park situated between the three immense cargo holds which served as the landing vehicles for the original colonists. The cargo pods have long since been abandoned as unsafe and sealed off from the public to avoid accidents, but the park welcomes many visitors each day. The Fountain of Attainable Wishes stands in the center of the park, where it is said that the Dominion's ancestors gazed into a small spring and a water spirit revealed the glorious destiny awaiting them. Many young Mekong businessmen will trek to this pool in hopes of seeing their own future.

223 MILICIA Regiment — Red Lions

This regiment was formed relatively recently but has already earned itself a distinguished name among AST units. With the rise in brigand raids on Mekong trade caravans and drone trains, the AST responded with a concerted effort to police merchandise shipments by assigning a small group of investigators to the problem. The members of what was to become the 223 were transferred from their home units to a staging area within the Southern Republic, just across the border from Hsi Tsang, to prepare for a surprise midnight assault on the largest of these pirate bands. The fighting was furious but despite the cadres' best efforts, many of the brigands escaped into the night. The brigands seemed less like outlaw pirates and more like a force ready for a civil war. In response to what the MILICIA saw as a threat, not only to the Mekong Dominion but to the AST itself, they formed the 223 Regiment, who took for themselves the name Red Lions. The mandate of the Red Lions is to root out the brigand bands still hiding in the Mekong jungles and to safeguard the internal trade shipments of the Dominion.

The centralized location of Yung An is an ideal base of operations for the Red Lions, currently serving under Commandant Anatole Fedevich of the ESE. Fedevich believes his troops to be a form of modern-day Cossacks, highly mobile and ruthless. His railriders (Gear cadres carried by high speed trains) are able to travel the internal railroads quickly and efficiently while his paratroops flank any fleeing outlaws. Many of his troops are also highly skilled jungle fighters and can survive for weeks in the bush. The regimental orders give the Red Lions a large area to patrol, occasionally sending cadres deep into the Badlands. As a result, they are allowed a freedom of action unmatched by any other Mekong regiment. A recent rumor circulating about the assembly is that the brigands the Red Lions are chasing are merely an excuse for the Lord Chancellor to send troops to disrupt Oyabun Miyazaki's operations in the area. This has yet to be denied or even acknowledged by the Lord Chancellor.

The Red Lions paint scheme consists of irregular tan and green shapes, overlapping each other to simulate local foliage. Many units have added a highly decorative lion motif to the accepted paint scheme. The jaws appear to swallow the sensory array of a painted Gear, while a stylized mane of flames drapes the back and shoulders of the machine. The Red Lions do not presently have a Duelist. An interregimental dispute between the Red Lions and the Mekong Anacondas resulted in the accidental death of their Duelist last cycle.



5.9 REGIONS

It is an indisputable fact of life that the majority of the power and wealth of the Mekong Dominion is concentrated in its city-states. Only a third of the Dominion's people actually live in the city-states, however the remainder are scattered across the immense untamed wilderness in isolated communes or small enclaves, which are like small city-states in their own right. Life outside of the main cities is hard and unforgiving; the mortality rate is high among the peasant classes which struggle to eke out a living from the brutal jungle or savannah of the area. Each commune is generally self-sufficient when it comes to food, with many of them producing a surplus of one crop or another to trade with neighboring communes or the major city-states.

Communes will often be situated near an exploitable natural resource: fernwood jungles in the south, mining in the Ngoc range and petroleum in the plains to the north. A few heavy industries and manufacturing facilities are located outside of the cities, but these are usually very small concerns and devoted to goods that are not exported outside of the Dominion: machine parts, agricultural implements and housing materials. Quite a few communes also have a thriving cottage industry making arts and crafts, which are sold to travelers and caravans.

The technology used by communes is generally very rugged and somewhat more primitive than what most Terranovans may be used to. Buildings are constructed of natural materials and agricultural machinery will often consist of a solar powered mill and a single tractor shared by the entire community. Approximately half of these communes have little contact with their neighbors save for the regular trade caravans which pass through their village.

Before the War of the Alliance, most villages had satellite dishes and many sophisticated household appliances and conveniences. Squads of GREL soldiers were dispatched to every commune with orders to round up and destroy all hi-tech devices, especially the satellite dishes which allowed isolated villages to communicate with the government and hence the resistance. Communes which resisted were burnt to the ground and their populations decimated; many suffered terrible atrocities at the hands of the Earth forces. It is estimated that well over three million peasants were killed during the war and 15 million forced to flee their homes and villages. GREL or ex-CEF soldiers are not welcomed in the interior of the Mekong. The peasant's memories of mass graves, burnt villages and destroyed lives will likely take generations to fade.

5.9.1 AGRICULTURAL COMMUNES

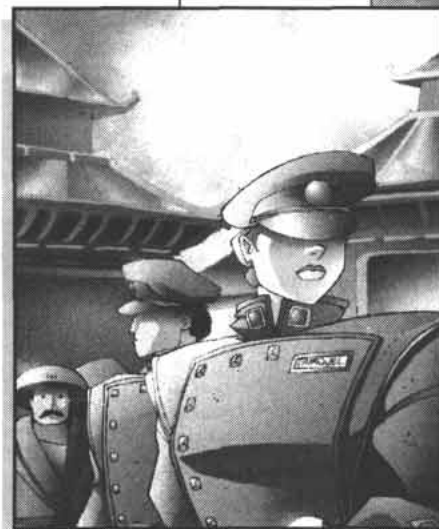
The agricultural communes of the Mekong are built along similar lines, which provide protection for the inhabitants while using mostly natural (and easily available) materials. The fields generally begin only a few meters away from the commune itself, which is always surrounded by a fernwood or, occasionally, concrete stockade. Most communes provide a home for three or four family groupings, but larger ones may house up to twenty different families. Unlike in the cities, each home has only one story, therefore each family grouping may occupy more than one building. Neighboring communes usually try to maintain close ties with one another, as their neighbors may be the most immediate source of assistance when disaster hits.

► Dominion Enclaves

Trade caravans maintain extensive routes throughout the Dominion. Many of the larger communes will be included, but many more remain isolated. In order to market their crops and resources, the peasants of the smaller communes must travel to central locations where the caravans stop. Over the cycles, these locations have grown in size and political power in their areas, until they are like small city-states themselves. The Mekong Assembly watches these fledgling cities very closely, wary of any threat to the stability of the Dominion. These large communes are called enclaves and usually provide a home for 20,000 to 80,000 people at most. They may incorporate as a city-state should the population exceeds 100,000 citizens, according to official census.

An enclave will often sprawl across dozens of square kilometers, its physical size exaggerated by the fact that few of its buildings more than a couple of stories. Surrounding the enclave is a massive palisade constructed of fernwood or local stone, though sometimes an entrenchment, moat or tank trap is also an important part of an enclave's fortifications. The center of the settlement consists of a huge marketplace where local peasants will set up stalls to sell their wares to the residents and caravaneers. Traveling caravans also set up stalls where the peasants bring their heavily loaded carts for trading.

The Dominion always maintains a large military presence in the largest of these enclaves — officially, "to ensure the security of the settlement and its people." Most suspect them of being there to remind the inhabitants that they should not entertain any idea of independence. There are generally not enough troops to go around, and the troopers move regularly between the settlements. All enclaves are forced by law to provide a small facility for the use of MILICIA and Peacekeeper garrisons when they come visit to make sure the trade routes are secure.



CHUNG TANG

5.9.2 CHUNG TANG

Chung Tang is located near the frontier of the Dominion with the Badlands in the western plains. More than a village and not quite a city, the settlement is the focal point of civilization in the region. People from all over come here to trade and exchange news and products. Trade houses and depots are protected by its walls and defense systems, and passable roads lead to rail links bound for the Dominion's interior. The enclave's nearest neighbors are the agricultural communes it protects; in addition to these are four Badlands homesteader counties, two of which are actually within the commonly accepted political boundaries of the Dominion.

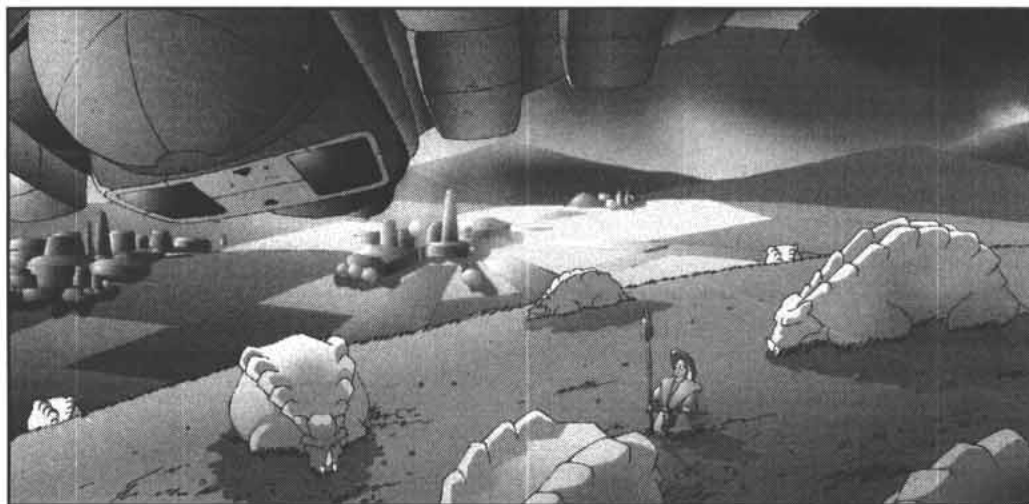
A hundred cycles ago, the enclave was a major stop on all caravan routes leading in and out of the league. Any group traveling through the region spent a few days here to rest and maintain their vehicles in relative safety. While it is still a crucial link in the region's trade routes, Chung Tang is also an important staging area for the Dominion's military presence in the area as well. Border patrols are heavily armed and seem to have standing orders to harass foreigners, including the inhabitants of the four homestead counties. According to official policy, they are little more than squatters on Mekong land.

Skirmishes between the homesteaders and the local forces are sporadic but bloody. Political pressure from the Southern Republic is all that is keeping the Dominion-controlled MILICIA regiments from wiping out the encroaching civilians. The Republic is wary of angering the NuCoal association, of which the four counties are members. Should the political winds change, it is expected that the Dominion will slaughter the "invaders" without a second thought. In response to the obvious threats originating from Chung Tang, the Badlands farmers have begun purchasing military grade weapons and vehicles from Paxton Arms. The Dominion forces are not impressed and have stepped up the training exercises in the area. To date, three MILICIA and one Peacekeeper regiments are stationed in the enclave, which boasts some of the most formidable fortifications in the area.

The growth of Chung Tang has been steady over the last hundred cycles. Recently, the official census has placed the enclave's population close to the 100,000 required by Dominion law to declare city-state status, which has put First Councilor Nathan Fontana in a precarious situation. The population of the city dislikes the local garrisons, while the army in turn distrusts the locals. Violent confrontations between the two are becoming more frequent, and the MILICIA is threatening to institute martial law should conditions deteriorate further. The locals, on the other hand, are demanding liberation from the oppressive military presence. If the city incorporates as a free state, as the local council wishes, Nathan knows that the Dominion will act to ensure it remains under control. His every waking moment is spent trying to diffuse the situation to the best of his ability. He only prays that it will not destroy the city he and his family have lived in for decades.

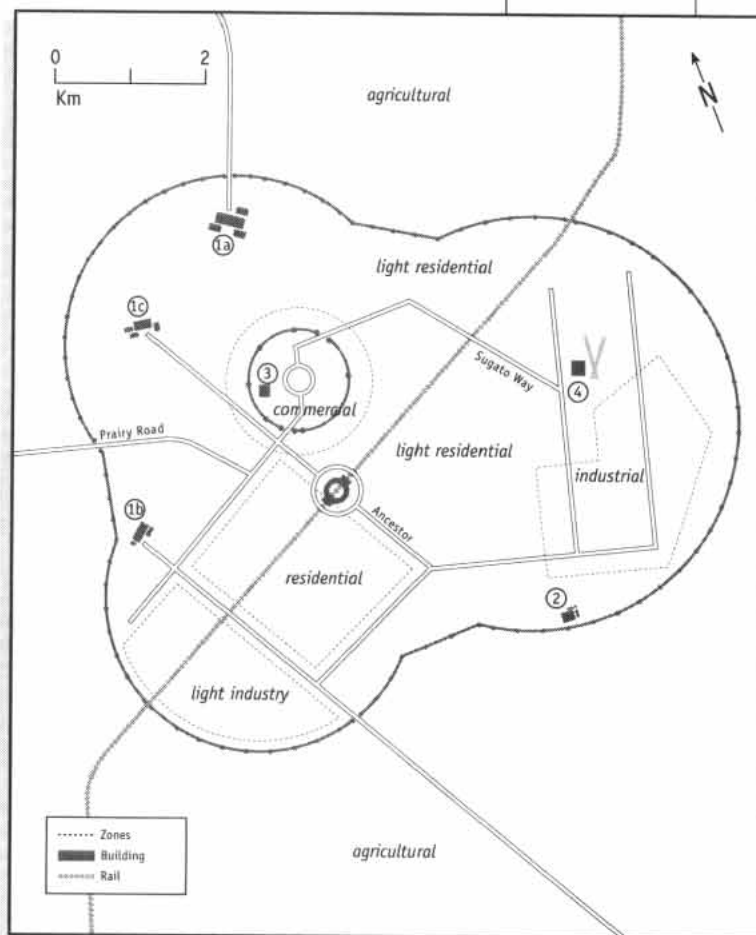
Vital Statistics

Founding Date:	TN 1830
Joined MD:	TN 1830
Method of Government:	Mekong protectorate council
Head of Government:	First Councilor Nathan Fontana
Population:	98,734 (last official census)
Primary Industries:	Barnaby herding, agriculture, caravan & military supply



Map Of Chung Tang

Location	Description
1. MILICIA Garrisons	Three MILITIA regiments maintain an active presence in Chung Tang. These three bases (Alpha, Beta and Gamma) provide a centralized command and strike task force to respond to any Badlands incident. At any one time, up to half the garrison may be pursuing sorties into the Badlands. The garrison maintains a constant state of alert due to a rise in terrorist bombing in recent months.
2. Peacekeeper Depot	The garrison maintains a refueling depot in conjunction with MDC, which they allow the general public to access. The facility is equipped to refuel, maintain and service any form of long range transportation vehicle, up to military class vessels, but not including aircraft. The complement of the garrison is a little larger than expected for an outpost of this sort, which many believe is due to the Mekong Assembly's increasing lack of trust in the MILICIA. The garrison also houses a small warder unit which serves as a pilot/port authority for the occasional landship that visits the city.
3. Council Hall	This building is constantly under construction, trying to satisfy the demands of a community which is growing in leaps and bounds. The Council Hall is open 34 hours a day, but even with such long hours it never seems to be enough to complete its tasks.
4. Ramonair Aerodrome	Taipan Judyth Ramona and her corporate entourage are frequent visitors to this facility, which serves as a major wayport for air transportation from the Badlands as well as a testing facility for Ramonair prototypes. This dual purpose make customs and security a prime concern and envoys of Taipan Ramona are constantly consulting the MDC/Peacekeeper garrison for advice.



SHEPHERDS

Like most Terranovan urban agglomerations, Chung Tang is protected from marauders by a series of defensive measures. Its walls are the simplest line of defense, and protect the various local warehouses and population shelters; it would be impractical (and probably inefficient) to surround the entire area covered by the enclave. Tank traps and ditches are found between some of the surrounding fields as well. Air defense turrets scan the sky, waiting to intercept hostiles.

The enclave's main compound is surrounded by rolling hills and huge savannas from which the local communes and many enclave residents draw a living. Herds of barnabies and springers are sheltered within the enclave in massive wooden pens. Early in the morning, the herds are let out to graze under the watchful eye of peasant shepherd, riding the smaller furred barnaby common in the Dominion. The military maneuvers of the enclaves garrisons often disrupt the herds, creating a great deal of antagonism between the locals and the army, which they view as arrogant outsiders. The military forces, on the other hand, distrust the enclave's residents, since many of them are friendly toward the Badlands homesteaders. Over the cycles, a number of Badlanders have married into Chung Tang families, which has increased the distrust of the MILICIA even more.

BOUNTY

Occasionally, criminals escape or fail to show up at their assigned correctional institute. If the criminal does not pose an immediate political or military threat to the Dominion, it may not be profitable to assign precious Policia or Peacekeeper resources to hunt them down. Thus, all escaped criminals have a bounty placed upon their heads equal to 10% of the money they are expected to earn during their sentence. This is paid to any individual which returns the criminal back into the custody of any law enforcement constable. If the criminals are returned deceased, the bounty is reduced to a mere 3% as they can obviously no longer work off their sentence. Chung Tang, being a natural transit point for escapees trying to get out of the Dominion, attracts its fair share of bounty hunters.

MIRAT

5.9.3 MIRAT

The Eastern Plain is home to the Mirat enclave, which is expected to achieve city-state status within the next ten cycles. Its success is due to the discovery, just before the War of the Alliance, of a huge oil field about 30 kilometers from the enclave. The natural resource was discovered by a Badlander by the name of Isabella Kolchenko, who was seeking her fortune in the Dominion. Before she could announce her claim to the field, the war with Earth began and such concerns became secondary to simple survival. The Kolchenko clan homestead was destroyed by the colonial expedition forces not long after.

Faced with an uncertain future, Isabella invited her entire family to move into the Eastern Plain. Approximately 30,000 Badlanders moved into Mirat, which welcomed the refugees with open arms. The tiny enclave had little strategic significance, but was occasionally plagued by CEF skirmishers. Outlying communes were burnt down and weekly aerial bombardment of the enclave became expected. The arrival of the Kolchenko clan, most of whom were armed and trained in some manner, was extremely welcome. The clan even had a number of heavily damaged but serviceable Gears, which they pledged to the defence of the enclave. When the Earth forces returned to harass the settlement once more, they encountered unexpected resistance.

The presence of Isabella's clan and the strategic insignificance of the enclave meant that the Earthers were not willing to commit a large amount of resources to an irrelevant battle. The few assaults they did launch afterward consisted of only a few squads, a mere fraction of their total forces. The enclave's defenders were hard pressed to repel even these half hearted attacks, as they were not professionally trained or equipped soldiers, but they succeeded. The attack became less frequent, and then one day stopped completely. The enclave had resisted the colonial forces for a cycle and half before the war finally ended.

Over the seasons of bloody fighting, the population of the enclave came to appreciate the culture of the Badlanders, welcoming them as brothers and sisters. The Kolchenko clan reciprocated by adopting the entire enclave as clan members, and many families were born of this. Once the conflict was over, Isabella revealed the secret she had guarded so closely over the last few cycles. The location of the Kolchenko oil field was told to the delight of the entire enclave. Isabella was praised for keeping the secret during the war, for if the existence of the huge, untapped oil field had been known to the enemy, Mirat would surely have been wiped out. The War of the Alliance would perhaps even have had a different ending. With a surge of public acclaim, Isabella was elected clan head, her predecessor having been killed during the war.

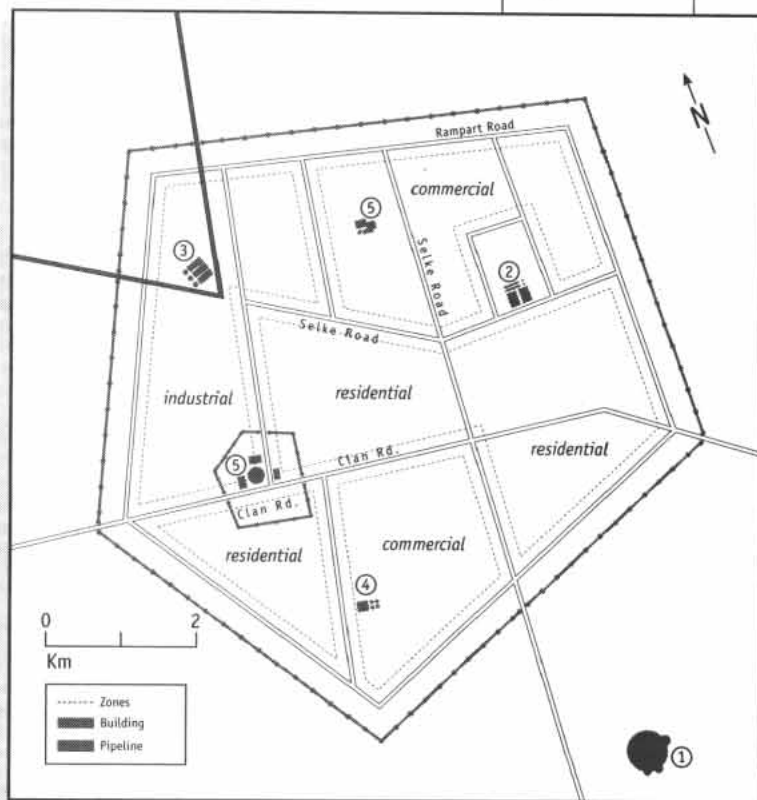
Vital Statistics

Founding Date:	TN 1871
Joined MD:	TN 1871
Method of Government:	Mekong Protectorate council
Head of Government:	Clan Head Isabella Kolchenko
Population:	76,934
Principle Industries:	Petroleum refining, Caravan supply



Map of Mirat

Location	Description
1. Ranger's HQ	Almost as impressively armed as a Republican Gamma base, the Kolchenko tower is a massive edifice built three kilometers south of the enclave. The Rangers patrol the surrounding area and the city itself in some of the finest Gears that money can buy. A typical Kolchenko soldier spends most of his time almost exclusively honing his close combat and gunnery skills, while neglecting exercises emphasizing squad tactics.
2. Storage Depot	The Kolchenko depot is a vital source of supplies for the communes of the area. It is here that the vital necessities of life and the occasional luxury product can be found. Foodstuffs and electronic components are the most popular items purchased from the depot, followed by ammunition, trideo and clothing.
3. Communal Refinery	The exploitation of local oil deposits is instrumental to the prosperity of the enclave. The communal refinery will process petroleum imported from any source for a nominal per kiloliter fee. It features a number of pipelines that go into the city from smaller feeder depots, eliminating the necessity of shipping the oil directly to the refinery.
4. Peacekeepers	Prejudice against the Republic has made it politically unpopular to station MILICIA soldiers within the enclave itself. Mirat respect the Dominion military, however. To date, conflicts between the clans and Peacekeepers have been minimal, with clan elders frequently enforcing the edicts of the Constables.



PROSPERITY

In the postwar cycles, the clan has become hugely prosperous, as has the entire enclave of Mirat. The standard of living of its residents is now comparable to that of the highest paid officials of any Dominion corporation. Many companies have moved into town to exploit the natural wealth of the Kolchenko oil field and the many smaller fields of the area. A steady influx of immigrants and capital have made the enclave expand at an incredible rate, its population being expected to achieve city-state status in the near future. The fiscal power of the clan is such that the Mekong has allowed them to retain control of the enclave. The clan has been officially recognized as the ruling council by the Assembly, in spite of the unusual precedent this sets for future generations. The Kolchenko keep a vigilant eye on all immigrants to the enclave, treating all malcontents to swift and brutal justice. A small contingent of Peacekeepers has recently arrived to assist them, in an effort to temper the wild frontier town which is on the verge of becoming a city.

ICP has an exclusive contract with the local storage depot's owner, Travis Ivanovich. He has become extremely wealthy due to ICP's release of merchandise at below wholesale prices. Travis' political power within the clan council is growing, along with his influence among the surrounding communes. Ivanovich is trying to increase immigration, hoping that Mirat will soon apply for city-state status and join the Dominion as a full partner. To date, the council has remained reticent to support such an agenda, believing that the enclave would become little more than a satellite of the Assembly. This tide is turning as the vehemence of Travis's political maneuvers increases.

THE KOLCHENKO RANGERS GEAR REGIMENT

The clan has created its own Gear regiment to protect the enclave. The regiment calls itself the Kolchenko Rangers and has been granted official status as a MILICIA-affiliated regiment. The Rangers are unusual in two respects. First, only Kolchenko Clansmen or those they approve are allowed to join. Second, each Gear is highly customized and often sports flamboyant paint schemes. Each cadre is formed from a particular family within the Kolchenko clan and maintained by them. The honor of the family is defended by the cadre and friendly dueling is common, serving to hone the combat skills of the regiment as a whole. The regiment is renowned as having some of the finest pilots in the Dominion. While it may be true that the overall quality of the pilots is very high and the upgrades of their Gears increase their value, it is also true that the regiment does little in the way of field training as a cohesive group. Military analysts are quick to dismiss the effectiveness of the regiment were they to be fielded in any large scale conflict. In any event, the Kolchenko Rangers are one of the major reasons why local brigands stay away from communes housing Kolchenko clansmen.

FESTIVAL

"Curse the luck!" Hiroki thought out loud. "Of all days you chose to break down, it had to be today!"

The little car, his pride and joy, was parked halfway up the side of the steep embankment skirting the road. The teeming masses of festivalgoers passed all around him, their bright carnival garments making it seem as if a rainbow was flowing around the small car and its forlorn driver. Tonight was the first night of the Dominaki-Gatsi, the Dominion Day celebration, three days and nights of boisterous festivities, and he was stuck in Outtown with a busted radiator.

A cloud of steam assailed him as he popped open the access panel. Boiling water covered the small two-cylinder generator and he could smell the distinctive odor of ozone from a fried electrical circuit somewhere in the darkened engine compartment. He reached in experimentally, hoping that the "shake the wire" method that usually worked so well would, by some miracle, solve the problem. The only result was a nasty discharge to his finger.

"Damn! I'll never get this damned thing going!"

Hiroki slammed the panel violently. The small Motorwerks Hurricane had been nothing but trouble since he'd bought it. When it wasn't the motors or the drive computer, it was the generator acting up, and now this.

Much of his last three cycles' wages had gone into buying and maintaining the little car. His family thought he was very foolish for getting it in the first place when all he really needed was a bicycle. They did not see the true reason behind his purchase. Living in Outtown was bad enough, and having a car gave Hiroki the feeling of freedom and power he desperately needed. That and the mobility to meet someone like Anastasia.

Anastasia lived Intown with her father, a mercantile official from a Federation corporation who was assigned to the Mekong City office. She was very beautiful and adventurous, and Hiroki had met her in a thrashy Midtown party club called the Bottoms Up. Not the usual place one meets a foreign diplomat's daughter, but then again she was not your average Northerner. Her spirit was as wild and exuberant as any Mekong citizen's, and right now she was undoubtedly very, very angry.

He looked around himself in despair, searching for a way out of this mess. Across the street, he spotted the familiar dark blue tunics of the Policia Watch, drab smudges amongst the brightly clad festivalgoers. An idea formed in his mind — perhaps...

Well, he didn't have many other options. Cinching his discrete crimson sash — the latest fashion — tight about his waist, Hiroki pushed into the teeming crowd. As he shouldered his way across the street, he quickly glanced into his belt purse.

"Only a thousand kronars... With a little luck and persuasion I might be able to bribe the Watch to drive me Intown and I shouldn't be more than half an hour late."

He hoped Anastasia wouldn't be too angry, but knew better.



6.1 NATIONAL CHARACTER

Deep-seated traditions and corporate and government cultural propaganda have fostered a deep respect both for the Founders' values and the idea that the Dominion will inherit Terra Nova through the efforts and hard work of its people. In everyday life, this usually comes out as a stoic endurance of the little problems that plague everyone and a fierce pride in the quality of one's work. This pride is often mistaken for haughtiness to others, and can become a barrier to open and frank discussion with foreigners. The people are justifiably proud of their accomplishments, from carving a nation out of the jungle to repelling the colonial invasion force — the Dominion folks do not know the meaning of defeat. As a nation, they believe that it is their divine right to take this planet as their own.

The work ethic of the typical citizen is wondrous to behold, though there is a hidden price to be paid for such productivity. The middle class is rife with stress-related illness, which the proud workers often refuse to acknowledge until it is too late. Heart disease is the second major cause of death in the Dominion, the first being workplace accidents and mishaps. It is not hard to see the reason why the middle class works so hard: it can be seen in the faces of every shanty town dweller in every city-state. Without the support of their corporation, workers could be forced to live in the shanty towns or even sell themselves into slavery.

The Mekong people are best described as eternally pragmatic. The ends often do justify the means and have few scruples about using whatever method is necessary to achieve their goals. To the Mekong, wealth is not a goal in itself, but the power that wealth brings is very respected. Mekong social views are equally pragmatic. They believe the old axiom, "you only live once" and savor life's pleasures at every opportunity. By Northern standards, the Mekong people are utterly corrupt and without morals, but they simply have a different system of morality. It is based around rules of polite behavior and means of gaining and losing face, a form of public honor and respect. They usually care little for any private, personal form of honor.

In addition to this, citizens believe in a policy of personal freedom and civic responsibility. They feel they are all responsible for their own well being and that of their families. If circumstances force an individual to sign a bonded contract for indebted servitude, then so be it. If society forces a man to commit murder, then so be it. By the same token, the state has every right to execute a murderer, as opposed to housing and feeding him at the public's expense. Life can be hard, but you have to deal with it, because it is all you can do. Rewards for excellence are unusual, while punishments for failure are expected.

► Duty, Polite Society and Corporate Negotiations

Dominion citizens are renowned for their pragmatic attitudes and sense of duty. To the average citizen, duty is an overwhelming urge which must be obeyed, even if it means sacrificing one's honor. This attitude of "anything goes" in pursuit of duty has left many foreigners with the impression that Dominionites are treacherous and untrustworthy. In some situations, this can be very true — the trick is to understand Mekong society well enough to avoid these situations.

The corporate and social structure of the Dominion is such that each step of a negotiation, whether personal or trade related, is carefully scripted. All negotiations, whether they concern an arranged marriage, a corporate merger or the purchase of a new vehicle, follow a set form. Varying from this script is to court disaster for the superstitious Mekong. Three stages, each separated by a week, make up the negotiation procedure. The initial stage consists of preliminary overtures and the giving of gifts — the larger the gift, the more earnest the negotiations. The second stage involves the drafting of the contracts, symbolized by the sharing of drink. The third and final is the signing of the contracts and the sharing of food, symbolizing the bond between the parties and their duty to complete the contract. A fourth stage can be elicited at a later time to represent the completion of the contract terms or to break the contract. In the first case, a knife is exchanged to end the contracts; in the second, a knife is used to break the contract. This second knife also symbolizes the death of the honor of the one breaking the deal.

Many see such politeness as simple courtesy taken to such a degree that it bogs down any business dealings. Foreigners will often try to rush trade deals, sacrificing corporate form for expediency; occasionally this results in conflict. If a corporate entity is forced into a trade deal that it cannot profit from or which involves illegal activities, and it has given its word (bonded contract), it is then duty-bound to fulfill the terms of the contract regardless.

► Verdant Land

The national anthem of the Mekong Dominion first began as a simple song sung by the alliance troops besieging Loyang. The author of Verdant Land was a young soldier known only as Toshiro. Unfortunately, he was killed during the siege and his last name was never known. The tragic tale of this aspiring playwright has been the subject of three major trideo productions and one opera, and a small monument to his memory can be found in Loyang. After the war, the lyrics were altered slightly to accommodate the wishes of the Loyang population and Verdant Land became the official anthem of the newly formed Mekong Dominion.



6.2 CUSTOMS

Citizens of the league often appear as arrogant or condescending toward foreigners. This is due in part to the closely knit family unit common in the Dominion, which often leads one to distrust outsiders. Their common religious and cultural upbringing also contributes to the inhabitants' reticence to socialize with people not of their faith, despite the facts that they are not particularly intolerant of other religions and cultures. People of the Mekong are generally leary of outsiders' reactions: the religious intolerance of the north is well known, and unfortunately it is a rather accurate stereotype of Northern reactionary prejudice against Shinto and Buddhism, both seen as primitive. Many of the day-to-day rituals in a Mekong citizen's life must seem bizarre to foreigners, but are quite natural to a person who has lived with them all his life.

6.2.1 FAMILY GROUPINGS

Dominion citizens believe in the sanctity of the family and encourage large family groupings. It is not uncommon to find three, even four generations living under one roof. Family members are very close and they are expected to support each other in all aspects of their lives, be it business, religious or social. Dinner time is very chaotic as everyone comes together to share the meal and the day's events.

Families are extremely loyal to each other and grouping can be a very powerful force when moved into action. A single family may have up to twenty or thirty members, employees drawn from all walks of life. Members are also related by marriage, business and social life to other folks. Angering a single family can call down the wrath of an entire neighborhood, or, with extremely old and established families (like the Sogabe or Miyazaki), an entire city. Marrying into a Mekong family is not to be considered lightly since it is the same as marrying an entire community.

• MENTOR BROODS

Upon reaching 15 cycles, children are expected to join a Brood organized by a prestigious adult, who assumes the role of mentor. These Broods can contain up to 50 protégés and two or three mentors, though a 10-to-1 ratio is more common. The mentor will guide each of his protégés through their developing cycles, aiding them to become productive citizens of the Mekong Dominion. In exchange for his services, the protégé's family is expected to provide the mentor with a substantial sum of money or an equal amount of services. It is a major *faux pas* to actually ask mentors the amount of their stipends.

The Kith, as the protégés call each other, form a tight bond of support which usually lasts until they die. In the past, mentors only accepted students who were interested in the same field of study as they themselves specialized in. This practice produced Broods which were trained in one specific field and usually at a level of expertise that public or corporate schooling could match. Recently, however, a trend toward diversification has developed. Mentors accept students from widely separate fields of study in the hopes that they will produce a powerful team, suitable for many different areas of the job market.

Unfortunately, the demand for mentors is high and the supply of worthy candidates who will devote themselves to the tutelage of their young charges is low. Only the best, brightest or most influential families can set their children up with a famous mentor. While there are plenty of others willing to become mentors, they are really little more than glorified career guidance advisors.

• MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Premarital and extramarital relationships carry no social stigma within Mekong. Citizens of the Dominion can be among the most expressive people on Terra Nova when it comes to love. Some couples have close friends whom they invite into their sleeping chambers. This open attitude of free love is rarely extended to outsiders, however. Even sincere and genuine expressions of affection take the form of a business transaction with foreigners. Within Mekong couples, gifts are sometimes exchanged for sexual favors, even between spouses. The open exchange of currency or stock is seen by many as the ultimate form of passion.

Prostitution is an accepted part of Mekong society and it may happen that a housewife or corporate businessman discretely offer his or her services to help make ends meet. There are numerous freelance brothels in all Mekong cities, where citizens supplement their incomes. Many of them are run by the Yakuza Oyabun and can occasionally be dangerous for clients and workers, but others are run by the Assembly and are quite respectable. The criminal brothels are stocked with indentured servants, essentially slaves who have signed a contract of Indentured Servitude, making the whole transaction somewhat legal. The conditions there are usually quite good: the Yakuza recognize that a smiling servant is more appealing to a client than a frowning one. These brothels provide a very profitable service for foreign travelers, particularly those from the religiously stifling Northern Lights Confederacy.

6.2.2 RELIGION

Religious life within the Dominion is widespread and diversified. Bringing with them their many varied religions, the Founders sought to create an environment of religious freedom and acceptance. For the most part, they succeeded. Within the league are many varied and distinctly Terranovan churches as well as the usual assortment of Earth-based religions. The three largest churches are Zentai Buddhism Shinto and the Church of Enlightenment. Most Dominion citizens are Buddhists, but the vast majority practice Shinto rituals and all observe the festivals. The league's temples and shrines are packed on ritual holidays, when the Dominion citizens renew their vows to the spirits of Terra Nova and pray for the protection and love of their adoptive mother.

Most festivals in the Mekong Dominion start with a highly organized ceremony, followed by a celebration, marked by wild abandon, loud music and garish clothing. Most festivals are celebrated with a half-day off from work, with only Citizenship Day and New Year's day being full days off. Only military, essential services and restaurants will remain open on these days, when the entire population of the league is expected to join in the festivities. Festivals are usually celebrated through the entire day and long into the evening, except in Loyang, where public gatherings are frowned upon by the civic authorities. There, celebrations are always accompanied by a very strong military presence, which still does little to dampen the festive atmosphere.

► National Holidays & Festivals

Date	Description
1 Spring	The Change of Seasons is celebrated with traditional bean throwing. The father of the household wears the mask of an Oni and runs out of the house while his wife and children pelt him with little boxes filled with dried beans. The beans are launched at the frightening Oni with chants of "In with good luck, out with demons." Shrines and temples throughout the country also scatter beans to exorcise the spirits from their villages and attract good luck for the spring.
11 Spring	Military pageantry and parades marks the somber Victory over Loyang Day . After mid-day, workers flood into the streets in a riotous festival, which is as impromptu and disorganized as the original VL day celebration decades ago. This War Memorial is celebrated everywhere except Loyang.
13 Spring	Loyang's version of VL day features a ritualistic burning of the effigies of famous Loyang War criminals. The FFT (Freedom from Tyranny) festival which follows is regarded as a catharsis of the city's guilt over the war, which ended so long ago.
38 Spring	Foundation Day , marking the formation of the Mekong Dominion, is celebrated across the League, except Hsi Tsang. The festival is often used as a forum for political discussion.
41 Spring	The memories of the plague victims of the St. Vincent's War makes St-Vincent Day a very somber occasion, more so than any other festival.
10 Summer	The annual results of the corporate census are posted on this Citizenship Day . The civil service will announce the current standings of every Mekong Corporation, beginning with the smallest to the largest. Citizenship Day is celebrated everywhere except Hsi Tsang and Olduvai.
39 Summer	On the Day of the Dead the deceased are said to return. Floating lanterns are lit and set free on lakes and rivers throughout the cities to guide the dead back to their final resting place.
9 Autumn	The Treaty of Westphalia and the end of the War of the Alliance is celebrated by a parade of military personnel and vehicles which second only to the pageantry of VE day.
10-20 Autumn	Family graves are visited and cleaned by relatives. Often, gifts are left for the deceased for them to enjoy in the resting-place. Memorial services are held throughout both equinoctial weeks to honor the dead.
37 Autumn	Employees are expected to give gifts of appreciation to their immediate supervisors. Labor Thanksgiving is also one of the few days when an employee is allowed to demonstrate affection for his superiors and a gift of candy or flowers from a junior employee to a superior is a common way of expressing these usually well-hidden emotions.
1 Winter	Visits to shrines, temples and the ritual cleaning of the graves of ancestors are very important at the beginning of Winter. Feasting and drinking with family as well as paying respect to co-workers and relatives are also emphasized.
7 Winter	On Landing Day , Shinto and Buddhist priests masquerade as the native spirits of Terra Nova, which clash with and are defeated by actors portraying the Founders and the ancient spirits of Earth.
25 Winter	Coming of age ceremonies are held on Adult's Day for girls and boys who have reached the age of maturity, which is 20 cycles in the Dominion.
30 Winter	A celebration of the retreat of the Colonial army from the league is held in every city and community of the League. A parade of military and civilian groups is held, which is led with a huge papier-maché globe of the Earth. At the culmination of the parade, the children of the city symbolically set the globe aflame.
39 Winter	Old dolls are displayed in the homes of all Dominion families. Young girls are given dolls, which represent ancient personages from the Earth legends.



• DAILY RITES

Religion and spirituality is an important part of daily life in the Mekong Dominion, but is not a strong political force. Early in the development of the league, it was decided that religious institutions should not hold political power and generally be kept separate from the affairs of the State. Only the Church of Enlightenment has sought to reverse this ruling, but with little success or public support outside of its own membership. All three main religions — Zentai Buddhism, Shinto and Enlightenment — are funded by popular or corporate donations.

The moral ethics of citizens within the league are very high, emphasizing duty to family, corporation and league above all else. Personal freedom is encouraged as long as it does not harm others or the productivity of the state. It is not unusual for young people to participate in the highly structured religious services in anticipation of the discipline they will experience in the Mekong workplace. Tradition and ritual are the stock and trade of the three major religions of the league. Paradoxically, the many religious festivals are often celebrated with a wild abandon, completely at odds with their regular stoic rites.

Mekong religion is tolerant of all but the most reactionary faiths. This includes the Revisionist Church of the North and the Rotud movement, neither of which are acknowledged by the three major religions or the government of the Mekong. Recently, the new Church of Enlightenment has sprung up out of Loyang; its doctrine and aggressive political stance is frowned upon by the other two religions, but as of yet no action has been taken to censor it. Most Buddhists also practice Shinto rituals, but it is unheard of for a member of the Church of Enlightenment to practice anything but his own faith.

• ZENTAI BUDDHISM

Thirty five million people within the league are Zentai Buddhists, by far the largest organized religious organization within the Dominion. The word "Zentai" is Japanasian for "whole," and Zentai Buddhism is derived from Japanasian Zen Buddhism. Zen Buddhism teaches that time is circular and that past present and future are one. Zentai is very similar but takes this philosophy one step further.

The original colonists had difficulty accepting their new home on Terra Nova from a religious point of view. Many Buddhist and Shinto rituals focus upon ancestor worship and caring for the departed. It was common for worshippers to offer food to the departed and care for their resting places, but how could they do so when they were light-years away from their forefather's graves? Within weeks of beginning the settlement of Terra Nova, Buddhists across the planet were suffering from a spiritual morass which threatened to destroy the faith.

The religious leaders of the new settlements organized a conclave of the pious in Yung An. The teachings of Zen were examined in great detail and the monks, as one, experienced a divine revelation. If Buddha taught that the concept of time was merely an illusion, would it not follow that space was likewise an illusion? Would not the prayers and offerings of the righteous on Terra Nova be heard by the honored dead and the gods back home, for the two planets were one in the eyes of Buddha? This new branch of Buddhism was called Zentai Buddhism to reflect its derivation from Zen and its embrace of Einsteinian unification (whole or Zentai) theories.

The faith is lead by archabbot Ryu Hayashi, who is headquartered in the 'Golden Temple of the Traveling Buddha' in Mekong City. From there, he leads the multitude of faithful within the Dominion. Each city has at least one Buddhist temple or monastery complete with a walled cemetery. Most major corporations will contain a Zentai rock garden for the use of their employees and highly placed executives take much pride in displaying their status by having a personal garden or temple on their estate.

• SHINTO

Shinto was imported by the Japanasian colonists who specialized in agriculture. They carried with them the relatively simple beliefs that the spirits of the ancient world were real and must be appeased. In such an alien environment as their new home, such beliefs were constantly being challenged and affirmed by the unusually flora and fauna of the planet. Because modern Shinto has evolved in to a system of rituals and customs focusing upon man's relationship with the spirits of the Earth, it was found to be inadequate for their new home.

The land, the plants, even the seasons were different; the natural world Shinto revolved around had changed. Like the quandary Buddhism faced, Shinto was also forced to evolve to adapt to its new home. It took approximately a decade for the customs and festivals of Shinto to adapt to the lunar and nearly nonexistent seasonal cycles of the planet. The assignment of many of the festival dates were almost arbitrarily assigned by popular consensus, and even the priests had difficulty allocating which days were to be observed as festivals and which were not. After a time, though, the new rituals were defined and life took its normal course again.

Of the many million citizens of the league, over two-third practice Shinto or are at least familiar with the rites. The Terranovan Shinto is not an exclusive religion and is often observed along with other beliefs. Traditionally, all Dominion inhabitants participate in the many festivals.

● THE CHURCH OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Little is known about this church except that its evangelical message is highly controversial and its recruitment policies are very aggressive. At present, only one million or so citizens scattered across the league are members of the faith. While their numbers are small, their vocal activities are felt throughout the Dominion. The church has only been in existence for three decades and is presently lead by Reverend Franklin Davidson. Davidson teaches that the people of the Mekong are chosen by God to be saved and that all others are heretics who will be destroyed in the coming apocalypse.

When examined logically, the principles of his faith fall apart. Genetically the Asian-descended Mekong citizens are no different than any other Terranovan; in fact, Davidson himself has little in the way of Asiatic features. Why would the people of the Mekong be chosen over the people of Earth or the other colonists? Unfortunately, logic has little to do with the religious fervor Davidson inspires in his converts. Recently, he has taken the stance that the Dominion is destined to control the entire planet, and when this is complete the Lord will reveal himself to the chosen and make the planet a lush paradise for all eternity.

To further this end, Davidson and his followers have been petitioning for their faith to be given political power. The AST, and in particular the Southern Republic, are quite alarmed by this and are pressuring the Assembly to take action before they are forced to. Many believe that if Davidson does not receive some form of appeasement soon, his demonstrations may become violent. The majority of the league see the Church of Enlightenment as a terrorist cult, though they have not conducted aggressive acts so far. The Curia does not think this will last long, however.

● ROTUD REVIVAL MOVEMENT

The Rotuds believe that the Stoneheads scattered across Terra Nova are monuments to long-departed gods. The Rotuds, or "routers," as they are derogatorily referred to in the south, are very secretive. It is heresy for them to reveal the teachings of the prophets to an unbeliever. Paradoxically, the only way to become a believer is to believe. This is accomplished by intense physical and spiritual training; only after many seasons of preparation and counseling is an initiate exposed to the wisdom of the Godheads. Southern experts see these rituals and exercises as intense indoctrination — little more than brainwashing.

The copious number of archeological sites within the borders of the Dominion attract large numbers of these pilgrims. The Rotuds do not acknowledge the existence of any governmental body on Terra Nova, save that of the Godheads. Without the advantages of Mekong citizenship, the pilgrims have no protection from the capricious whims of the Dominion's bandits. To protect themselves, they band together, usually constructing fortified monasteries deep within the jungle. A Rotud monastery is constructed below ground to avoid satellite surveillance and are invariably close to an archeological site.

► The Origin of the Dominion Zodiac

For eons people have believed that the stars have great significance to their fortune. With the migration to Terra Nova, parents and fortunetellers would search the stars for omens as to their newborn's future, to no avail. A gathering of soothsayers, fortunetellers and mystics held in Atsi in 5106 determined the best way to reconcile the constellations of Helios and the ancient beliefs of the Founders. A stirring ceremony was performed in which dancers portraying the ancient spirits of Earth and the Mekong settlers were petitioned by the priests to support their move to Terra Nova. Gifts of food and wine were offered to the Kami (gods) in exchange for their blessing. The Kami of Earth could not allow their wayward children to stray from their devotion and decreed punishment and hardships. Within the dance, the dancers petitioned the Kami of Terra Nova to adopt the settlers. Once adopted by their new protectors, the Gods of Earth relented the punishment.

All Earth deities have a distinct Mekong counterpart, with the exception of Horse, Sheep and Dragon. Horse and Sheep are included in the Mekong Zodiac since these animals were brought to the planet with the Founders. Dragon has no counterpart because Dominion citizens believe that Terra Nova has her own Dragon.

Order	Earth Animal	Adopted Animal
1	Rat/Mouse	Root lizard
2	Ox/Cow	Springer
3	Tiger	Long Fang Hopper
4	Rabbit	Pit Rat
5	Dragon	None
6	Snake	Scorpion Serpent
7	Horse	None
8	Sheep	None
9	Monkey	Go-ki
10	Rooster	Hopper
11	Dog	Pack Lizard
12	Pig/Wild Boar	Armadillo Beast



6.2.3 PREJUDICE

Observers of the Mekong from the CNCS frequently refer to the Dominion as a Jekyll and Hyde society. They believe that its citizens as a whole are psychologically disturbed, an opinion they are encouraged to keep to themselves while traveling. As evidence for this assumption they cite the intense devotion and work ethic of the corporate employees. When working, a citizen is expected to dedicate themselves mind, body and soul, yet are not encouraged to perform their duties with anything but robotic productivity. Conversely, recreational time is characterized by animated and colorful, almost hedonistic, abandon. During work hours, citizens are regimented, industrious, diligent and above all, dour. After hours, though, they transform into a light-hearted, expressively vivacious people, and the streets are filled with a carnival-like abandon. This separation between work-life and home-life is very important to the psychological well-being of the Dominion citizenry and taking one's work home is not encouraged.

Mekong citizens drive themselves very hard in all aspects of their lives, giving their utmost to succeed at any task they attempt. To excel is expected and failure is not considered when embarking upon a venture, whether it be business or personal. Overwork stress and suicide are some of the leading social issues facing the population. Still, even faced with an average life expectancy significantly lower than that in other leagues, the Dominion fails to recognize this concern. Duty, honor and loyalty to one's family and corporation override any consideration of physical or psychological ailments. The league's practice of only extending the benefits of citizenship to those who have purchased ten shares in the Dominion has a lot to do with this attitude, especially when those over fourteen cycles with no citizenship are not protected by Dominion law.

GREL and naturalized Earth citizens are not allowed to own Dominion stock, and most people in the league openly scorn or hate them. Consequently, there are few Earthers who openly acknowledge their origins within the league. The few who do are quickly picked up by recruiters for the Hsi Tsang slave market or encouraged to leave the Dominion. The memories of the War of the Alliance are still fresh in the minds of the Mekong, as are the atrocities committed against them during the occupation.

Mekong citizens are convinced of their own superiority, and consider their way of life to be better and more efficient than any other. While they do not go out of their way to stress this, the people of the league prefer to deal with their own. The success of the Dominion and its importance to the south seems to bear out this attitude. Many people find the cultural acceptance of the Dominion to be very hypocritical. Anything goes within the Dominion as long as there is a profit; charity work is uncommon and even religious institutions are expected to turn a profit. Social programs are very limited and the shanty towns are frequently raided by the Policia to round up non-citizens who are then marketed at the Hsi Tsang slave auctions. The shanty towns are made up of the destitute who frequently own only the minimum ten shares of Dominion stock required to keep them from being rounded up as slaves. The league is very accepting of many things, but failure is not one of them.

6.2.4 JUSTICE

The Mekong Dominion maintains distinct separations between three levels of law enforcement. Civil, Governmental and Corporate law are treated as three distinct practices, with three distinct levels of law enforcement. The system contains rigorous checks and balances which ensure the impartiality of enforcement officials — theoretically. In practice, the quality of justice depends a lot on the legal staff and the location where the crime took place. Unfortunately, social status and wealth sometimes influence the proceedings as well.

The Mekong Dominion is different from other Southern leagues in that its legal system is very streamlined and remarkably efficient. The first lord chancellor saw in other city-states the extreme waste of resources which were being expended in their court systems. He was determined not to recreate the same mistakes in his realm. An advisory board which would later form the heart of the Mekong Development Corporation was assigned to revamp the archaic legal system brought from old Earth.

The board devised a legal system based upon resource management. They believed that criminals are nothing more than negative human resources. Resources which do not add to the greater good are therefore negative resources and steps must be taken to reverse this trend. They believe that by conscientiously retraining a negative resource they may convert the offender into a positive resource for the country. To expedite this system, they introduced a new penal system which emphasized retraining over rehabilitation. A productive member of society is a happy member of society. After a few initial failures during trial runs and a few cycles of re-tuning, the new system was unveiled.

Any conviction of 200 demerits qualifies the criminal for forced career retraining. This is designed to provide the inmate with the skills necessary to become a highly trained and valuable member of society. Possible careers are determined by an evaluation team according to the demonstrated aptitudes of the criminal as well as the demands of the marketplace. In many cities, corporations submit a list of required professions to the Mekong Development corporation's local institution, which then trains inmates to fill the vacancies. The MILICIA also recruits from the Mekong Development Corporation's institutions.

• THE DOMINION LEGAL SYSTEM

A criminal is sentenced to a period of servitude, the length of which is determined by the judicial system and is served in a method chosen by the Mekong Development Corporation. During this time, the criminal is paid a low but fair wage. Of this wage, a quarter is kept by the Dominion, another by the Mekong Development Corporation and another given over to the victims of the crime. In the event of a victimless crime, that quarter is given to the Dominion as well. The most common sentence involves working in the service or agricultural industries. During this time, the criminal is placed into a retraining institute where they spend their off-work time; room and board is also provided. In this facility, they are provided with the educational training to become valuable members of society. It is not uncommon for newly paroled inmates to be solicited by corporate recruiters upon their release.

To discourage career criminals, the board also instigated a demerit system for repeat offenders. Within this system, a criminal amasses demerits for each conviction. Once a total of 900 demerits are accumulated, the criminal is deemed an unrecoverable resource and executed: a single demerit is removed from this total for each cycle that the offender remains in the general population without further criminal activities. This pragmatic approach is supposed to prevent repeated offenses while encouraging criminals to become valuable members of the Mekong Dominion society. The demerit system also serves as a sentencing system. For each demerit, the criminal is given one week of forced servitude and retraining to be administered by the Mekong Development Corporation. Short term sentences are served on a work release program, with the inmate working for various small businesses or farms which pay a nominal wage. Were it not for the social, psychological and education retraining of the criminal, the system would be little better than government-sponsored slavery.

In the work release program, the criminal is allowed to move about freely, but must return to the retraining facility in the evenings for his courses. Failure to return or committing a further criminal act results in added demerits and a fine determined by the amount of manpower expended in returning the criminal to the facility. Only criminals convicted of minor offenses are allowed into this program and they must wear the distinctive inmate clothing. In general, these criminals are not treated any differently by the general population (as long as they behave properly), and are looked upon more as students than pariahs.

• THE "CAUSING UNDOE HARDSHIP" CLAUSE

This amendment to the contracts of the Dominion law has only recently been enacted by Speaker Sogabe in an effort to curb the slavery trade centered around the city state of Hsi Tang. Slavery is not illegal in the Mekong Dominion, but is viewed as distasteful. Slaves are acquired by signing a contract referred to as indentured servitude contract; according to this lifetime contract, the servant is forced to perform whatever work the owner of the contract demands for a meager wage. Many citizens are forced under duress or by extreme poverty to sign themselves into indentured servitude. Occasionally, prisoners of war are forced to sign a bonded servitude contract as well.

In an effort to combat this, the Dominion passed a new law which invalidates a servitude contract if the owner of the contract knowingly causes undue hardship for the servant's family or dependents by signing the contract. This is primarily designed to prevent the exploitation of the peasant class, who are frequently tricked into slavery with promises of a better life. A wife who is forced to provide for her family alone because her husband has been tricked by slavers can appeal to the Peacekeepers under this law. Likewise, victims of financial scams may also appeal for justice.

► Demerits

Crime	Typical Demerits	Crime	Typical Demerits
Resisting Arrest	5	Mass murder	900
Impeding an investigation	10	Rioting	20
Minor theft (bread, etc.)	5	Inciting to riot	80
Major theft (automobile, etc.)	15	+Manslaughter charges (per death)	200+
Military theft (tank, Gear, etc.)	500	Sedition	900
Corporate pilferage	100	Child abuse	100
Assault	20	Child molestation	900
Assault with intent to kill	80	Failure to disclose stock holdings	100
Speeding	1-3	Owning unsanctioned stock	200
Driving in an unsafe manner	10	Owning treasonous stock	900
Driving while impaired	140	Rape	900
Vehicular manslaughter	220	Espionage (Governmental)	150
Manslaughter	190	Espionage (Military)	200
Murder (aggravated)	250	Unsanctioned political activity	100
Murder (premeditated)	400	Treason	900
Murder (of a Peacekeeper)	900	Causing undue hardship	10-900



• PEACEKEEPERS

Peacekeepers are the Dominion's law enforcement division and are highly respected by Mekong citizens. There are three levels of law enforcement which the Mekong Dominion recognize: Civil, Governmental and Corporate. The Peacekeepers enforce the first two levels while each city-state maintains a local Policia to regulate the third. Peacekeepers are a highly trained enforcement and judicial force of which only a fifth of the force is made up of actual Peacekeepers the remaining personal consisting of logistical and support staff, called Warders. A Peacekeeper training in made up of three cycles of judicial ethical and combat instruction. A further two cycles are required in a support division before being given the distinctive uniform and dagger of a Peacekeeper. The training is intense and only one out of every ten recruits actually graduates to become a Peacekeeper.

In the field, a Peacekeeper is a combination of investigator, advocate and judge. Once called to the scene of a crime, the Peacekeeper (and any support staff he requires) will review all evidence at the scene, identify the criminal and then proceed to apprehend and try him. Despite the fact that the system is designed for speed, the high level of training of Peacekeepers and the thoroughness of their support staff make errors very rare. Such is not the case with the local Policia units, which are often little more than an enforcement arm for whatever corporation lines the pockets of the officers involved in an investigation.

Once a criminal has been convicted by the Peacekeeper, a public place is designated for the sentencing. This could be as elaborate as Mekong city's Golden temple of the Traveling Buddha or as simple as a rice paddy or the floor of an industrial factory. To sentence the criminal, the Peacekeeper selects a group of twelve stockholders. Any citizen of the Dominion who own stock is eligible for this duty. In the absence of enough stockholders, the Peacekeeper can issue one share of Mekong Dominion stock at his discretion. The jury is then given a synopsis of the crime and the evidence arrayed against criminal. They are asked by the Peacekeeper to decide how many demerits the criminal is given. The criminal is then conveyed to the nearest Mekong Development Corporation's retraining institution to begin his sentence of forced servitude. The punishment for demerits of 800 or more is meted out by the Peacekeeper in a central location for the benefit of deterring other would-be criminals.

• CITY POLICIA

Each city-state maintains a police force called the Policia. The only exception is the city of Hsi Tang, where the men of the Mercenary Guild serve a similar purpose. The Policia is funded by corporate interests within each city and administered by the municipal government. The Policia mandate covers civil and corporate law, but does not include the governmental level. The Peacekeepers are charged with maintaining civil and governmental law, and there are frequent confrontations between Policia investigators and Peacekeepers over jurisdiction.

To become a Policia constable, a recruit need only apply. He is given a single cycle of training before being thrust into the field. The relatively short training period and low prerequisites for employment result in an inefficient, easily corrupted force which is often little more than a tool of the corporations. Given an opportunity, a criminal will often flee into a Peacekeeper enclave to avoid local authorities, unless he is wealthy, in which case the opposite is true. Constables are charged with the investigation and charging of criminals. The actual sentencing of suspects is conducted by a board of three judges who review the evidence and sentence the criminal. This system allows for longer trials and the hiring of advocates to plead the case of the accused. This system also allows a criminal to appeal a conviction, unlike trials conducted by Peacekeepers. An appeal is conducted by hiring an corporate advocate who will research the case and take it before the judging panel. The advocate does little actual investigating before the review, which is conducted behind closed doors. In practice, the more money given to an advocate and presumably the judging board, the better the likelihood of the conviction being overturned. The more money one has, the less demerits (if any) one receives.

This system is much more inefficient than the Peacekeepers' justice system — and far more corrupt. Many judicial critics believe that this inefficiency is intentional and cite as evidence the many convictions overturned on appeal due to suspected bribery. While this accusation remains unproved, it is generally accepted that a substantial gift to the judging panel can overturn a conviction or commute a sentence. Each judging panel is made up of three members, each an employee of a corporation based in the city. The corruption of the Policia and its judging system is well known and some career criminals use this to their advantage, deliberately giving themselves up to the Policia. These few are regarded as unofficial employees of the city and are given minor sentences in exchange for a cut of the spoils.

The Policia are also charged with the task of policing corporate as well as civil crime, which they pursue vigorously. The reason for this uncharacteristic vigilance is due to the fact that any corporate criminal is forced to serve the city-state. According to corporate law, any convicted corporate criminal may allocate corporate resources to serve his incarceration. The city government uses this fact to fleece their corporate allies and grow richer. The corporations see this as simply another cost of doing business. Loyang is notorious for its industrial pollution; manufacturing corporations in the city realize it is simply cheaper to pay the fines than retool their factories to be cleaner. The only real way to curb a corporation which is violating a law is to involve a Peacekeeper. Unfortunately, they have no mandate to enforce corporate law and it is rare for a corporation to break a law on the higher national level.

6.3 LIFESTYLE

The lifestyle of Mekong citizens is generally very good, provided one is employed. A vast majority of the population are not officially recognized as citizens and are forced to live in the sprawling shanty towns of the city-states. Many of these people are refugees who were forced from their native villages during the War of the Alliance. Unfortunately, they have been all but forgotten by the Dominion government and are forced to fend for themselves on the meager alms of the corporations. They live as hopeless destitutes, with little hope of relief. Many professional slavers cull the best prospects from the shanty towns to be sold on the slave market of Hsi Tsang.

The peasant class makes up the majority of the league's population and their life is little better than that of the homeless. The peasants are content with their lot in life, as they have been for centuries, both here and back on Earth. Where it not for their cohesive family groupings, it would be extremely unlikely that peasants would be able to stand the hardships of their lives. Grueling back-breaking labor with little monetary reward occupies much of their day. In the evenings, they retreat within their commune's wooden stockade to escape the vicious wildlife of the land. Each commune has a central hall where the peasants congregate to share the day's events. Prosperous communes may have a satellite dish providing trideo feed from the Hermes 72 system. Agricultural equipment is primitive, usually manpowered. Where a tractor would be required, teams of furred barnabies serve the same purpose.

Within the cities, the middle class are far more comfortable. They are commonly employed by Dominion corporations with lifetime contracts. Employees are kept happy and contented, but are worked extremely hard. The very presence of the Outtown shanties ensures that the middle class remains devoted to its corporations. Compared to a peasant commune, a middle class home is the height of opulence. Electrical appliances are common, every home has at least one trideo as well as many other household conveniences. The middle class is generally satisfied and well cared for by the Dominion since it is the backbone of the league.

In every society there are a privileged few who control the inner workings of the system, and the Mekong Dominion is no different. The upper class is led by the Taipan of the Mekong Assembly. Each Taipan owns a palatial estate upholstered with the most elegant of fashions. An immense staff is employed to service the every whim of the Taipan and his family grouping. Often, an estate will include gymnastic facilities, open air and enclosed gardens, as well as massive library and dining halls. Most city-states have sections of Intown devoted to the estates of the upper ruling elite. It is the dream of every humble employee to attain the wealthy, prestige and power of a corporate Taipan, but there are only a few companies which can actually afford to outfit their CEOs in this fashion. Most make do with simple ten or twenty room Intown penthouse suites.

6.3.1 EDUCATION

The educational system is another aspect of life where success is encouraged and failure can be devastating. From the age of four, children are enrolled in one of the many Mekong schools, each run by the city-state it is located in. School life is every bit as rigorous as the business world it is meant to prepare students for, and each city expends a lot of resources on its school. The level and efficiency of Dominion schools are the envy of other leagues yet the education level of its citizens is on average no greater than anywhere else. This is due to the demands placed upon the students and a high expulsion rate.

When students reach their 5th cycle of learning (at the age of ten cycles), they are expected to maintain a grade point average of 4 (on a scale of 1-5). Failure to meet this level results in the student being held back a cycle. Failure to meet this standard in the second attempt results in expulsion from the school. It is possible for an 8-cycle old student to be expelled from the state schools and be forced to enroll in one of the many private schools. Eventually, an especially poor student could be forced into the work force with little in the way of marketable skills. These unfortunates are commonly found selling their moderate skills in the Hsi Tsang slave market in exchange for a servitude contract, or struggling to survive in the shanty towns. As in the work force, suicide is not uncommon among students.

Once the tenth cycle of school is reached, an extravagant ceremony announces that the class has graduated into the work force. Successful graduates are given a 15,000 kronars bonus and ten shares of Dominion stock. A few days after the league-wide graduation ceremony, a employer convocation is held where the students, their parents and prospective employers meet at the school to discuss contracts and employment. Most students select or are selected by a mercantile corporation and sign a lifetime employment contract. There are also a few foreign companies represented at these events, but few students consider these their primary choice.

At this point, the student is considered to have the necessary skills to be a productive member of the Dominion. Subsequent education becomes the responsibility of the student's parent corporation. With the exception of the prestigious Mekong City University, the league has no secondary university structure. Graduate studies and such higher level training is supplied in the laboratories and industrial factories of the corporation. Any given laboratory will have at least a quarter of its staff consisting of teachers and students who learn scientific theory while aiding the productivity.

6.3.2 LANGUAGE

The Founders of the Dominion were unique in many respects from the other colonists that came to Terra Nova. Their people were part of the staff of a number of major corporations that originally came from Japanasia, China, Samarkand and to a smaller degree Krea, the Thai Zone and Vietnam. Over 98% of the Founders' colonists were of Asian extraction, taking their culture and language with them to the new world. Over the course of the Dominion's long growth, a new culture developed, combining many of the Founders' most ancient traditions and adapting them to the harsh new world. One of the most obvious new elements is their language.

Each city-state within the Dominion was founded by a different collection of nationalities, each with their own language. All settlements retained some basic linguistic influence from the Founders and share some basic traits. On the other hand, each has a distinct dialect which sometimes eludes northerners but is easily identified by Mekong citizens. Skillful linguists claim they can pinpoint the actual section of a particular city-state a speaker grew up in from listening to their dialect. The vast majority of the population is at least bilingual, with Universal French remaining the standard language of commerce and the military. It is little wonder that Dominion citizens are sought out as diplomats and businessmen, as their language skills are often phenomenal.

• ATSHI-GO

Over the course of hundreds of cycles of growth, the various languages of the colonists evolved into a local tongue, Atshi-go, a name loosely derived from their original language. The language is quite different from the original tongues it is derived from but contains enough to be understood in a makeshift fashion by a speaker of one of the Dominion's mother tongues, Mandanese and Universal French. Atshi-go evolved slowly into its present form and remains a dynamic easily learnt and populist language, spoken mostly by the simple farmers of the rural areas and the underprivileged of the city-states.

Modern day Atshi-go has developed from the mother tongues of Canton and Japanasian, with a vague smattering of Unified Krea and Thai nouns. The language also lends itself well to the cryptic sayings of the common folk of the league: Atshi-go is peppered with colloquial proverbs, many of which are drawn from the religious heritage of the Dominion's ancestors. While Atshi-go has 61 characters, all written words are spelt phonetically and very easily read with little ambiguity.

The sentence structure varies very little from that of the spoken language and tends to confuse Anglic readers with its backwards sentences. Dominion citizens are commonly characterized by the northern media as money grubbing traders speaking in disjointed sentences. Most Dominion citizens on the other hand believe that Northerners (and some southerners) talk far too much and always seem to be explaining their opinion over and over again. "So I says..." is commonly used by citizens when making fun of anyone not from the Dominion.

6.3.3 OUTLOOK

Many of the Dominion's citizens live the small settlements on the outskirts of the major cities or in the depths of the wilderness. These settlements are populated by simple folk, almost a throwback to the feudal peasants of ancient Asia. In fact, many city dwellers refer to their simple country relatives as just that — peasants. The majority of these settlements are built around one industry such as mining, agriculture, petrochemical refining or logging. These small communities are isolated from the hustle and bustle of city life. For some villages, the only contact they have with the outside world is the trade caravan or the Hermes 72 broadcasts.

Peasants and businessmen alike regard each other's lifestyles with bewilderment. City dwellers are astounded by the apparent stagnation of the peasants' lives. The villagers, on the other hand, have trouble coming to grips with the frantic lifestyle of the city-states. While they share the same driving work ethics, the villagers express it through tangible goals such as growing rice or harvesting fernwood, while city dwellers show theirs in increased productivity and trade deals.

Dominion citizens hate being called Dominionites, a name commonly used outside of the league. Perhaps this is due to the occupying Colonial Expeditionary Force's habit of referring to the resistance as the "Dominion Blight" and the psychological warfare they flooded across the airwaves to emphasize these remarks. Most citizens prefer to be referred to simply as Citizens or Dominion citizens, although some in the younger generation are trying to popularize the term Mekongeses for the youth of the nation.

The colonial invasion had other lasting effects on the Dominion psyche. Unpleasant memories of the siege of Mekong City and the atrocities during the Earthers' occupation of three Dominion cities have made the citizens extremely intolerant of GREs and refugees from the Earth fleet. In outlying settlements, a simple rumor that one of their neighbors is a war criminal may be enough to catalyze a lynch mob.

6.3.4 RESIDENCE

A typical Mekong family residence is a huge multi-storied building, generally built of prefabricated material or treated fernwood, with a roof covered in stone or clay tiles. The large size of the house is due to the fact that two or three generations of a single family may be living under the same roof. Some families can consist of thirty or more people of all ages. The floor level in every house, no matter how rich or poor, always has the same three basic rooms. The remainder of the rooms are no different than those in any other home, and reflect the wealth and interests of their occupants.

The common room is where the entire family will have at least their evening meals together in silence. The silence is dictated as a sign of respect for the guardian spirits of the house, whose shrine is located in the common room so that they may better watch over the residents. After the meal, the events of the day are usually discussed, then (and only then) the trideo is turned on. Wearing shoes in the common room is disrespectful to the gods and an unforgivable *faux pas*.

The kitchen is often quite sophisticated by most AST standards. Electrical implements are commonplace as they aid the efficiency of food preparation. This can be vitally important to family grouping in which the majority of the adults work. In groupings with retired adults, food preparation and day-care rest on their shoulders.

The bath room can be quite extravagant, since bathing is regarded as much a spiritual practice as an hygienic one. Unlike other societies, the bath room does not include toilet facilities, which are elsewhere in the house. An elaborate bath is sunk into the floor of the home and a shower head installed nearby. It often surprises guests when they realize that the baths are communal and no distinction is made between who bathes when, though guests are usually sent first. Playing in the bath is considered impolite; staring or openly flirting an outrage.

6.3.5 CLOTHING

Clothing within the Dominion varies from one city-state to the other. As with any large prosperous league, a lot of time and resources are devoted to the fashion industry, which caters to the rich while neglecting the poor — Mekong is no exception. Employees of any of the Dominion's corporations are usually required to wear a standardized dress. Each corporation commissions tailors to create their own image of corporate attire most of which are nearly indistinguishable from any other corporation's work clothes. Even the simple slacks and tunic of the lowest laborer are designed for each corporation. It is a condition of employment in a Mekong corporation that citizens purchase and wear suitable clothing from the corporate quartermaster's shop. Many small or new companies lack the resources to tailor corporate attire. The employees of these companies are frequently looked down upon by larger more prosperous corporations. Employees of such a corporation will go to great lengths to standardize their dress code, believing that each of them reflects upon their parent company either favorably or unfavorably. It is not unusual for employees to collectively punish or humiliate their comrades for breaking the dress code in small companies — sometimes roughly.

To further distinguish corporate attire, a small corporate insignia is usually worn on the lapel. Each insignia is specific to an individual and contains a small magnetic strip with the employee's Personalized Identification Number. It is not unusual when merchants meet for them to run their hands across each other's lapels. This allows their data rings to read the magnetic strip and allow them to access certain basic information on their colleague. It is considered a major blunder to actually read this information in front of a new acquaintance. In fact, this gesture is so commonplace that it has become the standard form of greeting, even among peasants. To simply extend a hand in greeting is a mild insult, insinuating that the greeter has somehow deemed you unworthy of friendship. Northerners are taken aback by this overly familiar touching from a complete stranger. Merchant expeditions to the Western Frontier Protectorate in particular are bewildered by the Northern league's opinion.

• DAILY CLOTHING

The control of corporate dress does nothing to inhibit civilian fashion. Perhaps because of the corporate influence over clothing, the Dominion has some of the finest, most colorful fashions on the planet. An open marketplace has the look and feel of a fair, while one of the many Mekong festivals are a wonder to behold. Few people can fault the industriousness of the Dominion's citizens at work or their abandon at play. Mekong fashion, at least in the capital, is very richly colored and loose fitting yet still highly practical. For all their rich fabric and billowing chemises, citizens are loathe to purchase impractical clothing. Even the most elegant evening gown is sturdily sewn and does not inhibit the wearer's movement; even high heels are modestly sized and durable. Yet for all the utility of the clothing's design they remain very beautiful — for those that can afford them.

For those that can't afford such opulent clothing, a loose shirt and flared trousers are common. Most farmers and the few wilderness inhabitants wear such simple clothing, often woven by someone in their home village. The loose tunic is ideal for working in the humid climate, especially the extensive rice paddies of Yung An. Plain leather sandals worn on the feet allow them to breathe. City dwellers prefer leather shoes of various styles but always of the highest workmanship. Anyone who is required to work in the jungles will purchase high synthetic leather boots to protect themselves from the clinging foliage and aggressive insects of the Mekong wilderness.

• FASHION TRENDS

Most city-states boast a particular fashion statement which distinguishes them from their neighbors. For example, Yung An has a large artistic population that wear distinctively egocentric fashions. Most would-be artists and writers tend to ape the clothing of their personal idols, therefore it is not unusual to see a group of artists walking about in very similar clothing. Such groups give the appearance of a street gang, and can be quite annoying to the unprepared traveler whom they may accost for alms. Other members of the artist clique give free reign to their "inner child," with very unusual effects. Youthful Atsi fashion consists of clothing designed to emphasize the body sculpting of the wearer. Skilled rips and slashes cut into otherwise traditional clothes provide a peek-a-boo effect for the artwork on the wearer's skin. Older city dwellers tend to mimic the flamboyant styles of the capital or wear a casual version of their business dress.

Loyang has little in the way of fashion. Most citizens wear cheaply made coveralls since the environment of the region tends to fade expensive garments. The intense pollution also causes natural fabrics such as cotton or wool to wear out very quickly, forcing residents to don synthetic or plastic clothes. When traveling outside, Loyang citizens will put on sturdy smocks to avoid the ever-present rain, which is quite acidic. Anyone who can afford a respirator will have one, and the more expensive the respirator, the more fashionable the wearer. Those who cannot afford a respirator are forced to use scarves or bits of cloth soaked in antiseptic decontaminants.

Hsi Tsang has three distinct classes, each with equally distinct clothing. The peasants wear the simple garb of all Mekong peasants. The corporate employees take great pains to always display some form of logo on their attire; in a city where slavery is not only condoned but encouraged, it is always wise to advertise the strength of one's employer. Then there are the mercs, the members of the Mercenary Guild, who believe that armor makes a fashion statement and that a sidearm is a suitable accessory to formal wear. They believe in advertising their profession at all time. Most are armed and the ones that are not are usually the most dangerous. A yellow armband indicates that the merc is not employed and is seeking employment. Most clothing is either in drab colors to avoid attracting attention or pitch black to inspire fear.

Ngorongoro has little in the way of a fixed fashion; it is extremely varied but highly derivative of the other member leagues of the AST. One common theme is the rugged outdoors look. Most residents think of themselves as living on the untamed edge of the Dominion and their clothing reflects this. Along similar lines, Olduvai has more of the feel of an archeological dig than a city. As such, fashion usually consists of worn jeans and sweat-soaked shirts. Formal wear might consist of nothing more than a patched tweed jacket thrown over slacks and sneakers. The garrisons stationed in the city is a slightly more refined sense of style heavily inclined towards military fatigues or dress uniforms.

6.3.6 FOOD AND DRINK

Eating is a very solemn routine for all Mekong citizens. According to their beliefs, food is a gift from the gods of the land. As such, it is not an enterprise to be entered into lightly. A reverent silence usually accompanies the evening meal, when it is believed that the Shinto gods watch their subjects to see if they are being respectful. Breakfast and lunch may be as noisy as you like, but dinner must be eaten with a respectful silence, or at most, brief whispered conversations. Talking loudly or about business during the evening meal is highly disrespectful to the hosts' guardian spirits. Mekong restaurants also respect this custom, with one room for the meal, and a separate lounge for after-meal drinks and discussion.

Correctly serving the evening meal is a skill in itself. The food must be laid out and eaten in a specific manner. Each course is held on a small plate or in an appropriate bowl. It is disrespectful to the chef (and hence the gods) to mix courses onto one plate. Dominion travelers are constantly ridiculed as they attempt to separate the different foods which other cultures serve on a single plate. Diplomatic hosts will respect this custom, and citizens will be very appreciative of it. To eat the meal, slim sticks are used to pick up individual pieces and eat them. These are called chopz and believed to be an ancient gift from the Shinto spirits which live on the planet to their new neighbors.

The meal always includes a side dish of rice, regardless of what the actual main course consists of. The staples of the average diet are cooked or raw vegetables, with some kind of meat, such as domesticated hopper or Barnaby, prepared in a stew or a fillet. Mekong citizens are true omnivores and have a reputation for being adventurous when it comes to their meals. Popular main dishes include the poisonous scorpion serpent, served raw in small slices on individual pads of kelp reed, or lightly braised; fermented mole root, generally mixed with various reptile and bird eggs until it attains the look and consistency of thin gravy; marinated skags, served in clusters stuck together by a vicious honey; live paddy worm, definitely an acquired taste. This distant and much smaller relative of the piranha worm is ingested live and is reputed to increase the longevity of the eater.

The Dominion is also renowned for its many varieties of tea, which always follows the evening meal. Local cawfee is also popular, but tea is preferred. Mekong wine and hard liqueurs are popular and a very profitable export. Mekong whiskey is produced under various labels, the finest undoubtedly being Lamond; it is distilled by a small commune of Western Protectorate immigrants in the lower Ngoc range. Dominion Brandy is only distilled by Krellen Foods. While not the best product in the league, its wide distribution across the Badlands have given it a reputation for its bitter taste and strong alcohol content. Sake, a traditional rice wine, is produced in almost every agricultural commune according to ancestral formula. True connoisseurs can locate the actual geographic origin of a particular brand without looking at the label.

6.4 ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

The Dominion encourages artists of all manner to express themselves in whatever medium they wish. Even in the South, where artistic freedom is a given, the Dominion is seen as extremely supportive of the arts. The Assembly will only exercise its power in instances where the artist is verging upon political treason or is endangering the safety of others. One would expect that the Dominion would be the site of innovative new forms of artistic expression and exciting new trends, but while it does have its share of innovators, the majority of artists tend to follow the ingrained styles of their ancestors.

Entertainment is big business in the Dominion and more closely scrutinized by the government than any other art form. The Assembly frequently exerts pressure on the media to project the Dominion in a favorable light, and while the propaganda content of Mekong productions is much more subdued than rivaling nations, it is nonetheless there, if a little more subtle. Trideo theaters and the Hermes network are very popular, even in smaller villages where trideo units are often communal. DDD (Dominion Dueling Division) broadcasts are especially popular.

The many festivals and community celebrations offer artists and performers important venues for their art. Large festivals often allocate civic buildings or small parks for such purposes, allowing artisans from far away to display and sell their works in an open forum. "Vivid," a popular magazine & trideo program covering the arts, entertainment and fashion scenes, published in Mekong City, is regarded as the foremost influence on Dominion art. "Vivid" is exported across the globe, though an abbreviated edition is exported to CNCS distributors, where censors require the nude photographs of Dominion models to be removed or touched up by the censorship computers, making the annual "Ashanti Illustrated" issue especially thin.

6.4.1 FINE ARTS

Yung An is the undisputed center of the literary arts of the Dominion, but the Mekong artisans also produce many other types of fine arts. Their skills is renowned across Terra Nova. While some new techniques and formats have been created on Terra Nova, many craftsmen pride themselves on their ability to preserve the techniques and trades of their ancestors. Yung An in particular is home to many painters and potters who practice styles directly related to these originally created many thousands of years ago on Earth.

● REPTILE SKIN TANNING

Every fashionable clothing store on the planet contains some item sown from the lustrous skins of one Mekong's many native reptiles. The dangerous pack lizard is highly prized for the rainbow sheen of its skin when hit by the sun, as well as for its renowned durability. Common peasants can make a good living trapping and selling the many reptiles of the Jungles. The cured hides are a boon to the Dominion fashion industry, which is receiving renewed attention since regular trapping has resumed supplying the cities with their hides. Renowned Norlight designer Donald Rathmusen is well known for using the rainbow skins of pack lizards as collar trim on his jackets and for pantaloons created from a single lizard hide. Such *haute couture* is notoriously expensive and a major status symbol among the elite.

The Ngorongoro area is renowned for its flying snakes and imported birds, and their feathers are often used in conjunction with reptile skins. A hiking vest may feature a bright outer coat of brilliant serpent skin, topped with a collar of delicate suede or colorful feathers — not really practical in the wilderness, but then the residents rarely spend more than a few hours there.

● SHINTO PAPER SCULPTURES

The many Shinto festivals which occur throughout the league celebrate the people's connection to the spirits of the earth. Golden floats are paraded through the streets of the cities and the people adorn every building with beautiful woven paper offerings to the gods. The intricate paper weaving of the gods likenesses can be purchased at any festival stall, and are much in demand outside of the Dominion as decorative treasures. The fragility of the intricate structures, which are assembled without glue, are a marvel to behold. Unfortunately, this vary fragility makes the offerings difficult to ship and keep out of harms way. Still the Shinto weaving industry is moderately lucrative.

● WOOD BLOCK CARVING

For thousands of cycles, the Dominion peasants have been preserving the histories of their small villages on blocks of dried fernwood. Each of these carvings shows a typical village scene or a historical event. Very similar to carvings from the Edo era of ancient Japan, these blocks are in great demand as works of art. Convoys stopping at any agricultural commune will snap up any available carvings to sell in the city-states and other leagues. As a cottage industry, block carving is profitable.

6.4.2 TRIDEO

The Dominion has a number of trideo production houses based in Yung An and Mekong City, the most successful of which is Blatant Statement Productions, best known for the weekly series *Karl Cheung: Mekong Peacekeeper*. Karl Cheung is the flagship of BSP and provides something of a diplomatic service to the Dominion as a whole. It has ranked consistently in the top 20 shows over the duration of its run and has spawned three feature length movies. Critics believe that the moral righteousness of Karl Cheung appeals to a broad range of viewers across the planet. Of course, the violence, subdued nudity, spectacular settings and the military hardware showcased in each episode also help make the show popular.

Dominion trideo productions are renowned for having convoluted plotlines and weird settings. It is not unusual for characters to travel to the afterlife, back in time or meet with alien races, even in reality-based series like Karl Chung. Three other series have retained a long term appeal with Mekong citizens. These are MechaFlare: Chronicle of the Oblivion War, which begins with the destruction and occupation of Terra Nova by a race of powerful aliens. The second is Ironheart: Journeys, about a young boy growing up alone in the Mekong Basin after his explorer parents are killed by wild animals. This series is particularly offensive to Northern views as it revolves around the Ironheart family and their graphically violent conflicts. The third program is a children's show which has been resoundingly banned by Norlight censors not so much for the violence, which it has in spades, but for the underlying political statements it makes. Sparky Springer's Treehouse is an animated show following the exploits of Sparky Springer and his cousins Spanky, Scrappy and Scruffy. Critics claim that Spanky's criticism of current affairs is little more than a diplomatic poke in the eye directed towards the North. Likewise, Scrappy and Scruffy's incessant torture of Lenny the Lion is frowned upon by Northern diplomats as thinly veiled anti-CNCS propaganda. In any event, kids of both hemispheres love the show, regardless of what opinion their parents or the diplomats take.

Related to the trideo industry, a booming merchandising sector produces everything from arcade games to stuffed dolls of popular trideo and real life Gears. It is common to see small children running to school with pack sacks sporting a cute rendition of a Striking Cobra or dragging a plush Iguana doll by one arm. Older children are more interested in wearing clothing similar to their trideo idols, such as garments based on Hikari "Ironheart" Kaji's clothing. Games based on trideo shows are also very popular and an important sector of the external trade market.

6.4.3 LITERATURE

Mekong writing tends towards sensational and highly profitable markets. What used to be called 'penny dreadful' in a bygone age on ancient Earth became an art form in the Dominion. The more sensational a book, the more popular it is. Granted, there are a number of extremely artistic and well-respected authors in the Dominion, but they just are not popular enough to attract the backing of major publishing houses. The most skillful writer/poets of the Mekong are practically non entities within its boundaries. It is said that the best way to remain out of the public's eye is to be a successful Dominion poet. True writers starve, while romantic novelists churn out the formulaic junk the public demands, and grow richer.

There are many literary publishers, many of which are little more than vanity presses who will print anything, provided the writer pays for the privilege. The largest and most reputable include Cherry Blossom Press, Verdant Fields LTD, Sterling Endeavors, Osaka Castle, Starlight Books Limited, Terranovan Scientific Research and Purple Turnip. The league has a thriving industry producing pornography, largely for export. The threat of trade sanctions from the CNCS prevents the Dominion from acknowledging this industry, but it is well known that border patrols will turn a blind eye to such material. A small handling fee serves as a government tax on what is essentially smuggling.

Great Authors ◀



Alicia Jacobson-Sunder is one of the best-known Mekong writers. This literary star is a darling of the Dominion media, who never pass on an opportunity to gossip about her. Her flamboyant lifestyle is frequently considered to be the inspiration for the romantic excesses of her heroines. While the plotting of her novels is considered formulaic and the writing itself is often criticized as amateurish, she is still the most widely read novelist in the Dominion. Her phenomenal success is usually attributed to the way her stories appeal to both men and women, featuring both graphic action and steamy romance. Her books are loved by millions throughout the entire Southern Republic. Alicia is best known for her novel *Passion's Scarlet Badge of Honor* and has two movies based on her work.

Another well-known author, but one who is not nearly as rich, is the man known simply as Takashi. He is commonly referred to as the working man's poet, for his work focuses upon the plight of the simple peasants and the oppressiveness of modern life. He uses basic rhyme structure and short poems to convey his ideas, but his writing appears neither simple nor primitive. His literary compilations are known throughout the southern leagues and he is well regarded by the few Northern critics that have had access to his books. While the subject of his poetry is looked down on by the southern government, his popularity with the common people makes him somewhat powerful politically. He has used his influence many times to push for social reforms in the Mekong countryside.

6.4.4 MUSIC & DANCE

The Mekong Dominion Cultural Orchestra is renowned across the planet as one of the finest classical groups in the history of Terra Nova. Its 150 members have a repertoire consisting of everything from jazz, Earth classical music and even old Punk. The orchestra is frequently called upon to play trideo themes for big budget productions and maintains a state-of-the-art recording studio in the basement of the the opera house. The Orchestra is perhaps best known for its rendition of the theme to *Karl Cheung: Mekong Peacekeeper*. Other groups housed in the Mekong City Opera house include the Royal Ballet, which can trace its origins centuries back, and the Emperor's Theater, specializing in Chinese and Thai opera.

The Atsi Humanities Amphitheater, a personal project of Speaker Sogabe, was constructed for the purpose of fostering the interest of all Dominion citizens in a revival of modern and classic art forms. It is home to a number of local artists, including the famous Yang Dancers, whose reinterpretation of classical kabuki ballet has received critical acclaim in the North as well as throughout the AST. This last cycle has been the most successful for the Amphitheater. Criticism of the Speaker's initiative would have died down were it not for the fact that she has openly invited artistic troupes from the North to perform at the Atsi venue. It remains to be seen if the fledgling Atsi art scene can weather this most recent crisis.

6.4.5 ARCHITECTURE

Mekong cities evolved according to a basic principle — concentration of power. The center of each city contains the political, corporate and financial centers. Arrayed in rough concentric rings around it are the various suburbs and residential sections of the city. Every citizen strives to prosper and move inwards to the center, but all recognize their importance as a spoke in the great wheel which is a Mekong city-state.

There is a distinct boundary between the center of the urban agglomeration and the sectors which surround it. Sometimes, this is an actual physical boundary, like the great wall of Mekong City. The various sectors, from the inside out, are called Intown, Midtown and Outtown by the locals. All Dominion cities are organized in this fashion; even frontier towns like Olduvai often end up in a similar configuration. A Mekong city-state is seen as a living being which must grow to survive, and it is not unusual for the concentric rings of Intown to push into Midtown as development expands the nucleus of the city into the outlying areas.

• INTOWN

Nowhere is the distinction between culture and efficiency, tradition and modernization, rich and poor, more evident than in the buildings which make up the Dominion cities. At the heart of any major Mekong city-state (with the exception of frontier settlements like Olduvai) is the corporate sector. Huge multistory edifices of steel and gleaming chrome are testaments to the wealth of the mercantile corporations. Their towering silhouettes give the city-state a distinct skyline. The Intown area of the capital, Mekong City, is a prime example of this; highly stylized neon signs advertise the wares of stores and shopping malls nestled between corporate towers. This is the domain of the rich Intown residents, the movers and shakers of the social and political circles. The styling of each building is unique but all have one thing in common — their opulence.

Corporate headquarters in particular are given to lavish displays of wealth. The image of a corporation is often determined by its offices, and these are opulent. Plush carpets, marbled corridors, gold inlaid elevators, expensive art work adorning every wall, to actually be assigned to a corporation's headquarters is the very pinnacle of a Mekong citizen's aspirations. The wealth contained in the city's Intown area is undeniable, as is its concentration of political and fiscal power.

• MIDTOWN

Midtown consists of suburban housing complexes, shopping facilities and public parks. Businesses tend to be service oriented or geared towards food markets. A typical housing complex will consist of a multi-level building, usually five to six stories in high; where land is at a premium, these may be as tall as twenty stories. The building itself will be relatively plain on the outside. Most structures in Midtown are prefabricated and assembled to produce whatever shape is required. Were it not for the large parks scattered through the area, it would be quite depressing. The parks are always immaculately clean and frequently feature a Zen garden or Shinto shrine as their central attraction. While land prices are more affordable in Outtown, the area is usually not as safe as a Midtown residence. Many complexes hire off-duty Policia constables to patrol their grounds for added security.

An efficient transit system of roadways and electric commuter trains allows residents quick and easy access to all areas. The system is provided by the Dominion and is free for citizens who use it for traveling to and from work. For all others, the cost is low, usually a kronar for a day-long pass. Smaller cities, like Olduvai and Hsi Tsang, do not have a mass transit system. Taxis are a common sight and are distinguished by their bright blue color and the sharp uniform of the driver. It is traditional for the chauffeur to wear a spotless uniform, complete with cap and gloves, and even an urban jungle like Hsi Tsang respects this tradition — but often adds a gun belt.

• OUTTOWN

Outtown is hard to describe because it varies from city to city depending upon the area and its industry. One constant is a typical family dwelling has one — very occasionally two — stories in height. The walls consist of thin wooden panels fastened to a solid metal or wooden frame. The roof is square shaped and peaked to allow rain to run off, with a ceramic or clay tile cover to insulate it from the elements. This style of building has not varied much over the millennia. As is the custom, most parents allow their children to live with them until they can afford their own home, or when the parents become infirm. Most homes have two and occasionally three generations living under the same roof.

When seen from the air, Outtown appears to have a patchwork texture. Huge tracts of residential housing are separated by industrial sites, warehouse facilities and storage yards. The majority of the Dominion's industry is contained in its Outtown areas. Most cities maintain a reasonable separation and density of industrial facilities to ensure that pollution does not destroy the habitability of Outtown, let alone affect Intown. Loyang is the exception: as the industrial heart of the Dominion, Loyang is dominated by the industrial facilities of its Outtown.

Mekong city-states are not without social problems and there are no better indicator than the numerous ghettos and shanty towns within Outtown. Shanty towns are cobbled-together collections of recycled building material, garbage and makeshift adobe used for protection against the elements. Life in the shanty towns is squalid and degrading. The deserted lot or the shell of a burnt out factory attract many of the city's homeless. Since most of these people are not citizens, they tend to group together for protection from the more dangerous elements of the population. Hsi Tsang is the only city in the Dominion with no homeless population: it does, however, have a profitable slavery industry.

Beyond Outtown lay the agricultural settlements which feed the cities, and the mining and logging camps which build them. Beyond is the jungle. To most city dwellers, Outtown is the very edge of civilization.

6.4.2 SPORTS

Recreation is a very serious pursuit in the Dominion. During work hours, a citizen gives his all for his employing corporation. After work, he expends nearly as much effort in recreational activities. Family get-togethers are commonplace, and whole blocks will occasionally block off their street for a huge barbecue. Corporate sporting events and teams are popular ways for employees to blow off steam as well as foster loyalty. Many sports are played, including batte, sokar and lacost. Professional sports is a booming industry in the Dominion and many professional teams compete in the Southern league.

Sokar and lacost are very similar except that sokar involves moving a larger ball into the opposing teams goal circle with only the player's feet and hands. Lacost on the other hand, uses a much smaller ball, which is manipulated with slanted stick with a net built into one end. Lacost players are allowed to physically attack other players, while sokar players cannot. As a result, sokar uniforms consist of little more than shorts, while lacost requires strong body armor.

• THE NGORONGORO RUNNING OF THE PACK LIZARDS

Less a sport than a cultural aberration, the running of the pack lizards is revered in Ngorongoro but considered crazy everywhere else. In the spring, the young men of the city line the streets while pack lizards which have been trapped over the last few weeks are released into the streets. The men try to outpace the reptiles as they in turn try to escape the city. The pack lizards are so intent on escaping their confinement that they practically stampede over anything in their path. Of course the occasional animal may take a chunk out of a racer, or even gore him, but this is rare. Once spooked, the lizards will stop for no one. In an effort to control the pack lizard population, the released animals are neutered; this increases their efforts to escape the city, since no anesthetic is used.

• DOMINION DUELING DIVISION (DDD)

The only official Dueling circuit in the Dominion runs from Spring 25 to Autumn 12, with the off-season being devoted to training camps and drafting of new talent. Each city maintains an arena which holds local teams and is the site of individual Duelists. Occasionally, a city-state may have smaller additional arenas supported by corporate or civic associations. Each city takes great pride in its teams and Duelist league, and many Duelists are heavily sponsored by corporate interests. While corporations do not field official Duelist, they may occasionally settle conflicts of honor or fiscal management by sponsoring duels between rival pilots. Gambling is encouraged by the Assembly and winnings are heavily taxed to support the dueling arenas.

All important DDD events are carried by the Hermes network and broadcast commissions are sold by the Dominion Professional Dueling Authority, which has begun to regulate the sport following Speaker Sogabe's policy of social reforms. In conjunction with a team of investigators from the Peacekeepers, the DPDA has reduced corruption within the DDD to an acceptable level. The DDD maintains five separate league wide championships. Civilian Duelists and Peacekeepers are forbidden to engage in duels, but this taboo is occasionally overlooked in support of a gala charity event or a pay-per-second sporting telecast.

6.5 TECHNOLOGY

The league's technological prowess is one of the highest on the planet. When it comes to research and development of new technology, few other states can match the innovative output of the many R&D laboratories of the Dominion.

Every corporation maintains a black research lab or skunk works. A lot of highly classified research takes place in these labs, most of which is of a military nature. Much of this research is devoted to reverse engineering the developments of already existing products and vastly improving them. Mekong corps have a reputation of being thieves and cutthroats, and justifiably so. Under the loose and easily abused Dominion patent laws it is easy for a company to take a new invention, analyze it, make a few cosmetic changes and then sell it as its own. While some of Dominion products are of very high quality and innovative engineering, most are nothing more than cheap knockoffs of another company's merchandise. The research budget of any Mekong corporation includes a generous amount solely to employ independent field researchers who are nothing more than mercantile spies. These spies are a constant concern for all businesses on Terra Nova, Mekong or otherwise.

The quality of goods produced by the Dominion range from remarkable to simply shoddy. Items intended for domestic use in particular are prone to looking good but breaking easily. This unreliability has given Mekong products a reputation for being unreliable. This reputation is justified in many cases, but the bulk of Dominion products are easily the match of those manufactured anywhere else in the AST. Experienced consumers tend to stick with established makes and brands which have a reputation for quality. It can be very hard for new companies to break through the instinctive distrust of new products common among Mekong citizens.

While the quality of established brand names is very high, there is a large difference in lifestyle between the peasants and the more affluent Dominion citizens, especially when it comes to the use of everyday technology. Residents of the Intown or Midtown areas of a Mekong city will frequently own their own automobile, washing machine, stove and air conditioner. Outowners, on the other hand, will make do with bicycles for transport. In fact, most major Dominion cities are filled with bicycles of all types. Next to the efficient public transit system, bicycles are the preferred mode of transport for the lower class and many of the middle class. Cooking is generally accomplished with a simple hot plate and a wok. Washing machines are owned only by laundry services and air conditioning is unknown. Most high-tech gadgets, such as food processors, datadisk players, personal computers and the like, are scarce with the exception of trideo sets, which are found in every home.

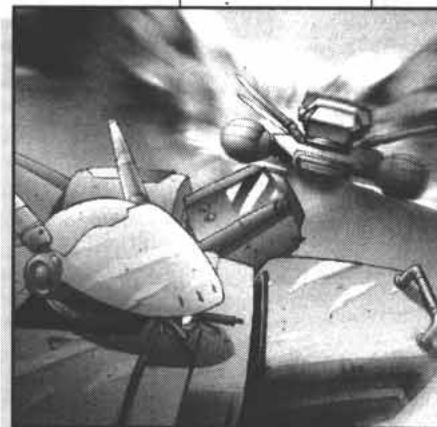
Rural life is far more primitive. Gas cooking stoves are uncommon and simple fire pits occupy the center of every house for cooking and providing central heating at night. Many rural peasants own simple rifles or sidearms for protection, a practice which is uncommon in the cities of the league. Transportation consists of utilitarian cars or loading trucks which are usually leased to employees to use both during and after work hours. More sophisticated technology is generally jointly owned by the entire village or settlement. Village council chambers frequently include a wide common area where residents can meet to talk or watch communal trideo broadcasts received by the large dish antenna mounted on top of the structure.

In spite of the lower standard of living and the absence of high technology, most peasants believe their quality of life to be superior to that of the "townies." Rural life does have its advantages. Statistics prove that the peasants' way of life is significantly healthier, though accidents and violence make the life expectancy no different from the one in the city-states (and lower in some case). Few townies would chose to live the simple, almost feudal life of a peasant.

► The Yung-An Rally

Once every cycle, Yung An plays host to a great cross country rally race. The race has been held for the last 24 cycles, with the exception of three cycles during the occupation of the Dominion by Earth forces and during the St. Vincent's War. During the rally, the Policia cordon off the main streets of Yung An before the starting flag is dropped. Similar preparations are made in Olduvai, where the race ends. Every thirty kilometers, race officials set up refueling and timing checkpoints to service race participants and provide medical assistance if required. The course is well marked and includes some of the most treacherous terrain in the Dominion. Participants from every nation on Terra Nova are invited to race in the rally, but the Dominion requires medical waivers to be signed non-citizens. Trideo coverage of the race is extensive, but there are large portions of the race that are not retransmitted for logistic reasons. Many accidents occur in these remote locales, and it is not unusual for one or more participants to suffer a fatal crash.

The race began as a simple road rally around Yung An, but eventually developed into a race that tests the endurance and fortitude of both the driver, his machine and his crew. The fierceness of the terrain make the rally impractical for any vehicle except those that are all-terrain capable. Initially, this consisted of light trucks and jeeps, but over the cycles has come to include Gears as well. Last cycle's winner was Francisco Garvin, a privately sponsored racer from the Badlands town of Temple Heights. Garvin was piloting a highly modified Warrior IV, which galled the northern and southern supporters to no end and was an unexpected marketing boon for Paxton Arms. Many have remarked how smoothly the machine moved, and how carefully its crew concealed it during checkpoints to avoid prying eyes.



SPIRIT OF THE JUNGLE

Kei tightened the harness around her shoulders, cursing the absence of the padded undershirt she had left in the village along with her other provisions. At least the peasants had given her enough time to gather up her weapons before the first mercenary arrived. True, she was now jogging through the thick jungle, clad only in her boots, backpack and underwear. On the other hand she was armed, so things weren't all bad.

She could always find suitable clothes at the next commune. She knew that Karl Cheung would probably do something stupid just about now, like weaving a complete suit of ballistic armor from dense foliage and setting traps while pursued. While she may be in the same line of work, she was also bound by physical limitations that the fictional Cheung and his scriptwriters happily ignored.

As a thorn weed scraped across her thigh, she cursed the CNCs troops again for arriving early at the rendezvous point. With even two or three minutes warning she would have been able to use her radio uplink to call for assistance. It was unbelievable that half a cycle's worth of deep cover investigation was blown simply because some Northie buckethead couldn't read a watch. Damn, damn, damn!

Behind her, she could hear the subdued roar of a V-engine and the crashing rumble of foliage being torn from the earth. Large, indistinct shapes could sometimes be seen moving between the fernwoods, obviously searching for something — or someone.

"Guess they've talked to Yesil," she thought, cursing the Northern spy she had been sent to keep an eye on. "Won't be long before they get here."

Looking about, she searched for her destination. There were reference points that only a trained eye could see. Noting the slight rise of a hill to her left, the bunched kelp reeds in the small stream she had been following and the abandoned jungle hopper nest nearby, she knew she'd found what she was looking for. A large, moss covered bump occupied the ground between two large grooves of tree. Kei clasped her hands together, praying to the guardian spirits of her ancestors, that her secret was still safe.

With one massive heave, she ripped the camouflage tarp away from the fernwood which it was tied to. Beneath the sheltering trees sat her Razor Fang Black Mamba, squatting with its head bowed like some sort of forest spirit, obedient to her alone. Moss had grown along some of the armor plates, making the vehicle's outline less distinct and somewhat more organic than mechanical. A single red light near the omnicamera showed that the neural net had acknowledged her presence and was powering up its systems. Kei looked back at the village in the far valley and her pursuers, anticipating the coming struggle.

"Six of them against me and old Napoleon here," she thought, patting her reliable Gear affectionately. She opened the cockpit and grabbed her spare piloting suit, dressing rapidly. This would be a rough battle, especially with those odds.

It hardly seemed fair — for her pursuers, at least.



7.1 DESIGNING A DOMINION CHARACTER

Designing a **Heavy Gear** character born in the Mekong Dominion is little different from creating other types of Player Characters. The Dominion is broad enough that any type of character would be at home in a Dominion campaign. Gear pilots, soldiers, technicians and special forces operatives are all found within the Mekong, as are Policia constables, rovers, brigands and spies. Players in a more intrigue-based campaign will be particularly interested in political terrorists, covert agents and other subversives living in the league.

The corporate structure of the league's government will have a distinct influence on Mekong characters, regardless of their actual occupation. Dominion characters value three things above all else: duty, profit and honor. Likewise, success within the league is often determined by the education of an individual and Player Characters should be prepared to take at least two languages and a smattering of business skills to reflect this. Of course, not everyone in the Dominion is well educated and Players should not be discouraged from playing characters drawn from the uneducated masses. The roleplaying possibilities of playing a peasant or an uneducated brigand could make for a very lively campaign.

7.1.1 CONCEPT AND BACKGROUND

The majority of Dominion citizens are descended from the predominantly Asian corporate workers that made up the Founders. Since the colonization, the population has become even less Asian with the intermingling of genes through immigration and marriage, but approximately 70% of the people still exhibit faint traits of their distant oriental ancestors in their eyes, skin and stature. It is as common for a blond-haired, blue-eyed executive to have the surname Suzuki or Leung (the most common Dominion surnames) as it is for his oriental looking coworker to have the name Parker or Smith. A Dominion citizen rarely judges the proverbial book by its cover, yet strangely most Mekong citizens believe themselves to be superior to other cultures even though their daily philosophy states that all people are equal.

Religion is not usually an issue with Mekong citizens, who are remarkably tolerant of foreign religions. Neo-Shinto and Zentai Buddhism are natural choices for Player Characters, but others are accepted as well, such as Jerusalemites. Mekongeses are frequently dismayed when representatives from other leagues express intolerance toward another religion. In combined forces such as the MILICIA, Mekong citizens often serve as mediators in religious quarrels. In fact, Mekong citizens are often stereotypically thought of as a serene introspective people who pause to consider the ramifications of their every action. This impression is probably fostered by the calculating calmness of Mekong business negotiators, who always follow a rigid format which does not allow for emotion. Foreigners are often surprised that Dominionites are every bit as passionate about things they consider important as they are.

7.1.2 ATTRIBUTES AND SKILLS

Attribute and Skill selection for Mekong characters is basically the same as any other **Heavy Gear** character. The Dominion society does have distinct views on education which should be accounted for by Players and Gamemasters during character creation. The education system is open to all citizens and extensive testing determines the aptitude of all applicants for higher education. Characters with high CRE and KNO attributes will be more likely to have a higher education than other less cerebral characters. The player must be able to justify certain skills such as History, Social Sciences or Art if his scores in these two Attributes are low. The Mekong system is very adept at funneling its human resources into jobs they are well suited for. However, like all large bureaucracies, money will serve to create exceptions, and a Player may be able to justify certain educational choices by creating a wealthy or politically powerful background for his character.

Mekong characters receive two of either Universal French, Atsi-go or Mandanese for free. Most should also have some basic Bureaucracy and Business Skills of levels 1 or 2, even those of the peasant class. The highly structured corporate culture tends to make it harder for individuals to develop the Intimidate and Leadership Skills; Dominion citizens are not encouraged to distinguish themselves as leaders but to excel at their chosen professions. The origin of a particular character will have a lot to do with the Skills chosen. A character from Hsi Tsang may well have developed criminal Skills such as Lockpicking, but will definitely have well-developed combat Skills and be Streetwise. Likewise, characters from politically powerful city-states like Yung An, Mekong City or Loyang, will have well-developed political Skills, such as Etiquette, Leadership and Business. Smaller city-states like Ngorongoro, Chung Tang and Mirat, would emphasize more trade-related Skills like Computer, Demolitions and Earth Sciences. Olduvai, with its academic focus and its location on the border, would attract academics and traders therefore Archeology, Survival and Navigation would be good Skill focuses for characters from this city. Atsi, on the other hand, is known for its liberal arts, and characters may have extensive Art, Dance or Theatric Skills.

Of course, not everyone lives in the city-states; wildlander characters are quite possible. A peasant would specialize in agricultural skills, while a guide would hone his Combat Sense and Survival. Caravaneers would be interested in Engineering and Tinkering Skills and trappers would be skilled in Small Arms and Stealth. Wandering monks would specialize in Theology (Social Science), while brigands could well develop any number of Skills to supplement their combat ability. The size and diversity of the Mekong makes any type of character possible.

7.2 EQUIPMENT

The Mekong Dominion prides itself on its technical prowess and is especially renowned for its production of high technology items. High quality workmanship can be found consistently on the outside market. For example, ICP trideo units are acknowledged as the finest on the planet and are in great demand in both civilian and business markets. Most of the high tech manufacturing companies of the league have a global distribution system. Much of the Dominion's basic home industry is devoted to making a quick kronar with slipshod products, however, and even the highest quality Mekong items are plagued with a reputation for being difficult to maintain and repair.

7.2.1 WEAPONS

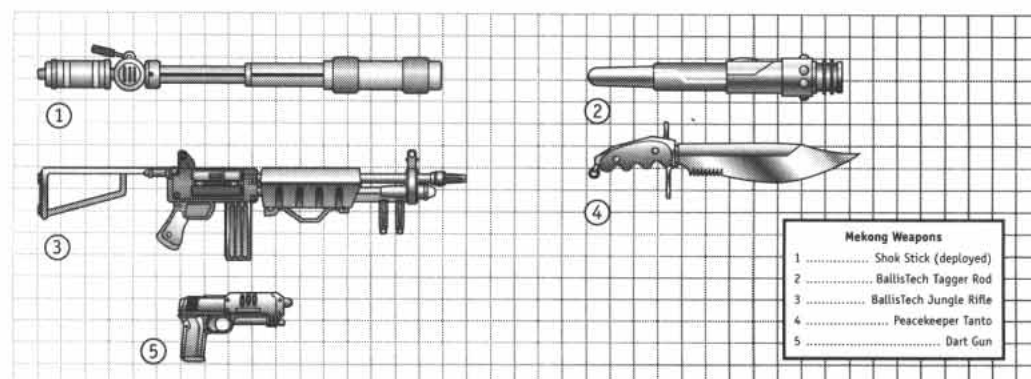
The memory of the Terran occupation of the league has left Dominion citizens with a deep-seated need for personal arms. While most civilians do not openly display sidearms (to do so is a misdemeanor everywhere but in Hsi Tsang), most homes have some sort of weapon. Rural communes rely upon personal weaponry for home defense from bandit and wildlife encroachments, though firearms are less common and rarely recent models.

Also common are small guns designed to deliver toxins to a target via a small dart. The dart itself is composed of uniquely bound proteins which dissolve into the victims bloodstream within seconds after discharging its contents. While the dart is unable to penetrate any armor and must strike exposed skin to deliver its toxins, it also leaves no easily discernable entry wound (Medicine vs. 6 to detect). Game stats are listed below; contact versions of the toxins are also available.

Dominion Weapons						
Weapon	Accuracy	Damage X	Range (m)	RoF	Ammo	Cost
Nunchuks	0	AD+8	close combat	N/A	N/A	10
Katana	0	AD+14	close combat	N/A	N/A	200
Naginata	0	AD+12	STR+10	N/A	N/A	80
Shok Stik	0	AD+6*	close combat	N/A	20	450
Short Vibrosword	0	AD+18	close combat	N/A	N/A	Restricted to Ghost Squads
Peacekeeper Tanto	0	AD+8	STR+10	N/A	N/A	Restricted to Peacekeepers
Peasant Longbow	0	10	6/12/24/48	0/2	1	50/1
7 mm Jungle rifle	0	22	50/100/200/400	1	30	500
Anti-Vehicle Grenade	-1	70	50/100/200/400	0	10	100
Dart Gun	0	special	10/20/40/80	0	10	200

* + Electrical Damage (see description)

Toxin Table				
Toxin Type	Potency	Effects	Onset Time	Cost
Refined Sunshadow	16	Fatal, Damage x10 + toxin	1 round	800 dinars per round
Delinquent	14	Sedative, Disrupts short term memory	1 round	500 dinars per round
Scorpion Serpent	14	Damage x15, then AGI reduced by 1 for dur.	5 rounds	200 dinars per round
Spider Tree Balm	15	Sedative, Truth Serum (-3 to resistance die rolls)	3 rounds, lasts 2 hours	1200 dinars per round
Tracker	-	Can be tracked by scanner unit	Flushed in 12-16 hours	200 dinars per round



7.2.2 SPECIAL FORCES

The Assembly maintains two distinct special forces units, each with their own doctrine, training regime and operational mandate. The celebrated Jungle Fighter escouades of the Peacekeepers are special units trained and equipped to operate as deep infiltration teams. Historically, Jungle fighting escouades were instrumental in the defense of the Dominion and were much feared by their GREL adversaries. The second unit includes the infamous Ghost Squads, whose very existence is denied by the Mekong Assembly. Ghost Squads are the strong arm of the Assembly's foreign policy makers and operate across Terra Nova. Their mandate includes industrial and military espionage, assassination and sabotage. Ghost Squads do not usually engage in actual espionage but provide tactical support for the agents who do the actual infiltration.

► Aegis Stealth Armor

This lightweight suit is designed to protect the wearer from electronic and visual detection. Unique filaments are woven through the suit, which changes color when exposed to minute electrical currents. The base color of the filament is a dull black, but each filament can cycle through red, yellow or white depending upon the intensity of the current. The filaments are hand-woven through the armor and are mostly unaffected by ballistic impact. The armor itself is very effective against small arms (Armor 25) and contains specialized tubing and sensors which regulate the Aegis temperature to match that of the ambient air (+2 to Stealth and Camouflage Skill tests). The Aegis is not available for sale and sources within the government estimate the price tag for each suit at over 400,000 kronars each.

Ghost Squads wear the unique "Omniscience" helmet with the suit, which is similar to those worn by Peacekeeper SWAT soldiers. The design includes night vision capacity, multiband radio communications with state of the art encryption, and a sealed two-hour air supply with external sampling sensors. The HUD display is above military quality and is favored by command officers. Ghost Squad HUDs are equipped to receive full color real-time transmissions from various sources, including stealth drones and surveillance devices. Optical ports allow the helmet to interface with the control displays of various systems.

► Infiltration Glove

This armored gauntlet contains complex electronics and a powerful optical computer with military spec code breakers. The glove can disarm or assume control of almost any security system, allowing squad members access to almost any high security complex (+2 to Computer Skill tests). Arrayed along the inside of the glove are a selection of electronic and mechanical sensors and picks (+3 to lockpicking tasks). One simply places his palm next to a lock and allows the device to do its work. The glove can be cosmetically modified to look like a common bracer or large bracelet, generally matching the local fashion, though with some loss in effectiveness (+1 to Computer, +2 to lockpicking).

► BallisTech 7mm Jungle Rifle

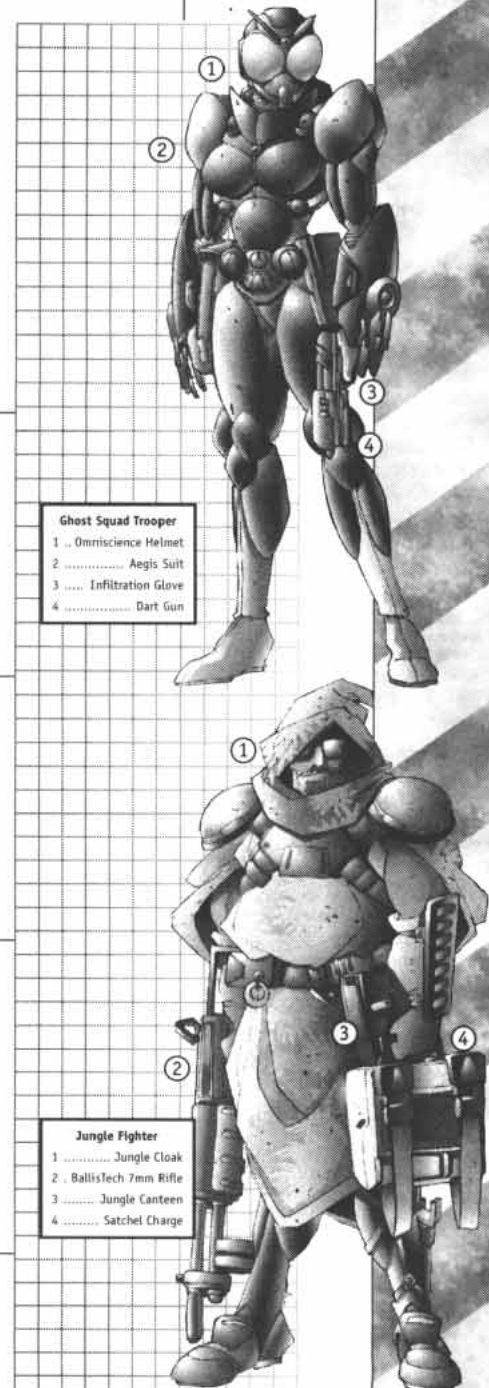
This weapon is designed for the grueling environment of the deep jungle. The rifle can be completely immersed in any type of liquid and can even be fired when the barrel is partially clogged by mud or foliage, though its accuracy is greatly diminished. The stock folds easily, allowing the weapon to be used in enclosed spaces or while climbing. It is extremely reliable and features a unique venting system which allows the rifle to mount and fire anti-vehicle grenades (Damage Multiplier x70) with no effect on performance. Flash suppressors reduce the likelihood of being spotted by the enemy, while an optional bayonet mount for a vibroknife ensures that a little extra personal attention is readily at hand for stickier situations.

► Jungle Cloak

The cloak is an outer garment used by the Mekong jungle fighter escouades, some of the deadliest troopers on the planet. The unique fabric used to create this garment is specially designed to simulate the flora of the local underbrush. A product of a decade of research, the fabric has been designed with a number of unusual properties. Its outer surface blends the natural coloring of the jungle into a smooth collage of geometric shapes specifically chosen to appear innocuous (+1 to Camouflage Skill tests). In addition, the textile is woven from a highly specialized polymer incorporating ribbed structures which function as heat sinks. The cloak is thus able to dissipate or absorb heat in such a manner as to match the ambient temperature of the air surrounding it. Regrettably, the high cost of the fibers make it impractical to outfit more than a few escouades per regiment with the jungle cloak.

► Jungle Canteen

This canteen is basically a housing for a genetic hybrid of an Earth sponge. The sponge feeds off the bacteria and impurities found in all naturally occurring water sources, leaving only pure, refreshing water. A canteen sponge can filter up to a gallon of water a day and becomes dormant when the impurities it feeds off are not present. The sponge also serve to stop the water sloshing around within the canteen.



7.2.3 BUSINESS & POLICE

The Mekong is a country of high commerce and has designed a number of specific pieces of equipment for its mercantile employees and police constables to use in their everyday lives. Businessmen pride themselves on owning the most fashionable business attire and the most up-to-date equipment. Peacekeepers, on the other hand, pride themselves on their history and the valuable service they provide the Dominion.

Corporate Tools ◀

Mercantile Corporations require that their employees wear a mercantile lapel pin displaying their allegiance. The lapel pin contains the employee's training and evaluation records, and can be easily assessed by a data ring. The lapel pin also contains an encoded strip beneath the corporate logo which contains other information, generally the default settings of the equipment the employee is authorized to operate.

Data rings contain a small memory core which will record the information from lapel pins. By bringing this ring close to a lapel pin, it will record the personal data on the pin, allowing the ring's owner to know exactly who he is dealing with and their position in their respective companies. The ring's memory can be easily downloaded to a mercantile dossier (a highly specialized personal computer) or computer system.

All Mekong citizens will be issued a Portfolio Identification Number which allows the Dominion to track and record the relevant personal information of the citizen, especially the number of Dominion stocks he or she owns. A laminated card with a small holographic image of the citizen is issued with the PIN and serves as ID card. Citizens are required to carry their PIN card at all times.

Sonic Analysis Unit (SAU) ◀

This device is extremely expensive to build and maintain, often costing in excess of 200,000 kronars. Placing the SAU against an object and activating it directs a sonic pulse through the target object, producing a detailed image of its interior. The size of the image produced is a cube of roughly 30 centimeters per side, penetrating the object completely to produce what is called a schematic core sample. The SAU has a number of drawbacks: the sonic pulse tends to damage sensitive electronics and it also produces a distinctive ultra-sonic shockwave. This makes its use detectable up to 20 meters away depending upon prevailing conditions.

ICP Book of Law ◀

Touted as a field guide for efficient judicial practices, this small electronic book contains a database of legal information combined with recent political rulings. The Book of Law is designed to assist Constables in making a correct judgement in the field where they are the sole court. This device assists Peacekeepers in analyzing a situation or argument for its political/legal ramifications and propose a number of possible lines of inquiry to support the defendant's position (+2 to Law Skill tests). The book is manufactured and marketed by ICP for Peacekeeper use only.

Stonewall Mk-3 Shok Stik ◀

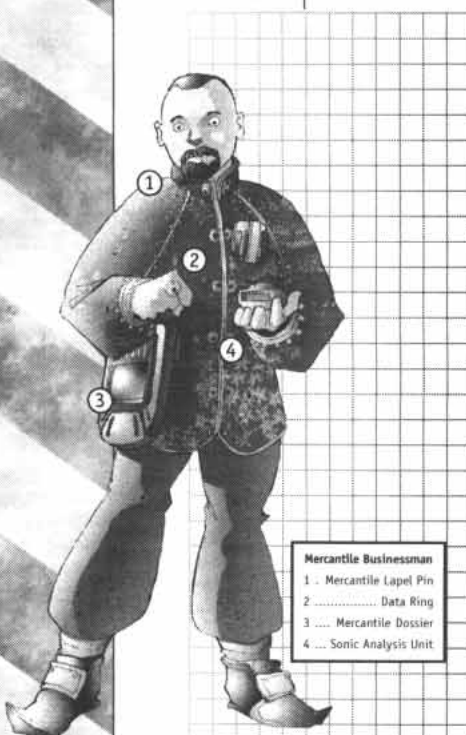
This weapon is very popular with Dominion constables. Essentially a retractable baton merged with a powerful electric battery, this device is capable of incapacitating the largest opponent (HEA check vs. Threshold 8 to avoid unconsciousness). When retracted the baton fits neatly into a holster on the constable's belt. The baton is manufactured by MDC and is available for export.

BallisTech Tagger Rod ◀

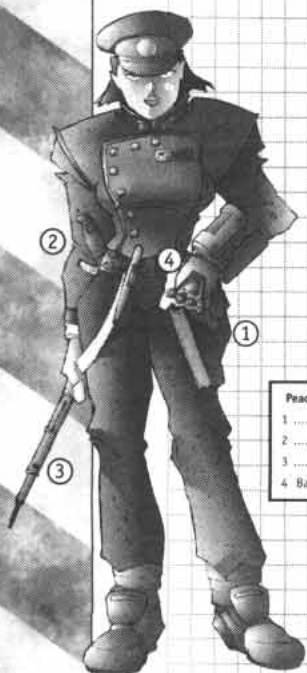
This unusual piece of equipment has greatly helped the Mekong Peacekeeper's reputation of always getting their man. The device is about the size of a large fountain pen and is issued to all Constables. The rod fires a barbed projectile which can be tracked. The projectile can adhere to almost anything and is extremely small. A digital readout in the body of the rod indicates the current position of the projectile up to 2 km away. The latest version of the rod adds a laser sight to the device and can be mounted on a sidearm.

Peacekeeper Tanto ◀

This short dagger is the symbol of a Peacekeeper constable. The Tanto is a fully functional combat blade constructed of the finest ceramic alloy composite. The blade is acid-etched with the motto and insignia of the Corps and serves to identify a Dominion Constable. The handle contains a sophisticated holographic unit which project image and text, identifying the constable the Tanto is assigned to. Presenting the blade upright, face towards a viewer, will activate the blade display. The level of sophistication which goes into the construction of the projection unit makes fake constable ID very hard to attain. The tantos are manufactured by the Peacekeepers in their headquarters and it is a considered a criminal offense to possess one.



Mercantile Businessman
 1 Mercantile Lapel Pin
 2 Data Ring
 3 Mercantile Dossier
 4 Sonic Analysis Unit



Peacekeeper Constable
 1 ICP Book of Law
 2 Peacekeeper Tanto
 3 Shok Stik
 4 BallisTech Tagger Rod

7.3 MEKONG CAMPAIGNS

The Mekong Dominion covers a massive surface area. Its jungles teem with wildlife and its urban sprawls are populated with predators matched in ferocity only by those dwelling in the corporate boardrooms of the powerful. Any of these environments could supply the setting for a Dominion campaign. However, such campaigns should be sure to touch upon a number of themes that make the Mekong Dominion what it is: duty, desperation, trade, powerplays and anarchy.

● DUTY

Duty can easily become the focus of a campaign. Duty is typically thought of in terms of one's home league. Within the Dominion, duty becomes a far more nebulous yet all-consuming term. Duty to one's family, mentor, city-state and employer often clash, causing Dominion citizens a great deal of trouble. Justifying the actions that an employer orders against the well-being of the peoples of the league can strain the loyalties of anyone. And in a society where personal honor is second to performing one's duty, and where failure is a taint that your entire family bears, duty is far more than simply punching the clock and doing your job.

● DESPERATION

Even though the Dominion is a major economic power, arguably the major power on Terra Nova, there are millions of citizens who remain poor. While the affluent walk tall among the mercantile elite, beggars huddle in shanty towns outside the city walls and peasants grow rice and other subsistence crops to feed the city-states. These common people are the backbone of the Dominion; they strive to better themselves against a system intended to maintain the status quo, even if that means at gunpoint. Unions are outlawed and riots are common in cities like Loyang or Yung An, where the worse abuses occur. Opportunities are few and far between, and when one appears you had better jump at it, even if it means hobbling those around you first. The common people can be a source of valuable information for the Player Characters, especially in campaigns revolving around intrigue, for who knows better what happens in the jungle or the slums than those who live there. But always remember that characters who held the destitute may be seen as a way out by those they help, and betrayal may be the price of helping them.

● TRADE

Mekong products are purchased and shipped across the planet; someone has to carry them to the customers. Trade caravans can make for an exciting campaign. Player Characters can travel across the entire Dominion, experiencing the richness of the vast and varied culture. Sociologist and archaeological teams may travel with caravans to find and record the strange hidden world of the Rotud monks or the primitive societies living in the heart of the jungle. Of course, these primitives may not be friendly and there is the ever present threat of Brigands to worry about, not to mention the vicious wildlife that thrives here. Caravaneers are a tough lot, often required to make brutal choices in the pursuit of a profit margin. Unlucky or troublesome characters may discover that caravans occasionally lose people suddenly even in the tamest plain or forest.

● POWERPLAYS

Political intrigue is only one aspect of the power structure of the Dominion. Corporate, military and criminal power structures mirror the political one, and characters must be prepared to hold their own in a country where all four seem to blend almost seamlessly. Yakuza advocates wander the halls of the Mekong Assembly where their Oyabun holds a seat as a corporate entity, while mercantile expeditors solicit Lord Chancellor Durocher for military aid against their corporate rivals. Player Characters can easily become the pawns in power struggles between the powerful. One conspiracy leads the PCs to another and another, into an endless web of intrigue where nothing can be taken for granted. Terrorist unions in Loyang, Yakuza military forces masquerading as Brigands and Peacekeeper Ghost Squads, all make for a very dangerous campaign where the slightest misstep on the Player's part can be fatal.

● ANARCHY

To the world at large, the Dominion presents a strong united front. Nothing can be further from the truth. Within the assembly, Taipan Logan works to topple the decades-long reign of ICP, both through stock manipulation and corporate espionage. Militant unions within Loyang threaten to resurrect the specter of war within the city. Brigands roam the jungles and plains at will, while the Peacekeepers are seemingly unable to curb their depredations. All the while the Yakuza Oyabun and the decadent Lord Chancellor squat in Hsi Tsang, drawing their plans. PCs will quickly learn that the Dominion is in turmoil, a turmoil that threatens to plunge the region into lawlessness. Revolution is on the wind and only the strongest will survive and prosper.

7.3.1 PRODUCT TESTING

In the ever changing battle for the kronars of the consumer, Dominion corporations place a premium on the creation and marketing of new products. Ruthless exploitation of the lower working classes feeds the coffers of the massive mercantile entities of the league. An entire campaign can be created around the development and marketing of a single product. All types of Player Characters can be incorporated into this type of campaign. Intrigue and espionage types will be occupied with maintaining the security of the corporation they work for while trying to learn the secrets of their rivals. Scientist will be kept busy with the research and engineering of the product. Marketing and administration, usually the most tedious of professions, is anything but boring in the Dominion. Corporate spies are attracted to start up businesses, hoping for a quick and lucrative score. Administrators often double as investigators, weeding out the traitors in their midst. In the case of military development, it is the test pilots who garner the most acclaim and the private sector is no different. PCs looking for the peak of adventure need only take the new product out on the obstacle course to find it.

With the current revitalization of the Peacekeeper military force, there are plenty of opportunities for start-up businesses and established corporate entities alike to market new devices. Characters may be solicited to design, develop and test new vehicles or systems for the army. A lucrative contract and prestige going to the victor. Military contracts are in high demand among Mekong Corporations and the Players will encounter a variety of situations which will test all their skills in such a campaign. Mercantile spies, and rival test pilots are only a couple of obstacles to be overcome. Political maneuvering can as easily kill a contract as a testing failure. PCs will have to become adept at negotiations and bureaucratic infighting. Those with an interest in creating new technologies will enjoy making new vehicles or systems and testing them against established or prototype vehicles. Finding the best balance between cost, effectiveness and durability is a challenge that will keep a Player Character group occupied for many sessions.

Starting Point: Yung An Rally ◀

It's time again for the grandiose Yung An off-road rally! The race where man and machine are tested to the breaking point is once more the talk of the town, and everyone is looking forward to the exciting days ahead. The rigors of combat are one thing, but they are nothing compared to the grueling pace set by this event, which usually claims at least a few crew each time. Called the ultimate proving ground for off-road and all-terrain vehicles, the road between Yung An and Ngorongoro is littered with mudtraps, treacherous turns and the rusted remnants of past competitors.

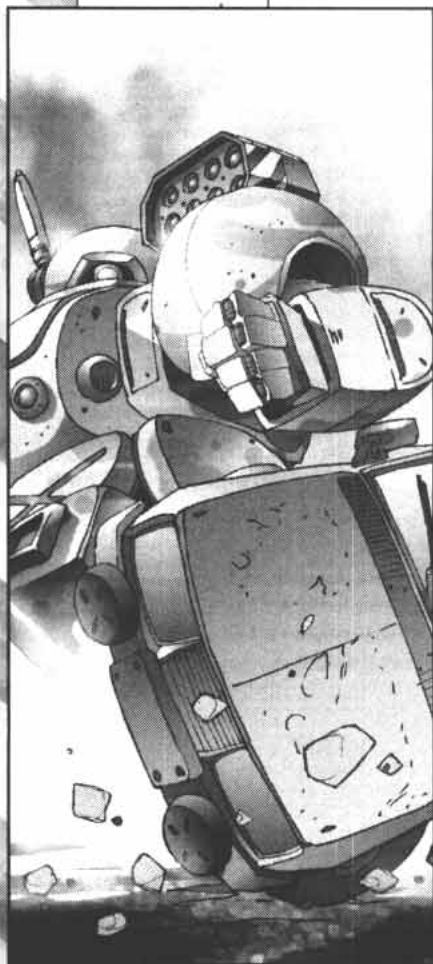
Yung An has been the center of attention for the last few weeks. Gamblers, spectators, sponsors and of course the racers themselves now fill the streets of the city-state and occupy most of the available hotels and rented rooms. They are coming from all over the southern hemisphere — and some from even further away — to either participate in the race, bet on the results, or just simply drink in the excitement of being there as high speed cars and walkers hurtle through the lush Mekong countryside. A huge party has been planned by the city's authorities to welcome the racers and their support crews, and festivities will likely go on throughout the night in all the bars and many of the streets. Tonight, the entire city celebrates, for the race begins in a few days.

Possible Campaign Variations ◀

1	One of the party members is offered the opportunity to join the race.
2	One of the drivers has been targeted by a Protectorate clan to be killed due to some past dispute or misunderstanding.
3	An agricultural commune's peasants are pleading with the organizers to change the route to avoid the destruction caused by previous races.
4	An unscrupulous corporation intends to abduct one of the racers during the race in hopes of unlocking his vehicle's technology.
5	A car accident occurs and the dying driver's wish is that the party finishes tomorrow's race for him — but for a rival corporation.
6	One of the racers is angered by the party and challenges them to a duel during the Rally.

Suggested Player Characters ◀

1	Pit crew for one of the racers.
2	Law enforcement officers seeking to identify a terrorist attending the race.
3	Judging officials.
4	Corporate sponsors of one of the racers.
5	Corporate scouts looking for new technologies or spokesmen.
6	Journalists covering the race.



7.3.2 TWO BAGS FULL

The Dominion's political system is based upon the success of its corporations. Working for one of the large and prestigious mercantile entities such as MDC, Ramonair or the ruling ICP has its share of challenges. No matter where you are on the corporate ladder there is always someone above you trying to keep you down or someone below you trying to help them. The corporation family is similar to the Dominion itself; united on the outside but filled with vicious whirlpools of political struggles on the inside. The various sections of the each corporation battle each other to justify their budget allocations and validate their employment to the board. Within the board itself, each chairman is the ultimate power and voice of the corporation, but only so long as his agenda remains under his control. Many chairmen are little more than figureheads, simple spokesmen for political powers which control them, hidden amongst the board members. Stock maneuvers, deception and secret agendas consume every waking moment of a board member's life, but the political power and exquisite perks of the position more than make up for it.

Player Characters may be introduced to corporate life at any level. Up and coming administrators may be appalled by their first experience with the ruthlessness of their superiors and the capriciousness of the support amongst their peers. Experienced diplomats and merchant traders may find themselves negotiating new trade routes with simple caravaneers one day, and sneaking into the estate of a foreign ambassador to discuss a secret alliance the next. Diplomats are often privy to secrets about their parent corporations and as such commonly targeted for 'examination' by rival corporations. Player Characters hired as mid-level diplomats will find their lives very exciting; they will be given access to much the same secret information as their higher ups but none of the security.

Researchers may be hired to work on innocuous projects or to simply develop new techniques to do the same old thing. Or they may be assigned to a black budget project creating prohibited weapons or utilizing illegal technology. Even innocuous corporations and outstanding corporate citizens such as ICP or Krellan Foods maintained questionable projects. Other less scrupulous corporations pursue treasonous projects and experiment on prisoners and slaves. Campaigns involving PCs as Civil Service Adjudicators can easily become very dangerous if they stumble across a hidden project or treasonous plot.

► Starting Point: Rush Job

Occasionally the Mekong Civil Service Adjudicators find themselves behind schedule and undermanned. The characters happen upon a third rank Adjudicator who is frantic to complete his sector's profits/assets reports. His staff has been decimated by an outbreak of Mekong influenza; luckily, the virility of the strain is mild and a few days bed rest will suffice to return them to good health again. Unfortunately, any delay is unacceptable to the Adjudicator's superiors and they demand that the reports be filed in full and on time. The local Adjudicator office is short staffed and very chaotic, and offers little help to the disheartened bureaucrat. In an attempt to alleviate the stress on his subordinates, the Adjudicator brings in the characters as short time support.

They may or may not be prepared or even qualified for the job, but strong hands as escorts and assistants with clerical skills could serve as temporary Adjudicators. Of course, the Civil Service would closely watch the work of their new employees — very closely indeed. After all, what better entry point for spies or saboteurs than the government structure itself? And even if the characters are honest, there are many who would be interested in new, ready-to-corrupt bureaucrats, and who will not likely accept no for an answer.

► Possible Campaign Variations

1	A party member is approached by a corporation to falsify their profits/assets report.
2	A number of irregularities in a corporations profits/assets report points to corruption within the adjudication team.
3	One of the corporations has extensive assets in the Badlands and the team must travel there to review them.
4	The party is offered an entry-level position as 1st rank Adjudicators in the Mekong Civil Service.
5	A Northern spy is operating within the Adjudicators and the fourth ranked Adjudicator attempts to ferret him out using the characters.
6	The characters are suspected of being Northern spies, but in fact work for another faction.

► Suggested Player Characters

1	Corporate officials who compile the profits/assets reports.
2	1st ranked Adjudicators who enjoy their limited power.
3	Peasants operating or working in corporate holdings.
4	Policia constables who intend to elicit bribes to smooth the census process.
5	Political activist who intend to destroy the census information in an attempt to disrupt the Mekong government.
6	Yakuza gangsters who wish their investments in a particular corporation to remain anonymous.



7.3.3 OUT ON YOUR OWN

The vast majority of the Dominion's population live far outside the city-states. The life of a wildlander is far different for the comfortable existence of a city dweller. The weather is unpredictable, often brutally so, and the animal life is even more brutal. Pack lizards roam freely and only the barricades of the isolated settlements keep them at bay. Peasants farmers tending their crops are usually accompanied by an overseer with a rifle to keep them safe. Cleared fields are planted with Mekong lotus or rice, the most common agricultural crop, while small logging interests eke out a living, trying to stay alive against the huge crews sent out by the major corporations.

Players in need of large amounts of cash or with gambling debts will be interested in the large salary and even larger bonus for meeting quota. Other PCs may need to leave town immediately for whatever reason, and taking on such an assignment and losing themselves in the bush may be just what they require. Many logging groups are desperate and struggle to keep alive, and Players may be attracted to the underdog — perhaps to become their white knights.

Interacting with the simple folk of the Dominion can be very rewarding for Players. Any type of Player Character can be accommodated in a rural setting, especially one as diverse as the Mekong interior. Smugglers, brigands and slavers are major problems in the picturesque jungles and plains of the Mekong, and PCs who consort with these types may find themselves in the less developed areas pursuing some assignment for their criminal masters. Likewise, MILICIA or Peacekeeper characters may be assigned to the wildlands to counter these problems. Scientist characters may find themselves in the wilderness searching for an elusive discovery, be it a never seen but often mentioned primitive society, or a new species of plant or animal which may hold the final clue to curing a deadly disease. Other characters could include guides, prospectors, caravaneers or businessmen.

Starting Point: Tin Woodsmen ◀

Outrider Logging, a small Mekong company, enlists the characters to serve as a logging crew. The hours are long and the camp is quite far into the jungle, but the pay is good. The company is desperate to find a new crew, preferably trained, but they are desperate enough to hire an untrained crew. Outrider Logging has a contract with the Loyang rural prefecture to harvest fernwood, but the contract runs out in 2 seasons and Outrider is under quota. According to the contract, the Loyang prefecture can refuse to renew the contract if Outrider is unable to meet its quota. The PCs are informed of this dilemma if they sign up and that there will be a significant amount of overtime and a huge bonus if they meet their quota. Players will be required to sign on for a two-cycle stint in the forests and jungle surrounding Loyang, with one week of R&R each cycle. Supplies will be sent to the mobile logging site once a week via a trade caravan. The team will radio its coordinates to guide the caravan to resupply them and pick up their lumber. It is imperative that the new team leaves immediately.

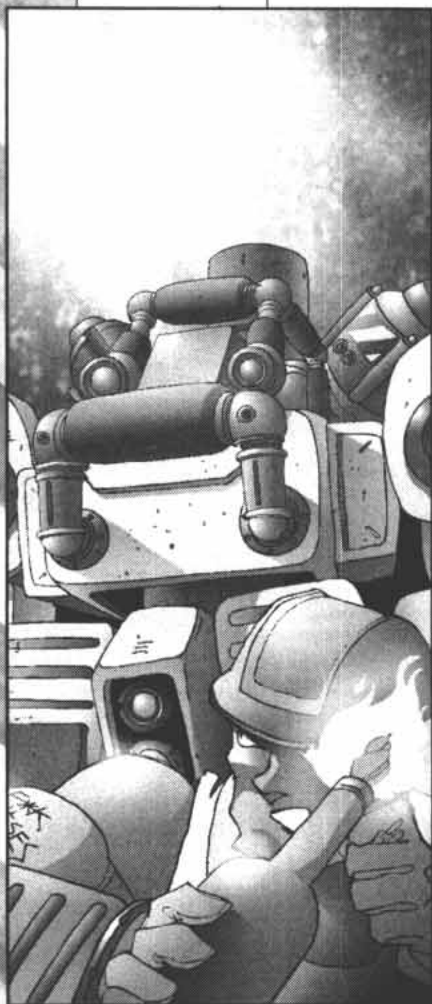
After an admittedly brief training course, the team is sent into the depth of the jungle. At this point, they meet the remains of the crew they are replacing, a very ragged lot to be sure. They discover from these men that the much larger Martinez Lumber Cartel, one of the municipal leaders in Loyang, is trying to force its employer out of business. Half of the crew deserted to the Martinez side under threats of violence, which luckily have not been acted upon. Instead, Martinez crews have taken to sabotaging Outrider equipment, intercepting much-needed supplies, and even burned down the living quarters. Their tactics show every intention of becoming more forceful. While no one has been hurt, the last crew was roughed up pretty badly, and none will stay with the PCs to assist in fulfilling their contract.

Possible Campaign Variations ◀

1	The equipment issued to the logging expeditions is antiquated and unreliable, and much effort must be devoted to repairing it.
2	A Northern reconnaissance unit is using a logging company as a front for its spying activities.
3	A logging company is cooperating with the Red Lion regiment in laying traps for brigands.
4	The huge Martinez Lumber Cartel is aggressively logging in the group's allocated fernwood area.
5	A agricultural commune is living in the midst of a logging zone, and they refuse to move.
6	One of the logging teams is sabotaging the group's equipment.

Suggested Player Characters ◀

1	Brigands hiding in the fernwood jungle.
2	Rival logging teams from other corporations, competing for the same resources.
3	Rotud pilgrims traveling through the jungles, looking for their gods.
4	Northern spies bent on subverting the Dominion.
5	Jungle guide hired to lead the expedition to their logging sites and keep them from harm.
6	Naturalists and scientific groups cataloguing the unique plant and animal life in the jungles.



7.3.4 HEART AND HOME

Life in the rural wildlands does not always mean dodging bandits and pack lizards. Some communities are well established and are situated on well-traveled and protected caravan routes. Living in small communities poses very different challenges for characters used to living alone in the jungles or plains of the Dominion. Likewise, life in the overpopulated city-states is very different from that of a small community. The closely knit society of a commune may seem welcoming at first, but is very closed to strangers. Many communes revolve around a single religious or political doctrine, and any variance from these ideals will be judged very harshly by the peasants.

There could be many reasons why the Player Characters may wish to live in an agricultural commune. They may be peasants born and raised in the commune or traveling from a commune recently hit by bandits or drought. Military personnel may be assigned to establish a listening post, either officially or covertly depending upon the league which sends them. Peacekeepers may be sent to enforce the law in a commune, which may or may not be welcomed by the independent peasants.

Such a campaign can revolve around the interaction of the PCs with the unsophisticated peasants as well as the trials of living in a small community. Luxuries will be at a premium and everyone is expected to pull his weight or leave. Cerebral characters such as politicians, artists and scientists will be little appreciated by the naïve commoners who will make life difficult for such characters until they prove their worth. Farmers, doctors, hunters, laborers and warriors will be better welcomed, but only slightly so. Being an outsider in an insular society poses a significant hurdle to the advancement of any character's agenda, no matter how noble it may seem. These will be especially evident if PCs develop romantic interests for residents of the commune, especially when marriage into the society is considered.

► The Magnificent Eleven

A group of Outtown peasants have saved their meager income for the last twenty cycles. They are now ready to found their own settlement, carving it out of the savannahs and jungles of the Mekong countryside. It is a hard life, but building something that will last for generations is very rewarding. Unfortunately, the peasants are naïve when it comes to the bureaucratic and logistic niceties of creating a new settlement. They believed that simply being able to afford the materials and the land titles would be enough. Now they are bogged down in a morass of red tape and they need help to negotiate the convoluted corridors of the Dominion bureaucracy.

Between the red tape, the everyday problems associated with building a commune from the ground up and protecting it from the attention of slavers and the tithes of local bandits, the commoners have a very large problem on their hand. They are way over their head on this, and they need help. They have already located the ideal site for the new settlement and all thirty-five peasant families are prepared to embark on their adventure. They need politicians to grease the wheels of the Assembly to officially authorize trade with their group and secure the land titles. They need to buy supplies to tide them over until the local economy becomes self-sufficient, and they need mercenaries to protect them from brigands. The Players may be asked to volunteer their services as the commune is dirt poor, though a few thousand kronars can be scrounged up to pay them if required.

► Possible Campaign Variations

1	Political pressures forces the peasants to seek out a Civil Service lobbyist to plead their case to the assembly.
2	Building huts, stockades, working in rice paddies and protecting the commune from jungle animals, immerse the group in the Dominion's culture.
3	A plague strikes the fledgling commune, wiping out most of the village elders and higher authorities.
4	Rumors of a Northern spy living in the commune are tearing the simple peace of the settlement asunder.
5	Pack lizards, creeper vines and rabid scorpion serpents infest the area, taking a high toll on the peasants.
6	A neighboring settlement competes for the area's natural resources, and have hired brigands to force their competition to leave.

► Suggested Player Characters

1	A jungle guide has decided to found a small way station in the village.
2	Peasant settlers struggling against the odds to survive and thrive.
3	Traveling merchants bringing much-needed supplies and provisions.
4	Reclusive trappers and hunters, who occasionally peddle skins and trapped animals.
5	Brigands extorting money and supplies from the commune.
6	A political activist moves in trying to plant the seeds of revolution in the village.



7.3.5 LOST TREASURES

The jungles of the Mekong hold much more than simple peasants and predatory bandits. The general collapse of the interior during the war with earth and the wholesale movement of peasant villages to avoid the battle lines forced many of these villages out of contact with the Mekong government. Even today there are villages with no contact with Assembly officials. This is not a new trend for the Dominion and the jungles contain many such isolated communities which are unwilling or uninterested in reestablishing contact with "civilization." Some of these villages developed new and diverse cultures, quite different from the simple villages which spawned them — others simply died out.

Sociologists are always interested in these new cultures, especially those which are most similar to the original colonists and those that are most different from the present mainstream culture. Archaeologist, on the other hand, are most happy poking around the ruins of dead colonial-era cultures, or the artifact-rich ziggurats and pre-fab buildings of the post-colonial period. A lucrative market in artifacts and works of primitive art has arisen, though few archaeologist are rugged enough to brave the perils of the jungles to locate them.

On the other hand, the jungle contains much more modern artifacts to plunder. Battle wrecks and hidden weapons caches draw salvage teams into the jungles in search of a quick kronar. Mercenary and brigand gangs are always in search of spare parts of weapons systems, and the jungle is littered with the detritus of war. Earth technology, especially those few machines left intact by the fleeing CEF, fetch a high price. Assembly agents, corporate researchers and governmental spies from across the globe finance expeditions to locate intact hover tanks and weapon systems for research purposes, and the occasional covert military incursion is not unknown. Such incidences are rarely acknowledged by the governments who instigate them, though the Mekong media takes great pains to publicize the confessions of any prisoners captured from these sorties.

Lions and Tigers and Bears Oh My! ◀

Deborah Sewell is an idealistic young naturalist who is determined to make a name for herself. Her family can trace its ancestry all the way back to Jonathan Sewell. She has studied the wildlife of the Yung An basin for cycles, but this is her first expedition into the jungle. A Humanist Alliance university is sponsoring her trip in hopes that new zoological and medical marvels will be discovered, and they are sending a field researcher, Stavros Thermopoli, along for the journey. Sewell is a brilliant scientist, but unlike her predecessor, she is not at home in the wilderness. The characters are assigned or hired to serve as her support staff. Luckily Stavros is an accomplished wildlander; he will take any unseasoned members of the party under his wing and guide them. Stavros has a reputation amongst archaeologists as an opportunist who will eagerly destroy an archaeological find to get at valuable artifacts.

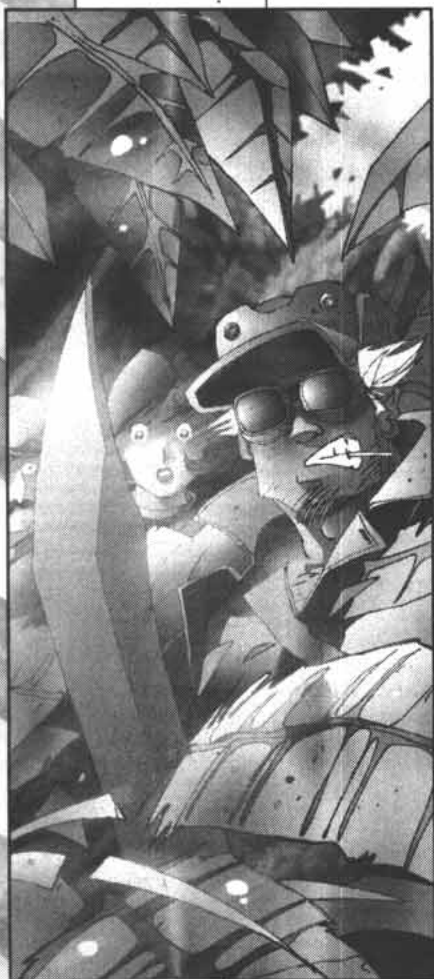
Unknown to the players and Sewell is the fact that Stavros Thermopoli is a covert agent of the HIRA (Humanist Insight and Regulatory Authority). Stavros' mission is to guide Sewell's party towards a specific area within the Yung An basin. HIRA intelligence believes that the Colonial Expeditionary Force established a secret weapons cache somewhere in this area, just before they were forced to retreat from the Mekong territories. This secret armory could be a great asset to the Alliance's military research and rearmament program, especially if they can discover some intact CEF vehicles. Stavros has orders to locate the stash and prepare it for retrieval by a covert HIRA unit waiting on the Mekong border. Thermopoli has been given a concealed satellite uplink to signal the retrieval unit when ready.

Possible campaign Variations ◀

1	Yakuza from Hsi Tsang attempt to steal the specimens to sell as pets on the Ngorongoro animal market.
2	A rival company is allowing Sewell to process the data from her specimens but intends to stage a midnight raid to steal it.
3	Deborah hears rumors in a local village of a small secluded valley inhabited by many bizarre and unusual creatures.
4	Sewell wanders away from the camp with a dangerous storm coming.
5	The base camp and all its equipment is destroyed in a flash flood, leaving the expedition with no provisions or tools.
6	The camp is struck by a virulent new disease.

Suggested Player Characters ◀

1	Rotud pilgrims from a settlement in the middle of the basin.
2	Local trappers who see the expedition as competition.
3	Political terrorists from a training area in the jungle.
4	A spy placed by a rival corporation in the group.
5	A jungle guide who does not accommodate the slow or the weak.
6	Peasant farmers hiring their services to the group as laborers.



7.3.6 VENTURE CAPITAL

Dominion travelers are encouraged to scout out new trade opportunities for the Dominion and report these to the External Affairs Office of the Civil Service. The Civil Service offers standard rewards for travelers who locate and secure favorable business deals for the Dominion or any of its member corporations. It is common knowledge that any Mekong citizen may be given the authority to set up a potential investor with an opportunity to discuss trade with the Mekong Dominion, should the case prove interesting. Even military personnel are on the lookout for an opportunity to claim one of these rewards. This practice makes travelers seem opportunistic at best, money-grubbing at worse, but it does encourage gregariousness in the otherwise insular Mekong travelers. This reward program has encouraged the expansion of Mekong trade across the planet, making the Dominion one of the richest leagues on Terra Nova.

The lure of a trade reward encourages many citizens from all walks of life to travel. A large portion of the popular media is devoted to encouraging this practice. Newly wealthy commoners are paraded across the trideo news every day, hopefully to spark the entrepreneurial urge in the viewers. Few peasants can afford the high costs of travel; many of their impoverished youth see the military as a perfect vehicle to seek out their fortune, since they get to travel all over the territories of the South. More affluent citizens finance their own trade expeditions, and of course the corporations send delegations on voyages of economic discovery.

It is estimated that approximately 123,000 Dominion citizens are scattered across the planet at any one time, seeking that elusive deal which will make their fortune back home. Many have skills that are very valuable, allowing them to work anywhere they choose to travel in the other leagues. The best travelers are always in demand and they can be very aggressive when it comes to trade matters.

► Starting Point: Big Wheels

Sandflea Transport, a small Badlands corporation on the border of the Mekong is struggling to survive in the cutthroat arena of Dominion business. Recently, they have grown so fast that they have attracted the attention of the larger Dominion corporations. Few enterprises survive the tender mercies of the large corporations, but this one is determined to do so. To accommodate their sudden growth they are offering lucrative positions in their business, in hopes of attracting loyal employees. Sandflea Transport is betting that it can buy the loyalty of Dominion experts with high wages and a lucrative stock purchase package. Without the insight and corporate/political savvy of true Dominion businessmen, it is only a matter of time before the struggling corporation falls prey to the aggressive Mekong mercantile entities.

Player Characters accepting this post may wish to play differing factions of the Dominion against each other. For instance, MDC maintains a number of Badlands facilities which they wish the Assembly to remain ignorant of. If the Players become aware of these facilities, they may be able to extort a lucrative and secret transport alliance with MDC and Sandflea. Of course, strong-arming a corporation headed by a Taipan as ruthless as Arron Logan is not without risks. Another tactic could be to play off competitors against each other, such as Ramonair, which has extensive Badlands routes and contacts, against Mekong Rail, which seeks to expand into the desert. Offering a contract to assist the logistical network of the MILICIA or Mekong Peacekeepers could be lucrative as well.

► Possible Campaign Variations

1	Characters may be invited to become part owners in the company, with all the responsibilities and power that entails.
2	The company's hierarchy is riddled with spies. The team is hired to root them out.
3	As employees, the characters discover that much of the company's capital is derived from illegal or unethical practices.
4	The company sends the characters to the Assembly to petition the patronage and protection of a larger, more powerful corp.
5	A R&D test team is required to field test new products developed by the company.
6	The company is a front for a subversive cell which intends to sabotage the Dominion.

► Suggested Player Characters

1	R&D scientists working on the secret new product line.
2	Average workers in the company.
3	Civil service arbitrators/lobbyists.
4	Caravaneers and distributors who expect to be compensated (bribed) for doing their jobs.
5	Mercantile spies seeking trade secrets.
6	City officials expecting a cut of the profits.



7.4 STOCK NPCs AND PERSONALITIES

The most unique aspect of Heavy Gear is its underlying storyline. Over the course of the next years, readers, Gamemasters and Players will see the world of the game change and grow as the story threads scattered throughout our sourcebooks are woven together. While the storyline is intended to serve as an interesting background to individual Gamemasters' campaigns (which are the foreground), it does mean that not every character in the game can be used freely without worrying about the consequences. To give Gamemasters some indications of how to use these introduced characters every Heavy Gear product since **Life on Terra Nova** has featured the chesspiece system and included a brief description of it.

New characters are given one of five chess pieces as an indication of their importance in the storyline. This permits Gamemasters to understand how best to use these NPCs without worrying about disrupting the setting and having to retrofit upcoming source material. Of course, roleplaying is about creating one's own stories, so Gamemasters should feel free to disregard the limitations of the chesspiece system, as long as they understand that their Terra Nova may no longer mesh with Dream Pod 9's.

The principal use of the chesspiece system is to indicate each character's importance to the overall storyline of Heavy Gear. These pieces, however, also give some indication of how to use the characters as NPCs in roleplaying sessions, even if one is not concerned with remaining consistent with the background storyline.

Historical Figures ◀

Kings and Queens are characters who have died before the date featured on the Timewatch™ display. Their inclusion indicates that they have had some importance for Heavy Gear, either by setting events in motion that have influenced the Heavy Gear storyline or by leaving a legacy still felt by Terranovans.

These characters have usually played some role which is important to the storyline, but may also have simply been a prime example of the spirit of their times. Often their legacy will play a role in the development of the Heavy Gear storyline, and their descendants, old allies and enemies might as well. Gamemasters running historical scenarios should treat these Historical Figures as Restricted Characters so as not to alter the main line of the storyline.

Restricted Characters ◀

Rooks are characters who are key to the Heavy Gear storyline and are to be used with care. Although they can still be useful in a roleplaying campaign — both as background elements and motivating forces — their survival until they can leave their mark on Terra Nova is critical to the storyline.

Although many Rooks hold powerful positions on Terra Nova, others seem utterly powerless or even insignificant. Small actions may have larger consequences later in the storyline. Gamemasters should tread carefully when using these characters in roleplaying scenarios, but they can become contacts, allies or even adversaries of Player Characters. Using them in purely confrontational scenarios, however, may prove unwise due to the chance for fatalities.

Very Important People ◀

Not everyone of note on Terra Nova is central to the Heavy Gear storyline. Very Important People are those characters who have a significant impact on Terra Nova, but are not critical to the storyline itself. This does not mean they have no influence on it, however.

Knights may not play a central role in the Heavy Gear storyline, but they may well have some impact. As important people in the game setting, they can influence major players or simply be carried along by the storyline. Gamemasters can feel free to use Knights in their adventures, but they should remember that all will be well protected (in one way or another) by underlings and allies.

Social Encounters ◀

Social Encounters are those characters who are included in source material primarily to add flavor. They are rarely critical individuals and do not have a significant impact on the storyline, but they stand as symbols of larger trends on Terra Nova. They serve most commonly as contacts and background elements, rather than opponents.

Bishops serve as reminders of social forces on Terra Nova beyond the central plot of the storyline. From student movement leaders to fashion designers, these social leaders may have some secondary effect on the storyline but are mostly present to add flavor and reflect current events. Gamemasters may use social encounters as they see fit, although they are rarely designed for combat of any sort. Bishops may return in future products, but for purposes of atmosphere only.

Expendables ◀

In general, Expendables are "average" Terranovans. They have no personal impact on the storyline and are included in Heavy Gear products primarily to be used by Gamemasters. Although this category is used for faceless stock NPCs and typical citizens, many of the Pawns are anything but everyday. Some pawns are peripherally linked to the storyline, but they have no real effect upon it. Interesting pawns can even be used as Player Characters if the GM and Player wish.

JUNGLE GUIDE

The Dominion jungles are a dangerous place for the unwary travelers. No matter how well prepared or outfitted, if you do not know the lay of the land, you are just asking for trouble. This is why hiring a jungle guide is not only recommended, but a mandatory procedure in many of the outlying city-states. Guides are many guides can trace the lineage of their families to the semi-mythical Exploration Corp of the Founders, or at least claim they can. No one knows the jungles like those who live in them: the guides can identify all sorts of edible creatures, which may not look appetizing but could mean the difference between a good meal and one that will kill you. Many of the guides currently offering their services participated in the resistance against the Colonial Expeditionary Force during the War of the Alliance.

► Attributes

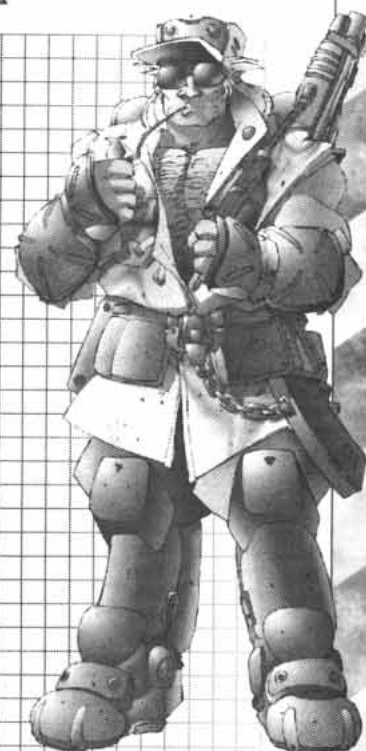
AGI	+1	APP	0	BLD	0	CRE	+1	FIT	+1
INF	0	KNO	0	PER	+1	PSY	0	WIL	0
STR	0	HEA	+1	STA	25	UD	3	AD	4

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Animal Trap	1	0	Earth Sc. (Geo.)	1	0	Navigation	2	0	Stealth	1	+1
Camouflage	1	+1	First Aid	2	0	Notice (Track*)	2	+1	Survival	3	0
Combat Sense	1	+1	Hand-to-Hand	1	+1	Small Arms	2	+1	*Specialization		

► Typical Equipment

Jungle clothes, survival kit, rifle, binocular.



JUNGLE FIGHTER

The mainstay of the Dominion's resistance against the Earth invaders, the fabled jungle fighters took the battle to the CEF invaders in the deep reaches of the green hell that covers much of the Dominion. They came from all walks of life, but most lived in isolated villages located on the edge of the Dominion trading routes. The fighters can live for cycles in the jungle with no provisions, simply living off the land, and are expert at hit-and-run tactics. Almost all are veteran of military actions, either against Earth during the War of the Alliance or more recently in action against Brigand gangs. The jungle fighter cadres know that when it really hits the fan, they will be called upon to protect the league again.

► Attributes

AGI	+1	APP	0	BLD	+1	CRE	0	FIT	+1
INF	0	KNO	0	PER	+1	PSY	+1	WIL	+1
STR	0	HEA	0	STA	30	UD	6	AD	5

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Camouflage	2	0	Dodge	1	+1	Small Arms	2	+1	Survival (Jungle)	2	0
Combat Sense	2	+1	Hand-to-Hand	2	+1	Stealth	2	+1	Tactics	1	0
Communications	1	0	Melee	2	+1						

Optional Additional Skills: Heavy Gear Pilot, Demolition

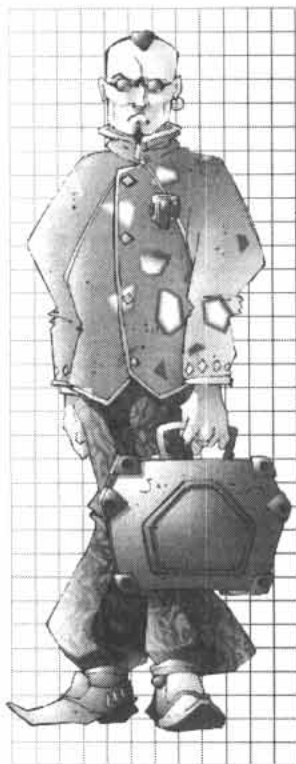
► Typical Equipment

Jungle cloak, survival kit, jungle rifle, canteen, satchel charges.





MERCHANT/POLITICIAN



The lubricant that keeps the Mekong wheel of economic progress going are the ambitious merchants of the city-states. With the Dominion tradition of mixing state and economic business, they are often statesmen as well, helping to direct the destinies of the league. Whether they are affiliated with the Civil Service, one of the great mercantile entities or simply entrepreneurs in the truest sense, these tireless businessmen are found everywhere on Terra Nova, seeking out new business opportunities. Depending on their affiliation and personality, they can be helpful, agreeable salespeople or ruthless business sharks who will settle for nothing except the main piece of the action.

Attributes

AGI	0	APP	+1	BLD	-1	CRE	+1	FIT	-1
INF	+1	KNO	+1	PER	0	PSY	-1	WIL	0
STR	-1	HEA	0	STA	20	UD	1	AD	1

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Bureaucracy	2	1	Drive	1	0	Law	1	1	Psychology	1	+1
Business	2	1	Etiquette	2	+1	Leadership	1	+1	Streetwise	2	+1
Computer	1	+1	Foreign Language	1	1						

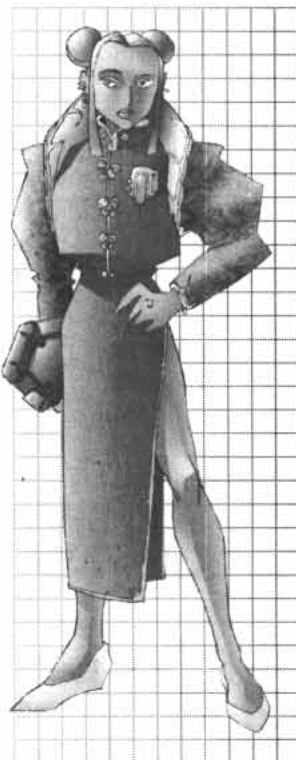
Optional Additional Skills: more Foreign Languages

Typical Equipment

Formal clothes, lapel pin, data ring, mercantile dossier, briefcase.



MERCANTILE SCOUT



Scouts are the troubleshooters and headhunters of the Mekong Corporations. When an important project is assigned within a corporation, a scout is sent to find the best people to complete the project. While this often involves a mere shifting of human resources within the company itself, sometimes talent must be hired from outside. The best person for a particular job may well be working for another company. Scouts are allowed a lot of discretion when it is necessary to move assets from one company to another: most of the time, financial incentives are enough, though more forceful methods may occasionally be required.

Attributes

AGI	0	APP	+1	BLD	-1	CRE	+1	FIT	-1
INF	+1	KNO	+1	PER	+1	PSY	0	WIL	0
STR	-1	HEA	0	STA	20	UD	1	AD	1

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Bureaucracy	2	1	Etiquette	2	+1	Law	1	+1	Psychology	2	+1
Business	2	1	Foreign Language	1	1	Leadership	2	+1	Streetwise	2	+1
Computer	1	+1									

Typical Equipment

Formal clothes, lapel pin, data ring, personal computer.

MERCANTILE SPY

Practically all the corporations maintain a certain number of intelligence agents to perform industrial espionage and counter-intelligence. Most mercantile spies seem destined for a short life and a violent death. Successful field agents for Dominion corporations can become very wealthy. In spite of their comfortable lifestyle, they realize that they are only one day away from being back in the streets of whatever city they may be stationed in, running for their lives. Life as a mercantile spy allow them to travel extensively across Terra Nova and meet a great many people. Of course, they may live and work in a city for many cycles before they complete their mission. They know that eventually they'll have to retire and have usually secreted financial nest eggs across the planet.

► Attributes

AGI	0	APP	+1	BLD	0	CRE	+1	FIT	0
INF	+1	KNO	+2	PER	+1	PSY	+1	WIL	0
STR	0	HEA	0	STA	20	UD	4	AD	3

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Bureaucracy	1	+2	Drive	2	0	Investigation	3	+1	Small Arms	1	0
Business	1	+2	Electronics	1	+2	Notice	1	+1	Streetwise	3	+1
Communications	1	+2	Hand-to-Hand	1	0	Physical Sciences	1	+2	Stealth	1	0
Computer	2	+2									

► Typical Equipment

Appropriate wardrobe, Sonic Analysis Unit, sidearm.



CRIMINAL GANGSTER (YAKUZA)

Organized crime in the Mekong Dominion is centered around the Yakuza, a powerful group of mobsters that have tendrils in all facets of illegal activities. The higher placed members are careful to shield their activities, and most of the Yakuza one can meet are lower level members who do the actual dirty work. Full of bluster and threats, the Yakuza are not to be taken lightly. Within their ranks are informers, assassins and gamblers, and without looking at their markings it is difficult to know the importance and abilities of the mobster one is dealing with. All of them have powerful allies; to offend one is to offend the organization.

► Attributes

AGI	0	APP	-1	BLD	+2	CRE	0	FIT	+1
INF	0	KNO	0	PER	+1	PSY	0	WIL	0
STR	+1	HEA	0	STA	30	UD	8	AD	8

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Combat Sense	2	+1	Drive	1	0	Intimidate	2	+2	Small Arms	2	0
Computer	1	0	Gambling	2	1	Melee	2	0	Sleight of Hand	2	0
Dodge	2	0	Hand-to-Hand	2	0	Notice	1	+1	Streetwise	2	0

► Typical Equipment

Clean-cut clothing, sidearm, dice or deck of cards, communicator.



BRIGAND



Little more than killers and outlaws fleeing the Dominion's harsh justice, brigands prey upon the weak and defenseless. The gangs that prowl the Mekong countryside vary greatly from one another in outlook, size, methods and objectives. Some, like the Oni, follow a strict moral code, but most are simply brutal killers, loyal only to themselves. Brigand gangs can be very well equipped with weapons — up to and including Gears — but the majority operate with only sidearms and a few rickety vehicles, if any. Most gangs are poorly organized and despite cries to the contrary, have a negligible impact upon the trade interests of the Dominion; comparatively little manpower is expended in pursuing them. The Mekong corporations are more concerned with the few large, well-equipped and well-organized groups.

Attributes

AGI	0	APP	0	BLD	0	CRE	+1	FIT	0
INF	0	KNO	+1	PER	+1	PSY	0	WIL	0
STR	0	HEA	0	STA	25	UD	4	AD	5

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Combat Sense	1	+1	Drive	1	0	Mechanics	2	+1	Small Arms	2	0
Communications	2	+1	Hand-to-Hand	1	0	Melee	2	0	Tinker	1	1
Camouflage	1	+1	Intimidate	1	0	Notice	1	+1			

*Optional Additional Skills: Pilot (HG), Gunnery (HG)

Typical Equipment

Ragged clothing, sidearm, vibroknife, machete, dice.

FIELD PRIEST



Occasionally, the stress of battle will incapacitate even the hardest veteran. Like the Norlights, the Mekong armed forces understand the need for spiritual counseling for their troops. Every regiment includes one or more field priests in their ranks. These officers are trained at the Zentai Buddhist temple at Yung An for the sole purpose of ministering to the spiritual needs of the Mekong troopers. When a force undergoes severe trauma, such as a battle, the field priest steps in to ease the soldier's mental and spiritual strain and to maintain his connection with the spirits of the Dominion and their ancestors. All field priests are given the honorary title of Monsignor in addition to their usual unit rank, and are equally at home in the temple or on the field of battle.

Attributes

AGI	0	APP	0	BLD	0	CRE	+1	FIT	0
INF	0	KNO	+1	PER	0	PSY	+1	WIL	+1
STR	0	HEA	0	STA	25	UD	3	AD	3

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Bureaucracy	1	+1	Drive	2	0	Law	2	+1	Soc. Sc. (Theology)	2	+2
Combat Sense	1	0	Etiquette	2	0	Psychology	2	+1	Teaching	2	+1
Computer	1	+1	Foreign Lang.	1	+1	Small Arms	1	0	Theatrics	1	0

Typical Equipment

Appropriate clothing, personal computer w/religious text, miniature ceremonial apparatus.

PEACEKEEPER

The Peacekeepers are the guardians of the Dominion. They act as a state security force, elite troops and wandering servants of justice, and are highly regarded by all citizens. Unfailingly polite and determined, they are seen with awe by the people they serve and with fear by the criminals. Peacekeepers are said never to let go of a pursuit until they've gotten their man. Such is their reputation that it even extends outside the league's borders. Confident in their abilities and the effectiveness of the Mekong justice system, Peacekeepers are a proud yet humble lot. Given a mandate to protect the population from corruption within and from invaders without, they are formidable fighters. They are also shrewd judges of character who rarely deliver false convictions, though occasionally the odd innocent man may be convicted.

► Attributes

AGI	+1	APP	0	BLD	+1	CRE	0	FIT	+1
INF	+1	KNO	+1	PER	+1	PSY	0	WIL	0
STR	+1	HEA	0	STA	30	UD	7	AD	7

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Bureaucracy	1	+1	Drive	2	0	Hand-to-Hand	2	+1	Melee	2	+1
Combat Sense	2	+1	First Aid	1	0	Investigation	2	+1	Notice	1	+1
Computer	1	+1	Gunnery (HG)	1	+1	Law	2	+1	Small Arms	2	+1
Dodge	2	+1	Pilot (HG)	2	+1						

► Typical Equipment

Uniform, ICP book of law, Peacekeeper tanto, Shok Stik, tagger rod, sidearm.



POLICIA CONSTABLE

There are always small fish in any big cesspool. Life is hard in the slums of the Dominion, and the Policia that keeps the peace there has got to be just that much harder to survive. Although many Policia troopers are honest and dedicated to holding the standards they have sworn to serve, many have given up and just take life one day at a time. In the worst precincts, bribes are a common way to get out of trouble or appeal a conviction, assuming one has enough money. Policia constables tend to build large number of street contacts over the cycles; if anyone knows what's going on in the streets and shady alleys of a Mekong city-state, it is the average cop.

► Attributes

AGI	0	APP	0	BLD	+1	CRE	0	FIT	+1
INF	0	KNO	+1	PER	0	PSY	0	WIL	0
STR	+1	HEA	0	STA	30	UD	7	AD	7

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Bureaucracy	2	+1	Dodge	2	0	Hand-to-Hand	2	0	Melee	2	0
Combat Sense	2	0	Drive	2	0	Investigation	2	0	Notice	1	0
Computer	1	+1	First Aid	1	+1	Law	2	+1	Small Arms	2	0

► Typical Equipment

Uniform, sidearm, communicator, Shok Stik.



CAPORAL-CONSTABLE KEIKO LEUNG

Keiko was born in Midtown of Mekong City in 1903. Ever since the War of the Alliance, Keiko, has tried to live up to the standards set by her grand-father, the legendary Sous-Commandant Akira Leung of the fighting 32nd, the Mekong Anacondas. Tales of his exploits have become famous across the league, forcing her to live up to his reputation. She is determined to live up the high standards set by Akira — and surpass them. Ever the perfectionist, she quickly rose to the rank of Caporal managing to draw an assignment to her uncle's unit. Now that Akira has mysteriously disappeared, she is always on the lookout for information concerning his whereabouts.

Profession ◀

Keiko is a jungle fighter by trade and disposition. She is an accomplished Gear pilot and is the acknowledged Duelist for her regiment. She rarely wears anything but jungle fatigues and her prized jungle cloak. During her four cycles of service she has been awarded the Crimson Sun and two ruby tears.

Attitudes ◀

Keiko has little time for anything but perfecting her skills, waiting for the time when she too can answer the call to arms as her grand-father, who inspired her to join the Peacekeepers, had. Her devotion to duty is mistaken for coldness by the members of her escouade, but they respect her competence and drive. Her team is considered one of the best deep insertion units and is often called upon for jungle patrol duty — extremely hazardous, but then there's no one better. She always has the time to help the peasants of the Dominion and is frequently sought out by those in distress because of her reputation for being a just and forgiving judge. Her record of judgments is unblemished, and while she prefers military assignments, she is also an accomplished investigator that could eventually become the next chief constable of the Peacekeepers.

Combat Reactions ◀

Unrelenting in the Duelist ring, Keiko is far more patient in the field. She will often track an opponent until he is the most vulnerable, then strike relentlessly. Cold and calculating, Keiko is a feared opponent whose reputation is well known to those who would challenge her or her unit.

Contacts ◀

The Leung family resides in a large house in the Midtown district of Mekong City and consists of 24 members of all ages. This old and moderately prosperous family has extensive trade and social contacts across the Dominion and wields significant political power. Recently, Keiko met Matsuo (age 24, specialties: politics & psychology) at a Mekong club where she and her cadre were celebrating a successful mission. The handsome young man was drawn to her strong character and seemed to be seeking some sort of romantic involvement. Keiko is at present uninterested and has spurned his advances, much to the amusement of her companions. Keiko is unaware that Matsuo is none other than Matsuo Sogabe, the son of the Speaker Sogabe. It is likely that even if she was aware of his heritage, she would be unimpressed.

Vital Statistics: ◀

Age:	33	Height:	1.63 m	Weight:	56 kg	Hair Color:	Black	Eye Color:	Green
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Attributes ◀

AGI	+2	APP	+1	BLD	+1	CRE	0	FIT	+1
INF	0	KNO	0	PER	+2	PSY	-1	WIL	+1
STR	+1	HEA	+1	STA	40	UD	6	AD	5

Skills ◀

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Athletics	2	+1	Demolition	1	0	Hand-to-Hand	2	+2	Small Arms	2	+2
Camouflage	2	0	Dodge	2	+2	Law	3	+1	Stealth	2	+2
Combat Sense	2	+2	Drive	2	+2	Notice	2	+2	Survival	2	0
Communications	2	+1	Gunnery (HG)	3	+2	Pilot (HG)	3	+2	Tactics	2	0

TAIPAN ARRON LOGAN

Arron was born in a small mining settlement near Yung An and like other boys his age he was determined to leave the backwater town. Through the standardized Dominion aptitude testing process, it was determined that he had a natural aptitude for business and was hired by MDC. Several cycles later, it was revealed that the results had been falsified by the ambitious youth. However, by that time Logan had ensconced himself deep within the corporate hierarchy of the mercantile corporations. His success was due in part to his driving ambition and in part to his ruthless efficiency.

► Profession

Today, Arron Logan has risen to the very top of the Mekong Development Corporation, but does not seem content with this position. His rank as Taipan of one of the most powerful organizations in the Dominion seems only to have whetted his appetite for power. The entire chain of MDC's massive bureaucratic machinery answers to one man only: Taipan Logan. With such power at his command where could he possibly hope to go. He needs bigger goals — much bigger goals.

► Attitude

ICP is very concerned over the ambitions of this one man, who threatens to topple them from their hard-won position of political power. Speaker Sogabe is worried that Logan, if appointed Speaker, will overturn the many social advances instituted by her government, returning the league to its former draconian state. Arron has made a number of enemies during his career, one of which is the Republic senate, which he has angered by declaring openly that MDC will ensure that the Dominion will secede from the AST upon his appointment.

► Combat Reactions

Arron Logan is not a physical fighter. His battlefield is in the mind and the business world, where he knows he can best his enemies easily. If confronted with physical violence, Logan will try to make good his escape, sacrificing staff and underlings if necessary to cover himself. He is not a coward — he just does not see how being dead or captured will bring him closer to his goals. He never goes anywhere without having his bodyguard Mara within ear range.

► Contacts

Jonas Kia (age 47; specialties: business & intelligence), MDC's Chief of Acquisitions, and the man most responsible for aggressive corporate raiding; Judyth Ramona (age 49; specialties: business & diplomacy), Taipan of Ramonair and Logan's main contact with UMF treasurer Yves Banderas; Paul Berthyo (age 36; specialties: stealth & covert operations), a MILICIA special ops agent under Logan's command, he recently disappeared on a mission against ICP; Sarah Mendez (age 41; specialties: finance & business): Logan's personal assistant, thought by many to be among his top advisors; Alan Litherland (age 55, specialty: business) Managing Director of Territorial Arms, now in debt to Logan for having uncovered high level spies in the TA; Mara Wang (age 29; specialties: weapons & martial arts): Logan's deadly bodyguard and, some say, his lover.

► Vital Statistics

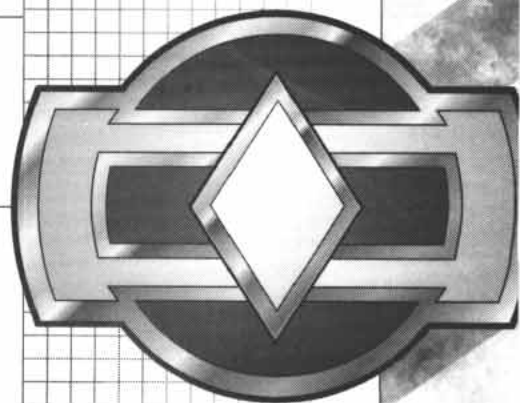
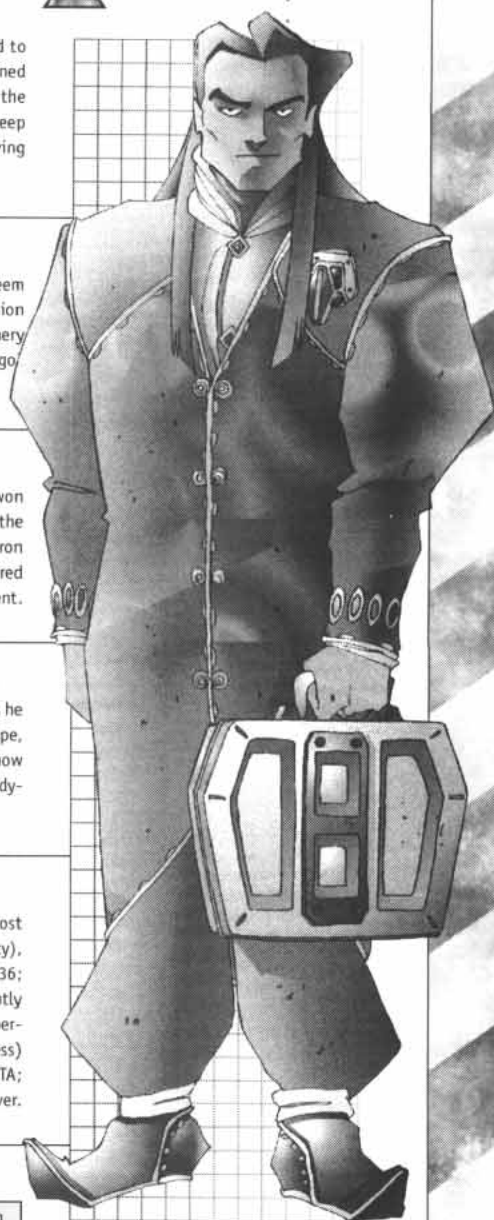
Age:	46 cycles	Height:	1.89 m	Weight:	81 kg	Hair color:	Black	Eye Color:	Brown
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► Attributes

AGI	0	APP	+2	BLD	0	CRE	+2	FIT	-1
INF	+1	KNO	+1	PER	0	PSY	-1	WIL	0
STR	0	HEA	0	STA	25	UD	3	AD	3

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Bureaucracy	3	+1	Drive	1	0	Law	2	+1	Psychology	3	+1
Business	4	+1	Etiquette	2	+1	Leadership	3	+1	Streetwise	2	+1
Computer	2	+1	F. Lang. (U. Fr.)	3	+1						





TAK YUE KAN

Tak is an important feature of the business world in his home city of Yung An. He was extremely hyperactive as a child, which often led to conflicts with other children and eventually with the authorities. At age sixteen, the boy was caught by the city Policia while shoplifting VR game modules and was sentenced to three weeks internment. Since his parents were simple office workers, they could not afford to pay the constables to "overlook" the incident and Tak was sent to one of Yung An's retraining facilities. It was there that his life changed forever. At the institution, the young boy attended various retraining seminars and classes which introduced him to the corporate ideals of life in the Dominion. Tak was captivated by the success stories he saw during these trideo presentations. The warden of a juvenile wing, an aging MDC official, saw great promise in him and became his mentor. Over the following cycles, the two became strong friends. Tak rose through the ranks of various Dominion corporations, eventually starting his own small talent scouting agency, "TK Talent."

Profession ◀

Tak Kan is the sole owner and operator of TK Talent, a small freelance talent scouting agency specializing in corporate interests. TK Talent is highly respected in corporate circles. Tak's data pad contains an extensive data base of freelance employees, ranging from mercenaries and bodyguards to research assistants and metallurgists. If a corporation is putting together a team, be it for research purposes or otherwise, Tak is often consulted to determine who is the best in that field and how they can be brought on board the project. He specializes in assembling teams from the general population or even the ranks of rival businesses. When it comes to headhunting, Tak has an innate ability to determine a person's price. He is especially sought out to assemble small teams for temporary jobs where discretion is paramount.

Attitudes ◀

Tak only acknowledgement to his wild youth is the blue tinted hair which has become his trademark among the movers and shakers of Yung An. Tak is relentless in his pursuit of a prospective acquisition and hates failure, but is mature enough to recognize that not everyone can be bought. Recently, TK Talent has completed a number of team-building projects for Mekong Rail which greatly concern him. His confidence has been shaken somewhat by the fact that one of the teams he created has been implicated in the brutal murders of a number of Yung An gang members.

Combat Reactions ◀

TK Talent has forced Tak to travel in some very dangerous circles and he has picked up a few combat skills along the way. He will attempt to diffuse any impending violence, but will protect himself if necessary.

Contacts ◀

Fredrick Thompson (age 70, specialties: psychology and politics), Tak's mentor and warden of MDC retraining institution YA-3; Marlene Abrams (age 30, specialties: music and trideo) a Jerusalemite immigrant from Wounded Knee whom Tak has helped develop a singing career and is secretly in love with; Minoru Quan-Lo (age 56, specialties espionage and law), a Mekong Rail official who has commissioned black ops teams.

Vital Statistics ◀

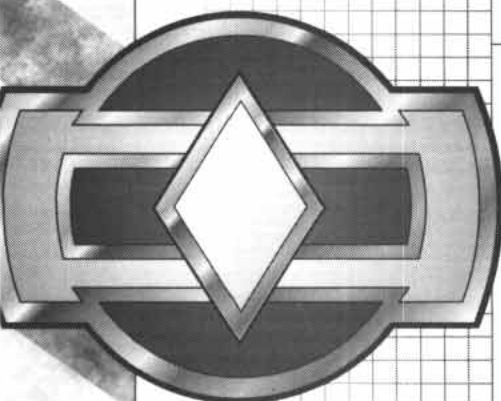
Age:	32 cycles	Height:	1.62 meters	Weight:	103 kg	Hair Color:	Blue	Eye color:	Blue
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Attributes ◀

AGI	+1	APP	+1	BLD	0	CRE	+2	FIT	+1
INF	+1	KNO	+1	PER	0	PSY	0	WIL	+1
STR	0	HEA	0	STA	25	UD	5	AD	5

Skills ◀

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Bureaucracy	2	+1	Etiquette	2	+1	Investigation	2	0	Notice	1	0
Computer	1	+1	F. Lang. (Indo-Ar.)	1	+1	Melee	2	+1	Small Arms	1	+1
Dodge	2	+1	F. Lang. (U. Fr.)	2	+2	Music	1	+2	Streetwise	2	+1
Drive	1	+1	Hand-to-Hand	2	+1						



OYABUN TOSHIRO MIYAZAKI

Oyabun Miyazaki is a very powerful man, for the intelligence network of the Yakuza clan is comparable to that of the AST secret services. The only individual within the Dominion whose personal assets have given him a seat on the Assembly, Toshiro is not a man to be taken lightly. In Hsi Tsang his word is law and Yakuza members would give their lives for him if he ordered in. Since he annexed the city of Hsi Tsang, making it his personal empire, the Yakuza's fortunes have been on the rise. Even the clan's setbacks due to the CEF purges during the occupation have been offset by recent recruiting drives.

► Profession

Openly, Toshiro is a staunch supporter of the Lord Chancellor Etienne Durocher, but in secret he is planning for the day when the decadent man dies. Miyazaki is confident that the next chancellor will be as easily manipulated as the present one, but more accommodating to his wishes. Many believe that Durocher holds some secret over the Oyabun, but only they know for sure. It is well known that the Lord Chancellor is anything but respectful to Miyazaki and that the Oyabun has suffered indignities at his hands that he would have killed other men for, regardless of their political power.

► Attitudes

The Lord Chancellor has discovered that the original Red Cohort were secretly commanded by Miyazaki. During the attack, Durocher's agents uncovered the source of the Red Cohort's military power and traced it back to the Oyabun. Apparently, the Oyabun had put together a huge army of dissidents from the armed resistance fighters remaining from the War of the Alliance. Toshiro was manipulating this ragtag army from the sidelines, intending to seize the Dominion's capital and plunge the league into a bloody civil war, from which he would arise the victor. The Lord Chancellor eradicated the threat of the Red Cohort and has kept the Oyabun's involvement a secret for his own reason. He has made it abundantly clear to Miyazaki that his secret could be revealed at any time, but he knows that Miyazaki is far more ambitious than many believe him to be.

► Combat Reactions

As Oyabun, Miyazaki surrounds himself with Yakuza soldiers, all of whom are heavily armed. However secure his palace may be and however many escape routes he may construct, he knows that Durocher could crush him at any moment. This has made him very jumpy and he will ruthlessly destroy any threat, perceived or real, provided he can do so without risking his own safety.

► Contacts

Toshi Yamakasa (age 34, specialties: espionage and politics), MDC guidance officer and liaison; Ushio Miyazaki (age 22, specialties: gambling and finance), Toshiro's only male child and heir; Janz Forzi (age 26, specialties: crime and smuggling), advocate from Wounded Knee cartel; Ushio Madea (age 32, specialties: streetwise and music), once a trusted lieutenant of the Miyazaki clan, Ushio has founded his own clan which Toshiro uncharacteristically supports; Gil Prasad (age 46, specialties: gambling and psychology), an ESE emir who owes a fortune to the Yakuza casinos and close friend of Toshiro.

► Vital Statistics

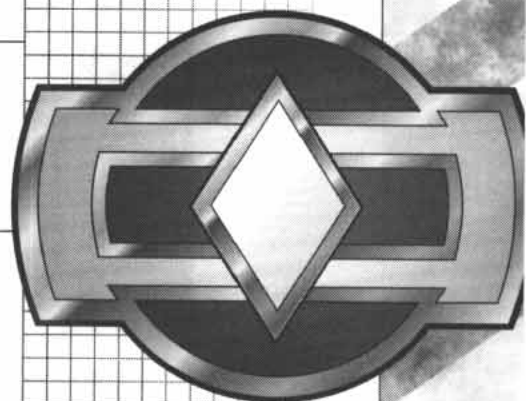
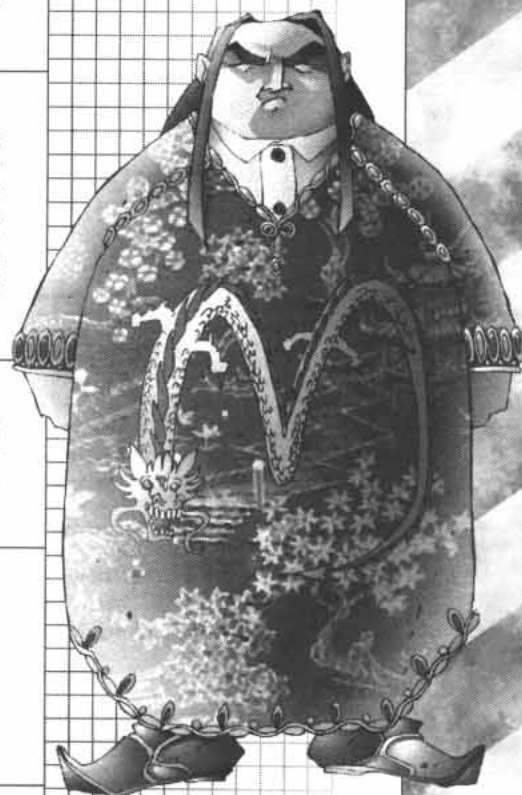
Age:	57 cycles	Height:	1.39 m	Weight:	105 kg	Hair Color:	Black	Eye color:	Brown
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► Attributes

AGI	-1	APP	0	BLD	+2	CRE	+1	FIT	0
INF	+2	KNO	+1	PER	0	PSY	-1	WIL	+1
STR	+1	HEA	0	STA	35	UD	9	AD	10

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Bureaucracy	2	+1	Dodge	1	-1	Investigation	2	0	Notice	2	0
Combat Sense	1	0	Drive	1	-1	Leadership	3	+2	Small Arms	2	-1
Computer	1	+1	Hand-to-Hand	2	-1	Melee	2	-1	Streetwise	4	+2



WATCHER

"Lovely creature, just a little bit closer." Kei muttered absently to herself, watching the pack lizard sniff tentatively at the bait.

She'd been out here all day waiting for this moment. Today, she would prove to her grand-father that she had what it took to be a real jungle fighter. She would capture and bring back one of the big pack lizards, all by herself. Many had dismissed her because she came from the city, and she would prove them wrong. She so badly wanted to do her share and follow her grand-father's footsteps.

Kei had killed for food many times before and was no stranger to the creatures of the jungle. Taking a beast as vicious and wily as a pack lizard alive was a completely different task, however. The reward was comparatively greater, too. Rather than get a single carcass' worth of meat, she could sell the live creature to the next caravan for what she hoped would be a nice pile of kronars, enough to put aside for the bad days. Perhaps she'd even have enough to buy herself something nice!

Time flowed slowly, her perceptions affected by boredom and stillness. How many hours had she lain here watching the drugged hopper struggle to get free, with nothing to show for it? And now, with her prey in sight, something else was wrong. Her technique must be flawed, for why else would the crafty pack lizard be so hesitant to devour the helpless hopper? The little creature squeaked pitifully, as if to express its fear and still not attract the attention of the carnivorous beast before it.

"Why isn't it taking the bait? Can it see the branches covering the pit?" she thought. "The pit is far enough off the path, the net well hidden, and I'm sure the fear of the hopper is disguising my scent."

"Why won't it go for it?" she uttered between close teeth.

Suddenly, the lizard straightened and turned one of its beady eyes directly towards her, looking almost coyly in her direction. Something was wrong, didn't match the plan. Kei heard a slight sound to her left and slowly turned her head in that direction. Fear gripped her stomach.

Her prey's packmate was staring right at her, no more than two or three meters away. Yuri reached very slowly for her rifle, knowing the reptile could easily jump twice that distance. The beast looked at the rifle, then at her. Its evil-looking eyes locked with hers then narrowed as it launched itself into the air with a shrill cry. She closed her eyes and awaited death.

There was a sound like thunder and the world exploded.

The lizard fell lifeless across Kei's chest and knocked her to the ground, its blood spraying across her face and into her hair. Grand-father rose silently from the jungle floor which had concealed him from lizard and student alike. He said nothing, but simply turned and started to walk back to the ground car.

He didn't need to say anything, for the message was clear. Kei still had much to learn.



FURRED BARNABY [MANX BARNABUS IGUANA]

An offshoot of the Barnabus Iguana found in the Badlands, this beast is common in the jungles and savannahs of the south. This Barnaby is distinct from its Badlands cousin in that its skin is thinner and covered with long bushy hair, making it look quite unique. The hair is actually a form of highly specialized scale, similar to a feather. It serves as a heat regulating system for the lizard and its structure is a natural water repellent. Cloaks woven from the hair of a furred Barnaby are commonly worn by Mekong peasant workers.

These beasts are significantly smaller than other breeds of Barnabus iguanas and do not have a tail. On the other hand, they are less aggressive, easier to domesticate and their meat is more palatable. Their smaller size makes them less suited as beasts of burden, but makes them ideal for use as packhorses in the near inaccessible terrain of the area's jungles. Peasant shepherds keep flocks of the beasts in the savannah, and will use teams of two to four to plow their fields in the absence of mechanical assistance. Domesticated furred barnabies generally have their fur shaved down to facilitate their daily care.

► Attributes

AGI	-1	BLD	+5	FIT	+1	INS	0	PER	+1
WIL	+1	STR	+3	HEA	+2	STA	50	UD	10+natural wpn.

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Combat Sense	1	-1	Dodge	1	-1	Hand-to-Hand	2	-1			

► Special Abilities

Bite (x5 damage), Thick Skin (+10 Armor)



SEWELL HOPPERS [PIT RATS]

Named after their discover, Jonathan Sewell, these creatures are known across the Dominion for their voracious appetites and foul disposition. This particular breed of the common hopper family has evolved a number of specialized abilities to survive in the Mekong jungles. Foremost among these is a natural ability to resist most diseases and infections. The source of its near miraculous resistance can be directly traced to an small organ which feeds special enzymes into the hopper's lymphatic system. Medical research and antitoxin production account of the high interest of Dominion medical corporations in these creatures.

As the Sewell hopper can resist even the most virulent toxins, they have evolved into detritivores. Rather than competing for live prey, the creatures prefer to feast on decaying plant matter and cadavers. They are commonly found in areas of disease, war and the sewage systems of large settlements. The shanty towns of the Dominion city-states are overrun with the creatures, whose nasty disposition is notorious. During the War, Sewell hoppers became a staple for many of the besieged cities. The creatures are raised in deep holes into which water and compost are thrown. Upkeep on such pits is minimal and the conditions ghastly, but the meat of the creatures feed many citizens. These 'farms' have given the creatures their nickname, pit rats.

► Attributes

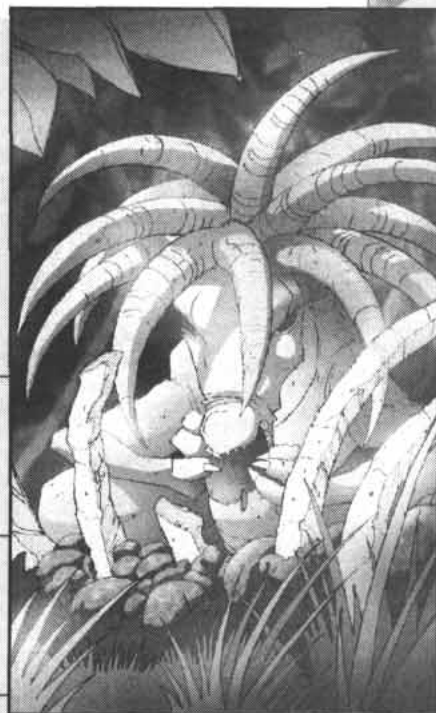
AGI	+2	BLD	-5	FIT	+3	INS	+2	PER	+2
WIL	+1	STR	-2	HEA	-1	STA	10	UD	1+infection

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Combat Sense	2	+2	Dodge	3	+2	Hand-to-Hand	2	+2			

► Special Abilities

Bite (x4 damage), usually carrier of one disease



PACK LIZARDS

The pack lizard was one of the first lifeforms discovered by the Founders' exploration team. More accurately, the pack lizards found them, falling upon the team's simple tents in the middle of the night. Survivors of the attacks were appalled by the viciousness of the beasts. Later, research revealed that the pack lizard is a social animal not unlike the now-extinct timber wolf of ancient Earth. But to the Mekongeses, the wild pack lizard will always be linked to these first violent encounters, and feared for their aggressiveness.

Pack lizards travel in groups of three to twenty, depending upon available food sources. Their diet is exclusively carnivorous and their stomachs are adapted to digesting any type of meat. The pack lizard does not have any natural enemies, and it sports a brilliant coloration which it uses to startle prey into the jaws of its packmates. It is uncommon but not unknown for pack lizards to be domesticated. Trained pack lizards are known to be loyal and loving pets, while their wild cousins are cunning predators who account for dozens of deaths every cycle. Most packs live in the Mekong jungle but a few ambitious groups have ventured north where they constantly plague agricultural communes.

Attributes

AGI	+2	BLD	+2	FIT	+4	INS	+3	PER	+3
WIL	+1	STR	+3	HEA	+3	STA	35	UD	8+natural weapon

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Stealth	3	+2	Combat Sense	2	+3	Hand-to-Hand	3	+2	Track	2	+3

Special Abilities

Claw (x4 Damage), Bite (x6 damage), Run 50 m/round, Leap up to 4 meters

SUNSHADOW

The Sunshadow is a flying snake: six of the reptile's dorsal ribs are elongated with a membranous skin connecting each rib to the others, with a sophisticated muscle group making them function as a wing. While the rib-wing is not very sturdy or maneuverable, it does allow the sunshadow to climb to the moderately high altitude from which it hunts. The snake uses its keen eyesight to spot its prey while gliding. It will then circle until the sun is at its back. Tucking its wings along the length of the body the reptile then plunges towards the target; at the last moment, the snake billows out its wings, stopping almost instantaneously to attack. The target may notice a shadow passing momentarily across the sun just before the snake strikes.

Sunshadows are a coveted pet of the rich merchant class of the Dominion, and trapping the creatures can be highly profitable. As pets, Sunshadow can be dangerous unless defanged. While not especially intelligent, a Sunshadow can be taught to respond to simple stimuli. A very few are even trained to attack on command, but they are very unpredictable. Placing a few of these in a sealed warehouse is the best possible theft protection, though keeping them inside can be difficult.

Attributes

AGI	+2	BLD	-4	FIT	0	INS	+1	PER	+3
WIL	0	STR	-1	HEA	+1	STA	10	UD	2+natural wpn.

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Flight	2	+2	Navigation	2	+1	Track	2	+3			

Special Abilities

Bite (x2 damage), Toxin (Potency 8, 1 Round Onset)

BURROWING SHAGS [SWARM]

The jungle of the Mekong are among the most fertile on the planet, and host to a wide variety of plant and animal life. Dominion peasants are kept busy hunting exotic animals to supplement their food supply or personal income. Jungle guides are an essential part of any traveler's preparation since much of the flora and fauna are poisonous to human life. An innocuous-looking fern may be quite nutritious or extremely deadly; on a planet which developed without humanity in mind, strange amino acids fill the planet and animal life, more so in the jungle that anywhere else on Terra Nova. Insect-like creatures are plentiful and can be either a nuisance or a life-threatening hazard for those unprepared for the aggressiveness of the wildlife.

Burrowing shags and their subspecies are one of the most common of these. They are related to their Badlands cousins, but are slightly smaller and more of a nuisance than anything else to the prepared traveler. They burrow into the fern trees of the lush jungle, generally infesting a small grove. There is always a central tree nest, which is home to the royalty caste and a mixture of the other four castes. The central nest is always defended to the last shag; troopers will attack even large animals with their acidic bite. Once the royal nest is located, however, it is a simple matter to burn it, eliminating the threat.

Logging expeditions are constantly running into burrowing shag mounds. They are problematic because they not only attack loggers, they can ruin many fine pieces of fernwood by tunneling through it until the plant dies. Many loggers carry a portable flamer to deal with such infestations. In all other respects, burrowing shags are similar to the Badlands version.

► Attributes

Aggressiveness	1	Damage/turn	1	Dmg. Threshold	20	Rnd. Horde Size	8d6	B. S. Size	400-800
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► Special Abilities

Attacks cause burning sore due to venom (treat as Fatal toxin with a Potency of 1)



DRILL TICK [SWARM]

Drill ticks live in the upper canopy of the Mekong fernwood jungle. For most of their life cycle they are harmless herbivores which raze upon the tender shoots of the upper leaves of fernwood trees. A hard exoskeleton protects them from predators and sharp claws allow them to prevent being blown off the fern during storms. They range in size from 1 to 3 cm in length, but extraordinary individuals have been known to reach 8 cm. During the mating season, which occurs five times a cycle for the short-lived insects, the females will be fertilized by the males. The males will then die, while the egg-bearing females move to the lower branches of the fernwood. There, they await a host in which to lay their eggs. Dropping onto warm-blooded animals, they clamp on with their claws and painfully insert their eggs beneath the epidermis of the target.

Two weeks later, the infected animal develops a dozen or more painful welts. The growing drill tick's young secrete a toxic acid which is excruciatingly painful to the infected animal, causing it to scratch uncontrollably. Eventually, the scratching tears the skin and the drill tick emerges, and scurries up the nearest fernwood tree to continue its life cycle. A local antibiotic applied to these welts will generally kill the youngsters.

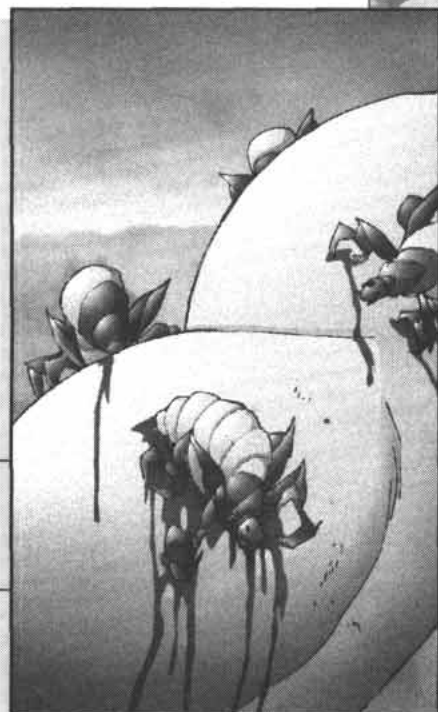
Drill ticks have influenced the Mekong society in two ways. Wide brimmed conical hats, similar to those wore throughout history by the peasant class, are common in the Dominion. The second is a predilection for brigands to stake out captives beneath a drill tick tree and let them kill their victims, eventually. Mekong Policia are rumored to use drill ticks during interrogations of prisoners.

► Attributes

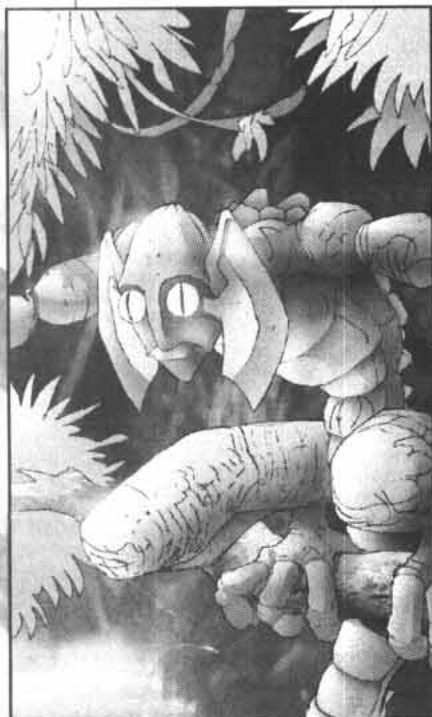
Aggressiveness	1	Damage/turn	1	Dmg. Threshold	10	R. Horde Size	2d6	B. Swarm Size	10-50
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► Special Abilities

2d6 days after the attack, untreated wounds become huge painful welts. 1d6 days after that, 1d6 young ticks emerge from beneath the skin of the victim. A HEA check vs. the number of ticks is required to resist total incapacitation from the pain, each day the welts remain untreated.



GO-KI



Go-ki are arboreal lizards with a distinctively humanoid appearance. Many point to their social dynamics and rudimentary use of sticks and rocks for foraging and defense as evidence of an emerging intelligence. Formal research of the animals is scarce as they are quite adept at spotting and eluding scientific teams, and are extremely difficult to keep in captivity. Poachers, on the other hand, rarely take notes and need only spot a go-ki nest to eliminate an entire cycle's offspring. It is rare to find a single go-ki, except during the mating season, when the alpha male drives off the young males or is killed by his successor. Solitary bucks are extremely dangerous then, as their instinct drives them mad with rage.

Go-ki bands share a complex group dynamic. Bands are centered about a single male/female coupling which serve as leaders. This pair chooses the fern tree that the band inhabits and will decide when the band must move to a different territory. During mating season, the females place their eggs in a crevice carved with sticks and sharp rocks into the band's fernwood tree. The eggs are orange in color, with starshaped yellowish mottling, which allows them to blend with the interior of the nest; they are considered a delicacy within the Dominion.

Attributes

AGI	+2	BLD	-1	FIT	+1	INS	+3	PER	+2
WIL	+1	STR	+2	HEA	+2	STA	30	UD	5

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Hand-to-Hand	2	+2	Stealth	2	+3	Throwing	1	+1			

Special Abilities

Bite (x2 damage), Minimal Tool Use (improvised weapons)

PIRANHA WORM



Piranha worms are an unusual cross between a centipede, an eel and a piranha. Their small legs are used to secure themselves to the stalks of small plants and bushes commonly found along the shores of Mekong rivers. They are not amphibious, but since the length of their bodies processes oxygen from the water flowing past them by osmosis, they are able to stick their heads above the water for indefinite lengths of time. A piranha worm's body has the slim, tapered look of an eel, allowing it to swim silently and efficiently through the water. Its head appears overly large for its body to accommodate its well-developed eyes and a large mouth filled with razor-sharp teeth.

Some of the largest specimens caught have measured up to an incredible 2.1 meters in length. Luckily, the majority of the animals are 8 to 10 cm in length and hunt alone. Unfortunately, they are drawn to the relatively easy picking of Mekong rice paddies, and it is not uncommon for working peasants to be attacked by hunting piranha worms.

Attributes

AGI	+2	BLD	-7	FIT	0	INS	-1	PER	+1
WIL	0	STR	-3	HEA	0	STA	5	UD	1+natural wpn.

Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
Hand-to-Hand	2	2	Survival	1	0	Track	2	1			

Special Abilities

Bite (x6 Damage)

SCORPION SERPENT

This beautifully colored predator conceals a surprise for any who stray too close: it can spray poison. The midsection of the scorpion serpent is distinctly bulbous to house a venom-producing gland. Using muscle contractions, the creature propels the clear secretion along a thin tube, paralleling the intestinal tract, ending at its tail. The venom is projected with great speed and accuracy up to ten meters away. Blinding and incapacitating the target, it allows the serpent to either press the attack or retreat.

GREL soldiers were frequently surprised by booby traps left by Mekong jungle fighters, which incorporated scorpion serpents in their design. Prized as a delicacy among the Dominion elite, raw scorpion serpent must be prepared carefully to avoid rupturing the venom gland. This would taint the meat and possibly kill the diner. Only highly trained chefs are allowed to prepare this dish, but accidental poisonings claim a dozen or so lives each cycle.

► Attributes

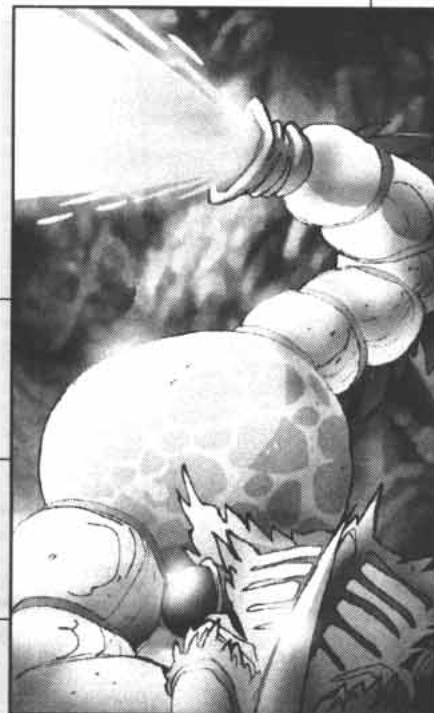
AGI	+1	BLD	-3	FIT	+1	INS	-1	PER	+1
WIL	0	STR	-1	HEA	+1	STA	20	UD	2+natural wpn.

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
"Gunnery"	2	+1	Hand-to-Hand	3	+2	Track	3	+1			

► Special Abilities

Bite (x3 Damage), Acid Spray (Range 10 meters, Potency 12)



CREEPER VINES (MAYPOLE)

Creeper vines are not common in the jungles on the Mekong, but every traveler should be on the lookout for these dangerous plants. They will often spread themselves across another plant or natural feature, allowing their vines to hang freely. The vines are brightly colored and quite pleasing to the eye to attract curious animals within reach. Once the animal touches the creeper, the vine will constrict, wrapping about the victim tightly via a unique system of internal hydraulics. The vine then secretes a caustic fluid which dissolves the nutrients locked in the flesh of the animal, to be ingested by the plant.

The vines are not intelligent, but they are able to differentiate and remember the scents of previous victims. Their rudimentary scent organs can track a familiar scent over many kilometers. By contacting and expanding the hydraulics within their vines, the creepers can slowly move towards the source. Luckily, the vines move very slowly but their bright colors often attract young children and unwary travelers to their doom.

► Attributes

AGI	0	BLD	-1	FIT	+3	INS	n/a	PER	+2
WIL	n/a	STR	+1	HEA	0	STA	30	UD	9+natural wpn.

► Skills

Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.	Skill	Level	Attr.
"Hand-to-Hand"	3	+1	Track	2	+2						

► Special Abilities

Constriction (x5 Damage), Acid(Potency 5)



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