

# IMPERIAL DOSSIER

## HOUSE HAWKWOOD







## HOUSE HAWKWOOD

(Imperial Dossier Series)

A FADING SUNS™ SOURCEBOOK

### Credits:

**Author:** Christopher Howard  
**Product Manager:** Bill Bridges  
**Editor:** Jennifer Hartshorn  
**Art Direction:** Maik Schmidt  
**Book Design:** Steffen Brand, Maik Schmidt  
**Cover Design:** Maik Schmidt  
**Artists:** Steffen Brand, Carlos Diaz, Carl Hassler, Benjamin Giletti, Sebastian Watzlawek  
**Logo Design:** Steffen Brand  
**Layout:** Jörn Aust  
**Fading Suns™** created by Bill Bridges and Andrew Greenberg

### Pilgrims:

*Patience.* This be the virtue of the lioness crouched in the grass, waiting... waiting for her prey and the time to pounce. Thus did the Lion House seize an empire. The plots of the mantis were for nought. The talons of the hawk, too late. To the lion went the spoils.

Endure patience beyond all insult, and the Pancreator will reward thee and damn thy prey.

— Archbishop Lyander, *Address to the Delphian Senate* (sermon delivered in response to the assassination of senate leader Lord Harcourt)

### THE IMPERIAL DOSSIER SERIES

These books examine in-depth the main factions of the **Fading Suns** universe. Each is presented as a primer written by a member of the faction, commissioned by Emperor Alexius' Imperial administration for the education of its members: everyone from diplomats, bureaucrats, soldiers and star-sailors, to Questing Knights and their Cohorts. Scholars of the Imperial Eye, the Emperor's information agency (i.e. spies), serve as editors and have added commentary to correct the primary author's biased perspective (and to drop telling clues about deeper conspiracies and mysteries). Some of these are classified "eyes only" — secret, "behind-the-throne" information.

Each book also includes a "factbook" about a topic closely related to the dossier's faction. These are compiled from multiple sources and edited by the Eye, to prepare Imperial functionaries for dealing with all manner of matters under the rule of the Phoenix Throne. As with the faction primer, these often include classified commentary.

Finally, there's a rules section for players and the gamemaster. These might include new Callings, perks, equipment, NPCs, and even alien creatures.

### ULISSES SPIELE

**Administration** Christian Elsässer, Carsten Moos, Sven Paff, Stefanie Peuser, Marlies Plötz

**Marketing** Jens Ballerstädt, Philipp Jerulank, Derya Öcalan, Katharina Wagner

**Publishing Team Germany** Zoe Adamietz, Jörn Aust, Mirko Bader, Steffen Brand, Frauke Forster, Christof Grobelski, Kai Großkordt, Nikolai Hoch, Nadine Hoffmann, Johannes Kaub, Matthias Lück, Benedict Marko, Thomas Michalski, Jasmin Neitzel, Markus Plötz, Nadine Schäkel, Maik Schmidt, Ulrich-Alexander Schmidt, Nils Schürmann, Alex Spohr, Jens Ullrich

**Publishing Team USA** Robert Adducci, Timothy Brown, Darrell Hayhurst, Eric Simon, Ross Watson

**Distribution & Customer Support** Florian Hering, Jan Hulverscheidt, Saskia Steltner, Stefan Tannert, Sven Timm, Anke Zimmermann

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# HAWKWOOD: THE LION ROARS



*It has been a generation since the end of the Emperor Wars, and much has changed since my Imperial Survey report on House Hawkwood and its fiefs. We saw then a hemming in of the Empire, by the Vuldrok barbarians on one front and the Kurgan Caliphate on another. Yet now, there has been a partial cessation of Vuldrok incursions with the Emperor's efforts at Hargard, and the Kurgan Wars have reached an unexpected interlude with the closing of their sally point at the Hira jumpgate. Even the war against the symbiots appears to be winding down with our recent victories on Stigmata. All around us, new opportunities open for house and Empire.*

*As Hawkwood influence has expanded abroad, our worlds have undergone radical social and political upheavals unknown for generations. Further, the reemergence of the aggressive and technologically advanced planet, Twilight, nightside from Ravenna, has created both a tempting target for Hawkwood military energies, as well as a near endless source of paranoia.*

• *Baron Geoffrey Hawkwood, Gwynneth*

## History

Through its long history, House Hawkwood rose to its position as First House among the Ten through military persistence, diplomatic finesse, and personal honor. Coupled with an unshakable belief in our own destiny, these qualities have seen House Hawkwood through periods of ascendancy and decline, propelling it to the heights of temporal power and preserving it in the face of near disaster. Now with one of our own as emperor, new horizons stretch before us. The stars themselves, it is said, await our next decision....

## Origins and the First Republic

But how did we get here? The First Republic, with its own history of discoveries and struggle, was three centuries old when the planet Delphi was discovered in 2395 (about a century after the discovery of the first jumpgate). Rich in needed resources, Delphi swiftly became the focal point for competing corporate and political claims. The ruling powers of the fraying republic sought to hold the new planet under their sway, while break-away elements saw it as a place to seek opportunities unavailable on more-developed worlds.

Bloodshed severed Delphi's ties with the First Republic when revolutionaries stormed the capital city, executing the republican governor. Almost every child raised on a Hawkwood world knows what happened next. How Gervaise Windsor-Hapsburg, heir to a lineage of old Urth pre-spaceflight nobility, brought order to the planet by imprisoning the leaders of the warring factions, but then convinced them to put their grievances aside and serve in his new government. Through clever economic diplomacy, both the revolutionaries and remaining republican elements quickly became dependent on him as he built

his political base. Keeping the lion's share of power among his family and closest confidants, he built a royal legacy. His philosophy of pragmatic idealism was perpetuated by his heirs long after his death.

As our embryonic house gained influence on Delphi, humanity continued to spread. The next planet that would eventually come under Hawkwood influence was Leminkainen. Discovered from Byzantium Secundus (then New Istanbul) in the mid-25th century, Leminkainen was a primordial planet with a yellow sun. From the start, it became a scientific laboratory for the First Republic's wealthiest conglomerates. Details of these years are incomplete, but some of the better-known concerns were Agricorp Interstellar, major mining corps, and Dextrite Medical Interplanetary, which built bio-weapons for various military factions. It was an axiom of the time that Leminkainen did not have citizens, only employees. Agricorp seeded the world with experimental plants and fertilizers, turning it into one of the largest food exporters of the day. This arrangement lasted for over 1,000 years, surviving the dissolution of the First Republic, Diaspora, and much of the Second Republic. Corporate wars took the place of nationalist conflict, making much of Leminkainen a battle zone for centuries.

## Diaspora (2500-3500):

## Exploration and Expansion

As the First Republic crumbled in the early 2500s, newly independent planets engaged in wars of expansion and defense. Delphi's ruling nobles remained mostly aloof, content to consolidate their planetary holdings. Their first foray beyond Delphi was accidental, or providential, when independent explorers



came across Ravenna in the year 2505. The world was the richest mineral find to date, but stormy and hostile. Its severe axial tilt created extremes of hot and cold. Earthquakes wracked the planet's rocky crust and primitive life forms, many inimical to humans, roamed its surface. Along with the Hapsburgs, several other prominent families — including the Hawkwoods (a then rebel family, with their own storied past) and surviving First Republic conglomerates — staked their claims. In 2525 Gervaise's grandson, Sir Robert Hawkwood (born to Gervaise's daughter through marriage into the rebel line), formally founded House Hawkwood, solidifying the family's territorial claims.

As the newly minted lion house consolidated Delphi and expanded its influence on Ravenna in the 26<sup>th</sup> century, a corporate science ship was returning to Delphi from the Ravenna system. Instead of arriving in Delphi, however, the jumpgate delivered the ship's crew to a bizarre binary star system orbited by a fertile forest world. This was Gwynneth, my beloved homeworld, but to these early discoverers it was a deadly enigma. The ship suffered serious navigational problems as it explored the system, and several of its crew members were mysteriously incinerated. The centuries since are a sad testament to what happens when ships get too close to the Paracelsus Belt.

## FIRE IN THE HOLD

*You want to know what I saw?! It all started when we entered that cursed system with its blue and red suns, and those fiery red bones scattered through space like some demons' graveyard. Then we got the strange readings and malfunctioning systems. Navigation, communications, life-support, the works! Computer panels scorched, little at first, accidents. But then monitors belching smoke, access terminals melting into pools of molten metal! Our drinking water exploding and scalding us from our taps! And then fire and shapes! Men and women, sleeping in their bunks, suddenly incinerated and shrieking and running up and down the halls! Chasin' me so as I could help them, but I couldn't! I got out — got in a pod! Saw the whole ship burning in space like a torch! I escaped! Just me! But I'm never going back there again!*

— Star Sailor Jack's report, Second Gwynneth Expedition

The planet, with its strange red and blue shadows, proved more confusing than deadly to the first explorers. Later colonists encountered its more sinister secrets, most notably its original inhabitants, known as rock trolls. Anunnaki ruins were scattered throughout the planet and some remain undiscovered. Settlers and fortune hunters from numerous neighboring planets flooded to the frontier world. The planet's trackless forests made it easy to hide from the authorities. Gwynneth quickly gained a self-perpetuating forest population, many of them pagans who reject outside authority, worshipping instead a false god they call the Queen of Sun and Shadow.

When Sir Robert died in 2610, his daughter, Zenobia Hawkwood, became head of House Hawkwood. A tumultuous political situation greeted her. The space around Ravenna and neighboring planets erupted into conflict between the governing corporations and a resistance movement of Sathraists and other dissidents. The remnants of a rebel fleet fled through Ravenna space, closely pursued by a corporate armada. The ships desperately jumped through the Ravenna jumpgate in the hope of making it to the Gwynneth free zone. Instead, the revolutionaries found themselves in a strange new system containing a hospitable Urthlike planet orbiting a young, white star. The fleet went about setting up a small colony, and Twilight soon became a magnet for dissidents from multiple systems. Despite the chaotic times, Zenobia Hawkwood finally cemented full control of Ravenna through a host of family and business alliances. In less than a century, House Hawkwood had mastered two worlds.

Common citizens, still disenchanted with the fallen republic, were also suspicious of the new noble families. When the Prophet Zebulon first spread his teachings, his philosophies found welcome adherents on Delphi. Yet, this was nothing compared to the religious sensation he caused on Ravenna. The planet's harsh environment bred an apocalyptic furor and its people welcomed his words of salvation with the ardor of true converts. From then on, Ravenna became the most devout of Hawkwood worlds. When the Prophet died on his embassy to the vau, the planet went into deep mourning. One of his most pious followers, Lord Cato Hawkwood, followed the Prophet's lead, taking a ship full of the devout into space and crashing it into the jumpgate. Saint Cato's image remains a prominent fixture in Ravennan stained glass windows. Leminkainen was less receptive to the Prophet's teachings, birthing a bizarre animistic "Universal Mother" philosophy (called Gjarti), which still holds sway there.

In 2849, the Delphian patriarch, Lord Cyprian Hawkwood, pledged his daughter, Analise

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Hawkwood, to wed Fergal ap Llwyn, scion of a powerful colonial family on Gwynneth. On the morning of the ceremony, Analise was discovered dead in her chambers, her throat cut. The intended groom admitted he had received a similar offer of marriage to the sister of Duke Zgismund Decados, along with veiled threats of dire consequences should he refuse the offer. Naively believing the threats hollow, the young noble proceeded with the marriage without sufficiently reporting them. Enraged, Lord Cyprian invaded, defeating the other planetary powers in a bloody war of attrition. Gwynneth became the third world to fly the lion banner, and House Hawkwood never really trusted the Decados again.

Humanity next reeled before the onslaught of a united ur-ukar nation. The ur-ukar sought to sweep humanity from a host of planets, many of which they claimed as their own. Ukar ships bombed Criticorum and concentrated much of their forces on Gwynneth. The ukar seemed to have a special interest in the forest world, making unwholesome alliances with the lumbering rock trolls. Many historians believe the ukari's nearly suicidal obsession for Gwynneth made them waste resources better spent elsewhere.

## Second Republic (3500-4000)

With the rise of the Second Republic in the 35th and 36th centuries, the noble houses embarked on a period of intense diplomatic and social maneuvering to secure their place in this new era. With other institutions now managing interstellar governance and a million new power centers, social trends, and influences — a great, growing raft of technologies,

discoveries, and pleasures to be had in this frequently secular, republican age — nobility struggled for simple relevance and family continuity. Many nobles became party members, patrons of the arts, media stars, and scandals in a time that valued novelty and sensation over the more solid norms of society today. It is said we shouldn't too harshly judge even some of the most frivolous examples from that long-ago era. It is the age we must judge, not our wayward ancestors who had to maneuver such heathen times. Celebrity culture and tabloid fodder were, seemingly often, the best things to which they could aspire.

### RED CARPET

*Here comes Antonius Vivaldi Hawkwood, the "Bright Prince of Delphi," wearing a daring ensemble of peacock feathers and Severan blood gems! While dazzling on the runway here at the new Anschok Pleasure Plaza, he has denied spending almost a third of his planet's fortunes in the casinos of Criticorum! And behind him, is that Lady Caihong? Borne aloft by six oiled and muscular men of her 600 estimated "brother husbands" from her religious compound on Ravenna, she's bound to make a splash at the Republic's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations tonight!*

*— Unearthed 3900s holo-doc "Kingz & Queenz of Spaze"*





Despite its extremes, that age was not as shallow or benighted as is sometimes claimed. Along with the many Hawkwoods of that era, born to privilege but little responsibility, there were others who put both family name and the serious governing institutions of the Republic at the center of their efforts. Even in an era that largely repudiated the very concept of nobility, Hawkwoods took trusted roles in the civil service and other ministerial positions. Alliances with respected Church families also strengthened the Hawkwood position with that increasingly powerful institution.

Delphi rose to the pinnacle of Second Republic power as a regional, if not truly galactic, power. Still considered nearly perfect in terms of weather and natural surroundings, its people spurned weather control technology; many modern Delphians have come to regret this decision. Pilgrims and tourists crowded Gwynneth to observe its twin suns and majestic haunted forests. Gwynneth architecture was grand and soaring, yet its crystalline agorae and cathedrals never overshadowed the planet's natural beauty. In this age of super-science, Gwynneth created a synthesis of nature and technology to both master and harmonize with the planet.

Twilight became a center of commerce and learning that soon rivaled Delphi. A prime beneficiary of the Republic's progressive philosophies and monetary largesse, Twilight thrived as a liberal democracy and vigorously resisted the growing encroachment of Church power and noble ascent.

Ravenna underwent a physical metamorphosis to match its spiritual transformation after its grand acceptance of the Prophet. Fantastically prosperous because of its mineral wealth, Ravenna invested in the most advanced terraforming technology, remaking the hostile world into a garden paradise that would be the envy of the most pious Li Halan. Even more amazingly, Second Republic scientists used force fields and colossal gravity engines to correct the planet's flawed axial tilt, making its current changing rotation virtually unique in the Known Worlds. Many today view this as an act of ultimate hubris, altering the Pancreator's work, and blame it for the fading suns phenomenon noticed a century later.

For many centuries, Leminkainen had operated as a corporate laboratory and cash cow for a host of mega-corps. All things must come to an end, however; the combined might of the corporate powers could not hold sole possession of the planet forever. As the planet continued to transform under their control, space around them also changed. Leminkainen's neighbors — among them Byzantium Secundus, Ravenna, and Aylon — were no longer content to leave such a strategic world solely in the hands of irresponsible corporate powers. A now-empowered

House Hawkwood seized control of the planet, putting its land and people under noble stewardship.

## New Dark Age (4000 - 4986)

As though on schedule, the end of the Republican Era came precisely in the year 4000. House Hawkwood was seemingly in good position to solidify its leadership of the Ten Houses during the chaos following the collapse. This is not to say, at least initially, that they were engineers of the fall. Refusing to join the "Rogue Worlds" in seceding from the Republic, Prince Roderick Hawkwood — whose affair d'amour with the renowned star pilot Milanza Goforth had already achieved the stature of legend — spoke loudly in denouncing the rebels. When the Rogue Worlds joined with alien forces to seize Byzantium Secundus, however, Prince Roderick's sister, the Duchess General Alexandra (considered the best military mind of her age), led the assault that liberated it. With the retaking of Byzantium Secundus and the formation of the Ten Houses, the death knell of the Second Republic sounded throughout the Known Worlds. The age of the Nobility had arrived.

As the collapse of the Second Republic rippled throughout the Known Worlds, Delphi was one of the first planets to observe the fading suns phenomenon. The planet's Urth-like yellow sun swelled and turned orange within two generations; instead of growing hotter, however, the planet cooled precipitously.

In the face of this new age, Twilight openly rejected the Church's edicts on technology and fielded an advanced fleet to preserve its autonomy, and ultimately closed its gate — seemingly forever.

Despite rampant unemployment and political turmoil, Delphi successfully resisted the mass dissolution of its urban centers that occurred on other planets, bending to Church mandates just enough to avoid heresy charges.

In the early years of chaos surrounding the fall, Prince Roderick appeared an ideal candidate around whom to build a new galactic order. Charismatic, educated and earnest in the pursuit of his duties, he was popular among the family and respected abroad. His strange suicide was a sudden blow to Hawkwood ambitions. An inquiry conducted by the Church concluded that the Hawkwood leader died from self-administered poison aboard his personal starship. Though House Hawkwood consented to the holy verdict, much was made of the presence of the Scraver assassin known as "The Dark Blade" (a known hireling of the Decados). At the same time, other fingers pointed closer to home, blaming Roderick's son and heir, Gordon Hawkwood, for his death.

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*What makes a company a better neighbor? What makes your employer your best friend? Caring. Here at Agri-corp, sure, we've made some mistakes. They call it Germ-X, a "poison" that killed over 125,000 on Byzantium Secundus. "That's what they say." What they don't say is that this "germ" was really a new miracle seed that would have made barren moons bloom, bringing food to millions and prosperity to all, if it hadn't been stolen from our labs and weaponized by nobilist-terrorists. What they call Germ-X, we call: Hope! Don't let irresponsible noble families control Leminkainen's future! Support Defense Initiative 26!*

— *Agricorp holovid advertisement, 4028*

## Civil War

Despite its dependence on high technology, Ravenna was among the first planets to heed the Church's call and discard Republican rule, avoiding the mass violence of the time. The faithful abandoned the cities and returned to a holier way of life in the country. The planet only reserved some technology to defend itself and to "help its less agreeable neighbors" (e.g.; Gwynneth, Leminkainen, and Velisamil) to follow its path to a more agrarian existence. Unlike Ravenna, Leminkainen resisted this trend. Leminkainen's reputation as one of the most iniquitous of worlds drew the Inquisition's wrath in the years that followed. The Church excommunicated Leminkainen's leaders and persuaded nobles from more devout planets (including Ravenna and the Li Halan) to bombard the planet during the early 43rd century. Abandoned by Delphi and unable to receive adequate aid from Gwynneth, Leminkainen was on its own. By the time it recanted, its cities were in ruin.

Maintaining many of its technological advances, Gwynneth, like Leminkainen, drew the Church's ire by refusing to adopt a pastoral existence. The same noble fleet that bombarded Leminkainen soon attacked Gwynneth's technological enclaves. Gwynneth resisted stiffly and local Hawkwood cruisers repelled the attacking fleet. The Church excommunicated the planet's leaders and put the world under quarantine for almost 300 years. The blockade proved ineffective and the Church eventually negotiated a settlement with the hold-out planet.

## Reconstruction

Its plans for building an empire on hold, House Hawkwood concentrated on its planetary holdings. Justine Hawkwood (who wore the title of queen and was called the Golden Sovereign) methodically took the reins of power for almost four centuries. Citizens of the time blessed the Pancreator for her preternaturally long life, though historians now credit her longevity to a now lost battery of DNA re-editing procedures that made her one of the most long-lived individuals in human history.

What followed was a period of retrenchment and reassessment. The military continued to grow, but with the house's attentions now closer to home, its people largely profited during a period that was, on other planets, known as an age of fear and darkness. House Hawkwood kept many of the Second Republic's most popular institutions alive, while building its own. Medicine, education, and sanitation would seem to be the minimal necessities for a civil society, yet these were badly disrupted on many planets during the decades after the Republic's final collapse. House diplomats reached concord with Orthodoxy. This was not merely a calculated acquiescence to the Church's new power in this post Republican era. Burning with newfound piety, many nobles became patrons of the faith. Some ostentatiously funded the building of great new cathedrals, while others quietly and piously supported the Church's mission of feeding and clothing the poor in uncertain times. Although its place in the Church's hierarchy of supporters would later be supplanted by House Li Halan, in the early years following the fall of the Second Republic, Hawkwood enjoyed a reputation as the most faithful adherents to Orthodoxy.

It was the brilliant Leminkainen diplomat, Duke Lawrence Hawkwood, who later negotiated the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs, removing the technological sanction on the clergy. Leminkainen was an early beneficiary of this holy writ, and one of the earliest planets to regain its technological edge. Despite the Church's eventual blessing in this matter, however, something soon went very wrong with the planet's sun. The star turned blood red over several generations and expanded to twice its normal size. The oceans evaporated; plant and animal life died off in mass numbers. Drawing upon deeply buried botanical secrets, hardy strains of fauna developed that could thrive in the planet's hot house conditions. These biological miracles have super hard skins, fibrous water-stingy interiors, and live for years without rainfall. The faithful see these tenacious plants as blessings from the Pancreator, while Gjartin pagans see it as the bounty of their "Good Gjarti."

Ensnared in what it considered a new holy age, Ravenna's conservative populace was slow to adopt the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs, allowing the clergy (and eventually nobles and guilds) freer access



to technology. It was only the advent of the Barbarian Invasions in 4525 that partially shifted most people's thinking on the matter. All Hawkwood planets suffered during the ensuing wars, though Ravenna, buffered by Leminkainen and Gwynneth, avoided the worst of the invasion. Critics of the Ravennan ethos of spiritual primitivism and technological abnegation, point not only to its shielded position behind more frontier Hawkwood planets, but also to its rejection of technology while still reaping the benefits of the peak of Second Republic terraforming and weather-control technology.

By the middle of the fifth millennium, it seemed House Hawkwood was once again poised to gain galactic preeminence, and nothing short of a full-scale invasion from outside the civilized worlds could stop it. As if on cue, the Vuldrok Invasions of the 46<sup>th</sup> century provided just that impediment. The border world of Leminkainen received the worst battering, holding out against overwhelming odds and absorbing much of the barbarian assault, giving other planets a chance to defend themselves. Even though the planet fell briefly during the Emperor Wars, it was later liberated by a combined Hawkwood and al-Malik fleet. The invaders fully justified the label of barbarian, employing outlawed biological weapons, killing over a third of Leminkainen's population, and further poisoning the environment. Even now, centuries later, some of these diseases resurface and combine with older native plagues, enforcing a gruesome legacy on the cursed planet.

## Rehearsals to Empire

In 4540, Vladimir Alecto announced his intention as leader of the Ten to bring peace and unity to the Known Worlds, stamping out once and for all the barbarian threat. Prince Gervaise Hawkwood II threw our house's support behind him and Vladimir was crowned in 4550 as the first Galactic Emperor; he was assassinated the same day. Due to the ravages of Vladimir's campaign against the barbarians, many houses (including House Alecto) lost most of their power or went extinct. The number of houses in contention for the vacant Imperial throne was reduced to five.

Other aspirants to imperial power surfaced in 4684 when Ravenna's ruler, Lady Avyryl Hawkwood, married Bishop Halvor Li Halan of Kish, throwing her political weight behind his bid to become both Patriarch and Emperor. The rest of the family, fearful that she might bring Ravenna into the Li Halan fold (and generally opposed to a theocracy) blockaded Ravenna. Challenged by Halvor's forces, the combined might of House Hawkwood destroyed the invading fleet and arrested Lady Avyryl. Her supporters claimed she renounced her Hawkwood allegiance out of love; her detractors that a lust for power caused her to cast her lot with the power of the Church and the Li Halan.

*Say not that I cared for power, for as ruler of Ravenna, I already had more than I ever wanted. When I first saw Bishop Halvor Li Halan of Kish preach, it was not a lust for worldly influence that drove me, but the desire to see the power of the Pancreator shine in every face, as it did in the thousands who flocked to Halvor's sermons. Despite the hateful lies of my family, I never sought to bring Ravenna into the Li Halan fold, and the word "theocracy" was never spoken between me and my beloved. If the forces of hate and jealousy had not been galvanized against us, a new and blessed age would have shone out from Ravenna, second to only Holy Terra as most sacred of worlds.*

— The Diary of Duchess Avyryl, *Convent of the Hidden Veil*, Jualwa (4702)

## The Long 50<sup>th</sup> Century

Since Vladimir's assassination, it was only a matter of time before the houses would again clash in pursuit of the crown. But in the year 4900, the Symbiot War put all other considerations on hold, as the resources of the Known Worlds were marshaled against an existential threat. Rivals were forced to work as allies, and House Hawkwood again distinguished itself in battle. A new generation of Hawkwood heroes arose, notable among them Grania Maizière Hawkwood, whose psychic abilities made her an ideal combatant in the war against the parasitic enemy. The exploits of the Penitent General, as she became known — combined with those of her close companion, the Eskatonic priestess Mariah Juandaastas — elevated the house's reputation for bravery and daring. By the time the symbiot threat was declared officially "over" (at least for the present), Hawkwood had again worked its way to the top of the political heap.

It was not from politically energetic Delphi, but from the more placid world of Ravenna that House Hawkwood's new standard bearer arose. Born to the family matriarch — the Duchess Regnus-Octavia and her paramour, Duke Utar Vincius Hawkwood — Alexius grew up in a house at war. His uncle, the Regent Darius Hawkwood of Delphi, vied against the other Royal Houses for the throne. After his death, Lady Octavia threw her support to her son. With the dowager mother's backing, Alexius quelled family dissension and out-manuevered other rivals in what became known as the Emperor Wars.

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After solidly defeating House Li Halan in several major battles, Alexius received not only their support, but the blessings of the Church as well. The defeat of Houses Decados and Hazat was never preordained, but Alexius' forethought and the growing support of the other factions prevailed. Through his military prowess and the clandestine maneuverings of his close friend, Baron Chamon Mazarin, Alexius managed to defeat both the most militant and most devious of the Royal Houses. With the eventual backing of House al-Malik, Alexius' ascendancy to the Imperial throne was finally assured. In 4995, the Decados and Hazat admitted defeat, accepting Alexius Hawkwood as Emperor.

## THREAT ASSESSMENT, TWILIGHT

**TOP SECRET**

While initially considered a plot to divert our Aragon initiative, it has become clear that the re-opening of the Twilight jumprouete to Ravenna is purely coincidental to current military exigencies. Night Station intercepts and initial humint assets report a planet that has deteriorated markedly from the planet recorded in historical archives.

A nuclear conflict has occurred and the planet suffered massive environmental dislocation, and is now in a permanent state of nuclear winter.

The dominant power there, a poorly understood multi-continental power known as the Citadel, has crushed most opposition to planetary dominance. One of their few standing enemies, the Heidgards, are our planetary cousins from before the Fall. It was they who re-opened the gate in 4989 in an attempt to secure outside aid.

The consensus of this office supports the prince's decision to quietly aid the Heidgards while warning the Citadel that any further attacks against them will entail a military response from us.

The Citadel is not knowledgeable of the current astro-political situation beyond their planet and has been largely quiescent in the two years since the prince's ultimatum. This office urges that the reappearance of Twilight remain top secret throughout the rest of the war.

— War Department memo, Rooks Military Intelligence (4992)

## A NEW MILLENNIUM

With Emperor Alexius on the throne, House Hawkwood looked forward to its just reward, expecting to share the governance of the Known Worlds alongside its greatest son. Alexius' decision to disassociate himself from his house, to avoid favoritism, came as a rude awakening. Some members of the house feel that they have been abandoned by their Emperor and now taste the bitterness of finding themselves sidelined as Alexius courts the expertise of the Church, the League and the other noble houses. Others point to the fact that the Emperor has salted his council of advisors with its fair share of Hawkwoods, including Baron Chamon Mazarin as chief of Imperial Security, as proof House Hawkwood is far from forgotten.

Hawkwood's current head, Princess Victoria, has kept silent regarding the Emperor's policies. Her quiet administration of house affairs seems to proclaim that, whatever the circumstances, House Hawkwood will conduct itself with its customary sense of propriety. Many younger Hawkwoods have actively sought service in the Emperor's fleets or as Questing Knights and ambassadorial staff. They welcome Alexius's indifference to their position as cadet or morganatic kin, recognizing instead their individual merits. At the same time, in this new era of dominance, many young nobles appear aimless and dilatory, or have displayed a parochial arrogance (popularly called "imperial imperiousness") that exceeds the family's traditional self-confidence. Fops, dandies, and bullies may be found in any house and era, but modern social observers have noted the trend. This behavior is not just limited to the nobility, but has also permeated many walks of life.

For a time, the barbarian Vuldrok Star-Nation increased its raids on Hawkwood worlds in an apparent desire to test Alexius' mettle. Neither turning a blind eye toward these attacks, nor prosecuting a full-out attack against them, the Emperor took a third and unexpected tact. Marrying the Vuldrok warrior princess, Freya Eldridsdottir, the Empire received the planet Hargard as her dowry. This has seemingly, at a stroke, mostly ended centuries of raids from that planet and beyond — a welcome development, especially on Leminkainen. While the Vuldrok threat has receded, that of Twilight has come to the fore.



# Hawkwood Traditions

At the dawn of the 51<sup>st</sup> century, House Hawkwood seems, to the casual reader of history, much like it was at the end of the 45<sup>th</sup> or, even, at the time of the First Republic. This continuity of behavior and adherence to “proven Hawkwood virtues” has largely served the house well, though the house has also been flexible enough to admit new ways and peoples.

## Appearance and Fashion

Nobles of House Hawkwood consciously project an image that inspires confidence in subordinates, admiration among peers, and respect from foes. This attention to “style” comes not from a devotion to superficialities, but from an understanding of privilege and responsibility. Eschewing transient fashions for classic attire, both men and women of the house cultivate stylish conservatism in their dress. Even young members of House Hawkwood are expected to conform to the “house look,” and excess in any aspect of clothing or hairstyle receives strong disapproval (especially from the older generation).

Many Hawkwoods affect a military or quasi-military cut to their clothing. Combat armor follows the same lines as their general apparel and, regardless of technological sophistication, is often of the highest quality.

Young children on Hawkwood worlds, even freemen and serfs, often seek to emulate Hawkwood or Imperial styles, at least on special occasions. Many homes on Hawkwood worlds will have a photo of the family with their young son or daughter dressed in knightly garb or the uniform of the noble armada. Hawkwoods place great emphasis on physique and fitness, encouraging its members to train their bodies for peak performance — whether in combat or on the ballroom floor.

## Codes and Customs

From childhood, all Hawkwoods learn the finer points of etiquette and manners, how to behave with composure and dignity in any imaginable situation. Titles, forms of address, rules of precedence, heraldry, and family lineage are all part of a basic Hawkwood education. Cultivation of arts and letters is encouraged as a mark of a well-rounded individual. House Hawkwood is renowned for its gracious hospitality. Though they are not as lavish as some other houses,

Hawkwood hosts ensure the comfort and protection of their guests. Despite Church disapproval, duels of honor are common among younger Hawkwoods. Any Hawkwood caught cheating or using underhanded tactics in a duel receives the full brunt of family disapproval.

Courtship and marriage within House Hawkwood likewise follow proscribed paths, and most marital unions are arranged early in a young Hawkwood's life. Alliances with friendly (or even rival) houses are not uncommon, though alliances with House Decados are virtually unknown. This fact goes a long way to explain the consternation that ensued when the Duchess Salandra Decados was considered, however briefly, as a possible paramour for Emperor Alexius. Marriages between House Hawkwood and the League are rare, though dalliances with Charioteers are frequently romanticized and occasionally end in marriage. In the cases of arranged marriages, amorous liaisons outside of marriage are *de rigueur*, provided both parties are discreet.

## Rank and Promotion

Although the lines of inheritance of Hawkwood lands and property generally follow the custom of primogeniture, in which the oldest child receives the bulk (if not all) of the estate, House Hawkwood also tries to ensure that future generations earn what they inherit.

All Hawkwoods spend their early adulthood in some form of military or ambassadorial service to the house. Here they practice the traits that have been drilled into them from youth: courage, self-discipline, patience, diplomacy and, above all, honor. Before exercising any real administrative power within the house, young Hawkwoods embark on a “tour of duty” that takes them to all the Hawkwood controlled worlds, where they acquire an on-site education concerning the house's holdings, resources, and subjects.

Service with the Imperial Fleet provides one avenue for achieving honor and glory, and many young Hawkwood knights take advantage of this opportunity to defend the Empire. Others, desirous of attaining truly legendary status, seek their fortunes on the frontiers of the Known Worlds, hoping to discover Lost Worlds to add to their house's holdings. The elite Questing Knights promote the expansionist aims of the house, while also channeling the more reckless and adventuresome Hawkwoods' energies to constructive ends.

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# Holdings

## Delphi

From space, Delphi stuns observers with its painterly contrasts of polar white and vibrant greens and blues, all suffused in an orange glow. As one grows closer, concentrated stretches of maxicrete gray and, at night, star cluster patterns of electric light give evidence of the planet's large and vibrant human population. Spiral cyclone cloud formations corkscrew their way through the planet's atmosphere, betraying its tempestuous climate.

Delphi is a cooling planet and has been since the fall of the Second Republic. Its sun was one of the first to exhibit the fading suns phenomenon. Delphi's star has become a large, bleached orange-white color, delivering steadily less warmth to the planet with each century. As a result, the world is now divided into three horizontal bands, with a deciduous green and ocean blue mid-section sandwiched by great icecaps.

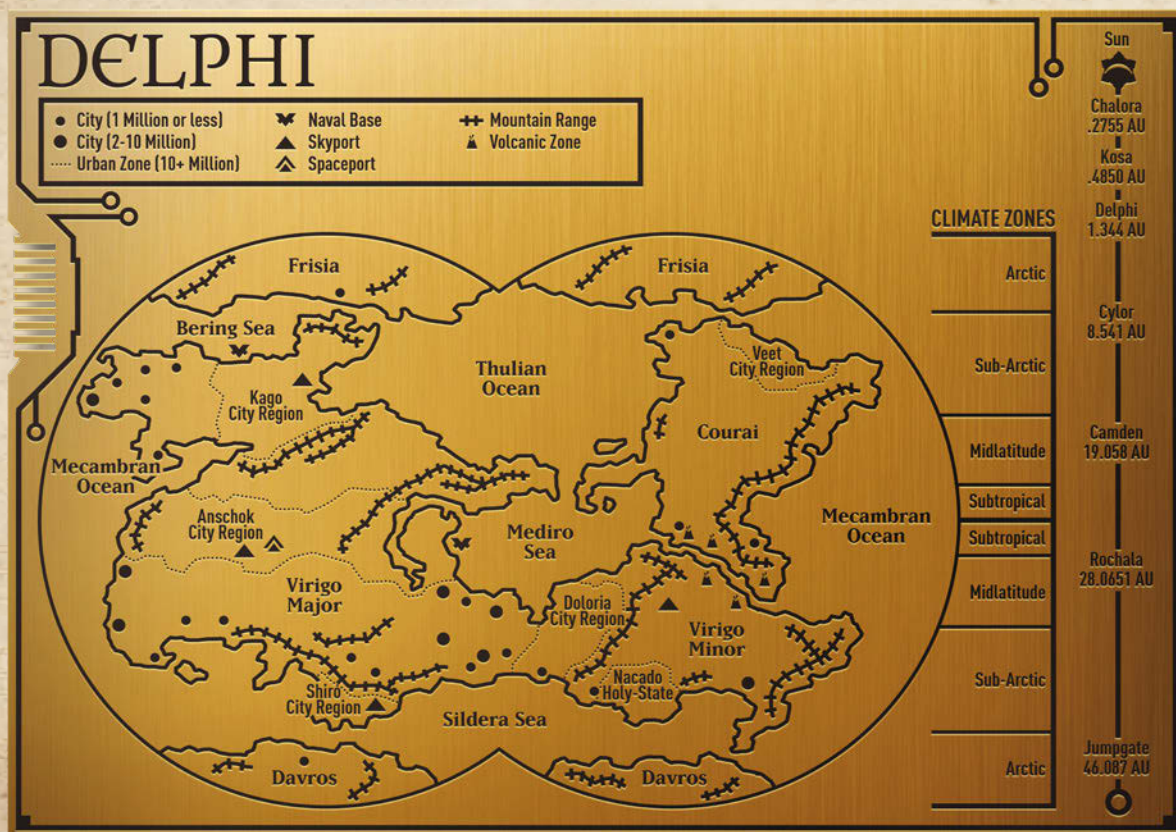
Despite the eventual doom this transformation portends, the lengthy process by which it has occurred has allowed the people to adapt and even become

proud of their planet's precarious position, with pugnacious gospels predicting the eventual reversal of the sun's demise.

## Recent Events

The cradle of House Hawkwood from its earliest days, Delphi has long stood as a powerful nexus of military, mercantile, and political power. Even with the devastation of the Emperor Wars, Delphi is stronger than it has been in years. Delphi was the leading military and diplomatic force behind the Hawkwood bid for the throne in the Emperor Wars. Benefiting greatly from Alexius's ascension, it remains the Ravenna-born Emperor's most solid base of power.

Still, all is not well. The recent assassination of Lord William Granville Harcourt, a stabilizing presence for the past 75 years and confidant of Princess Victoria, has sown confusion on the usually confident world. The planet has become increasingly advanced technologically, a matter of no small concern to the Church.





## Solar System

**Chalora:** Chalora is a medium-sized, rocky planet with a slow axial spin (rotational cycle is three Urth months). The day side was originally molten, while the night side was frozen. Since the fading suns phenomenon, the molten side has cooled somewhat. Temperatures are survivable near the wide day/night perimeter.

**Kosa:** Kosa is a small rocky planet, formerly rich in precious metals. There were numerous mining operations on the planet in past centuries, though all but one have closed. Cetus-12 is a joint Justinian/Charioteer mining concern, eking out a tenuous existence under archaic environmental domes.

**Delphi (Miercoles):** Delphi is the system's third major satellite and the only planet with a life-sustaining atmosphere. Delphi's moon, Miercoles, is roughly 1/5th Delphi's mass and houses several Hawkwood military installations. Miercoles is off-limits to unofficial personnel.

**Cylor:** Cylor is a large, volcanically active planet and is occasionally used in Hawkwood fleet war games.

**Camden:** Camden is a blue and purple Jovian planet.

**Rochala:** Rochala is a small frozen rock in space. The planetoid once served as a Hawkwood listening post until several successive crews went mad and killed themselves. The house has recently reopened the installation.

**Jumpgate:** Delphi's jumpgate, orbiting at 46AU, is one of the largest gates in the known worlds. Four great alien faces with glowing eyes, one of which has an eye that has gone out, dominate the gate's surface.

## People & Places

Despite the world's tempest-tossed nature, many on the capitol planet remain a bold, industrious, and strangely optimistic lot. Tested by the elements, there is little the planet's citizenry — from the highest lord to the lowest serf — feel they cannot handle. Largely urban and sophisticated, Delphi's population is highly educated; even the remotest villages receive the latest news through the planet's excellent system of town criers.

Politically stable, but with a hint of anti-Imperial sentiment, the world has traditionally distinguished itself for its pragmatic governance. Delphi is dominated by the Gervaise-Hawkwoods, who are known for their sophistication, intelligence and almost supernatural political acumen, as well as their belief that the rest of their family is somewhat retrograde.

Delphi's main landmass is the Virigo super-continent, divided along two political boundaries: Virigo Major and Virigo Minor. Together with Courai

(separated from Virigo by a thin expanse of water), this continental grouping constitutes 80% of Delphi's landmass. The remainder is in its two polar continents, Frisia and Davros.

### DELPHI TRAITS

Delphi's sun is badly affected by the fading suns phenomenon and has a bleached orange-white tint, radiating far less heat than usual for a star of its kind.

**Rulers:** Princess Victoria Gervaise-Hawkwood (Virigo Major), Duke Montgomery Hawkwood (Virigo Minor), Lady Regnus Octavia (The Dowager Empress, mother of Alexius)

**Major Cathedrals:** Domaldo Cathedral (Orthodox, Anschok City Region), Temple of Hombor (Amalthean, Kago City Region)

**Major Agorae:** Charioteers/Reeves

**Capitols:** Anschok City Region — West

**Jumps:** 2 (Byzantium Secundus > Tethys or Pentateuch > Delphi)

**Adjacent Worlds:** Tethys (dayside), Pentateuch (dayside), Ravenna (parallel)

**Solar System:** Chalora, Kosa, Delphi (Miercoles), Cylor, Camden, Rochala

**Human Population:** 2,125,000,000

**Alien Population:** 180,000 (mostly ur-obun)

**Resources:** Granite, gold, deuterium

**Exports:** Granite, gold, deuterium, politics

**Landscape:** Delphi is a cool, windy planet with temperate conditions near the equator and in mid-latitudes during the summer months, although snow along the equator is not uncommon. Deciduous forests blanket the equator, while boreal evergreen forests, steppe, and arctic tundra cover most of the rest of the planet.

### VIRIGO MAJOR

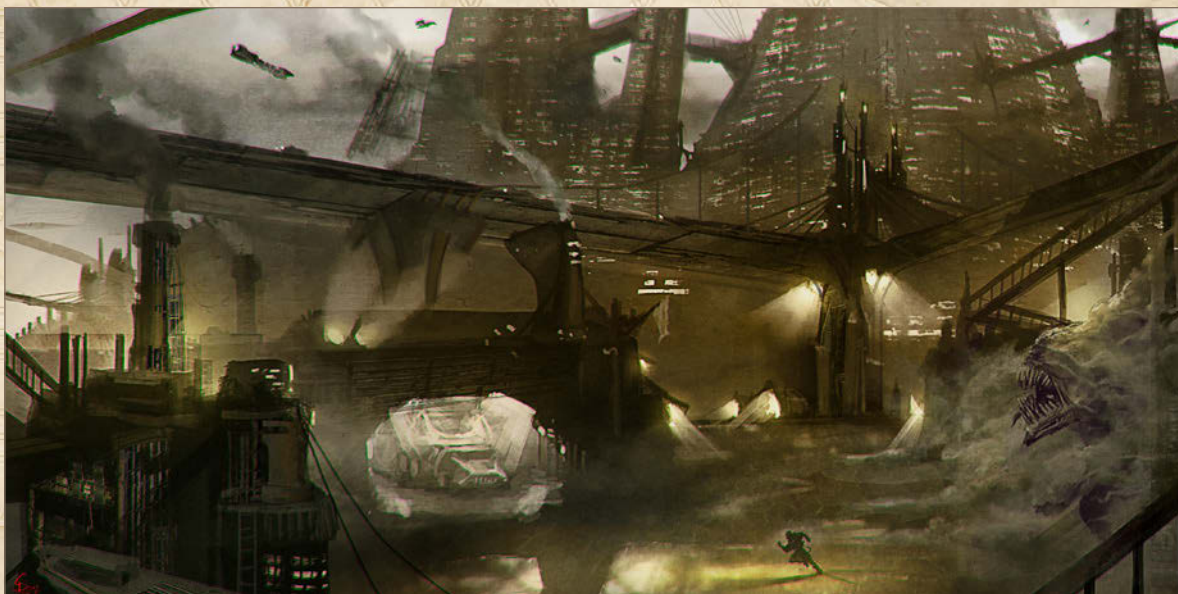
From space Virigo Major appears as a great expanse of green, crisscrossed with maxicrete gray and segmented into geometric patterns of farmland. The continent's biome ranges from deciduous forests and tall prairie grasses at the equator to evergreen forests, alpine tundra, and boreal forests. Strong winds blow across the continent. Although Virigo Major is evenly populated by noble properties and free farms, most of the continent's population resides in its three major urban regions. Tying the continent together is one of the best maintained road systems in the Empire. With the planet's burgeoning economy, motorized vehicles now almost outnumber brute carts and sleighs,

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with frequent accidents as fast-moving hover cars run more pastoral conveyances off the road.

Virigo Major is divided into a system of counties and baronies, ranging from vast regional fiefdoms to rural townships. Ruling over the continent is Princess Victoria Hawkwood, who is also Delphi's preeminent voice in interplanetary affairs. Below her, a system of lesser nobles, Church leaders, and guild interests form a tightly-organized governing system that oversees the continent's domestic affairs. This system has served the kingdom well, making Virigo Major one of the wealthiest and most stable regions in the Empire.

*They trudge home in shadow, in the  
stacks; they are tired.*

*Begrimed by Kago fog, anonymous,  
they pass the statue,*

*Justine, the Golden Sovereign, dwarfs  
her subjects' heirs.*

*Fog begrimed, on her plinth, dwarfed  
by maxicrete canyons,*

*A fugitive sunbeam, from high up,  
lights her empyrean halo.*

*They grit their teeth against the cold,  
oily wind; they are tired.*

*But they are proud. Yes, proud.*

*— Delphi Triptych, Orannia Khazan  
(4893)*

## URBAN REGIONS

Virigo Major has three major urban areas that sprawl in parallel bands across the continent's northern,

equatorial, and southern expanses. These super cities consist of either uninterrupted urban areas that stretch on for hundreds of kilometers, or of large individual cities linked by smaller cities, towns and hamlets. Virigo Major's urban regions exhibit the highest degree of technology among the common citizenry on any Hawkwood world (even most serfs enjoy running water and electric lighting).

### **The Kago City Region (Northern Polar Region):**

The Kago region hugs the continent's mountainous northern coast. Kago is a confusing tangle of twisting highways, architectural styles, massive shanty towns, and heavy industry. Much of the region is covered by "stacks." These structures are multi-tiered lattices of steel and maxicrete, supporting systems of roads and buildings. They have an ant-hill quality and allow many layers of teeming humanity to live above each other. The Kago shipyards build most of the planet's seagoing merchant vessels, despite that its ports are frozen three fourths of the year. Massive ice-cutting ships keep the channels clear enough for traffic. The city also hosts other industries, including: refineries, mining in the southern hard-rock regions, and even a growing automotive industry that produces everything from heavy transport and industrial vehicles to luxury hover-cars.

The region is mostly powered by arbidium black stone, a hard coal variant ideal for liquid fuel production and metallurgical coking, but unfortunately productive of a noxious black smoke. Now mostly dependent on the dwindling resource, Kago is the most polluted city in Hawkwood space. Kago fog, as this black smoke is called, collects most thickly in the lower levels of the urban stacks. These "shadow vapors" are known to cause hallucinations and are sometimes





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blamed for causing psychic or demonic energies to randomly manifest among common citizens, with black ghostlike shapes causing effects from minor mischief to mass murder. Conversely, industrial guilds celebrate the fog as a sign of prosperity, pointing to how the coal warms homes on the wintry planet and its attendant industries employ millions.

Thousands of homeless people wander the stack's slums. Some are pitiful beggars while others form gangs, attacking strangers with clubs, knives, and even firearms. One of the greatest temples to Hombor exists in Kago and is staffed by Amalthean clergy who attend the poor.

**The Anschok City Region (Equator):** The planet's showcase city, Anschok, is also the continent's capital and houses such sites as the Domaldo Cathedral and Princess Victoria's palace. Built as two nearly contiguous urban regions during the Diaspora and Second Republic, Anschok spans almost the entire continent. Architecturally, the city remains a fine example of both Hawkwood and republican architecture.

Ancient and delicate looking terracite structures have survived a millennium since the Fall, mingling with modern glassteel guild towers, marble palaces, and more modest maxicrete and brick structures. Taking advantage of its title as the "windy city," vast fields of steel turbines dot the cityscape, imbuing it with a thrumming heartbeat.

Anschok is also the home of the Delphian Senate, arguably the most democratic institution in Hawkwood space. Its upper chamber is noble while the lower chamber has Church, guild, and freemen members. At its best, it has given the Delphian people a real voice in their own destiny (especially around matters governing trade and social welfare); at its worst it has acted as a rubber stamp and a diversionary forum on which to blame bad decisions by the nobility. The recent assassination of senate leader Lord William Granville Harcourt, by a sniper's laser rifle on the steps of the Senate, has been seen not only as a blow against House Hawkwood, but as an attack on the Delphian people.

Anschok is a center of learning and commerce. Great Church universities, sprawling urban agorae, metropolitan museums, and theaters educate and entertain the populace, giving the region one of the best educated populations in the Empire.

Situated along the planet's equator, Anschok is also the warmest region on the planet. Summer temperatures here sometimes reach a balmy 24° C, luring pilgrims from around the globe to bask in its equatorial warmth. Especially popular are the Mediro beach resorts, which have garnered a reputation as retreats for the super-rich and havens for sin. Only slightly distracting from this pleasant atmosphere are the occasional monster attacks by towering, antediluvian leviathans that slumber on the ocean floor.

## THE PRICHNYA

*Nobles, guilders, Churchmen, and serfs in their tiny hamlets have learned to fear the activities of these wraith-like assassins of the night. Masked and clad in black monk robes, carrying brooms (with which to sweep away treason and immorality), the dark knights of the Prichnya claim loyalty to House Hawkwood and Orthodoxy, but are really the minions of a shadowy cabal bent on punishment, control, and revenge. This dangerous band of zealots has spread swiftly in the last decades.*

*While most Hawkwood nobles are appalled by this band of terrorists, it cannot be denied that they would not exist without clandestine support from within the house. The Prichnya have committed multiple atrocities, from burning towns and assassinating nobles and clergy, to the murder of fellow Town Crier guild reporters tracking their activities.*

*The Prichnya first appeared on Gwynneth under the aegis of Duke Rochfort of Tolth. They next appeared on Delphi, where they congregate around the Nacado Holy State, from there appearing as street fighters in Courai and multiple small towns throughout Hawkwood space. This paper has uncovered covert funding from Ravennan nobles, as well as involvement by influential members of the League and Church, and from off world.*

*The Prichnya's terror-inducing methods are clear but their goals, beyond causing chaos, are less so. They mainly strike those who are accused of disloyalty to House Hawkwood, as well as pagan populations and other unpopular groups at the margins of society. Witch burnings are a major part of their repertoire. They are also anti-tech zealots, attacking people or places where technology is deemed too high, though they are not averse to using technology to further their activities. Their ultimate agenda, however, is unknown.*

*— Nacado Courant article written by Kiara Gant, Town Crier; found murdered in her home, early 5019*



**The Shiro City Region (Southern Polar Region):** Shiro is a thriving southern coastal city. Nestled along steep mountains and freezing fjords, the city region has developed a reputation for producing precision technology, including telecommunications, medical tech, and components for the Tethys space industry.

Despite this penchant for science, superstition runs rampant in the region's mist-shrouded valleys — often with good reason. Ice wyrms and packs of wild Davros wolf-cats pick off citizens from outlying rural areas and snowy city streets. Even worse, a psychic coven is reputed to make its home here, driving citizens inexplicably mad. These victims may stew for months, becoming more and more psychotic, before going on mad killing sprees. Often known by their red, blood-limned eyes, these victims quickly die of internal hemorrhaging — if they are not killed first.

## VIRIGO MINOR

Virigo Minor constitutes the southeastern third of the Virigo super-continent. Poorer and less technologically advanced than Virigo Major, long simmering social tensions are boiling to the surface in the form of bloody riots in some areas, while other regions have the peace and serenity most often attributed to Hawkwood lands.

The planet's ruler, Duke Montgomery, took the ducal throne upon the death of his father and has done much to fight corruption and alleviate poverty over recent decades.

Emanating from the food riots at the beginning of his reign, a hesychast order of priests known as Ur-edenics argue for a new brotherhood between Church and people, without the nobility. This movement continues to draw adherents due to indulgence by the duke. At the same time, the Prichnya has also grown, pointing to the Ur-edenics as a symbol of society in decline. Conflict between the Church and League has also grown over the years. The guilds want to modernize while the Church wishes to maintain the region's pastoral traditions.

## URBAN REGIONS

Virigo Minor has two major urban areas: the Doloria region on the Northwestern Mediro coast and the explosive Nacado Holy-State to the south.

**The Doloria Region:** Doloria is a relaxed urban setting, and serves as a welcome respite for those trying to escape Anschok's technological glitter and fast paced life. Mostly devoid of Second Republic architecture, Doloria exhibits a large collection of post-Fall structures, mostly of granite and wood.

The city's ruler, Countess Colette Hawkwood, is a devoted supporter of the Church. The city's hundreds of chapels, cathedrals, and parish churches bear testimony to centuries of such ardent patronage.

Largely serene, the city has traditionally served as the planet's true center of theological debate. When bishopric councils become stuck in their debates, little focuses their minds more than the natural serenity of Doloria's churches and hundreds of scenic lakes. The region also supports several Justinian mines, specializing in gold and other precious metals.

**The Nacado Holy-State:** House Hawkwood gave the Nacado region to the Orthodox Church in 4120 as a sign of its faith. The Orthodoxy governs the region as an autonomous city-state, while the house takes responsibility for its external security. Nacado swiftly threw off the remnants of Second Republic technology and many in its urban regions returned to an agrarian existence. This arrangement worked well for centuries but, as the fading suns phenomenon intensified and the planet grew colder, food shortages became a major problem. Now dependent on food shipments from elsewhere, Nacado faces increasing urban dissent.

Openly demonstrating for both food and a softening of the technosophy laws, urban dwellers find themselves at odds with the Church and rural citizens who largely wish to retain more traditional values. The region's presiding theological authority for many decades (Bishop Vereen) worked to balance these competing desires, but was assassinated in 5011.

The Prichnya has come into this region, working more openly than in many areas. Here they have built a divided reputation, by providing food and other resources to some, while killing others. They most recently burned an orphanage run by the Amaltheans in a move that has resulted in calls for a strict crack-down on their activities.

The Archbishop Lyander is the Delphian Metropolitan, and thus responsible for the spiritual welfare of all four Hawkwood planets. Formerly a traditional middle-path Hinayana theologian, the archbishop hoped to succeed Hezekiah the Elder to the patriarchal dais on Holy Terra. Those hopes now thwarted, Lyander's theological position has become increasingly reactionary. As a symbol of his displeasure with post-war social trends, he has moved the Delphian Metropilae from its historical neutral setting in Doloria to the Nacado Holy-State.

## COURAI

Courai was once part of the Virigo continent, but slow tectonic drift and sudden earthquakes have recently separated the final land bridge between the



two land masses, though the channel between Courai and Virigo Minor is often frozen at Courai's southern end. Earthquakes and volcanism are still intense in both south and east Courai; a dark smoky pall often hangs over the river between the two continents.

By ancient treaty, Courai is the partial domain of House Justinian. For some time, the continent's internal affairs were managed by a triumvirate, most recently consisting of Count Udoro Justinian, Bishop Megnasi, and Dean Mozak of the Muster, with a Hawkwood noble (Countess Chirona Hawkwood) presiding over security matters.

This arrangement recently crumbled due to animosity among the triumvirate's members. In 5015, Bishop Megnasi withdrew from the group and threatened the other two members with planetary excommunication if they did not make peace and dissolve the triumvirate. Count Udoro Justinian took rulership in 5018 with Church and Hawkwood support, provoking a furious Dean Mozak to declare a new Republic in the already unstable Veet Region. Countess Chirona has ordered his arrest, but has not been able to reach him in his new stronghold.

### VEET REPUBLIC (5018 —)

Veet is the planet's largest mining and refinery center, exporting quarried granite, deuterium, and precious metals to almost a dozen worlds. Competition for House Hawkwood's lucrative mining contracts led to bitter feuds between House Justinian and the Muster. With the dissolution of the Courai Triumvirate and establishment of the Veet Republic, various guildmasters have lent their finances and prestige to create a viable ruling entity, gaining some support from the people. Justinian guards, Muster mercenaries, Hawkwood troops, Avestite inquisitors, and Prichnya murder squads alike have all played a role in recent street fighting, with commoners either choosing sides or hunkering down and hoping for peace.

### FRISIA

This northern polar continent has the highest percentage of freemen and guilders in Hawkwood space. These settlers hew a rough living from the region's remaining mines and the icy tundra. Frisia also attracts a wide array of fringe religious sects, accepting groups that might be tried for heresy in more conservative climes. Large numbers of hesychasts, Eurygnostic Incarnates from Gwynneth, and even occasional wandering Children of Zuran find their way here. The region's most dangerous predator is the Frisian ice wyrm.

For over 60 years the continent was ruled by its rugged, native daughter, the Duchess Leda Hawkwood.

But after her death in an ice-wyrm hunt in 5013, the childless ruler was replaced by her nephew, Count Cyrus Kreuger-Hawkwood. Recalled from his home on Byzantium Secundus, the foreign heir's cybernetic enhancements and Byzantine ways have not endeared him to his subjects, who have watched in trepidation as he funded the Engineers in building a massive new deep-boring project. Named the Rodak Well, after a legendary ice wyrm, it is meant to bring unlimited geothermal energy to the region, but many believe the project is cursed.

### DAVROS

Davros is a stark, beautiful land of ice-covered peaks and glacial valleys. During the Second Republic, a wealthy tourism consortium installed great solar lenses on steel and maxicrete pylons, importing foreign flora and fauna to create areas of tropical splendor. Even with the fading sun, these lenses are still capable of creating areas of greenery. The region also boasts hot springs with reputed healing properties, attracting important personages from the Church, guilds, and various noble houses. The region is a long-standing winter resort with excellent skiing, skating, hunting and... other activities.

*When in Davros, mix a little sin with your winter sports. Sybarites with an educated palate will be delighted to find this voluptuary polar demimonde on the capital planet of the oh-so rectitudinous Hawkwoods. This popular resort is a haven for the Courtesans Guild, who ply their trade legally, along with numerous other activities deemed "vices" by the Empire at large. While one won't find some of the truly depraved activities found in, say, the Psychotropic Spore Pits of Cadiz (see Chapter 3: Staying Sane in Decados Space), one is also less likely to return to one's parish with embarrassing diseases.*

*The region's ruler, Count Tiberius Rogan, is a colorful, populist leader. Sometimes called the "Purple Prince," Rogan is known planet-wide for his scandalous love affairs — sometimes with aliens. Despite this, his own people seem to have little problem with his behavior, as long as his reputation keeps pilgrims and other travelers coming to the resort nation.*

*— From the Davros entry in the Sybarite's SigNal Guide (5016 edition)*

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# Gwynneth

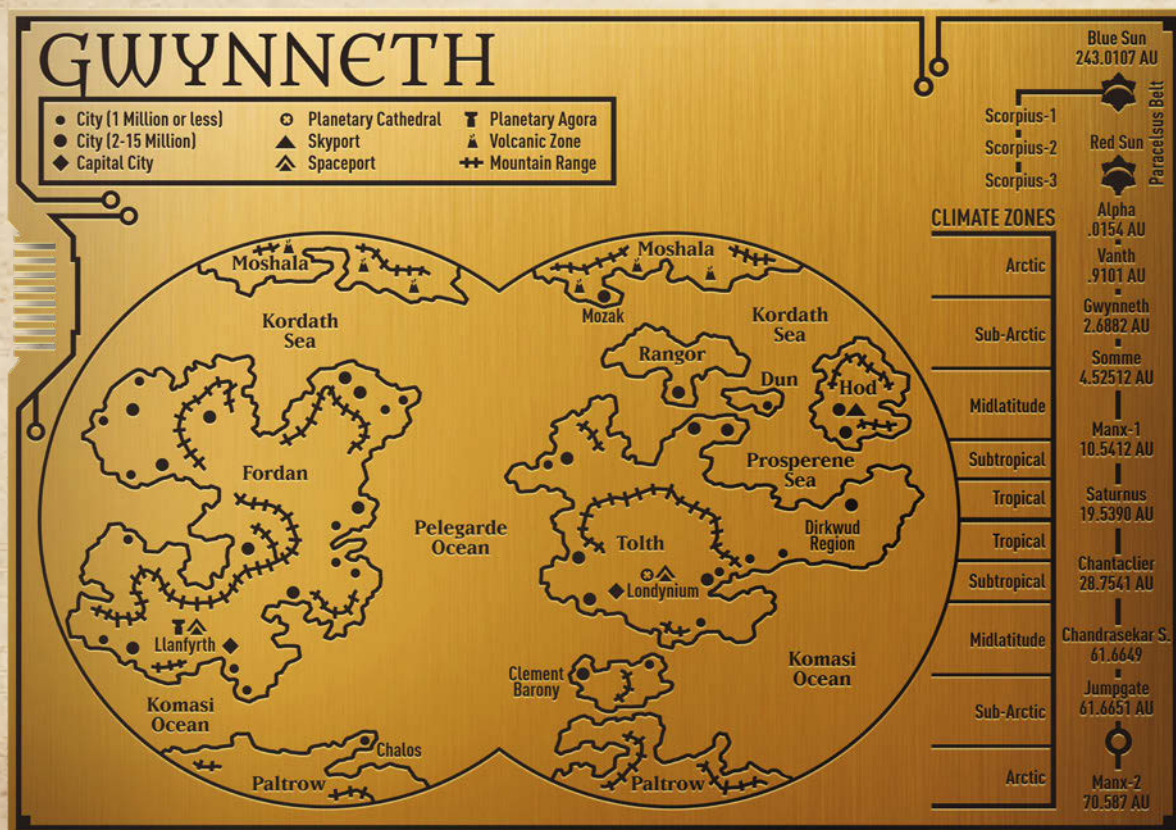
Orbiting at a comfortable distance from a mature red giant, Gwynneth is a fecund, temperate world, predominated by ancient old-growth forests. A far more distant blue sun circles with the red giant. The twin suns cast dizzying, double-edged Flammarion shadows of anti-red and anti-blue through the dense foliage, giving Gwynneth a reputation as one of the most mysterious of planets. Strange creatures and secretive pagans ply their way through the vast stretches of unexplored arboreal territory. Much of the planet's surface has a karst topography and is riddled with limestone caves.

## Recent Events

Unlike Ravenna and Delphi, Gwynneth did not profit much, politically or financially, from the successful conclusion of the war. Vuldrok raids increased precipitously in the immediate aftermath, going beyond mere space piracy to openly attacking the planet itself. Religious and territorial schisms surfaced during the war; the Church unleashed the Inquisition against the forest pagans and breakaway church sects alike,

while the nobility escalated the use of Scaver mercenaries. Many of Gwynneth's forest people served with distinction in Hawkwood military units during the war, and were displeased to return to stories of pogrom and displacement. As a result, raids and even open rebellion against the house have escalated in some regions. Much of this finally died down since the Emperor made overtures to the Vuldrok, taking one to wife, but the current treaties are tenuous.

Cultural ties are strong between Gwynneth and Bannockburn, which is also appreciated as a staging planet for defense against the symbiots. Criticorum, meanwhile, remains a massive outpost of a competing power in our house's backyard. A certain antipathy between the Hawkwoods of Gwynneth and neighboring Ravenna has grown because of the Emperor's marriage. The Emperor, his marriage, and the improved conditions that have come with the Pax Alexius have found support here. Vuldrok raiders remain a threat to the planet's spaceways, despite the recent peace accords, but their numbers have decreased significantly. One recent event that has caused celebration, speculation, and fear is the arrival of the inter-generational void ship, the White Star, which returned from after almost 1000 years in space.





## Solar System

All the planets listed below orbit the system's red sun. The blue star has three known satellites: Scorpius 1, 2, and 3. The distance to these planets and rumors of void krakens and other menaces means they are seldom visited. One such deep space explorer, White Star, returned from Scorpius 3 in recent years.

**The Paracelsus Belt:** Called "Paulus's Bane" and the "Demons' Ladder," because of its red, latticed shape and baleful effect on travelers, the Paracelsus Belt is a column of red solar plasma which proscribes the system in a wide, undulating arc. The belt is visible from Gwynneth and remains a major component in its folklore. The most dangerous aspect of this phenomenon are solar entities called star salamanders. A ship that travels too close to the Paracelsus Belt may find key areas — bulkheads, wiring and oracle panels — scorched or melted. Critical ship functions begin to fail and eventually crew members are incinerated by fiery phantoms that roam the hallways. Entire compliments have been destroyed in this manner, their ships left to float derelict or pulled to fiery ruin.

**Alpha:** Alpha is a small molten planet, almost completely consumed by the sun's inner corona.

**Vanth:** A hot and turbulent world, Vanth is feared and admired for its soaring red mountains, screeching solar winds, and vast oceans of bright silver lava. Vanth frequently passes through the Paracelsus Belt and is the alleged home of the enigmatic star salamanders. Ships that investigate Vanth seldom return.

**Gwynneth (Norian, Cheux):** Gwynneth is the system's third major satellite and the only planet with a full, life-sustaining atmosphere.

**Somme:** Somme is roughly the same size as Gwynneth and was extensively terraformed and colonized during earlier eras, creating large regions where there is a breathable atmosphere. Somme became an outpost for free thinkers and dissidents, as well as the republic's military industrial machine. Its hospitable gravity, vast mineral resources and proximity to Gwynneth made it a coveted prize. Somme has been the site of numerous battles over the centuries, and is where House Hawkwood secretly maintained its shipyards after the Fall. The planet is still used as a depot, mining colony, and spaceport.

### GWYNNETH TRAITS

Gwynneth is part of a binary star system, one of the strangest and most volatile in the Empire. Gwynneth orbits a mature red-giant. The other star in the system is a much larger but more distant blue-white star. As a result, Gwynneth has four distinct light cycles: daylight, veridical daylight, half-night, and veridical night. Daylight occurs when only the red (prominent) star is visible. Veridical, or "true," daylight occurs when both stars are visible (and can be confusing for those not used to the binary system). Half-night is when just the more distant blue star is visible, and veridical night (the rarest condition) is when neither star is apparent. The system's most bizarre astrographic feature is the Paracelsus Belt.

**Rulers:** Duke Erasmus Wilde Hawkwood, The Queen of Sun and Shadow (god queen of the forest people), General Camille Hawkwood (Tolth)

**Major Cathedrals:** Qualuth Edge Cathedral (Orthodox), Jörn Painted Cathedral of Hôd (Sanctuary Aeon), Gloaming Cathedral of Londynium (Orthodox)

**Major Agorae:** The Saturna (Charioteer agora on moon of Saturnus), The Gray Souk in Paltor (Engineer/Muster), The Green Web (open electronic-based market space in Llanfyrth)

**Capitol:** Llanfyrth

**Jumps:** 2 (Byzantium Secundus > Criticorum > Gwynneth)

**Adjacent Worlds:** Criticorum (dayside), Ravenna (parallel), Bannockburn (nightside)

**Solar System:** Alpha, Vanth, Gwynneth (Norian, Cheux), Somme, Manx-1, Saturnus, Chantacrier, Manx-2

**Human Population:** 840,000,000 Hawkwood / 100,000,000 forest people (estimated) / 1,350,000 barbarian (estimated)

**Alien Population:** 25,000 ur-ukar (estimated) / 10,000 ur-obun

**Resources:** Lumber

**Exports:** Lumber, furniture, etc.

**Landscape:** Gwynneth has numerous temperate conditions, ranging from tropical jungles along its equator to snow at its two poles. The planet has four continents (Moshala, Fordan, Tolth, and Paltor) and four major island chains (The Clement Barony, Dùn, Hôd, and Rangor). Much of the planet is covered by old growth forest and jungle, with a medium-sized desert region in central Fordan and mountain ranges on almost every major landmass. Subterranean lakes and millions of underground tunnels riddle the planet.

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**Manx-1:** Manx-1 is an unremarkable ball of rock, so small it barely qualifies as a planet.

**Saturnus:** Almost identical, save for a bluer tinting, to Saturn in the Holy Terra system, Saturnus served as a major tourist attraction during the Second Republic. The ruins of space casinos and luxury hotels dot several of its moons. There is still an operating hotel and agora (the Saturna) for the super wealthy located on one of the larger asteroids on the outer rings. A Charioteer/Reeves consortium arranges regular Empyrean Luxury Yacht cruises to Saturnus from Gwynneth and other planets. Such obvious wealth is a magnet for Vuldrok pirates, even after the Emperor's acquisition of Hargard.

**Chantaclier:** Chantaclier is an immense Jovian planet, roughly twice the size of Saturnus, and emits a strong electromagnetic pulse at regular eight second intervals. There are gravimetric and seismic disturbances on the planet, and winds as fast as 1,600 kph rip through its outer atmosphere. Nevertheless, its upper gaseous reaches are home to strange forms of life, such as the continent-sized swarms of jellyfish like "floaters" and the curious diprotians. Over 20 moons orbit the planet, and rumors persist of an abandoned Second Republic research facility on one of them.

**Jumpgate:** At least one cruiser is always available to defend the gate.

Chandrasekhar Station, a floating Charioteer/Engineer research station, keeps a constant distance from the jumpgate, taking readings and performing various experiments. It shares nearly the same orbit around the red sun as the jumpgate; both share a counterclockwise orbit at variance from the system's planets. The station has had an intermittent, decades

long problem with "extra-dimensional ghosts." Several of their crew members have disappeared into thin air. The station has drawn Inquisitorial interest and an Eskatonic investigator sent there some years back is one of the missing.

**Manx-2:** An unremarkable planetoid, similar in most respects to Manx-1 — except for the Ur ruins. An expedition of Muster miners discovered them over 500 years ago; there are rumors that some artifacts remain. However, since it lies past the system's jumpgate, it is considered to reside dangerously close to the Dark; the Church forbids expeditions. Nonetheless, scientists, fortune hunters, and demon cultists have gone there, evading Church warden ships.

## People & Places

As with the population on other Hawkwood planets, Gwynneth's citizens are mostly a solid, industrious and friendly people. Perhaps because of the world's strangeness, people reason, its inhabitants are used to odd occurrences and are thus less paranoid of strangers. This said, there are some distinct attributes that are attributed to its inhabitants. The twin suns and their ancillary lighting effects — including regular auroras at all latitudes and vivid nighttime rainbows — have cultivated a rich mythology from the start. Strange astrological traditions tie human psychology and destiny to the distinct four phases of the suns.

The forest pagans in their worship of "the Queen of Sun and Shadow", pursue their own colorful traditions, including a specialized mind-training called Zahren, which is reputed to lead to a deeper seeing.





Even the planetary Orthodox church is deeply entrenched in Gwynneth's multi-faceted mysticism. People on other worlds frequently believe that those from Gwynneth are not quite ordinary humans, with fantastic tales ranging from Gwynnethians all having multiple personalities, to having faces on their stomachs or growing extra limbs on a whim, or altering their sex with the changing suns.

And, there is some truth to these beliefs, as Gwynneth has a higher number of the Changed than on most worlds. These mutants are frequently accepted

## COMING SOON

*Gwynneth! A world with two suns and a million secrets! Meet Friar Mundle... most of the time a timid, kindly fellow and a devoted follower of the Prophet. But when both suns rise high, and the twin shadows come out, he transforms into the depraved Mistress De Sade! A tantalizing temptress who finds pleasure in your pain!*

*Friar Mundle and Mistress de Sade, brought to you for your moral edification by: Muss Ryer! The same producer who brought you such cautionary magic-lantern morality plays as I Married a Vorox! and Severan Sex Slaves now brings you this real-life documentary of the lurid, lust-crazed pagan perversions on a planet with too many suns!*

— *Friar Mundle and Mistress de Sade, Criticorum Holoplays Unlimited (5019)*

as normal scions of the strange world and are even revered in pagan areas as having been touched by the forest queen.

Next to Delphi, Gwynneth has the highest population in Hawkwood space, though one would hardly guess this from space. There are many large cities, but they are so completely integrated into their forest surroundings, that only at night can human settlements be easily detected from orbit by their electric lights.

Almost all Gwynneth's power is based on a biogenic power web developed during the height of the Second Republic. Even during periods when anti-tech zealots of Church and crown outlawed its use, this bio-grid survived "amongst the tree roots" for use in latter times.

The Wildes (the Gwynneth branch of the Hawkwood clan) is said to most perfectly personify the family's knightly honor traditions of *Strength, Honor, Fidelity*.

## FORDAN

Fordan houses over half the planet's population and remains a central hub for interstellar commerce and culture. The region's mixture of haunted mist-shrouded forests and Ur-ruins have attracted poets, scholars, and mystics from across the Known Worlds; it is also a popular setting for various authors and magic lantern companies.

Revolt by Fordan's large but uncounted population of forest pagans — long a feature of Fordan life, typified by both pagan atrocities and inquisitorial excesses — reached a cessation of sorts five years ago. This fragile peace was brokered between the inscrutable Queen of Sun and Shadow, and Fordan's longtime ruler, Duke Erasmus Hawkwood. This treaty has delivered the benefits of peace and trade between city and forest. It is generally believed, however, that the forest dwellers were helped to the bargaining table by their fear of a waking darkness in the deep forests, known to them as the Black Stone God (an abbreviated name for *Nyoch-lek-Trün*). This demon master reputedly lives at Gwynneth's center and is worshipped by the planet's primordial inhabitants, the rock trolls.

## LLANFYRTH

Llanfyrth is a graceful river delta city about 80 kilometers from the southeastern coast. Architecturally a mix of Second Republic, post-Fall, and more modest wooden structures, the city is one of the most beautiful in the Empire. Great parks and tree-lined vistas are the norm; even the tallest modern buildings have flora growing from almost every surface.

There are various forms of transportation popular here, from horses and skimmers to bicycles. Much of the city is crisscrossed by a series of Second Republic-era glassteel pneumatic tubes that shunt riders from place to place through the tree tops.

Llanfyrth is a center of art and learning. An ancient electronic communications system known as the "green-web" is commonly used to trade goods and ideas. Known for its high percentage of freemen, the city also serves as the continent's center for political and theological discourse.

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## WHITE STAR

The Cassiodorus, an Eskatonic research ship, may have been the ideal ship to receive the homing beacon from the void ship, White Star, in 5008. Boarding the seemingly derelict vessel, the priests found not only a dozen humans in cryogenic stasis, but a relic gargoyle embedded into the ship's prow.

Painstakingly cross-checking the ship's name, design, and passenger manifest with ancient records from before the Fall, the mystic scholars were stunned to discover that the ship, and its sleeping crew, were travelers in time from 1000 years ago.

Reviving the sleepers, they were amazed at their story. The passengers, later dubbed "Decans" by the Town Crier press, claimed to be 12 of the original 2000 sleeping colonists sent by an anti-tech millennialist sect from the faltering Second Republic to colonize the exoplanet of Scorpius 3, orbiting Gwynneth's distant blue sun. There they found a planet of heavenly beauty, which they called Sundara, meaning "beautiful" in an ancient language. The colonists built an idyllic, low-technology colony, learning new truths about the Pancreator, and eventually sent 12 of their number back to share these truths. While they needed their sleeper cells to survive the long travel between worlds, they fantastically claimed to live immortal lives on Sundara, a planet to which they will one day return, with those who prove worthy.

Their story was an instant sensation and popularly believed, with biometric data from ancient

archives supporting their claims to identity. Despite doubts in many quarters, the 12 were viewed, not only as celebrities, but as mystics, healers, dispensers of arcane wisdom, and visionaries of a new age.

In the decade since their return, the Decans' influence has spread to multiple adjoining planets. Claiming adherence to Orthodoxy and stymying Church critics with their masterful command of the Omega Gospels (and in-depth knowledge of pre-Fall Church history and philosophy), they went in short order from carving out a small ecclesiastic polity in the Gwynnethian Archbishopric, to almost effortlessly commanding financial resources and powerful supporters among the guilds and nobility, as well as among serfs and freemen. A plethora of small churches and cathedrals have appeared, seemingly overnight on all Hawkwood worlds and several adjoining planets.

The 12 Decans (now numbering 11 after one was killed on pilgrimage to Pyre) have exhibited strange and varying abilities, leading skeptics of their divine provenance to consider them powerful psychics or among the "Changed." While critics label the new Order of the White Star as outright frauds and/or a dangerous cult — noting that key portions from the White Star ship's memory banks remain unretrievable — the sect continues to grow, delivering a message of popular restoration in a new millennium.

## TOLTH

Tolth's unquestioned ruler for decades was Duke William Rochfort. Raised and educated on Midian, and devoted to the Church, the young Hawkwood seemed destined for a life in the clergy until an unfortunate accident drowned his older brother in the Komasi Ocean. Returning from Midian, he was shocked at the condition of his dukedom. Paganism and other evils seemed to inhabit his lands at every turn. Off-world inquisitors from Ravenna and Pyre heeded the Duke's call to cleanse the continent of sin. Mass executions exploded throughout the region and the inquisition quickly spread beyond the forest pagans, to include targets among the guilds, intelligentsia, alien community, and ultimately the duke's Hawkwood rivals.

From the '90s through the early 5000s Tolth went from a repressive state melding noble and theocratic power, to a continent wracked by civil war and genocide. No segment of society went unscathed, as

Hawkwood battled Hawkwood, Church sects fell on each other, and Muster mercenaries aligned with the highest bidder. The forest pagans were both civilian victims and opportunistic mobs, as were the serfs, freemen, and good country squires of every village.

The violence reached its zenith in late 5009, when a massed army lead by knights representing all four Hawkwood worlds stormed Rochfort's Londynium stronghold. In pitched battle, the Duke retreated to his high tower and was either pushed or jumped into the river below. His body was not found after an exhaustive search, leaving one more tangle in the post-war gnarl.

Duke Rochfort had no living heirs, and today his throne is uneasily occupied by Lady Camille, one of the Hawkwood generals who lead the assault on his tower. Her mother, the Duchess Catherine, is ruler of the Jyväskylä Duchy on Leminkainen. This off-planet pedigree and oaths to the Brother Battle Order have made Camille enough of an honest broker to the planetary powers to assure her autonomy as



she re-orders the continent, permanently dissolving Rochfort's dukedom into lesser holdings.

While many new baronies and counties have been awarded, more are available to those who bring order to the ongoing chaos. Persisting problems include a fractured communications system, mob justice, banditry, religious cults, and schisms (including Prichnya activities), and an economy still upended by the war. On the other hand, Tolth's people now know a freedom they haven't seen in generations. A radical arts scene with highly potent music and literature now emanates from the region, with a growing generation of young people, born to the inquisition but now shaking off its confines.

### LONDYNIUM

Similar in size and architecture to Llanfyrth, this graceful old city was both Rochfort's fearsome capitol and his first victim. During the inquisition, Muster toughs, and Avestite flame-bringers drove around the city in skimmers or brute-carts, waving clubs and rifles and wearing a bastardized Hawkwood lion emblem circled by a flaming jumpgate. Now with Rochfort's defeat, Londynium is returning to its old, cosmopolitan ways, its famous Gloaming Cathedral passing back from Avesti to Orthodox control. City walls are still pockmarked with bullet holes and terrorist attacks continue, enacted by hidden supporters of the old regime.

### MOSHALA

Moshala is Gwynneth's northern polar continent, and the one region heavily terraformed during the Second Republic. Moshala's volcanic activity, while sporadically deadly, also makes the region far more habitable than the planet's southern polar continent (Paltor). Magma-heated steam vents allow natural areas of greenery on the continent's coastal regions. The population lives in small townships distributed around the thermal valleys, and are a calm and industrious people.

Despite the region's apparent placidity, something very different is at work below the surface. The region is crisscrossed by a system of ley lines, attracting numerous antinomist cultists, collectively known as Gray Bloods, who serve a leader known as the Witch of Wasting. The Eskatonic Order has been in a shadow war with them over the continent's ley lines for the last 80 years.

The continent's ruler, Countess Elan Hawkwood, is a gifted natural healer and may well be the most popular leader on Gwynneth. She has been helpful countering the cultists, but they continue to menace Moshala's people.

### PALTOR

During the Second Republic, glacial Paltor was heavily populated thanks to its advanced building and energy-gathering technology. Ancient holograms portray vast cities under glass-like domes, sanctuaries of greenery in the polar wastes. After the Fall, these cities were bombed from space or slowly disintegrated as the planet's infrastructure collapsed. The continent lay fallow for centuries until opened to exploration as a semiautonomous free state.

Merchants, freed serfs, forest dwellers, and other freemen have migrated to the icy continent to try their luck. Overseen by a joint committee consisting of noble, Church, and League representatives in the continent's dingy frontier city (Chalos), freemen explore and homestead the continent.

Strict Church and Imperial laws govern what technology may be removed from the region; both Scraver and Engineer specialists examine the finds at the Gray Souk, a massive marketplace that constitutes much of Chalos. Those who uncover lost tech may receive either a finder's fee or develop the technology, if deemed appropriate.

Many explorers are poorly trained and equipped, falling prey to the continent's dangers. Besides howling arctic winds, vast ice-sheets, and natural predators (including an imported cousin to Delphi's ice wyrm, and the highly dangerous cryophyta or "ice slime"), there are more mundane dangers to consider. Chainers and other freelancers are not shy about violent claim jumping. Also, a few small communities of so-called ice-pagans have homesteaded the region for centuries. While some of these are harmless, others are either religious zealots (including poisoning cults) or common bandits.

### MAJOR ISLANDS

Gwynneth has four major islands: Hôd, Rangor, Dûn, and the Clement Barony.

#### HÔD

Hôd is a northern mid-latitude island of significant size. A great ring of mountains circles the land like dragon's teeth, protecting it from invasion and the storms that sweep in from the Fordan Sea. Most of its people are industrious peasant stock. Grand cathedrals made from the local umberwood (a "miracle wood" coveted throughout the Empire), such as the Jörn painted cathedral, undergird the faith. The local forest pagans gather under the name of the Black River Clan.

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## RANGOR

The Rangor Freehold contains some of the planet's densest forests and is the longtime fiefdom of the planet's other noble family, House Juandaastas. The house has turned its island into a sanctuary of sorts for aliens, unpopular Church sects, and even, some claim, unrepentant psychics. Count Phillipe Juandaastas also has friends among the forest people and is always happy to entertain anyone who can bring a new form of art, music, or other contribution to his cultured court. During the years of the Tolth inquisition, Rangor was a haven for refugees and later a staging ground for Duke Rochfort's overthrow.

## DÛN

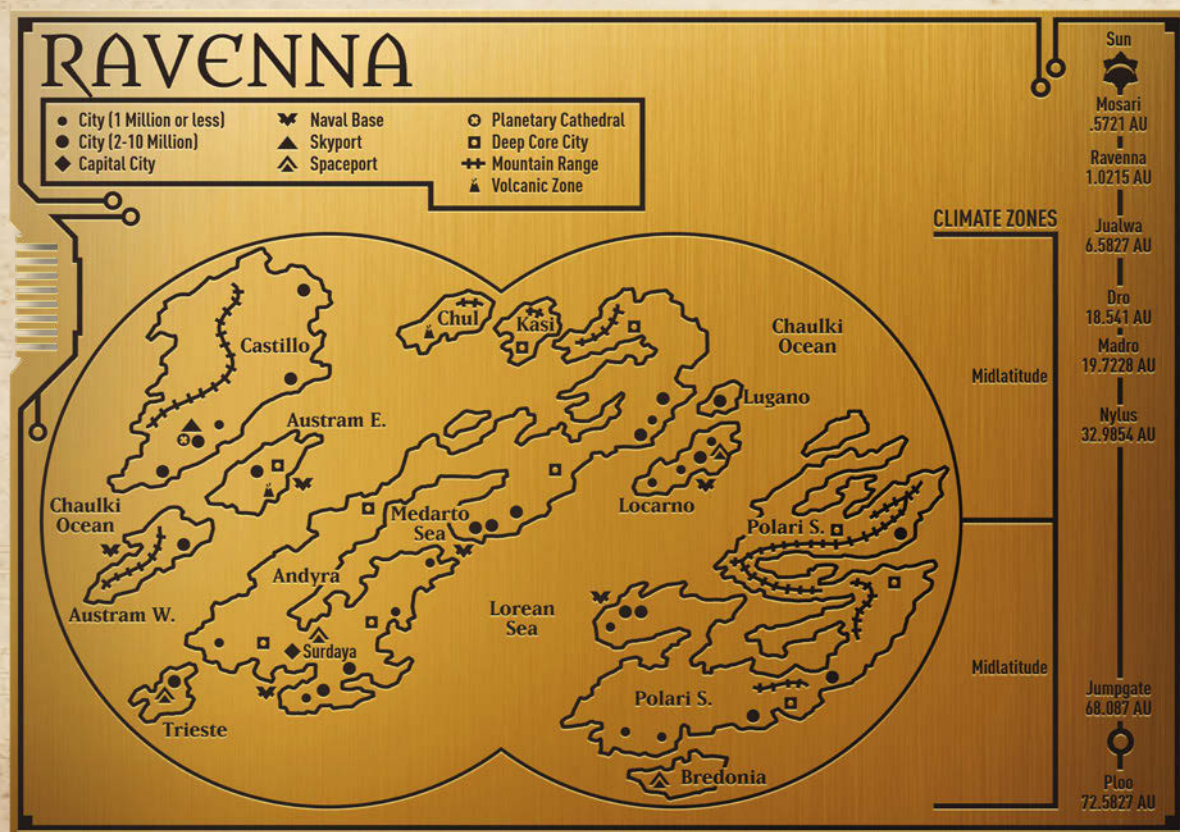
Dûn is a small, semi-forested island resting between the Kordath and Prosperene Seas. Sympathetic to the plight of the forest pagans, the island's nominal ruler, Baron William Erhardt Hawkwood, had known public dealings with Hargard dignitaries, leading some to accuse him of harboring Vuldrok spies. The baron was an early supporter of the Emperor's overtures to the Vuldrok, helping pen the Hargard Accords that led to the acquisition of that planet. He was much feted at the Emperor's marriage to Freya Eldridsdottir, much to the chagrin of some in the family.

## THE CLEMENT BARONY

For over 30 years, the Clement Barony's story has been one of two brothers. The island's ruler, Baron Clement Hawkwood, was a political ally of Duke Rochfort and swift to use the inquisition to quell dissent. His younger brother (Lord Randall), took up the forest pagans' cause. A longtime period of near war ensued. During a treaty negotiation, Lord Randall was assassinated by an unknown assailant. Baron Clement denied any involvement in his brother's murder, and eventually brought the pagans to heel, but thereafter fell prey to a paralyzing illness that defied even healing efforts on Artemis. Rulership has passed to his niece, Lady Ava, who continues his strict policies. Baron Clement has offered large landed holdings to anyone who can reverse his curse.

# Ravenna

Originally a harsh but mineral-rich world, Ravenna was remade during the Second Republic with the apex of that super-science era's terraforming technology. Now a tranquil orb of blue and green, the planet's rotation is influenced by planetary engines and soaring weather towers, giving it a uniformly optimal climate. Only the planet's mountain ranges and few





desert regions mar Ravenna's impression of verdant serenity. An artificial, stellar anomaly, Ravenna has no set axis, but rather spins in a gentle, ever shifting pattern around the great gravity engines at its core.

## Recent Events

Bathed in the warm light of a stable yellow sun, Ravenna is a living paradise. Mirroring its geological stability, the nobles of Ravenna prize political stability

### RAVENNA TRAITS

Ravenna orbits a standard yellow main sequence star, only slightly affected by the fading suns phenomenon.

**Rulers:** Duke Cassius Darian Hawkwood (Folari South), Grand Duke Alvarex Hawkwood of Andyra (brother to the Emperor), Countess Morgana Solara Trusnikron (Folari North),

**Major Cathedrals:** Maximillian Cathedral (Orthodox, Southern Castillo region), St. Regoe's Cathedral (Orthodox, Andyra continent)

**Major Agorae:** The Viceroy (Reeves/Muster, Andyra continent)

**Capitol:** Celdor

**Jumps:** 2 (Byzantium Secundus > Velisimil > Ravenna)

**Adjacent Worlds:** Velisamil (dayside), Leminkainen (dayside), Gwynneth (parallel), Delphi (parallel), Twilight (nightside)

**Solar System:** Mosari, Ravenna (Triangulus), Jualwa, Dro, Madro, Nylus, Ploo

**Human Population:** 450,000,000

**Alien Population:** 30,000 (mostly ur-obun)

**Resources:** Ravenna marble, gems, precious metals, deuterium

**Exports:** Raw mineral wealth, fine art, food, wine

**Landscape:** Ravenna is a temperate world with no discernible changes of season, though its weather grid has caused local disruptions in the wake of the Deepcore 6 disaster. Its biome mostly consists of either deciduous forests with leaves that never change color, or cold needle-leaf forests in the highest elevations. The planet also has wide stretches of tall prairie grasses, arid (but not overly hot) deserts, towering mountain ranges and marshes in many of its coastal regions. Ravenna's mountain ranges are also home to the urroc, a great bird of prey that serves as a steed for the planet's Hawkwood and Trusnikron nobility.

above other considerations. This centuries-old stability now seems to be unraveling. The birthplace of Emperor Alexius, and central to his rise to power, many of Ravenna's nobles are now disillusioned with the Emperor. Not only has he distanced himself from the family to more fairly rule over a diverse empire, but (much to his family's horror) also wed a barbarian when he married Freya Eldridsdottir.

Connected to the peaceful obun planet (Velisimil) and friendly Hawkwood worlds, only now — with the reopening of the gate to the warlike planet Twilight — has Ravenna come under direct threat. Twilight's reemergence has shaken the conservative planet badly, the effect of which has been not unlike that of a peaceful neighborhood finding that a family of mass murderers have moved in down the street.

Ravenna has also recently been forced to deal with unprecedented environmental calamity when one of its deepcore cities exploded, causing malfunctions in its weather control grids and great social angst.

Under the influence of the Emperor's brother, the Grand Duke Alvarex, Ravennan politics have also become fraught with paranoia and conspiracies, real and imagined. Groups such as the Avestites and the dark riders of the Prichnya are increasingly active, handing out brutal justice where they see heresy or treason.

## Solar System

**Mosari:** Mosari is carpeted by a thick layer of carbon and sulfur dioxide. Inhospitable in the extreme, the planet is scoured by hurricane-speed winds and remains largely unexplored.

**Ravenna (Triangulus):** Ravenna is the system's second major satellite and the only planet with a life-sustaining atmosphere. Ravenna's moon, Triangulus, is roughly 1/10 Ravenna's size; it maintains an artificial atmosphere and the gravity of a planetoid six times its mass. It is inhabited by two Muster mining operations, which typically employ criminals, ukar, and other aliens for labor because of the dangers involved.

**Jualwa:** Jualwa is a small, nondescript planetoid. Mined extensively during earlier eras for its deposits of iron ore, it now seems to have little of intrinsic value. A twin monastery and convent sit on opposite sides of the globe, wherein shamed Hawkwood nobles and other inconvenient potentates take holy orders rather than face prison or execution.

**Dro and Madro:** Two great crimson gas giants of similar size and composition, Dro and Madro travel in opposing orbital directions and appear as two scarlet specs in the Ravenna sky. Often called the "Eyes of Azzurayelos" (the demonic Lord of the Gates of

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## TWILIGHT – IMPERIAL EYE REPORT

Twilight, more than any other recent factor, has brought Hawkwoods of varying sorts together. Whatever family or planetary branch, house loyalist or imperialist alike, they now share a deep concern with the planet called “Malignatus on our doorstep” by the imperialist author, Arnand Sorrel.

Last seen during the collapse of the Second Republic, when it closed its gate to the Known Worlds, the lost planet drifted into the twilight realms of myth and legend. When the gate abruptly re-opened during the Emperor Wars, it became obvious that something had gone terribly wrong on the lost world.

Twilight’s young, white star was among the earliest of those affected by the fading suns phenomenon. Competition for resources and ideological hatreds drove the planet through a centuries-long arms race. A culminating nuclear war in the 48<sup>th</sup> century tore open the planet’s surface along geological fault lines. Monstrous volcanic eruptions now belch billions of tons of ash into the atmosphere yearly, cloaking the planet in perpetual winter and forcing its population underground. Worse, the cataclysm has shaken the planet from its orbit so that it travels a little farther from the sun with each passing year.

Only recently has the secret of Twilight’s emergence become widely known. Once a stable, technologically advanced democracy, Twilight has re-entered history as an unpredictable wildcard. Power on Twilight is divided between three contenders: The continent of Reval is overseen by the Citadel, a totalitarian state with a huge conventional and nuclear arsenal, as well as a sophisticated defense web seeded throughout their star system. The continent of Tsaerdik was the most damaged by the war, and run by an oppressive plutocratic collective that brainwashes its people with continuous propaganda. It is to the nobles of Delphia — and their lost cousins, the “White Tigers,” ruled by King Albion of House Heidgard — that we now look for ingress.

While 1000 years out-of-date with the galactic scene, Twilight is an advanced planet, with impressive remnant technologies from the Second Republic. Even many common people have access to luxuries that would be considered technosophic in the Empire. Besides Ravenna, archives say that Twilight’s jumpgate is connected to the lost planet of Antioch, a world with reputed access to Kurgan space. What contact, if any, Twilight has with the caliphate is unknown.

**The Citadel:** This planetary superpower has gained superiority over the entire solar system with its Blackstar Fleet. Masters from centuries experience in intelligence, espionage, and asymmetric warfare, the Citadel has circumvented the Hawkwood quarantine to make diplomatic overtures to the Church, guilds, and the other houses, meanwhile bartering for (or stealing) technologies to improve their spacefleet. Their agents, known as “Gray Men” (though they are just as likely to be women), have been tracked to at least a dozen worlds. Feeding its population’s sense of xenophobia, paranoia and inherent superiority, the Citadel is now the world’s preeminent military power, with well-trained ground and space forces. In 5008, our agents noted the death of the Citadel’s Domitor, Kerima Vajra. Control of the planet has now passed to a planetary think-machine called the Colossum.

**Blackstar One:** In 5015, a Citadel dreadnought, known only as Blackstar One, destroyed Hawkwood observation bases on moons around the gas-giant, Night, at the terminus of Twilight’s system. The black leviathan then entered Ravenna space, hunting down military and civilian craft. Two Hawkwood capital ships, the Lombardy and the Alexandra, engaged but were crippled in a firefight, before the leviathan retreated. A combined Hawkwood/Imperial hunt team gave chase, ultimately rendering it inert near Twilight itself, though its shell was later recovered by the Citadel. Damage to Hawkwood prestige has been immense. “If a single planet’s ship can do this to the vaunted Hawkwood fleet...?” became a question asked in war departments throughout the Empire.

— Baron Chamon Mazarin (Byzantium Secundus)





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Death), their conjunction in the sky is supposed to portend death and calamity. Dro and Madro have over 40 moons between them, however, some of which have been settled in past centuries.

**Nylus:** Nylus is a large, rocky world, at least three times Ravenna's mass. Because of its monstrous gravity, Nylus has never been exploited, despite its mineral wealth.

**Jumpgate:** The system's jumpgate follows an elliptical orbit beyond Nylus at 68AU. Ravenna's gate is less ornate than most, a fact that the conservative people of Ravenna point to with pride. The gate has been traditionally well-guarded against Vuldrok raiders, and because of general Ravennan insularity. The opening of the route to Twilight, however, now sees the gate under virtual interdiction, with all passing ships heavily searched.

**Ploo:** Ploo is a small orb of frozen rock.

## People & Places

The most frequent stereotype of a Ravenna citizen is of a disapproving and taciturn zealot, as typified by Father Scowler in the popular *Dan Comet Chronicles*. While it is true that Ravenna is the most traditional of Hawkwood worlds, its people are generally no more single-minded than on any other planet.

Ravenna has three continents (Castillo, Andyra, and Folari) and eight major island groups (Chul, Kasi, Trieste, Austram East, Austram West, Lugano, Locarno, and Bredonia). Originally torn apart by runaway tectonic activity, the planet's geological destiny is now determined by its aging planetary engines.

The most common branches of the Hawkwood family on Ravenna are the conservative Darians, the Solara clan (which has intermarried heavily with House Trusnikron), and the austere Grimmoards.

Guild and Church activity have also typically followed Ravenna's orderly traditions, though Orthodoxy here tends toward mysticism and personal spiritualism that might be considered heretical, if the planet was not otherwise so respectable.

### CASTILLO

House Hawkwood gave this continent to the Church after the Fall; diplomatically, Castillo is now considered Terra Firma (part of Holy Terra). The citizens of Castillo are counted among the most devout in the Known Worlds. Industrious and honest to a fault, crime and corruption are virtually unknown. The Inquisition has wide support as keepers of public order, with citizens cheerfully greeting them on the street. Whether the citizenry's honesty is a result of

the continent's inherent holiness, or of the Church's draconian adherence to Orthodox law and codes of punishment, is in question.

The Castillo Theological University is a major font of learning throughout the Empire; every year thousands of scholars, merchants and pilgrims visit the Castillian Holy Land, most particularly the mount in southern Castillo where Zebulon addressed the multitudes.

The continent's spiritual and temporal leader is the Archbishop Sondra Nies, who is also the supreme theological authority for the planet at large. The archbishop is a conservative member of the Orthodoxy's Hinayana tradition and staunchly opposed to the concept of an emperor of any house.

### ANDYRA

Emperor Alexius was born here but, in his absence, Andyra is ruled by his brother, the Grand Duke Alvarix. Despite occasionally strident criticism by house and Church critics, Emperor Alexius remains popular among the people. Peasant homes across the region keep images of the Emperor in places of honor and pray every night for his wellbeing. Alexius's reign has also brought a new age of prosperity to the continent. Visiting pilgrims who wish to do so may see the birth place of the Known World's longest-reigning Emperor flood the planet.

The boom times on Byzantium Secundus and other parts of the Empire has resulted in renewed interest for Ravenna's mineral wealth and skilled stone masons. Andyra's citizens are divided between a rural existence in agrarian communities and a partially technological way of life in its deepcore mining cities. Due to its status as a center of politics and major export center, Andyra maintains a large interplanetary spaceport in its capital (Suryada) and a comprehensive magna-rail train system.

### SURYADA

Suryada is a large, orderly city in the south-central portion of Andyra. Almost all the buildings in Suryada are made of quarried stone. Builders mostly disdain synthetic materials such as maxicrete, and the population destroyed all the Second Republic architecture after the Fall. The most important buildings are made from Ravennan marble of various dazzling patterns and hues.

Suryada contains such sites as the royal palace, the planetary agora (the Viceroy), and St. Regoe's Cathedral. There are multiple active guilds in the city, far more than on the planet at large. The spaceport in Suryada is large, opulent, and displays a combination of the modern and the traditional.



## THE GRAND-DUKE ALVAREX

When Alexius ascended the throne, he surprised many by distancing himself from the family and ceding most of his Ravennan lands to his brother. Alexius's younger brother (by a year), Duke Alvarez Hawkwood bears a strong physical resemblance to the Emperor, and is occasionally mistaken for him. Once a staunch supporter of his brother's rise to power, the Grand-Duke has since become one of his most frequent critics. He now lends his prestige to a faction of malcontents within the family, many of whom expected imperial favors and were disappointed when they were not forthcoming.

Duke Alvarez has a keen military mind, as he proved in the Cadavus Offensive, but was initially considered a political novice. Over time, however, he has skillfully made inroads to a myriad of military and political departments. Already admiral of the Hawkwood fleet, he also has allies in the Ravenna and Delphi parliaments, army generals, and the Rooks. His military expertise makes him a valuable tactician whose services are often sought

by the Imperial Fleet — a force he believes he should command. These hopes have been dashed twice, most recently when Marquessa Cefariana Hazat became fleet admiral in 5015.

Alvarez recently made a financial bid to purchase what he could not earn, by buying out considerable interests of warfleet construction on Tethys. In this he was outmaneuvered by Dean Njeri, an ally of Emperor Alexius, and lost a fortune as a result. He appealed to the Dowager Mother, Lady Regnus-Octavia Hawkwood, and her intervention saved him from financial ruin, but the fallout was embarrassing to him and the family at large. One political cartoon published in an imperial organ (and distributed widely by the Promoters Guild) featured the proud duke as a baby in a soiled diaper, crying for his mother. The cartoonist committed suicide a month later.

Duke Alvarez maintains an extensive estate on Ravenna. Here the Duke hosts many like-minded family members, treating them to hunting parties and gala festivities. The Duke also enjoys funding from multiple unknown sources outside of Hawkwood space.

## DEEPCORE CITIES

Deepcore cities are urban complexes built around deep mining shafts during the Diaspora and Second Republic. Up to 10 kilometers in diameter, some are rumored to extend 200 kilometers or more into the planet's interior. Originally built to exploit the planet's deep mineral wealth, and later to install and service its planetary engines, the cities are largely enigmas.

During earlier times, the sprawling underground metropolises supported hundreds of thousands of workers. Grand concourses, shopping and entertainment plazas, and spaceship landing pads jutted out hundreds of yards over the yawning precipices. Abandoned and placed under Church interdiction during the early Dark Ages, some of them were made active again after the barbarian invasions of the 46<sup>th</sup> century. There are currently 14 active cities. Plans to open more have been postponed in the wake of the Deepcore 6 disaster.

The cities often have unofficial names, but most are known by their pedestrian republican names (i.e., Deepcore 1, 2, and 3, etc.). They are largely administered by Muster miners and Scraver archaeologists, though House Justinian also runs three mines. This has led to fierce competition and even some violence between local guilds and the off-world nobles.

Power has been restored (at least partially) to some of these complexes, while miners still dig by oil-light

in others. Strict Church and noble edicts ban exploration of the deeper tunnels, for fear of disturbing monsters, planetary engines, and exposing the faithful to forbidden technology. The Inquisitorial Synod sends confessors to ensure the theological purity of each mining operation. Mining operations have been plagued by monstrous subterranean creatures. Deepcore cities also draw the attention of Eskatonic geomancers who wish to study the planet's deepest secrets.

## FOLARI

Since the Fall, Folari has been divided between two great fiefs. The southern region is a typical Hawkwood duchy, while the mountainous northern continent is ruled by the Hawkwood's long-time allies of House Trusnikron.

### FOLARI NORTH

North Folari is highly mountainous, forested, and wild, with more species of wildlife than anywhere else on the planet. Some Muster activity takes place on the mountainous eastern coast, but there are strict rules governing the guild's mining and timbering practices. The Reeves also have a role maintaining the region's wealth, but high-tech guilds such as the Engineers and the Charioteers are virtually nonexistent here.

Nobles in this region are frequently of the Solara Clan, a noble family with deep roots in both House



Hawkwood and Trusnikron. Trusnikron nobles mostly live in palatial mountain-top aeries, soaring above their subjects on their great urroc steeds. Their hardy

subjects live in stone or timber houses, usually with numerous animals. House Hawkwood has often depended on the Trusnikron for their aid in war, fierce loyalty, and good council.

Numerous deepcore cities once operated here, but are now abandoned and are viewed with apprehension. The Church and House Trusnikron ward off explorers, though the Scravers have sent several requests to conduct archaeological expeditions. So far, the house's leader, Countess Morgana Solara-Trusnikron, has refused all such entreaties. The countess is a compelling figure, with long brown hair and a shock of white running throughout. She is a master fencer and champion urroc rider.

#### DEEPCORE 6

It has only been in the last century that the planet has made efforts to reclaim the mysterious deepcore structures. That effort is now in jeopardy after the Deepcore 6 disaster. In mid-5018 a series of ancient warning systems alerted Muster administrators that a Scriver research team deep within the complex had disrupted an ancient technological or mystic safeguard. Within hours, a major series of earthquakes shook the facility, which erupted into a 100-megaton column of flame, piercing the planet's thermosphere. The resultant environmental catastrophe created earthquakes worldwide and a blanket of ash that set off a long winter over Folari South. Weather control stations around the globe were knocked offline by cascading failures, and people used to perfect weather were suddenly confronted with freak blizzards and fireballs



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from the sky. While most of the weather-control systems have since adjusted on their own, sporadic rogue weather patterns appear with no warning.

Deepcore 6 still burns as a permanent hell-pit, belching forth fire, radioactive smoke and more mysterious emissions, not unlike the black demon-laden fogs of Delphi's Kago.

### **FOLARI SOUTH**

Folari South still profits from its remaining mineral wealth, though much of its resources are, after a thousand years of exploitation, finally near exhaustion. There were only three deepcore cities (two Muster and one House Justinian) working on the continent.

Duke Cassius Grimmoard-Hawkwood, and his predecessors have slowly steered the region's economy to a more agrarian base. Duke Cassius is reactionary in political and theological principle, but a conscientious leader. Muster and Justinian emissaries have urged the Duke to open the continent to mineral development, but he has refused. This is partially because of the local Church's strong objections to technological expansion, but mostly to honor a long-standing treaty with the Trusnikron. This did not, however, protect the region when the already operational Deepcore 6 facility exploded, enveloping the region in an ash-choked winter. Eskatonic mystics, Amalthean healers, and other specialists have flocked to the region to study the phenomenon and mitigate its damage, but their efforts have been dwarfed by the magnitude of the disaster. Hawkwood regulars seek to keep order, but looting and other crimes have ensued. Both the Inquisition and the Prichnya are abroad in the land to keep order, the latter blaming witch covens for causing the disaster.

## **ISLANDS**

Besides Ravenna's three continents, there are also eight notable island territories: Austram (West and East), Chul, Kasi, Trieste, Lugano and Locarno, and Bredonia.

### **AUSTRAM**

A conflict between two Hawkwood nobles on the Austram Islands has long marred Ravennan serenity, becoming something of an embarrassment for the planet at large, and more recently a proxy battle between family hardliners and supporters of the Emperor.

The island chain has traditionally been a single duchy, but the last duke divided it between his two children. The elder heir (Count Otto Kierkegaard) inherited Austram West, but claiming both islands, has launched multiple attacks on the island of his half-sister (Countess Cassandra Solara).

Seen as the more traditional claimant, Count Otto has gained support from the Ravenna family at large,

including that of Duke Alvarez. The Countess, a favorite cousin of the Emperor, has become an imperial cause célèbre.

Austram West is a hilly country and the richer of the two islands. Countess Cassandra's island (Austram East) is a lower lying island and richer in new-found mineral wealth. Heavily forested, both islands have a reputation for big game hunting (including the ocelynx, a nearly extinct giant cat) and rare spices.

### **CHUL**

Chul's inhabitants are backward, insular, and suspicious. They disapprove of even the low levels of technology seen on the rest of Ravenna, believing that such items as oil lamps and water wheels are evil. Chul's ruler and headman is Baron Nicodemus Grimmoard. Following a splinter sect from the Orthodox Church, they worship the island's live volcano as an avatar of the Pancreator. Citizens of neighboring Kasi have accused Chul's citizens of human sacrifice.

### **KASI**

Kasi is a rugged island with an active Muster mining operation at Deepcore 12. Its citizens enjoy a slightly higher level of technology than that found on most of the planet. Many have electric lighting, though the Muster keeps a cap on more advanced technologies in deference to planetary tradition. Beyond conflict with its Chul neighbors, Kasi has had other problems of late. Recently, after discovering a new vein of Ravennium (a coveted ingredient found in the best ceramsteel), miners began to disappear in the tunnels. The Muster believes some subterranean horror is killing them.

### **TRIESTE**

Trieste is a heavily wooded island and supports one of the planet's three spaceports because of its willingness to handle high technology. The island acts as a center of trade and has a high League presence. Perhaps most importantly, Trieste is one of the Empire's few sources for luminite. Trieste has for generations been dubiously regarded abroad for its flirtations with technosophy and the antics of its playgirl ruler, the Baroness Morgein. It retains this reputation (albeit for different reasons) after the old baroness died, leaving the barony to her "strange daughter," Parisa Maizièrè.

### **LUGANO AND LOCARNO**

Lugano and Locarno are two relaxed resort islands known for their Urth-like wildlife, breathtaking scenery, and rich ocean life in the surrounding coral reefs. Both islands are major tourist and business attractions for Ravenna citizens and off-worlders alike. The islands have plush resort hotels and are more cosmopolitan than the planet at large.



## BREDONIA

Bredonia is a small, sleepy barony administered by Brother Bernardo Li Halan, a former commander of the Teldor Garrison on Leminkainen. Since the Barbarian Invasions of the 46th century, Bredonia has become a retirement home for warriors who live out their remaining lives in either monastic solitude or as teachers to a new generation. The St. Lextius Academy draws aspiring warriors from many worlds. The only evidence of high-science is in the academy's rather surprising arsenal of ancient, modern, and alien weaponry.

## Leminkainen

Newcomers to this forest world often underestimate its dangers due to its sylvan appearance, but its deadliness is respected by natives and often used to temper Hawkwood knights from less-perilous planets.

Baked by a red giant sun, with shallow warm seas evaporating into space, Leminkainen still boasts lush vegetation. Its arboreal splendor, nurtured in the dying days of the Second Republic, is largely the result of biological super-science. Now Leminkainen teeters toward total environmental collapse, despite its verdant veneer. Much of the planet is also whipped by strong winds, ranging from constant breezes to immense cyclones. The constant howling of the winds is enough to drive some mad; many believe there are evil wind spirits here who steal men's souls.

## Recent Events

Bordering barbarian space via its jumprouse to Hargard, Leminkainen long bore the brunt of Vuldrok raids. It was occupied for a time by barbarians, and their descendants still live here, maintaining what they claim is a sovereign nation. Leminkainen has benefited greatly from the lessening of barbarian raids after Alexius married the Vuldrok shield-maiden, Freya Eldridsdottir. Support for the Emperor here is strong, even if much of the rest of the family is not held in high regard. While traditionally a Hawkwood world, it is the most tenuously held by the lion house.

Leminkainen's deep past as a corporate laboratory continues to reverberate, usually negatively, through the present. Not a year passes where some new disease or genetically engineered horror from the past does not menace the population. Green and orange spore clouds appear in populated areas accompanied by the claxon call of "Green" or "Orange Alert" to warn citizens to don their gasmasks. Green spores are wildly hallucinogenic and only imperfectly prevented with breathers; the orange spores are deadly but usually preventable with even simple breather units.

During recent schisms, many people on Leminkainen openly revolted. Temple Avesti gained a good deal of power as a result, as have Muster mercenaries in charge of planetary security.



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# Solar System

**Nax:** Nax is a medium-sized planet that boasted a science complex during the Second Republic. Now it sits in the outer fringes of the sun's corona and is a desolate molten world. Twisted metal wreckage is all that remains of the Republic's ceramsteel pressure domes.

**Leminkainen (Staltos, Cox, Momerath):** Leminkainen is the system's second satellite. The planet's three moons are considered sister goddesses by the Vuldrok.

**Shylkor:** During the Emperor Wars, barbarian raiders seized Shylkor and claimed it for the Vuldrok Star-Nation. In the wake of the Hargard Accords, it has now come under imperial management. Shylkor hosts a spaceport which is still an occasional target for barbarian attacks.

**Tantalus:** An icy, volcanic world with a thin atmosphere containing a breathable percentage of free-floating oxygen. Liquid water and strange aquatic life exist under the ice near volcanic vents. House Dextrite, the Engineers, and even Decados Genetechs have visited the planet to perform secret research.

**Ivald:** A seething, radioactive world of volcanoes, spitting lava and ash hundreds of kilometers into the atmosphere.

**Mord:** Mord is a desolate, heavily cratered planet in the middle of the system's great asteroid belt. Ships that try to land on Mord must be skillfully piloted or be smashed to pieces. An ancient Diasporan research facility exists in one of the planet's sheltered canyons and was recently reactivated by a combined Eskaton-ic/Engineer research group. It is said that those who die on Mord arise as husks.

**Bilgo:** Bilgo is an icy, asteroid-pitted world.

**Jumpgate:** Circling at over 101AU, Leminkainen's gate has a reptilian motif and tends toward longer reset times.

## People & Places

Due to the planet's harsh history, its inhabitants are understandably suspicious of strangers. The Hawkwoods of Leminkainen and their subjects feel wronged by the house at large, and are especially suspicious of the Darian and Gervaise clans. Of the four Hawkwood worlds, Leminkainen is most frequently the odd one out, and there are long memories of wrongs done in the past.

The planet is also a penal colony for criminals and heretics from throughout Hawkwood space, with Chainers and inquisitors often in charge of these populations. Indeed, there are more Avestites on





Leminkainen than on any other Hawkwood world. Both current prisoners and descendants of past prisoners make up a not insubstantial percentage of the population.

The most numerous Hawkwoods here are Leminkainen's primary rulers, the independent (and frequently warlike) Cortrans. The Taggarts are another branch, known mainly for their stubbornness,

and their non-Hawkwood shortness and burliness. They are fearsome defensive fighters and frequently live in underground complexes.

## LEMINKAINEN TRAITS

Leminkainen's sun is badly affected by the fading suns phenomenon and has decayed into a dying red giant.

**Rulers:** Duchess Catherine Cortran-Hawkwood (Jyväskylä), Duke Redoran Taggart-Hawkwood II (Grikkor), Thane Skarash (Vuldrok warlord of Valdalla)

**Major Cathedrals:** Morali Cathedral (Eskatonic Order, eight-sided structure on the continent of Jyväskylä, houses one of the largest libraries in the Empire), Garden of Souls (Avestite, Grikkor)

**Major Agorae:** Agricorp Central (Grikkor), Blood Desert Agora (Jyväskylä)

**Capitol:** Hakkonen

**Jumps:** 1 (Byzantium Secundus > Leminkainen)

**Adjacent Worlds:** Byzantium Secundus (dayside), Ravenna (nightside), Aylon (nightside), Hargard (nightside)

**Solar System:** Nax, Leminkainen (Staltos, Cox, Momerath), Shylkor, Tantalus, Clarul, Mord, Bilgo

**Human Population:** 500,000 Hawkwood/200,000 barbarian (estimated)

**Alien Population:** 8,000 ur-obun / 4,000 ur-ukar

**Resources:** Pygmallium, agriculture, prisons

**Exports:** Pygmallium, giant vegetables, refugees, cutting edge medical technology

**Landscape:** Leminkainen has four continents (Jyväskylä, Grikkor, Valdalla, and Isalight) and six major islands (Kriel, Vree, Mog, Tesla, Mazor, and the Cordan Chain). Despite its almost oven-like temperatures and dry climate, most of the planet still retains a lush covering of genetically engineered green. The planet's three moons cause fast-moving tidal swells in the shallow, salt-laden oceans; an area that is underwater at high tide may be as many as 80 kilometers away from the nearest water at low tide.

*God is good, but his planet is trying to kill us! Demon tornadoes, poison soil, predatory plants and animals, husks, bandits, and a sun that's boiling away our seas! Listen, I have a maxicrete castle built into solid bedrock with a ceram-steel blast door and the best air filtration systems you can buy, but last week one of my men turned dead-eye on us in the middle of dinner and infected two other men before we could destroy them. What hope do people on the surface have?*

— Baron Jord Taggart, East Jyväskylä

## JYVÄSKYLÄ

Ruled by Duchess Catherine Cortran-Hawkwood, Jyväskylä ranges in land surface from hard rock plains to great forests, low mountain ranges, and red deserts. Sluggish, silt-laden rivers also wind their way through the continent's interior; their banks teem with jungle life.

The central portion of the continent is covered by the so-called Blood Desert, a vast wasteland of scarlet sand, once a major mining and industrial region. Heavily bombed in consecutive wars, the area is mostly devoid of human activity. Ruined buildings protrude from the desert and rumors of Changed cultists, demi-intelligent husks, wind demons, and other Second Republic monstrosities keep this region free of all but the boldest explorers.

This changed somewhat when a geological team discovered deposits of Pygmallium, the valuable but illicit material used to create the neural matrix of intelligent golems. Imperial forces guard the mining site from attack or misuse. Permission for Church oversight has so far been politely rebuked by Duchess Catherine, even as she has fended off the Inquisitorial Synod's accusations of apostasy and "monster making."

North Jyväskylä is cooler and receives more rainfall than many areas. A series of robust farms feed much of the continent; great fields of red wheat alternate with rich forest land. The dusty eastern end of the continent is in the Tornado Belt, hosting some of the most extreme weather in the Empire. Here "demon storms" have stripped away the vegetation, scouring the land surface down to its rocky mantle. Those who live here say the winds are inhabited by demons in service to T'chakk-alak, also called the Tyrant of

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Storms. When the winds howl, many say they can hear his laughter.

Situated here is the foreboding Haxor Prison, a high security facility for the Hawkwood's most dangerous criminals and terrorists. Run by the Muster and overseen by Baron Chrysler Taggart Hawkwood, only a small handful of criminals have ever escaped from here over the centuries.

South Jyväskylä suffered recent Vuldrok invasions. When defeated, the barbarians left a new strain of Kessler's Plague behind. Over two thirds of the population died in the decades that followed and now much of the region is completely deserted, except by wandering husks. Rumors of old technology caches here still draw explorers.

### **HAKKONEN**

The continent's capital city, Hakkonen is beautiful despite its tenuous existence at the edge of the Blood Desert. A maze of graceful, sand-blasted terracite structures from the Second Republic forms its center. Air-conditioning comforts the Muster executives, the nearby spaceport, and nobles in the queen's Crimson Palace. The great eight-sided Morali Cathedral in Hakkonen houses one of the largest libraries in the Empire.

### **GRIKKOR**

Located in the planet's northern hemisphere, Grikkor was originally controlled by Agricorn Interstellar and derives its name from that extinct corporation. Hardy farmers make a subsistence living from the arid land. Grikkor has so far escaped the wild weather patterns and tectonic instability of neighboring Jyväskylä, but has more husk plagues than any other place in Hawkwood space.

Grikkor's southern regions are mostly difficult to farm and unpopulated, except by hardy forest nomads and genetic monstrosities. The region has also drawn attention because of rumors about a powerful entity known as the Duke of Ravens, who controls a widespread antinomist cult network, as well as stories about malevolent mutants and other Second Republic monstrosities.

Most of the continent's population lives along the northern coast, in rural enclaves or in the cities of Dyrak and Sardan. Despite its troubles, Grikkor remains a politically cohesive state under its ruler, Duke Redoran Hawkwood II.

The planet's most fertile area is in South Grikkor's Mikkelschire Region, a place renowned for its unique plant growth. Situated in a wide river flood plain, the region produces a fantastic quantity of scarlet wheat and the planet's specialty: enormous vegetables. Here one can find brute-sized radishes and even larger tubers. Also here is the Avestite Garden of Souls.

### **DYRAK**

The continent's radial capitol, Dyrak, is a dreary looking maxicrete city on the edge of an extinct inland sea in Grikkor's southern region. The palace is a Second Republic terracite structure (originally Agricorn's corporate headquarters), and shares the royal concourse with the city's cathedral and agora. The Agricorn Agora is an opulent structure and center of vice, including a criminal element with suspected Scraver backing.

### **SARDAN**

This pleasure resort on Grikkor's northern coast is either an oasis paradise or a pit of sin and iniquity. Shielded from the elements under great blue poly-shielded domes, the resort allows guests from any background, if they are



willing to pay. Here one might meet extravagant diletantes, League deans, successful criminals, archbishops, barbarian chieftains, and undercover agents.

## THE GARDEN OF SOULS

*In central Mikkeshire is the Avestite monastic-township and rehabilitative prison known as the Garden of Souls. Here inquisitors gently or sternly guide prisoners back to the Pancreator's light. Most of the prison grounds are without walls or fences, and thousands of criminals farm its bountiful fields.*

*Run by the benevolent Mother Dulcinea Montrosa Cortez-Hazat de Sutek, a minor noble who gave her life over to the inquisition, the monastic prison is a visual delight. The prisoners seem content and interested in re-entering society as productive citizens.*

*Rumors of more brutal treatment in the monastery's catacombs have been investigated by House Hawkwood and the Amaltheans, who have found no proof of these accusations. At any rate, most prisoners say: "Better the red-hoods than Haxor or Kriel."*

*— Travels in the Empire, Brother Bartamus of Aylon*

## VALDALLA

Ceded to the barbarian invaders by the Teldor Treaty, Valdalla houses a patchwork of barbarian farms, shanty towns, and warrior barracks. The lead barbarians have taken the better accommodations in the region's old palaces, cathedrals, and agorae, often despoiling them and building statues to their pagan gods. Owing nominal allegiance to House Hawkwood in accordance with the Hargard Treaty, Valdalla has taken on some civilized Hawkwood aspects.

Most here are Gjartins, who follow a path of personal enlightenment at variance with the Universal Church. Gjartin shamans wield strange powers of an unexplained thaumaturgical nature.

Trade and cultural exchange is limited, but does exist. Hawkwood administrators oversee certain governing functions, but such positions are dangerous and intrigue-laden. The barbarians are a fractious lot and many have little interest in honoring existing treaties. Valdalla's last ruler, a monstrous bravo

named Thorium Ukrops, was killed in single combat and replaced by Thane Skarash, a more "civilized barbarian" in the words of one imperial observer.

## CORTRAN BARONY

The Cortran Barony is an ancient Hawkwood territory. The hilly barony follows a martial tradition and resents the loss of their territory to Vuldrok invaders, and the Empire's willingness to trade off much of their land for what they see as a dubious peace. Centuries of war left much of the region scarred, especially along the 1000-kilometer front where both sides maintained a state of trench warfare, with the Vuldrok escalating over time from swords to Decados-supplied radium blasters. The ruler of the Cortran Barony is the steely Baroness Antonia Cortran-Hawkwood.

## MAJOR ISLANDS

Besides Leminkainen's continents, there are also seven major island territories: The Fiefdom of Isalight, Mazor, Kriel, Tesla, Vree, Mog, and the Teldor Imperial Zone.

### FIEFDOM OF ISALIGHT (HOUSE VASALAYANA)

The Isalight Fiefdom is an independent kingdom ruled by House Vasalayana. While the house is historically an ally, its recent relationship with House Hawkwood has been rocky. Suffering barbarian incursions in the '90s, the house repelled the invaders but then, with Decados prompting, attacked Hawkwood installations. Among the dead was Sir Erasius Hawkwood, a favorite nephew of Princess Victoria. The incident engendered outrage on the knight's native Delphi. "Erasius Brigades," consisting of young nobles spoiling for war, demanded the house's destruction. The Isalight's new ruler, King Sasha Vasalayana, has made restitution and the matter is officially closed, though bad feelings persist.

### MAZOR

Mazor is a small and, for Leminkainen, peaceful place. Miraculously resisting the earlier barbarian invasions, the jungle island's ruler, Baroness Latera al-Malik, maintains an orderly court from her hillside mansion. Her wealth has attracted pirates but a powerful automated defense system protects from attackers.

### KRIEL

Kriel is the traditional home of House Dextrite. How this house, more appropriate to Decados space, has existed all these years on Leminkainen is a testament to their roachlike ability to survive. Under the aegis of its masters, House Masseri, they have garnered wealth and privilege by selling their superior medical skills.

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The island's ruler, Duke Honorius Masseri-Dextrite, has received doctorates on planets as disparate as Criticorum, Artemis, and Severus.

Kriel also houses a joint Dextrite-Chainer penal colony, housing violent criminals from many worlds. Deformed pirates ply the surrounding waters in submersible ships. These mutant corsairs launch raids on shipping lanes and vulnerable coastal townships on Mazor, Vree, and the Isalight Fiefdom before disappearing without a trace.

#### **TESLA**

Duchess Catherine gave the Supreme Order of Engineers a 100-year lease here in 4965 for unspecified services. In little time the guild constructed a research facility (an advanced maxicrete "castle") and mined the waters around the island to discourage visitors. Among its public offerings are new strains of fauna, medical advances, and new spaceship technologies. The Avestites claim it is a "golem factory."

#### **VREE**

Like much of the southern Jyväskylä coast, Vree is catacombed with fjords now laid bare by the pitiless sun. Great stone arches, numerous caves, and subterranean rivers provide ideal hiding places for pirates, runaway serfs, and a suspected cabal of antinomists. Its few legitimate citizens fearfully inhabit three small towns along its northern coast.

#### **MOG**

A small forested island, Mog shares Vree's craggy coastal appearance, but is ostensibly uninhabited. Used for nuclear testing and bio-weaponry research in past centuries, the island is rife with plague and inhabited by a host of large and voracious insects. There is a newly recovered Dextrite research lab on the island's center.

#### **TELDOR/IMPERIAL ANNEX ZONE**

The Annex Zone consists of the Cordan Island Chain and occupies a strategic position near Grikkor, Jyväskylä, Valdalla, and the Isalight Fiefdom. Overseen by Bishop Nostroma Del of Brother Battle, the Annex Zone is fortified with "Taggart forts," and patrolled by Hawkwood ships. The militarized zone ostensibly guards against barbarian aggression, but long folklore indicates it guards a darker secret. Taggart forts are sturdy dome-shaped forts fashioned from maxicrete and pre-fabricated ceramsteel ribbing.

## **Other Holdings**

Besides its primary planetary holdings, House Hawkwood has interests and sway on several other worlds.

## **Velisamil**

Obun (or Velisamil to its natives) is a Hawkwood protectorate. Ur-obun history stretches back into the mists of time, long before they encountered humanity. House Hawkwood considers the ur-obun a proprietary cultural treasure and have largely left them to their own devices. Hawkwood presence is centered in the capital city, Looajen. The planet's ruling council, the Umo'rin, rules over the planet in most respects, consulting House Hawkwood only on major policy matters. Hawkwood ships patrol the system's jumpgate.

## **Byzantium Secundus**

The Empire's drowning capitol planet has its own existential concerns; the fact that their Emperor is also a Hawkwood is of supreme indifference to most. (House Cameton is the local dominant noble family.) To address this, House Hawkwood has spent millions to make sure that its interests here are respected, buying time in the Town Crier press and elsewhere to explain Hawkwood values and concerns. The "Ravenna Lobby" is shorthand to Alexius' supporters for propaganda by his brother, Alvarix. Hawkwood knights are plentiful on Byzantium Secundus, and many other Hawkwoods serve under the imperial banner.

## **Tethys**

Although Tethys is not officially a Hawkwood world, the family has long maintained strong economic, cultural, and military interests there. Perhaps the most valuable of these are the house's ties with the Ambrim crafter-family; this alliance has provided the Hawkwoods a secure source for their spaceships. Although other noble families (and now, the Empire) have contracts with the crafters, House Hawkwood still holds the most valuable shipping contracts.

The Dowager Mother, Lady Regnus-Octavia Hawkwood, is a major player on Tethys and houses much of her private fleet here. With its jumpgates leading to Delphi and Byzantium Secundus, Tethys is seen by the family as strategically vital.

## **Bannockburn**

A League planet, family power is still a negotiated necessity here because of its position between the Hawkwood planets and the symbiots. Besides its cultural ties, Hawkwood worlds are the largest customers for Bannockburn goods and services. The house has used this leverage to maintain a strong diplomatic and military presence on the planet.



# Institutions

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## The Military

A proven factor as recently as the Emperor Wars and in skirmishes with the Vuldrok, the Hawkwood military is a refined instrument of war. While a dashing cavalry officer, with sword in one hand and a blaster in the other, is the picture many have when thinking of the lion at war, House Hawkwood stresses staff work and logistics at least as much as individual heroics.

### ARMY

The Hawkwood inter-planetary army is a small, disciplined force, blending patriotic sentiment with a well-paid professional core, rather than relying on drafts or press-gangs. For larger wars the house depends on individual family armies to complement their regular force. The quality and technological sophistication of these units varies widely, though the army's leaders maintain up-to-date records on all units throughout Hawkwood space.

Hawkwood armies utilize organizational principles and a ranking system that would be largely recognizable to a First Republic-era observer. Lower ranks (private through sergeant) are typically held by yeomen commoners, while the officer corps (lieutenant-general) is mostly the preserve of house nobles, though particularly brave or intelligent commoners find ample room for advancement.

### WET NAVY

House Hawkwood maintains little in the way of a navy on its core four planets. None of their planets are seriously contested by competitors who can field their own waterborne navies, so ships are largely used either to police local problems (pirates or other criminals) or for search-and-rescue missions.

On icy Delphi, Hawkwood ships serve mainly to keep open trade routes. Ravenna and Gwynneth are also worlds with little internal competition. It is only on Leminkainen, where pirate vessels emanate from the Vuldrok Star-Nation's bases on Valdalla, do blue water fleets sometimes clash.

Hawkwood sea-going ships are frequently wooden sailing vessels, both in respect to Church restrictions, as well as a matter of saving money.

### NOBLE ARMADA

House Hawkwood has put most of its military resources into its space fleet. Hawkwood ships share

standard class configurations with those of the other noble fleets (explorer, raider, escort, frigate, galliot, destroyer, cruiser, and dreadnought). Typically colored white and blue, and proudly emblazoned with the house's crest, the ships make for a grand sight on display or in battle.

Much of the Hawkwood Armada has been constructed on Tethys, by the same shipyards that maintain the Imperial Armada. Duke Alvarex is the Grand Admiral of the Hawkwood fleet and has worked tirelessly to repair and modernize it since its victories during the Emperor Wars.

The fleet's current missions mostly revolve around curbing Vuldrok piracy and guarding against the symbiot menace, though a sizable contingent now watches over the Ravenna jumpgate and has made raids into the Twilight system. While respected throughout the Empire, the fleet has recently lost prestige due to the Blackstar One incident, and is looking to settle the score.

## The Rooks

From the start, House Hawkwood built its security apparatus to comport with the house's high level of honor and responsibility. The present era has challenged the Rooks with matters that go beyond intrigues against their competitor houses, most notably the rise of the symbiots and the newly found threat of Twilight.

The Rooks must also contend with new and dangerous currents within House Hawkwood itself. These forces have friends in every stratum of society. No less a personage than Alvarex Hawkwood has his hooks deep within the intelligence community. The agency's longtime second-in-command (Count Chan Darian-Hawkwood), took full power when his predecessor, Marquis Cedric, crash landed in a poorly understood incident over Daishan in 5017.

Along with its more regular host of agents, military and criminal analysts, and forensic specialists, the Rooks have two highly specialized departments.

### V-SECTOR

Specializing in the murky arena known broadly as "alien affairs," this department has a varied past. The Rooks have cultivated a dependable supply of talented obun and other alien operatives. With bureaus based in the Kessel Building on Delphi, Gwynneth (Rangor Island), Trieste Island on Ravenna, and on Velisamil, V-Sector is currently run by Countess Andoria Hawkwood, a



woman chosen more for political reliability in Ravenna than any knowledge or enthusiasm for the department's mission. Its cagey longtime field director, an obun psychic named Shatara Han Kavar rigorously manages its day-to-day operations, despite ongoing efforts to "put the position back in human hands."

## THE ECHO CHAMBER

Despite society's widespread distrust for psychics, the gifted of this program have served House Hawkwood well, both as intelligence gatherers against the symbiots and in blunting the activities of psychics used by the Rooks' competitors.

The Echo Chamber's primary headquarters is a high security, subterranean complex centered in a hidden thermal rift valley on Moshala (Gwynneth).

Charged with a subtle and dangerous mission, often working in cooperation with holy orders such as the Kalinthe, the Echo Chamber track antinomists and other supernatural threats. The current director of the Echo Chamber is Bishop Petros Hawkwood, a potent Eskatonic theurgist who was permanently crippled on Stigmata.

## The Family (Prominent Branches)

The Hawkwood family is widespread and close-knit; still, families can have their squabbles. Some of the best-known branches of the lion house are known for distinct traits or family outlooks, though one should be careful in ascribing overmuch to these descriptions.

Among the most recognized of the Hawkwoods are: The conservative Darrians and the untamed Solara clan of Ravenna, the noble and exacting Wildes of Gwynneth, the sophisticated (and frequently brilliant) Gervaises and sybaritic Rogans of Delphi, and the fiercely independent Cortrans and stubborn Taggarts of Leminkainen.

There are also branches and individuals who solely hold the name Hawkwood, which was itself a distinct and ancient family. The rustic Grimmoards of Ravenna and Leminkainen, live lives of puritanical abstemiousness that would put many Li Halan or Asvesti to shame. The mystically gifted Maizière branch of the family are at least as likely to take oaths as members of the Eskatonic Order as to ascend to temporal power within their house. There are also the recently re-discovered White Tigers of House Heidgard on Twilight, whose family line diverged from the Hawkwoods a thousand years ago, and yet seemingly retain many Hawkwood traits.

## Personages

The following selection of individuals illustrates the variety of personalities that have brought fame, and sometimes shame, to this noblest of Royal Houses.

### DUKE ERASMUS WILDE (GWYNNETH)

An honorable warrior from an earlier time, Duke Erasmus Wilde-Hawkwood is at 143 (which he jests is the new 113) a regal silver-haired man, exhibiting all the best qualities of House Hawkwood. A skilled strategist and orator, he is loyal to the emperor without forgetting his familial duties.

From Silverheim, his graceful palace in Llanfyrth, Erasmus has long been a force for benign and engaged continuity, using his considerable influence to calm many of the troubling trends of recent decades. Most notably, he has negotiated a durable treaty with the Queen of Sun and Shadow (against whom he battled as a young man), though at the cost of accusations that he has become too friendly with the pagans.

Against Church and family resistance, Duke Erasmus led the planetary effort to censure Tolth's tyrant, Duke William Rochfort, for his atrocities at the turn of the century.

### COUNT TIBERIUS ROGAN (DELPHI)





Ruler of the pleasure-loving polar province of Davros, Count Tiberius Rogan Hawkwood, is a colorful, populist leader. Sometimes called the “Purple Prince,” Rogan is known planet-wide for his scandalous love affairs, with partners of both sexes and even aliens. His people seem to have little problem with his behavior, as long as his reputation keeps pilgrims and other travelers coming to the resort nation.

Seemingly insatiable after many years of such a lifestyle, he continues (in the words of the minstrels) to party as he did in 4999, frequently consorting with minor nobles, guild luminaries, and the region’s impossibly relaxed clergy. Additionally, he has a penchant for mechanical marvels that exceeds even the most non-traditional definition of technosophy. Despite his foppish demeanor, he served with honor on the Sutek front during the war and has a reputation as a skilled duelist.

Three noble children (two sons and a daughter), now in their 20s and seemingly little younger than their father, have joined the family business of leavening sybaritic excess with prudent financial skills and public relations.

## **DUCHESS CATHERINE CORTRAN** **(LEMINKAINEN)**

Jyväskylä’s ruler, Catherine Cortran-Hawkwood, is a cagey, strong-willed woman in her 80s who has ruled over the continent since she was a child. Surviving a barbarian attack that took the lives of both her parents, she became a bulwark against the anarchy of the barbarian hordes, in just 50 years building the region into a formidable military power. Unquestionably loyal to house and emperor, she keeps peace with the Valdalla barbarians if they abide by the Hargard Treaty. During the Emperor Wars she was a skilled commander of a Hawkwood battle fleet, and struck deep into Hazat space.

She is a tall blonde woman who, thanks to her use of cutting-edge longevity drugs, remains in her prime almost 50 years after her exploits on the Aragon front. Catherine has a reputation as being one of the most technologically adroit Hawkwoods.

She has three daughters, all of whom look much like their mother. Each has gone on to distinguish herself. Her eldest, General-Marquis Camille became the viceroy of Tolth after the dissolution of Duke Rochfort’s inquisition state. Her other daughters, Aadya and Melisande, are respectively a captain in the Imperial Fleet and a talented geneticist. The Inquisitorial Synod has made public accusations of apostasy, cloning and “monster making” at the duchess.

## **BARONESS PARISA MAIZIÈRE** **(RAVENNA)**



For some years, the island of Trieste’s reputation was inextricably linked in the public imagination to the hijinks of its raven-haired, playgirl ruler, the Baroness Morgaine. Wolfishly beautiful and devastatingly charismatic, the baroness was one of the most popular and scandalous members of her house. The “Rogue Baroness” flaunted multiple affairs, even with those of the hated House Decados. Indeed, rumors that she was born to a Decados misalliance by her mother was a common accusation against her. Her apparent death in the terrorist destruction of the empyrean liner Osidien over Byzantium Secundus, left the barony to her “strange daughter,” Parisa Maizière.

Parisa, the only legitimate heir to the house, was seemingly ignored while her mother gallivanted from planet to planet, being sent at an early age to a private school on Gwynneth. The new baroness appears the opposite of her mother. Where the latter was brazen and outspoken, the former is studious and tightly controlled. Like her mother, she has a penchant for cybernetic implants, though this is not widely known. Also, like her mother, she often travels abroad, though in search of old manuscripts rather than parties. Whispers that she, like her mother, really uses her travels to perform missions for the Echo Chamber, are only made in the most crazed or privileged circles.

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## COUNT CYRUS-KREUGER WILDE (DELPHI)



Gawky, with glasses, fast talking, and excitable, Count Cyrus is few people's idea of a Hawkwood noble. Born on Gwynneth but always in motion, the brilliant young count is an architectural visionary and master builder, boasting high-profile buildings and major civil engineering projects on a half dozen worlds before he was thirty. Soon one of the richest men in the Empire, the count became enamored by the emperor and his policies while building floating cities on Byzantium Secundus. Now an ardent supporter of the imperialist cause and interplanetary unity, the count has become a thorn in the side of imperial critics. His vocal criticism of the Emperor's brother has lost him support among many in the family.

The count recently and unexpectedly inherited his deceased aunt's lands in Frisia, where he is building a geothermal complex like the deepcore cities of Ravenna, a controversial act of hubris that is not popular with his new subjects. Most frequently found on Tethys, Byzantium Secundus, and Delphi, he is never seen without his bodyguard and friend, a noble vorox named Red-Claw.

## DUKE MONTGOMERY HAWKWOOD (DELPHI)

When his father died, the well-intentioned young duke of Virigo Minor quickly underwent a baptism of fire. In the final years of his father's rule, the ducal palace was a magnet for bad advisors, corrupt politicians, and greedy guilders and priests. The new duke has done much to clean up this corruption, while gaining some powerful enemies.

Duke Montgomery is a quiet, scholarly man. Once considered the most eligible bachelor on Delphi, in his younger years beautiful heiresses and eligible noblewomen from across Delphi and from other houses vied for his attention. The duke now effectively rules the continent along with his husband, the obun mathematician, Ven Sabal. His marriage to an alien caused major scandal a dozen years back, but much of the clamor has since died down.

## COUNTESS PORTIA DARIAN- HAWKWOOD (RAVENNA)



The daughter of an arranged marriage between Sibylla Torenson and the late Phillip Darian-Hawkwood — who governed Ravenna before his untimely death while riding his favorite urroc above the skies of Suryada — Portia Hawkwood has inherited the Torenson grasp of etiquette and protocol. The countess



has taken it upon herself to write the definitive guide to Hawkwood comportment and style.

Once considered one of the 10 most beautiful women in the galaxy, her beauty has faded to a whisper of its former glory, but Portia still represents the height of fashion and grooming.

Portia Hawkwood has glided through three marriages (all arranged) and innumerable love affairs, overseen the weddings of her seven children, managed a sizable Ravenna estate, and dispensed her incomparable knowledge of traditions and protocol to several generations of Hawkwoods. A companion in girlhood to Lady Regnus-Octavia Hawkwood, Countess Portia had a hand in the early education of Alexius; her admirers attribute the emperor's diplomatic skills to her tutelage.

Her own diplomatic skills are considerable. She was the only one able to calm the waters at a recent near disastrous summit between the Hawkwoods and Thane Sigfaddir Firestorm of Hargard, who took to calling her "little mother," and her hauteur has even been known to silence Duke Alvarex on occasion.

Many families send their daughters and sons to stay with her for brief periods so that they absorb some of her good breeding and style. Her latest book, *Manors and Manners*, is considered required reading in polite noble circles, and touches on etiquette and protocol in all the noble houses. Even many curious commoners have read her books to better understand their rulers.

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## IMPERIAL EYE REPORT: THE TWIN MONARCHS

*While traditional noble systems in today's empire admit to no rank higher than prince, Hawkwood space (or areas adjacent) host two powerful entities who carry the titles of queen and king.*

*The Queen of Sun and Shadow (Gwynneth)*

*Since settlers first colonized Gwynneth in the 26<sup>th</sup> century, they have paid homage to the dualistic entity they call the Queen of Sun and Shadow. Portrayed as a beautiful pagan woman, or alternatively as a night-shrouded phantom-panther or a winged sun-serpent (two top predators in Gwynnethan forests), she reputedly watches over and protects the forests and their inhabitants, while also punishing those who transgress forest traditions.*

*The Church and Gwynneth's Hawkwood nobility have variously (depending on the century) considered her as an antinomist threat, worthy adversary, ukari plot, Anunnaki hologram, mass delusion or hoax, planetary guardian, and have even advertised her as a paranormal tourist attraction.*

*Her worshippers claim she communicates with them through dreams and is one with the forest; it is confirmed she uses the old Second Republican bio-grid for instantaneous travel and communication. The forest monarch is considered an implacable enemy of the even older Black Stone God, who reputedly rules Gwynneth's underworld.*

*Our best intelligence categorizes her as an ancient planetary think machine program left by the Anunnaki, though this is hotly debated.*

*The Queen and her followers have had a difficult relationship with House Hawkwood over the centuries, but this has improved with a recent concordat reached between her and Duke Erasmus. While this peace has been welcomed by most, some Hawkwoods have accused the "wood witch" of enchanting the venerable noble. Whatever their true nature, the Queen of Sun and Shadow has no detected power agenda beyond their own world.*

*King Albion Heidgard (Twilight)*

*For the last 50 years, the mysterious ruler of Twilight's White Tigers has held together a fractious collection of nobles while at constant war. Though outside ambassadors and agents have only met him a handful of times, he has gained a reputation as a puissant and honorable lord, working to shepherd his people to safety on a world gone mad.*

*Having survived multiple assassination attempts and massed bombings on his cities, the king is now largely cybernetic, his body housed in a suit of white and gold ceramsteel armor with a permanently affixed tiger-faced helm.*

*Known to be a master combatant, strategist and potent psychic, the "White King" and his Delphian kingdom are badly overmatched by their Citadel foes. Statistical analysis by this department estimates a 78.9% probability that Delphia will be defeated in the next five years if current trends hold.*





## FACTBOOK: THE NOBILITY

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*We find ourselves in an altogether unprecedented situation, not only as a community of planets, but as a species. Archives speak of the ancient empires of Holy Terra, and globe-spanning noble rule has also appeared from time to time in the Known Worlds since the First Republic. Now, however, age-old patterns of noble power have been both greatly disrupted and newly empowered with the dissolution of the regency and the ascension of Emperor Alexius.*

*Never in human history has an individual or faction held such a broad portfolio of powers. In order to understand this new nexus of human endeavor, it is important to distinguish: Is the imperial project an altogether new step in human organization? Or can it still be better understood as a continuation of the noble system that has ruled the stars since the Fall of the Second Republic? Much greater in scope, certainly, but essentially reducible to the family dynastic patterns with which we are all familiar?*

*It is, thus, worth revisiting the root system (nobility) that informs not only traditional interplanetary institutions, but which has expanded its sway to hold the fate of humanity in its hands.*

*— Professor Bishara Xu, The Royal Houses and the Imperial Way (Veridian University, Byzantium Secundus)*

## Noble Hierarchy

For thousands of years, since both the rise of the First Republican noble families and the Fall of the Second Republic (which initiated the true age of noble rule), an intricate and variable hierarchy of noble ranks has been established among the planets and houses that would eventually constitute the modern Empire.

### TITLES AND HOLDINGS

Titles can be inherited, conferred or taken. Especially high ranking nobles may carry a plethora of titles.

## Emperor/Empress

In humanity's long history among the stars, two men have succeeded in ascending to this highest honor. Only the current Emperor Alexius of House Hawkwood has held this position for any time, and before him only Vladimir Alecto held the position (and only for a day). Still, the concept of empire has been a longstanding dream among millions over the centuries of human endeavor among the stars. The concept and reality of a king-of-kings — just in rule and answerable only to the Pancreator — has caused great celebration in the most recent generation, who view

Title	Honorific	Holding
Emperor/Empress	Imperial Majesty	Empire
Prince/Princess	Royal Highness/Highness	Principality
Duke/Duchess	Grace	Duchy
Count/Countess	Lord/Lady	County
Marquis/Marchioness	Lord/Lady	Marquisate
Baron/Baroness	Lord/Lady	Barony
Baronet/Baronetess	Sir/Dame	Baronetcy
Knight	Sir/Dame	Knight's Fief



Alexius' reign as a unique opportunity for unity, justice and preeminence over the stars.

Before Alexius took the Phoenix Throne, the highest position mutually available among the houses was that of regent, a position held for 10 years at the behest of the prince electors of each house (as well as the Church and League scepter holders). The position of regent no longer exists, though many wish to reinstitute it, and to do away with the position of Emperor.

## Prince/Princess

At the zenith of each Royal House sits one prince or princess, who rules over it and who can speak for the entire house in its dealings with other dominions. The powers encompassed by these five interplanetary potentates are immense, with billions living under their rule.

At present the five princes are: Hakim Raschid al-Malik, Hyram Vladislav Decados, Victoria Mountbatten Hawkwood, Juan Jacobi Nelson Eduardo de Aragon de Hazat, and Flavius Kung-Zhau Li Halan.

While a number of women have held the position over history, currently only one of the house rulers is female (Victoria of House Hawkwood). By choice, and through some force of tradition, she has used the masculine form "prince" when dealing with rulers of other houses, though her subjects are just as likely to refer to her as Princess Victoria, and the difference is rarely a point of contention.

In the Empire, it is the princes and princesses who controls each house's vote scepter, and can thus vote for the regent (or presumptive emperor). Historically, each prince was likely to serve a term or more as regent themselves (it was rare for the electors to vote the same house into consecutive terms as regent).

## Duke/Duchess

The top tier among the general nobility, the dukes and duchesses of the Empire control the fates of millions on a continental or even planetary level. Dukes are the rulers of vast provinces and the superiors of the counts.

A woman who holds the title to a duchy or dukedom, either in her own right or as the wife of a duke, is normally styled duchess. The children of a sovereign duke or duchess are usually addressed as "duke/duchess", although in some family traditions they may be affectionately titled "prince/princess" (but not when the house's true prince is present).

## Count/Countess

The power held by counts is highly variable, with some holding little temporal power beyond a small county or mere estate, while the most powerful among them may rival dukes or other high nobles.

While lesser counts/countesses of varying descriptions are common, "counts palatinate" are potent nobles, frequently carrying out judicial and administrative duties, overseeing the court systems and crafting the laws that make noble rule possible. Instead of remaining near the centers of power, counts palatine travel to distant provinces (palatinates) to act as high judges or governors. These may overlap the frontier territories held by a marquis (in which the count serves under the marquis in some capacity), the next province back behind the line, or a territory that is in some other way troubled by disaster, crime, or rebellion. The responsibilities are administrative, military, and jurisdictional. A count who rules over a large territory, may also have authority from the exchequer to mint their own regional coinage.

## Marquis/Marchioness

Also, known as a marquis or marquess (literally the "count of a march") or as "march lords." This noble title, just under that of count, frequently performs a specific role in the noble hierarchy, to act as governors or occupying generals in the dangerous territories that impinge on more civilized lands. Frequently drawn from the ranks of the counts, nobles who hold this dangerous and difficult position may gain great power.

Because the territorial integrity of the border realms is essential to the integrity of the noble system, the noble appointed as a margrave (sometimes given the title viceroy or praefect) is given responsibility for securing the border. In addition to the powers granted with this position, a margrave might expand their sovereign's realm by conquering additional territory, perhaps gaining an autonomous principality of their own. Of course, a margrave may also spectacularly fail in holding their territory, going home to ignominy, or be stoned to death by rebelling hordes or eaten by alien parasites.

Over time, many border territories become peaceful interior states, still ruled by descendant marquis who have never had the responsibilities of their forbearers, but who still hold their high title.



## Baron/Baroness

Barons are lower ranking nobility, and in some places the second lowest (just above knight). Over the centuries since the Fall, however, barons have frequently been characterized as the guild-nobles.

Broadly speaking, barons are a hungry class, the nobles most interested in accumulating wealth, often punching above their weight class because of their connections and new-found riches. Baronial territories are frequently small, at most they might rule over a city or small province.

Some barons are “free barons” (*liber baro*) and considered higher barons. Rich guilders also sometimes style themselves as barons (when they aren’t calling themselves “merchant princes”), but such titles hold little noble cache.

## Baronet/Baronetess

Baronet is a hereditary title ranking below baron but above knight, and has often been used by higher nobles to raise funds by allowing wealthy commoners entry into the ranks of nobility. A baronet is addressed as “Sir” or “Dame” (as are knights), but ranks above all but the highest knightly titles. *Dominus* (Li

Halan) or *ritter* are equivalent titles. Baronet is often considered the highest rank among the minor or petty nobility, which can have its own advantages among the landed gentry.

## Knight

While all noble scions are practically born into this rank, knighthoods are also conferred by higher nobles upon those of non-noble lineage for gallantry or service to a house. This honor may or may not come with any land or other rewards.

Traditionally, knights aspire to the ideals of prowess, loyalty, generosity, and courtesy. Knights, as brave defenders of house and kingdom, often garner more genuine respect and goodwill than higher nobles, though many higher nobles also count the rank of knight among their titles. (Even Emperor Alexius was knighted after serving as a young squire.)

Usually, a knight gains the title after years serving as a squire, though occasionally a fighter might be knighted on the spot for showing uncommon bravery in battle or doing some other great service. Those who inherit the title of knight must claim the title, along with its requisite prestige and responsibilities. Those who do not do so are considered “unbelted” knights.

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## SQUIRE

A squire is a teenager training to become a knight, usually after serving as a page. Starting at age 13-14, a squire begins service as an attendant or shield carrier, doing simple but important tasks, such as caring for the knight's weapons, armor, and mount. A knight typically takes their squire into battle, giving him a chance to prove himself.

Squires serve in this role for seven years and become a knight at the age of twenty-one, though sometimes earlier for bravery in battle. If the squire proves their loyalty and skill, he gains a "dubbing", an official ceremony that makes him a knight. Even the son or daughter of a duke might also be a squire or page as they learn the duties and privileges of nobility.

It is a squire's duty to learn about the code of chivalry, the rules of heraldry, horsemanship, and the use of weapons, as well as courtly etiquette, music, and dancing.

## PAGE

A young child (usually age 8-12), junior to a squire, who works for a knight. A page may be a young noble or a commoner picked for one reason or another, perhaps as a ward or for uncommon cleverness. The daughter of a duke might serve as a page or a squire next to the son of a candlemaker. A page does household work, waits at table, and cares for the lord's clothing and mount, along with other odd jobs.

## OF KINGS AND QUEENS

*In a galactic firmament ruled by an Emperor, princes, and dukes and duchesses, the old-fashioned titles of king or queen have not been part of the general royal schema since a standardization of noble titles during the late Diaspora. This hasn't stopped some petty local nobles, whose lands wouldn't equal a barony in other places, from declaring themselves kings.*

*Queens and kings also appear on human planets outside of the Empire, as on Vuldrok worlds, or King Albion of Twilight. Rulers of large populations on imperial worlds that fall outside control by the recognized houses, such as the pagan Queen of Sun and Shadow on Gwynneth, are also sometimes grudgingly accepted. Similarly, certain alien lords, such as King Kummanga (the vorox ruler of Ungavorox), credibly wear the title.*

— Prof. Anerrean Tavos (Anschok University), Quirks of the Crown

## Rising in Rank

While many nobles are simply content to rule over their lands (with their contingent responsibilities and pleasures), others spend much of their time devising ways to rise higher in the noble hierarchy. This is mainly done by impressing one's lord (or their superiors) with one's loyalty, general value as a retainer, or in return for some specific brave deed. Nobles can also rise in rank by inheriting a title from a deceased relative or gaining it through marriage rights. For ambitious nobles, this means getting to know the lords to whom they owe fealty ties and discovering what deeds these lords value. It might be something as simple as collecting the most taxes (geld) or as hard as ending an insurrection that has troubled the lord's lands for the last decade.

Rank above that of knight once conferred land. That is, duty to manage land (the land is ultimately owned by the house). The Emperor Wars changed this. In the wake of the decades-long chaos, with lands changing hands many times over the course of the war, many once-landed nobles no longer have lands to manage, and yet they retain their ranks for their service to the house. For those who do still have lands, fiefs may be rewarded for a lifetime (returning to the awarding lord when the vassal dies) or as heritages (the receiver's heirs inherit the land).

Rank can be stripped by a lord (or his superiors), but this is usually only done in extreme cases, such as treachery. Continued control over a fief is not always guaranteed for life. Feudal lords may invoke a right known as "escheat" to take back a fief if a vassal dies without lawful heirs, becomes an outlaw, or otherwise breaks faith with his benefactor. Of course, the right of escheat still needs to be enforced....

## Lords and Vassals (Duties)

In return for a noble vassal's duties, a lord owes his vassal the following:

- honorable treatment befitting his rank,
- arms and armor (this could be fulfilled by something as basic as a short sword and leather jerkin or something as grand as a blaster rifle and an energy shield),
- and upkeep (food and shelter in his holdings).

Two things prevent a lord from too commonly knighting others into her service: noble tradition maintains that only blood right creates a true noble (non-nobles who receive title rarely have the training



and attitude to rule, much less the poise not to embarrass their lords), and the costs to upkeep a knight are often better spent elsewhere, unless war threatens the fief. A lord who liberally hands out knighthoods may suffer the ire of their vassals.

While there are many details to the responsibilities a vassal owes their lord, they can best be summed up as:

- serve the house in the best way known,
- increase its holdings,
- obey your lord,
- and manage their lands well.

## Noble Inheritance

From *Manors and Manners: A Guide to Royal Etiquette*, by Countess Portia Darian Hawkwood:

### Primogeniture

As Sylan the troubadour sang: “There is no geniture more primo than primogeniture.” Primogeniture is the right by which the firstborn child inherits his or her parent’s entire or primary estate, in preference to younger siblings and other contenders. In the absence of any children, brothers or sisters of the deceased typically succeed based on seniority.

There are various forms of primogeniture. The most commonly practiced in the Empire, is lineal (or equal) primogeniture, in which only the order of birth, not the child’s sex, is relevant to his or her order of inheritance.

Other forms of inheritance are female-preference primogeniture (succession goes to a male successor only if he has no living sisters or deceased sisters who have surviving female descendants), male-preference (the opposite), and agnatic primogeniture (preference goes to the ruler’s elder surviving brother or sister over any children) and ultimogeniture (inheritance goes to the youngest).

Not confusing enough for you yet, dear reader? There is also “Djehut Law.” This agnatic seniority primogeniture system excludes any female (or alternatively, male) from principle inheritance, and dates back from the planet Sutek and the early years of the First Republic. Djehut Law is uncommon in the modern Empire, though House Xanthippe practices it in preference of its female children, as does my dear cousin, Duchess Catherine Cortran of Jyväskylä. (Though that, as she reminded me at our last meeting, is more properly the subject of a different book.)

## APPANAGE

Appanage is the grant of an estate, title, office, or other things of value to a younger child of a sovereign, while the elder heir takes power. These lands cannot be sold or used as dowry, and they return to the progenitor family on the extinction of the noble line.

Appanages soften the rules of primogeniture and are to discourage the revolt of younger children who would otherwise have no inheritance, and to avoid the undesired end of an “equal division” of the territory. The ruled over territory is considered family property. The consequences of equal division (dismemberment of the kingdom, civil wars, conflicts between heirs, etc.) are considerable, so appanage is generally considered a just practice for all concerned.

## CADET BRANCHES

Cadet branches arise when a younger heir receives appanage and manages to establish it as a power base to his own line. This is not an independent royal line, but a line of (senior) servitors to the main noble line. If the main line dies out, the cadet line may claim the throne, but otherwise it mostly supplies spouses and officials to the main branch of the family.

Typically, nobles seek to transfer their title intact, without creating cadet branches. One exception is when a younger child is particularly meritorious, outshining older siblings. A cadet branch may appear by design under a system called secundogeniture.

## MORGANATIC NOBLES, BASTARDS, AND OUTLAWS

Given the potential number of heirs and other interested parties, various devices are used to prevent the undesired dispersion of noble lands. Morganatic marriages are demanded by the family when the partners are of widely diverse rank, such as between a duke and a much lower noble (or a commoner). In such cases, neither the spouse nor any children of the marriage can expect to inherit any titles, properties or succession rights. The children are considered legitimate, however.

Bastard children of nobles are those conceived outside of a sanctioned marriage. Considered illegitimate, they have no legal expectation of inheritance, and are frequently castigated by the family, Church, and society in general, though they may be accepted if the family decides to do so.

Nobles who fully reject the laws of their family, society, or the Church (for good reasons or bad) may find themselves as outlaws. Along with any civil or



criminal penalties they might face, this condition removes them from all expectations of inheritance or other family privileges for as long as it lasts.

## Noble Retinues

Along with their widely respected right to rule, there is a lot of money to be made from serving the nobility. Noble courts and retinues attract merchants of both respectable and illicit goods. Whether serving gourmet meals, the finest silks from the Istakhr markets, or illegal cybernetic enhancements or pleasure drugs from Severus, vassals and merchants have much to gain from their noble masters.

A broad array of vassals, servants, guilders, churchman, soldiers, and serfs find service with the nobility. Most skilled laborers or artisans belong to the Church or a guild. Unskilled workers rarely have any guild representation, though those involved in serving food or drink to the nobility may be members of the Brewers or Gourmand Guilds. Those in charge of administration may be Reeves, members of a Bureaucrats guild, or scholarly clerics.

While noble intrigues or the machinations of priests and guilders may take the forefront, those who serve beneath the salt have their own opinions, lives, and secrets. Are they valued servants who rise to the level of confidants and friends of their lords? Or are they blackmailed into betraying their master, or even boiling with hatred for the entire house under their practiced courtesies? The ones beneath notice may learn the greatest secrets. What did the footman see after the banquet last night? Of what noble scandal will the minstrel sing next?

## Fealty and Vassalage

From *Manors and Manners: A Guide to Royal Etiquette*, by Countess Portia Darian Hawkwood:

“It is as natural as breathing, this social ordering, n’est-ce pas? I do not understand the confusion,” a visiting Hazat baron plaintively murmured to me when an Engineer at the trade pavilion inadvertently promoted him by calling him “your grace.” But is it? “Natural as breathing,” I mean.

To those born to the purple, we are inculcated in such matters since birth, but to outsiders, noble hierarchy is as opaque, complex, and even alien as the subtleties of an obun tea ceremony or an ukari fire dance. One of the more confusing aspects of noble life to outsiders, I have found, is the ordering of fealty and vassalage. Or, as one confused yeoman once asked me: How is it that every noble does not have to obey the commands of every other noble?

To begin with, what, or rather, who, is a vassal? And how is he different from any other subject of a dukedom or a barony? Nobility rules by divine right and the will of the Pancreator who formed us all. As all are subject to the divine rule of God, we all fall under this great chain of service and rule, from our mighty Emperor to the lowest serf toiling in the field. And so it is that any person who falls under noble rule, willing or otherwise, is a subject. A rebelling freeman in the forest may reject that title, even as the local nobility assumes it. A vassal, on the other hand, is anyone, noble or commoner, who takes a step beyond that of a common subject, formally swearing allegiance (or fealty) to both the noble directly above him, his lord’s lord, all the way up to the Emperor. Virtually all vassals are subjects, though comparatively few subjects are vassals.

Nobles swear fealty to lords higher up the chain of rank than themselves. A noble who has no lord is not only not-to-be-trusted but is hardly a noble at all. Rank is only conferred by those who have the right to give it (a noble of baronet rank or above) upon those who have the right to receive it (a person of noble lineage, or a knight who earns it). Often this may be through a process called Enfeoff, in which someone swears fealty to a noble in return for a fief or some other great favor. This typically involves a knighthood if the recipient is not already a noble. For those born to inherit a noble title, this takes place when they reach the age of majority, or upon their parents’ deaths. The heir swears fealty to a higher lord to claim her title, with its many rights and responsibilities. Until this occurs, a scion of a noble house is still considered a noble, but without title or duty, and no authority to command anyone but their immediate family’s servants.

Most nobles swear fealty to a high-ranking member of their family, thus keeping the family’s greatest treasure — its blood lineage — in command of the family’s holdings. In swearing fealty, nobles swear one oath to the lord immediately above them in the chain of rulership, and then a second oath to the overall head of their family. It is not impossible that these two vows might come into conflict, sometimes with unfortunate results.

The highest rank of nobility within a given Royal House is that of “prince.” In theory, the prince owns all his house’s holdings, and all nobles within that house owe fealty to him. In practice, a high noble does not always retain the loyalty of every house member, and may well spark a revolt should he make overly arduous or unreasonable requests from his vassals.

The prince awards titles and land management rights to multiple dukes, a rank that usually confers rulership of a continent, moon, or outer planet. Dukes in turn award titles and fief management rights



to counts (a county or capital city), who themselves lay claim to earls or marquises (cities, provinces, and various trouble spots), who award baronies to barons (keeps or shires), who collect vassalage from baronets (keeps and fortifications), who finally claim knights (who may, or may not, gain land as part of their knighthood).

A noble's fealty is only to the nobles in a direct line of succession, from the noble to whom he has directly sworn allegiance, to that lord's lord, and so on up to the ruler of his house. For example, Sir Emic Wilde-Hawkwood of Fordan (on Gwynneth) owes fealty to Count Balthazar (the lord who knighted him), who in turn owes fealty to Duke Erasmus, and from him to Princess Victoria Hawkwood (who resides on Ravenna, thus showing how fealty ties stretch across the stars). Sir Darkon does not owe fealty to Duke Redoran (or any of his lesser nobles) on the continent of Grikkor, even though both Darkon and Redoran owe fealty to Princess Victoria. Note that, even though Emic swore his oath to Count Balthazar, he also owes dues to all Balthazar's other lords of greater rank than his own. Thus, Count Balthazar also promoted a baron and a marquis, both of whom gain authority over Sir Emic. Our good knight does not, however, owe fealty to barons, counts, or even dukes who fall outside of this chain.

## Holdings by Title

The holdings held by landed nobles in the Empire are sometimes quite large, spanning entire regions or more. In general, a territory held by lower nobles (from counts on down) are designed to balance territory versus population. A duke may want a count or marquis to watch over large territories or densely populated areas, but not both, as too many resources in the hands of a vassal are temptations to rebellion.

## EMPIRE

At minimum, the territory to which the Emperor Alexius lays claim is three dozen planets. Imperial rule, in principle, extends over not only imperial planets such as Byzantium Secundus and Tethys, but all the planets ruled by the five Royal families, alien planets, League worlds, and those held by various Church factions.

## PRINCIPALITY

The principalities held by the princes of the five Royal families include all the planets held by that house. Thus, Princess Victoria of House Hawkwood is the acknowledged ruler of Delphi, Ravenna, Gwynneth, and Leminkainen.

## DUCHY

Also, called a dukedom, landed dukes and duchesses rule over territories such as continents or other major regions. They may also take rulership over extra-planetary territories such as moons.

## COUNTY

Counts and countesses hold large scale geographical regions (such as a continental coastal region, a mountain range, or a productive breadbasket region), or more centralized areas that may encompass several major cities.

## MARQUISATE

Marquisates, at their largest, may equal the holdings of a count, though first-generation marquisates are often troubled regions in revolt or some other turmoil.

## BARONY

Baronies may encompass thousands of square kilometers of rural land, or a large city or two.

## BARONETCY

Baronetcies typically encompass a township and its surrounding lands, though they may be larger rural stretches.

## KNIGHT-FIEF

A knight-fief may be a single wood, a farming valley, a town or any other minor territory, usually anchored by an old fortification or manor house.

# Imperialism and the Houses

A new and vital impulse has resounded in the Known Worlds in the past generation. An almost singular occurrence in human history, an Emperor now rules over a sprawling interstellar Empire that, at least in theory, holds sway over dozens of planets.

The imperial concept is still weak on many worlds, especially those that oppose the idea of empire in general, or to competitors who believe that they, not Alexius, should sit on the Phoenix Throne. Still, the idea has captured the imaginations of millions, noble and commoner, throughout the Known Worlds.



Imperialist societies have sprung up on almost every planet, though what Imperialism writ-large is supposed to entail in this age is far from a matter of consensus.

While House Hawkwood would seem to have the most to gain from the new Imperial project, imperial neglect of that house's agendas in various spheres means some of the most ardent anti-imperialists reside on Hawkwood worlds. Meanwhile, many in the houses that lost the recent Emperor Wars support imperial institutions and doctrine, in the hopes that they will hold the imperial scepter next.

A certain military potency is attributed to Emperor Alexius and all things imperial. This has given him great latitude in building not only a military apparatus independent of his family, but also in his statecraft when dealing with competitor houses, as well as with extra-territorial powers such as the Kurgans or the vau. It is his successes with the Vuldrok, however, that has most impressed allies and competitors alike. His policy of quiet strength and clever back-channel diplomacy, when dealing with previously intransigent barbarian worlds, has encouraged both militarists in search of expansion and subjects who seek peaceful cohabitation.

Imperialism on the modern stage takes many forms and means different things to its subjects. Gunboat imperialism, in the wake of a shiny new Imperial Armada built by a dozen worlds, seeks new vistas beyond the current Empire. Whether this new frontier seeks gains on alien worlds, or in bold forays against human "lost worlds," makes little difference to armchair theorists in taverns throughout the Empire.

Economic imperialism has fired up the Known World's mercantile element, who imagine a standardization of trade treaties, and new markets opening without the limits set by small-minded house parochialism. This form often, though carefully, espouses republican sentiments cloaked in imperialist enthusiasm.

Another brand of imperial thought imagines all humans, and even aliens, as one galactic family. To them, the imperialism of Emperor Alexius is a method by which egalitarian practices such as equality, the fellowship of all sentients, and the alleviation of suffering might take place. And, indeed, new laws geared to the elimination of slavery within the Empire and new rights for serfs and aliens have been forthcoming, if not always pursued with the vigor with which their proponents desire.

Meanwhile, the eminences of the great houses publicly consent to the new Empire, and seek prominent places within its institutions, planning their next move.

## Fief Management

A fief is a piece of land controlled by a noble. The size of a fief is in basic accord with the noble's rank, with higher ranking nobles tending to own the largest, richest, or most populous fiefs. Not all fiefs are created equal. Some are larger than others of the same kind (a barony on barren Pandemonium may be bigger than one on crowded Byzantium Secundus). A barony with a large population is still smaller than a county with a small population (at least, on most worlds — barren worlds such as Nowhere may provide exceptions to this rule).

Castles, and especially palaces, are small cities unto themselves, with dozens, hundreds or even thousands of servants, administrators, guards, churchmen, families, visiting supplicants and dignitaries, and other hangers-on. Behind the scenes of any palace, castle or estate, are sprawling servants' quarters, secret rooms and passages, crypts and cisterns, guild suppliers, plots and intrigues, and criminals who seek to enrich themselves from the lowest scullery to the highest salons.

## RESOURCES

A noble's holdings are also notable for their production of natural resources and crafted trade items. These could be food (e.g., the red wheat of Leminkainen), minerals (Severan gemstones), crafts, or mercenaries. Of course, some holdings are far more productive than others. The blasted wastelands of Cadavus are far less productive than the Greenswarth region of Kish.

The combination of a fief's taxes and the money it makes selling its resources provide a quick measure of its affluence, and thus its lord's standard of living. Although a lord can strip her fief's wealth to bolster her own standard of living, this is often considered tyrannical, eventually causing poor morale and lower resource output; if continued, it can lead to revolts.

A fief's known population consists of its serf vassals, freemen renters, and even freemen land owners (usually only small plots at best). Population generally determines how many taxes the lord can collect, though a holding's general wealth may be at variance with its ruler's personal funds for multiple reasons; a region might be prosperous but its ruler bad with money, squandering his personal wealth with little to show for it. Conversely, a destitute region may have a wealthy ruler who has stolen from the people's labor.



## GARRISON

Every noble fief has some military contingent to protect from outsiders and to keep internal order. The more important a fief is tactically or strategically, the higher its garrison (often bolstered by troops from a greater lord's armies). Generally, it takes a duke to muster a legion (10,000 soldiers or more), a count or marquis to maintain a regiment (1,000-5,000), and a baron to hold a company (100-250). The lowest noble properties command small dozens of mustered serfs or mercenaries, though skilled fighters might be present in the least likely of places.

## MORALE

A fief's morale is also an important factor to consider. A fief might be bright, cheerful and filled with music and good spirits; solemn abodes for the faithful; enlightened sanctuaries for the arts and sciences; or forlorn, war-torn and grim, decadent, or even brutal charnel houses.

The better a population's morale, the more effectively they will fight when called upon to defend their homes against enemy attack and the easier they will accept high tax burdens. The lord's quality of rule is often directly mirrored by his population's morale (i.e. just rule causes high morale). However, the Church can often work to bolster morale during bad rule, or lower it during good rule, depending on its own behavior (inquisitors rarely improve a fief's mood) and priests may sermonize against a lord who they consider impious.

If a fief's resources are too dependent on the population's good morale (crafts, trade, tourism, etc.), then poor morale can affect the resource output. Fiefs that rely on physical labor (mining, crops, etc.) can usually maintain output even under poor conditions, at least for a while.

## RELATIONS

Fiefs do not exist in a vacuum, but have political, cultural, military, and trade relations with the fiefs or lands around them. The most prominent categories are frequently: the fief's ruling house, neighboring noble houses, and the Church and the Merchant League, though alien populations and space raiders from adjoining planets may also be factors.

Embargoes and boycotts declared on one's fief are tactics often employed by spurned guilds. Likewise, priests can ignite (or even lead) uprisings and strikes; officially sanctioned strikes, while rare, risk the ire of upper levels of the Church should military force be used too harshly in retaliation.

## Demesne

The demesne in a fief describes the lands and structures specifically set aside in a noble's holdings specifically for use by the noble. For example, although Emperor Alexius rules over dozens of planets, he cannot land on Aragon (a Hazat world) and simply move into a native duke's palace as though it was his own. Similarly, Baron Renardo rules over a large barony consisting of towns and countryside, but he cannot simply move into a Church, guild hall, or yeoman's home without expecting resistance. Noble holdings do, however, come with traditionally held residences and lands that are wholly set aside for the noble and his retinue. These may vary from a simple manor house and some surrounding woods for a knight or other lower noble, to the dozens (or even hundreds) of castles, palaces, and broad private reserves of the top-tier nobility.

## Castle-Palace-Manor

The various abodes of the nobility vary greatly, from the grandest palaces of the planetary nobility, to local castles (new or ancient) built for defense, to manor houses built by the upper nobility as secondary estates, or by local nobility as their primary form of residence. In the broadest sense, the difference between a castle or a palace, of any style, age, or size, is one of livability versus defensibility. Castles are made as salient points against invasion or rebellion, whereas palaces are grand structures made for maximum comfort. Manor houses are usually made on a more modest (though often still luxurious) scale, either as homes for the nobility or other elites.

The difference between castles, palaces, and manors include the age and technology in which they were built. Some castles have been expanded to become more palatial, while certain palaces have been hardened post facto to become more defensible.

Castles and estates are much commoner than palaces. Both castles and palaces are extremely expensive propositions in terms of construction and upkeep. A manor house or estate of a lower noble family may have the defensibility of a castle or aspire to the grandeur of a palace, though usually without the funds needed to make either a complete reality.

Whether palace, castle, or mansion, the homes of the rich and powerful in the Known Worlds are widely disparate in construction; the thousands of years and dozens of planets that constitute the modern Empire represent a dizzying array of needs, materials, and architectural styles. Some castles and palaces might well resemble the crenellated battlements of an ancient, medieval Holy Terra, but others mirror centuries



of progress in architectural innovation, or the retrograde re-discovery of basic architectural standards as technology receded and rebounded from its heights in the Second Republic. Some structures have been built during a nadir of technological progress during the planetary dark ages, with local materials and only a crude knowledge of stonework and carpentry. Other castles or palaces have been re-purposed from ancient structures of ages past.

Thousands of grand palaces, stout castles, and luxurious manor houses exist in the Empire today, each with its own unique look and history. A short list of these incredible structures includes:

- the urbane showplace that is the grand Anschok Palace on Delphi;
- the bizarre Metallic Castles of Hira;
- Castle Furias of Aragon (both a refined palace and a well-designed deathtrap for its attackers);
- the elegant Li Halan castle estates of Casaverda on Icon;
- the under-water luxury estates of Madoc;
- the primitive outpost Castle Sybaris on Malignatius.

These are but the scantest of examples.

The building materials found in noble abodes through the Empire vary widely, depending on the planet and local materials. Some contain conventional low-tech materials such as stone or cement, or comparatively high-tech materials as maxicrete or hardened maxicrete, luminite, Ravennan marble, rainstone or terracite (a miracle Second Republic material, known for its beauty, strength, and lightweight qualities).

## CASTLE

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Long before humanity travelled the stars, the advantage between attacker and defender (sword and shield) has traded places many times. Castles have been built in those times or localities where technological conventions have favored hardened centers of defense over the abilities of attackers to take them.

Modern castles in the Empire today may be hardened maxicrete structures built into mountainous bedrock, capable of withstanding multi-megaton nuclear blasts, psychic prying, or the attacks of focused spaceborn plasma-weapons or mass-drivers. Or, they may be simple, stalwart stone structures built to repel primitive local hordes. In general, however, castles

tend toward the more austere duties of defending a province or frontier, rather than impressing visitors with comfort or high culture.

Castles are generally considered to be the province of vassal knights, provincial counts, or marquis governors, rather than the refined homes of dukes or established family dynasties.

The best defended castles are local sanctuaries that serve as places of safety for all surrounding inhabitants, whether from primitive tribesmen or the advanced weaponry of space raiders. Technologically advanced castles are built to the highest specifications as blast/fallout shelters, with 50-ton blast doors, hardened maxicrete walls, advanced air-filtration systems, and rapid transit tunnels.

## PALACE

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A palace is a grand structure, most often a ducal or royal residence, or the home of a head of state or some other high-ranking dignitary, such as an archbishop or grand guild dean. (The seat of the Patriarch on Holy Terra is often referred to as the Patriarchal Palace.) The palaces of the high nobility are built for comfort and to impress. Lavish apartments for the high nobles in residence, as well as ballrooms, dining halls, chapels, libraries, gardens, guestrooms, theatres, baths, and grand galleries decorated with works of art are common features of the palace. Palaces, more than almost any other complex, are virtual cities unto themselves, and extremely expensive to maintain.

## MANOR

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Manor houses inhabited by the lower nobility often seek to emulate those of their superiors, as a way of currying favor and staying in fashion. They may have the defensibility of a small castle or aspire to the luxury of a palace.

Manor houses may be technologically advanced townhouses in modern city-states or forward-thinking oases in otherwise backwaters. Others may be wind-blown husks of their former selves, still inhabited by noble owners but left to disintegrate because of lack of funds or general neglect. Small haunted manors and sorrowful estates in decline might have only a small staff or only a single, elderly servant.



*"Cecil Wilberand Gervaise-Hawkwood!"*

*Cecil winced. Whenever his Aunt Agatha used his full name, in that tone, it meant the old Muster whip-hand was in high dudgeon.*

*"You will marry that girl. She is a fine match and the Grimmoards are a serious family. She will make something of you."*

*"I say, Aunt Aggie, old prune, but this is the third wretched woman you've tried to burden me with this year. First, that dull Darian girl, and then that horrible Hazat heiress who almost traded me into slavery for a couple of Kurgan otter-pelts."*

*"And the better part of that deal she would have gotten, too! You will get married, or do a stint in the army, as your uncle insists. He says a few years fighting Vuldrok raiders will make a man of you. I dare say that's a feat beyond even those barbarians, but still...."*

*Cecil edged back toward his trusty vorox valet, Wolfram, who had been respectfully quiet the whole time.*

*— Ellery Croydon, Cecil and Wolfram Go to Hargard*

## Family Life

Compared to their subjects, nobles are born with an expectation that their lives and destinies are favored by the Pancreator. Even so, life in one of the great families is not without its duties and frustrations. Every noble family follows its own set of codes, and these are impressed upon family members from birth. The temptations for a noble are great. Eloquent churchmen, fast-talking guilders, and breathless groupies who want to join the retinue give ample scope for an inexperienced noble to go astray. Certain events may hold a house up to embarrassment, ridicule, or even existential danger. In such cases, the family tends to publicly rally around its offending member, even if they are in the wrong. What happens internally is a different story.

Ne'er-do-well members of the family may almost certainly count on a cavalcade of embarrassed,

well-meaning, or disapproving parents, aunts or grandparents watching them carefully to make sure that they do not bring shame on the family (though what this means varies widely based on the house). Such interference may be played up in a humorous manner out of an Ellery Croydon novel, or in a more serious fashion.

While a certain latitude for eccentricity is afforded to most nobles, anything an individual does to expose the family at large to public embarrassment is almost always subject to disapprobation. Whether this means a certain frostiness at the next family gathering, being cut off from one's allowance, a whipping in the stables by an outraged grandfather, or expulsion from the family altogether, depends on the family and the infraction. As has been observed by at least one *grande dame* of every other generation: What young people get up to among each other is of little concern, assuming they don't upset the brute carts in the street.

## Noblesse Oblige

The nobility rules, secure in its privileged position, as commanded by tradition and law, as well as by the edicts of the Church. Still, nobles are not insensitive of their duties to those they rule. Whether from a genuine philanthropic ethos, or from a crass understanding of mass psychology, nobles realize that they cannot successfully rule without, at least, the tacit support of their subjects. In the waning days of the Second Republic, it was the belief that it was the nobility — rather than the discredited mega-corps and planetary governments — who were truly dedicated to the welfare of their people.

On many planets, noblesse oblige is an established and genuine practice. It is closely felt and taught as canon, as both a feature inherent to superior rank and as an edict of the Omega Gospels. Even the most depraved Decados misanthrope will give lip service to the practice when cornered.

Noblesse oblige takes shape in many forms, from small private acts of charity to the building of great hospitals, libraries, or other good works for the people. In some places and times, it may even be exhibited in partial power sharing, not just with the Church and guilds, who have carved out their own power structures, but with the people through local or regional constitutional mechanisms.

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## Callings

### Servant

**Precondition:** Merchant *or* yeoman

Often beneath notice, and frequently beneath contempt, the servitor class that undergirds the noble class is a broad grouping of people who know not only their own role, but the greater eco-system that pervades and surrounds the powerful. Those of the servitor class serve not only the nobility but paying members of the guilds and even (to a lesser extent) Church interests. While most servants come to their calling through conventional means, some enter the servant class as spies or as a cover. No few nobles, or other important personages, have been forced into secret servitude to escape the dissolution of their house or to hide from enemies. In so doing, they gain new insights and the “common touch” that comes with the calling’s peasant perks.

#### PATRON SAINTS

*Orieth the Faithful* — A simple and unassuming servant, little is known of this woman who is obliquely mentioned throughout the Omega Gospels. Orieth served the Prophet with honest piety all her life and died with him during his pilgrimage to the vau.

*Balazim the Clever* — Nobles rule over society, priests speak for the cosmos, and the guilds invent, but serfs and servants know who really keeps everything going. Balazim was cleverer by far than any of his “superiors,” and the benign trickster always managed to get his feckless masters out of trouble (usually of their own making), while also benefiting himself and others who served below the salt. Balazim is a subversive, folkloric figure, not always venerated by the Church. Some scholars doubt he really existed, pointing out that if all the songs and tales about him are true, he served over 100 masters and on almost

every planet in the Known Worlds — though most of his tales involve bailing out his bumbling master, Lord Cylus Chauki of Sutek. Regardless, he remains popular among serfs, and especially among long-suffering servants who toil under half-witted masters.

#### EARLY CAREER

**Capabilities:** Customs (Cathedral *or* Commons *or* Court); one relevant Lore *or* Transport capability

**Characteristics:** Endurance +1; Faith +1 *or* Will +1; Perception +2; Presence +1 *or* Wits +1

**Skills:** Charm 2 *or* Impress 2; Crafts 1 *or* Drive 1; Impress 1; Knavery 1; Observe 2; Remedy 1; Sleight of Hand 1; Sneak 1

**Perk:** 1 from the Servant perks, below, or the open perks list.

**Equipment:** Domestic uniform and credentials, plus a one-use piece of embarrassing gossip about your employer that is worth 100 firebirds if sold to a rival.

#### SERVANT PERKS

Cat Burglar’s Eye  
Counterfeit  
Householder  
Keeping Secrets  
Peasant Hero  
Rabble Rouse

### Star Marine

Star Marines are elite soldiers found in many space armadas, from Brother Battle to every noble fleet, and among the Charioteers and Muster mercenary groups. Trained to operate in a wide array of environments, they are most frequently deployed in ship-to-ship boarding and combat. In this arena, they are unparalleled in the complex process of breaching an enemy ship’s hull while taking fire, and then fighting through the enemy ship to take its bridge and other vital centers (or defending against such attacks). Star Marines are also used as space-deployed expeditionary forces on planets below, though usually



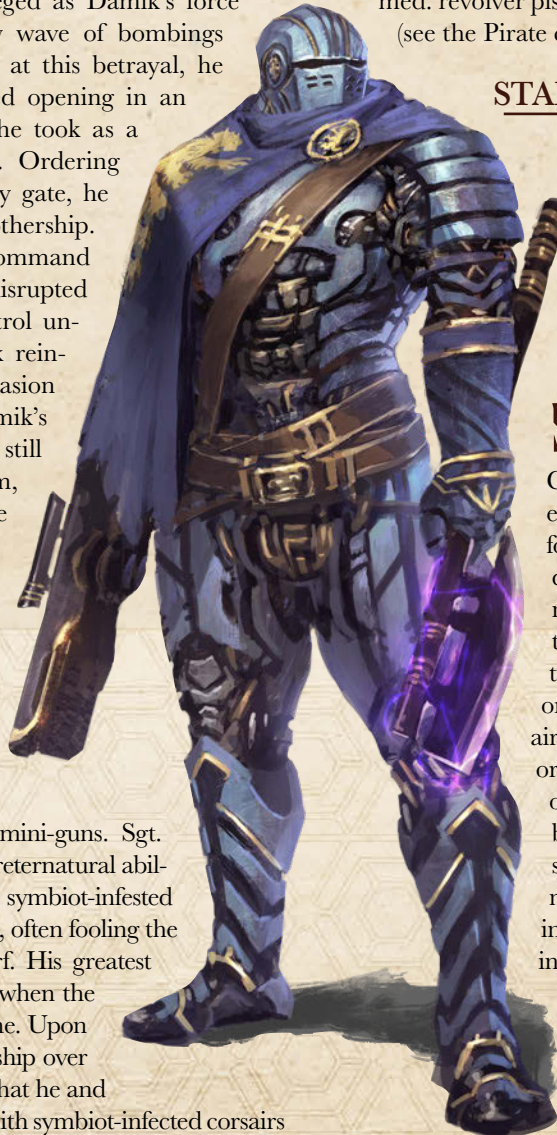


backed up by more traditional ground forces. Because of their dependence on high technology, those who retain space marine forces are sure to carve out holy exceptions for them under the Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs, though this lasts only for as long as the marine is in good standing with the greater military body.

## PATRON SAINTS

*Damik the Marksman* — Damik was a renowned al-Malik commander who battled against the ukari during their war against Criticorum. With a surprise attack from a hidden mothership, the ukar destroyed much of the local fleet (Damik's was one of the few still battleworthy), leaving the planet defenseless as they launched wave after wave of spaceborne attacks. When the ukari offered mercy to the thousands of civilians under Damik's protection if he would stand down, the noble reluctantly agreed. The ukari, however, reneged as Damik's force withdrew, starting a new wave of bombings over the planet. Enraged at this betrayal, he spotted a jumpgate-shaped opening in an interstellar cloud, which he took as a vision from the Prophet. Ordering his ship through the misty gate, he discovered the hidden mothership. Boarding the ukari command vessel, he and his men disrupted ukari command and control until the arrival of al-Malik reinforcements, ending the invasion and saving the planet. Damik's thousand-to-one shot is still celebrated on Criticorum, or wherever soldiers face seemingly hopeless odds.

*Sgt. Gronn* — As much a tactically adaptable artillery battery as an individual soldier, this cigar-chomping vorox space marine was well known during the early Symbiot War in his battle armor with twin-wielded mini-guns. Sgt. Gronn displayed a nearly preternatural ability to adapt to the bizarre symbiot-infested planets on which he battled, often fooling the creatures on their own turf. His greatest victory, however, occurred when the menace came closer to home. Upon boarding a Vuldrok pirate ship over Bannockburn, he realized that he and his men were in a firefight with symbiot-infected corsairs



and had become infected themselves during the battle. Rather than endangering the planet below, Sgt. Gronn and his men steered the ship into the sun. A somber monument to the vorox and his men still draws pilgrims on the windblown planet, and his memory is revered by those who battle in space.

## EARLY CAREER

**Capabilities:** Armor (War) *or* Ranged Weapons (choose Slug Guns *or* Energy Guns); Knowledge (Shipboard Operations)

**Characteristics:** Dexterity +1; Endurance +2; Strength +2

**Skills:** Fight 1; Intrusion 1; Melee 2; Observe 1; Shoot 2; Tech Redemption 1; Vigor 2

**Perk:** 1 from the Star Marine perks, below, or the open perks list.

**Equipment:** Armored spacesuit, gun-axe (combines med. revolver pistol with battle axe) or hull knife (see the Pirate calling in the core rulebook)

## STAR MARINE PERKS

Armed to the Teeth  
Boarding Action (see below)  
Can Opener  
Marksmanship  
Military Rank  
Spotter

## Star Sailor

Charioteer captains and others travel space in almost every form of vessel, but they do not do so alone. Star sailors are the men, women and aliens who do the hard work of maintaining the craft, tending its engines, or maintaining its hull integrity, air recycling systems, navigation, or servicing/manning its weaponry. Sailors may come from backgrounds as disparate as the ships they serve, which may be modern or primitive, pristine or in need of constant repair. Ships in need of sailors include: tugs or salvagers, solar-sailed barges, sleek cutters, research stations, interstellar cargo ships, slaver vessels, hospital ships, powerful warships (new or

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ancient), research vessels, and opulent luxury liners. Star sailors are also needed on space stations and airless moon bases.

Sailors on these vessels may be noble, Church, guild, or from a panoply of other backgrounds. Robed monks may be think-machine experts or stellar cartographers on Church vessels, while such unexpected types as Carnivalers and Courtesans may pick up their guild-duties while entertaining on a luxury liner (or other ships where their services are required). While most advanced shipboard jobs go to Charioteers or Engineers, the only prerequisite for this calling is to have served on a ship long enough to have learned the ropes. While spacecraft inspire awe in those who behold them, few think of the demanding tasks involved in keeping most ships running. Gourmands Guild chefs serve crew and passengers food, while chaplains and members of the Oublette Guild help keep people grounded while sailing through space for months at a time in groaning metal tubes. Sewage and other waste removal are most often carried out by members of the Purgers Guild, who have adapted to ship life.

## PATRON SAINT

*Olav the Engineer* — A valuable slave on a Decados war vessel after the Fall, Olav resented his captors but loved the ship on which he served. Both a skilled engineer and faithful follower of the Prophet, he served his masters well in many conflicts, while also praying for freedom for himself and his fellow slaves. When his ship encountered a seemingly derelict vau ship near the Cadiz jumpgate, his captain boarded the vessel in search of advanced technology. Finding surviving vau, the captain foolishly ordered their execution, a decision that might easily have resulted in war and (possibly) the extinction of House Decados. Interdicting his captain's orders by stranding him on a shuttlecraft, Olav's act of mutiny was unknowingly well-timed as a vau warship arrived just in time to have monitored the entire affair. The resulting diplomatic incident, later known as the Vril-Ya Imbroglia, allowed for the release of Olav and his fellow slaves, as well as thousands of others, at vau insistence. The Decados made their own show of magnanimity in releasing the slaves (and cashiering the "rogue captain"), cleverly

improving their standing with both the vau and the Church in the following years. Makeshift shrines to Olav can often be encountered on ships and space stations.

*Po-Pi* — Famed for fighting to the finish, this sailor of the stellar seas worked on every form of spaceship, from the most primitive tramp vessels to the largest dreadnoughts. During the Kurgan conflict, the Hazat command ship on which Po-Pi served was critically damaged. Donning a spacesuit, Po-Pi worked feverishly outside the ship, bringing systems on line, thus saving the ship and allowing for victory over the Kurgans. Upon returning to his comrades, Po-Pi immediately died, but it was discovered that his suit was torn and he had really run out of air many hours earlier. Though some claim his survival was only attributable to his imbibing of advanced Agricorp oxy-green, the miracle of the torn spacesuit is still celebrated, and the suit itself a venerated object on Vera Cruz. A bardic lay to this sailor's sailor has been rendered as

both a solemn hymn and a raucous drinking ditty: *"A sailorman was Po-Pi, drank vacuum and still wouldn't die. With courage and cunning, sent the infidels running. He was what he was, Po-Pi."*

## EARLY CAREER

**Capabilities:** Jumpweb Lore *or* Tech Lore; Shipboard Operations Lore

**Characteristics:** Dexterity +2 *or* Endurance +2; Intuition +1; Wits +2

**Skills:** Charm 2 *or* Impress 2; Interface 2; Knavery 1; Pilot 1; Shoot 1; Tech Redemption 3

**Perk:** 1 from the Star Sailor perks, below, or the open perks list.

**Equipment:** Spacesuit, spanner (TL7 nanotech device: produces and array of tools and meters for most tech redemption needs, one tool at a time; wrench-sized. *Tech Compulsion:* Industrious)

## STAR SAILOR PERKS

Gambler

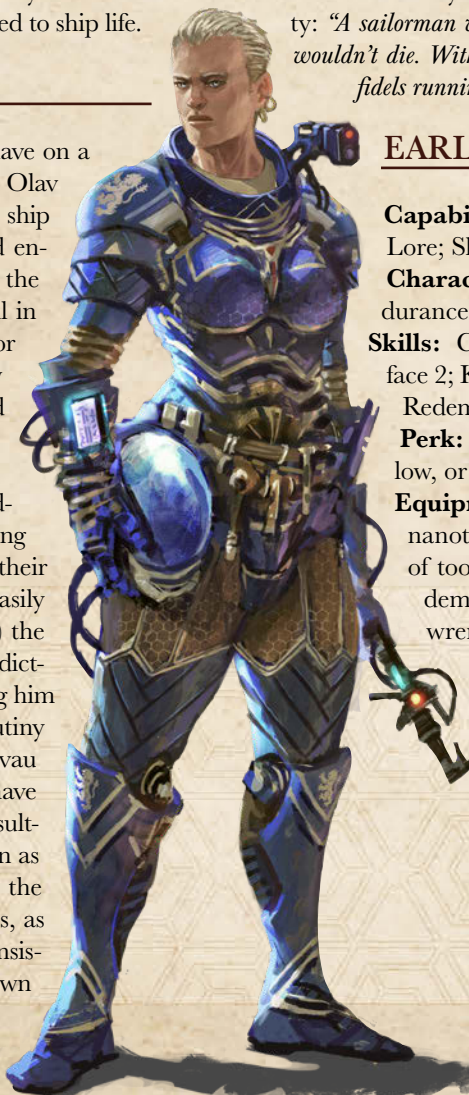
Linguist

Machine Spirit

Mechanic

Military Rank (for those who served on a military vessel)

Polymath





# Perks

## BOARDING ACTION

**Calling • Ability • Precondition:** Pirate or Star Marine

You have tactical training for breaching new zones of fire. Whenever you breach a protected area, either through a blasted open wall or bulkhead, or any closed door (locked, barricaded, or otherwise), you have been tactically trained on how to enter the new zone swiftly, maximizing your own line of fire while looking out for enemy defenders.

**Benefice:** During the turn you breach a new zone of combat, and for one turn after, all attack actions you make are favorable and any attack actions against you are unfavorable.

## HOLY KNIGHT

**Calling • Privilege • Precondition:** Priest

Holy Knight is a title that may be conferred by the Church, usually by a bishop or higher. They are generally considered as equals by their knight-rank noble counterparts, though the title is rare and not an inheritable rank.

**Benefice:** You gain +1 Mind Resistance, in addition to the bonuses bestowed by your Church Ordination rank(s). Also, you gain +2 goal to any *castigate* maneuvers you make against anyone you have bested in physical combat (for the remainder of the same act).

You are empowered to temporarily conscript serfs and freemen in defense of the Church or the faithful (such as against heretics, cultists, etc.). If a conscripted person is killed, the Church customarily extends charity to their family, but is not required to pay wergild. If you abuse this privilege, you might be brought before a Church tribunal to judge your actions. If you're deemed to have misused your authority, it can be stripped until you perform proper penance.

## NOBLE MIEN

**Calling • Privilege • Precondition:** Noble

You are a paradigm of nobility, and embody what people expect of their rulers in style, comportment, and knowledge. Through natural inclination and study, you easily navigate the noble system's social and legal mores. You are well-known and respected within your house, and even those of other houses respect your seemingly inherent nobility.

**Benefice:** In any situation in which the Court Customs capability applies, you gain favorability on persuasion influence rolls.

## SOVEREIGN TITLE

**Calling • Privilege • Precondition:** Noble Title 1+

Much of the feudal system is contingent on the relationship between nobles and their vassals, with lower ranking nobility owing fealty to the noble(s) above them, all the way up to their fealty to the prince who leads their house (or duke in the case of minor houses). Sovereign nobles get off this ladder somewhat, still owing ultimate fealty to the head of their house but owing no obedience to any other nobles in the house hierarchy. A "sovereign" duke or baroness has far more ability to act independently than one whose powers are contingent (at least in that sphere) on the noble above them. Sovereign titles especially impress other nobles who do not share this freedom, though this autonomy can also be grounds for suspicion. Nobles, sovereign or non-sovereign, of any rank or house, are taught since birth to respect the hierarchy and traditions of their class.

**Benefice:** Gain +1 Mind Resistance. You are free to act far more independently than non-sovereign nobles, and this lends to your mystique in the family. You gain an additional use of the Imperious perk within the same span (you can now use that perk twice in a single span), to ward off influence attempts and occult powers used against you. (See the Imperious perk under *Perks* in **Chapter 3: Traits** of the **Character Book**.)

## VISCOUNT/VISCOUNTESS

**Calling • Privilege • Precondition:** Noble Title 2+

A viscount or viscountess is a common lower-level title. It is awarded to a low-level noble (baronet or higher) by a count (or higher) to assist in the running of a province and the performance of judicial or military duties. In the 51<sup>st</sup> century it is not a hereditary title. If the counts make the laws, the viscounts enforce or administer them, either as judges, castellans, local legislators, or as inspector generals (weeding out corruption).

Since the Diaspora, the rank of viscount has generally held prestige roughly between that of baronet and baron. The title is not a separate stepping stone to higher rank on its own, though it is sometimes given to particularly promising lower nobles (barons or marquises) as training ground for later acquiring the count rank.

Viscounts have a range of investigatory powers which they may use at the behest of higher nobles who want answers, or they may launch their own investigations if legitimately warranted. The privileges of this perk end at the edge of the viscount's house's holdings. A Hazat viscount can hardly expect to use this position to investigate doings in Li Halan territory. Viscounts who misuse their power may end up on the end of someone else's investigation.

**Benefice:** You may sit as judge in any disputes involving serfs of your house (although such matters are

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usually handled by local elders or sheriffs), levying punishment as you will. You might be called to testify or even judge a dispute in free court, or (more rarely) regency court, either to defend a house member or seek redress against another house.

In your investigative capacity, rooting out corruption, you may gain access to protected archives within your house, even those that might be hidden from someone of higher noble standing. You do so by presenting yourself to the local head of house and requesting to view the archives. No influence roll is required. You can also access secure noble-held data files (you have a legitimate password to bypass house data encryption, normally an Interface skill maneuver against Severe Resistance).

Additionally, you have the recognized authority to investigate any place within the boundaries of your house's properties and can thus gain access to Church or League facilities on those properties (as with the All-Access-Pass perk). This does not protect you from those factions' ire, however; you might make enemies if you misuse this privilege.

**Note:** For more information on the courts (free, regency, and ecclesiastical), see the **Reeves Guild (Imperial Dossier)** book.

## Creatures

Numerous monsters exist within House Hawkwood's holdings. Below is a brief list of some of them.

### DIPROTIAN

**Agent (creature) • Level: 3 • Size: 4**

The upper atmosphere of the gas giant Chantacrier in the Gwynneth system is awash with strange hydrogen-based life forms. Most ubiquitous are the continent-sized swarms of jellyfish-like "floaters" that explode into clouds of sparks when damaged. Also discovered are luminescent threads that form mathematically significant patterns but disappear when approached. Most significant to the Hawkwoods, however, is a strange lifeform that rides the Jovian winds, taking innocent delight in popping the jellyfish.

These odd creatures display a rudimentary sentience and are curious and social, forming bonds not only with each other but even with species as bizarre and alien as humans. Occasionally a diprotian might be coaxed by specialists in the Wranglers Guild to leave Chantacrier; it is then adopted (sold) as an expensive pet/companion at the Saturna Agora (starting price 800-1000 lb).

Diprotians are amorphous, soft-bodied creatures that exhibit liquid and gaseous properties, with an

outer energy shell that is ticklish to the touch. They are spherical and nearly undetectable in the visible light spectrum (except in visible mediums: smoke, fog, water, etc.). They can change shape, either to roughly mimic forms or to seep through tight spaces, and can move things about by displacing air.

With behavior patterns comparable to faithful dogs, diprotians are curious, often playful, and enjoy the alien energy patterns they encounter. Bonding to a trusted individual or group, they become protective if they or their pack are threatened.

#### Special Abilities:

*Amorphous harrying:* A diprotian can hinder a target by spreading its mass around the target's face, effectively blinding them temporarily.

*Concuss:* A diprotian's main form of attack is to ram itself into its target. Against humanoids, it aims for the head, knocking them off balance.

*Covert center:* A diprotian's life center is a small, fast-moving, and barely visible nucleus. Once a diprotian has been reduced to 1 Vitality, it takes further damage only from laser weapons.

*Ignite:* Diprotians can ignite part of their hydrogen mass to make a flame attack against either a single target within 10m or all targets within 2m. Each time they do this, they lose 1 Vitality. Diprotians take normal damage from fire attacks but cannot be reduced below 1 Vitality by them.

*Hydrogen healing:* Diprotians heal by attracting free hydrogen molecules. On Chantacrier they regain 1 Vitality per minute, but in breathable planetary environs this is 1 per hour.





**Characteristics:**

Str	5	Wits	3	Pre	5
Dex	8	Per	5	Int	8
End	7	Will	4	Faith	5

**Skills:**

Empathy	6
Sneak	7
Vigor	6

**Actions:**

Goal	Impact
<i>Concuss</i>	11 Target is knocked Prone.
<i>Harry</i>	14 Target is Blinded for that round.
<i>Ignite</i>	11 6 dmg (Flame)

**Resistance:** Body 5 | Mind 3 | Spirit 0**Vitality:** 12**Surge:** rating: 8 | number: 1**GARGON****Agent (creature) • Level: 3 • Size: 9**

These subterranean eurypterids resemble giant, rocky scorpions with eight legs, powerful crushing claws, and agile, stinging whiptails. Beasts of burden and war beasts for Gwynneth's rock trolls, these fearsome creatures are top predators in Gwynneth's underworld. Although stony in appearance, gargons are fast-moving and even more lithe in their aquatic cavern homes. Equipped with multiple eye-clusters at front and on top, gargons are also highly perceptive of their surroundings.

**Special Abilities:**

*Gargon venom:* Poison from the gargon's tail sting can be extremely painful and disorienting.

Potency	Duration	OD	Effect
7	1 hour	End -2, Per -1	Dazed, Tormented

**Characteristics:**

Str	10	Wits	2	Pre	6
Dex	4	Per	7	Int	5
End	7	Will	5	Faith	7

**Skills:**

Fight	5
Vigor	6

**Actions:**

Goal	Impact
<i>Bite</i>	15 6 dmg
<i>Sting</i>	15 4 dmg + gargon venom

**Resistance:** Body 7 | Mind 0 | Spirit 0**Vitality:** 17**Surge:** rating: 13 | number: 1**Giant Insectoids**

Insectoids refers not specifically to Urth insects but to any number of insect-like creatures on multiple

planets. Some are sentient, like the civilized g'nesh or vicious ascorbites, while most are of animal intelligence. Giant insectoids are dangerous hazards on multiple planets and may have evolved naturally or be the results of ill-conceived scientific experimentation. On Hawkwood worlds they occur most commonly on Leminkainen. Insectoids take on almost as many forms, attributes, and behaviors as their smaller cousins. Below are three dangerous varieties.

**CLANGOR BEETLE****Agent (creature) • Level: 2 • Size: 8**

Clangor beetles are stubborn, ill-tempered herbivores the size of brutes (Size 8). Heavily armored with large top and bottom pincers that make a loud clanging sound when opened and closed, clangor beetles are not inherently aggressive, but are easily startled and violently protective of their brood clutches.

**Characteristics:**

Str	8	Wits	1	Pre	6
Dex	4	Per	5	Int	4
End	8	Will	7	Faith	8

**Skills:**

Fight	6
Vigor	6

**Actions:**

Goal	Impact
<i>Beetle rush</i>	14 5 dmg (Slam)
<i>Pincer strike</i>	14 3 dmg

**Resistance:** Body 8 | Mind 0 | Spirit 0**Vitality:** 15**Surge:** rating: 10 | number: 1**RAST WASP****Agent (creature) • Level: 2 • Size: 2**

Unlike many wasps, rasts are not hive makers but carnivorous pack predators who live under leaf litter or fallen trees on the forest floor. Usually hunting in groups of 10-100, their primary attack is with their clacking mandibles; their stings are only reserved for





dire emergencies as their stingers come off in a target's body, taking time to regenerate. Rast wasps are bioluminescent, glowing a dim red in the dark.

#### Special Abilities:

*Poison:* From a *sting* attack.

Potency	Duration	OD	Effect
7	5 minutes	Per -5	Blinded

#### Characteristics:

Str	2	Wits	1	Pre	4
Dex	8	Per	6	Int	5
End	4	Will	5	Faith	8

#### Skills:

Fight	5
Sneak	6

#### Actions:

Goal	Impact
<i>Bite</i>	13
<i>Sting</i>	13

**Resistance:** Body 2 | Mind 0 | Spirit 0

**Vitality:** 10

**Surge:** rating: 6 | number: 1

### THORN-WEB SPIDER

**Agent (creature) • Level: 5 • Size: 5-7**

Dimly sentient, thorn-web spiders are cruel and clever predators that delight in capturing prey in their thorny webbing, playing with them before devouring them. Thorn-web spiders have a rudimentary communication system of clicks and intricate dancing movements, allowing them to coordinate attacks, retreats, and danger signals. Their webs are made of a sharp and fibrous material that both imprisons and damages their prey.

#### Special Abilities:

*Poison:* From a bite attack.

Potency	Duration	OD	Effect
7	1 hour	Paralyzed	Fatigued

*Web:* A successful *ensnare* maneuver roll is required to catch the victim. Someone trying to pass through the web must make a secondary-action Vigor + Dexterity roll vs. a Demanding Resistance to avoid becoming ensnared. Victims can break free with an unfavorable primary-action Vigor + Strength roll vs. Tough Resistance.

#### Characteristics:

Str	7	Wits	4	Pre	6
Dex	8	Per	6	Int	6
End	6	Will	5	Faith	8

#### Skills:

Fight	5
Sneak	7
Vigor	7

#### Actions:

Goal	Impact
<i>Bite</i>	12
<i>Ensnare</i>	12

**Resistance:** Body 5 | Mind 0 | Spirit 0

**Vitality:** 15-17

**Surge:** rating: 12 | number: 2



### ICE SLIME (CRYOPHYTA)

**Agent (creature) • Level: 1+ • Size: 1+**

Bioengineered to create new cold survival traits in both plants and animals — in response to the cooling of Delphi's sun — cryophyta or "ice slime" escaped confinement, becoming the most hated and feared creatures in Hawkwood space. These cold-weather apex predators are almost indistinguishable from the surrounding ice or snow — until they attack, using powerful enzymes to quickly dissolve their prey down to the DNA level. The red coloration of blood cells often takes longer for the slime to digest, giving it the horrifying appearance of





gore-spattered snow, though this does reduce the efficacy of its camouflage for some hours after feeding. Rendering them even deadlier, ice slimes temporarily absorb some of their victim's memories, giving the creatures an enhanced intelligence and the ability to crudely mimic their victim's voice and appearance. Cryophyta add a small amount of mass with each meal but go dormant for years after a period of feeding.

An ideal mixotroph, drawing energy from sunlight and prey, these abominations may live for a century or more. At one point in each colony's long existence, it replicates itself through mass binary fission (once all the cells in the colony have been imprinted with the DNA of one of its meals). The individual colony cells are archaean prokaryotes, lacking individual cell nuclei, but each colony has a single oversized nucleus. The danger a colony poses is in direct proportion to its size; stories of cryophyta the size of glaciers are part of Delphi's folklore. Unwisely employed as bio-weapons over the centuries, cryophyta have appeared on other cold planets such as the Decados worlds of Cadavus and Malignatius. Whether they were planted by the Hawkwoods, or captured and accidentally set loose by Decados genetechs, is a hotly debated mystery.

Cryophyta grow more powerful in direct proportion to their size. The example below is of a 5<sup>th</sup>-level, Size 5 monster.

#### Special Abilities:

**Absorb:** Cryophyta gain +1 Size and +1 level every time they kill and devour creatures whose Sizes total up the cryophyta's current Size. For each level gained, *crush* and *acid* attacks increase by 1 dmg and Strength increases by +1; Body and Mind Resistance increase by +1; and Vitality +3.

**Cold immunity:** Cryophyta are immune to any cold-related damage.

**Heat vulnerability:** Ice slime take double damage from heat weapons and retreat from those who wield fire effectively.

**Plasmic nature:** Cryophyta are Hardproof and Slamproof, and can squeeze through openings one-fifth their size. All Vitality damage done by anything except fire regenerates at 1 Vitality per turn.

#### Characteristics:

Str	5	Wits	3	Pre	5
Dex	9	Per	5	Int	7
End	7	Will	12	Faith	10

#### Skills:

Fight	6
Vigor	8

Actions:	Goal	Impact
<i>Acid smear</i>	11	5 dmg
<i>Crush</i>	11	5 dmg (Slam)

**Resistance:** Body 5 | Mind 2 | Spirit 0

**Vitality:** 15

**Purse:** 15

**Surge:** rating: 10 | number: 2

## ICE WYRM

**Agent (creature) • Level: 7 • Size: 15**

The most powerful hunters on Delphi, ice wyrms are reptilian dragons who traverse the planet's great polar regions. Graceful and deadly, they are perfectly adapted to the planet's icy wastes.

Standing up to three meters at the shoulder, wyrms as large as 15 meters long are not unknown. Their crocodilian heads are tapered into snouts filled with long black teeth and their eyes hint at a high level of animal cunning. Colors vary, but most of the Frisian variety have glistening steely-blue scales that heat up red due to a poorly understood biological process. They use this ability to melt their way through the ice and sometimes for self-defense.

While feared, ice wyrms are not hated like the cryophyta (on which they sometimes feed). Indeed, they are held up as ancient spirit totems, potent symbols of planetary pride. They are only legally hunted by the nobility, and then only according to ancient traditions, though Vuldrok raiders have also hunted them illegally as a way of "counting coup" on the Hawkwoods.

Ice wyrms have been exported to other cold planets (most notably during the Second Republic) and may live for hundreds of years. They are typically solitary or may be found in mated pairs. Ice wyrms lurk under the ice to hunt, bursting forth to attack with surprise. Attempts to domesticate or weaponize these creatures have all failed, though certain human populations have worked out treaties with the creatures by leaving fresh kills (usually brutes, tundra rhinos, or ice-claw bears) out away from their settlements.

#### Special Abilities:

**Heat:** When burrowing or angered, the ice wurm's scales heat to red-hot. Anything that touches the scales takes 6 points of fire damage. This is usually enough to melt most melee weapons that touch it, but weapons made of ceramsteel take no damage.

**Tremorsense:** A Frisian ice wurm can automatically sense the location of anything within 100 meters that is in contact with the ground.

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**Characteristics:**

Str	14	Wits	3	Pre	9
Dex	8	Per	7	Int	7
End	9	Will	8	Faith	8

**Skills:**

Fight	5
Sneak	8
Vigor	10

**Actions:**

	Goal	Impact
<i>Bite</i>	19	8 dmg
<i>Claw</i>	19	6 dmg
<i>Tail slap</i>	19	6 dmg (Slam) + Prone

**Resistance:** Body 7 | Mind 1 | Spirit 0**Vitality:** 27**Surge:** rating: 21 | number: 3

## LEVIATHAN

**Agent (creature) • Level:** Varies • **Size:** 25+

Intermittently waking from their long subterranean slumbers to menace Delphi (and other worlds), these antediluvian monsters tower over tall cathedral spires, requiring a concentrated military response to kill or drive them away. Scientists have analyzed the DNA of these monstrosities and discovered that they do not share that of any other creatures on Delphi, proving that they are of alien origins. Some speculate these creatures have been seeded throughout the Known Worlds by the Anunnaki or other progenitors, perhaps as doomsday weapons. Others claim they are of more demonic pedigrees. Leviathans have a wide array of body plans, from bipedal, quadrupedal, hexapedal, multi-headed, or more. Similar gargantuan monstrosities have appeared on other planets, usually attracted to areas of high tech (primarily electrical) activity.

The creatures' intentions seem to be wholly destructive, devouring people and animals whole, and crushing sturdy buildings like eggshells. After a time, they simply depart, burying themselves deep in the ground to continue their slumber; fortunately, most rampages are brief. Leviathans seem to have a panoply of strange

abilities, varying from simple great strength and highly



armored exteriors, to winged flight, a breath weapon (fiery, acid, or electrical), burrowing, the ability to break its greater mass into smaller modal parts, or more.

When these beasts break loose in a civilized area, there is not much anyone can do. Intelligent actors may save innocent lives, distract the monster away from population centers, hunt down its spawn, or otherwise act on their own covert plans while the city collapses around them.

**LEVIATHAN SPAWN****Agent (creature) • Level:** 2-10 • **Size:** 2-10

During their rampages, many leviathans drop spores from their armor plating. These spores hatch into diminutive spawn within minutes, hours or days, each of which goes on its own killing spree. Born hungry, these voracious little monsters are born roughly the size of a cat but quickly kill and devour anything they can to gain mass. If not killed within a short period, spawn cut a bloody swathe through a community before going into a torpor once they have gained enough mass (size 10), at which point they attempt to elude pursuit, burying themselves within the ground and eventually emerging as full leviathans.

Like their giant progenitors, leviathan spawn take on an eclectic number of forms and abilities, though all are well-armored and strong. Some are slow and ponderous, while others are swift and cunning.

The traits below are for a 5<sup>th</sup>-level amphibian-like spawn.

**Special Abilities:***Exoskeleton:* Slamproof.

*Gulp:* On a critical hit, this spawn's mouth unhinges, allowing it to begin swallowing a target its own Size or smaller. During this process, the spawn's *bite* rolls are favorable. A victim can escape by making a primary-action Vigor + Strength roll vs. Tough Resistance. At 0 Vitality, the victim has been eaten.

*Slime:* On a successful ranged attack from a slime-pouch in the spawn's throat, a target is covered with a foul slime and becomes Nauseated for three turns.

*Slippery:* Any attempts to *grapple* or otherwise entrap this creature are unfavorable.

**Characteristics:**

Str	8	Wits	3	Pre	5
Dex	6	Per	5	Int	5
End	8	Will	10	Faith	8

**Skills:**

Fight	5
Sneak	4
Survival	5
Vigor	9

**Actions:**

	Goal	Impact
<i>Bite</i>	13	5 dmg (+ <i>gulp</i> )
<i>Claw</i>	13	4 dmg
<i>Slime</i>	11	4 dmg + Nauseated



**Resistance:** Body 6 | Mind 3 | Spirit 3  
**Vitality:** 13 (Size 2) +1 per Size rank gained by eating  
**Purse:** 15  
**Surge:** rating: 13 | number: 2

## ROCK-TROLL

**Agent (creature) • Level:** 5+ • **Size:** 6-7

The original masters of Gwynneth, these subterranean creatures view humans as interlopers and miss few opportunities to avenge themselves against their invaders. They are strong, fast, and protected by a natural stone-like armor. These cagey hunters may attack unwary serfs as they wander home from the fields, or raid entire towns en masse, taking prisoners below the ground as slaves or sacrifices to their demonic deity, Nyoch-lek-Trûn (known by the forest pagans as the Black Stone God). Neither the forest pagans nor Hawkwood subjects have had any luck in making peace with the trolls, though occasional exiles from their ranks find their way into human society, acting as brutal bodyguards or enforcers. Rock Trolls use their pincer-like claws to rend opponents in combat. They are usually only found above ground during the nighttime hours, as bright light causes them pain.

Below are the traits of a skilled 5<sup>th</sup>-level rock troll marauder, Size 6.

### Special Abilities:

**Brutal:** Once a troll has Hindered someone with his dark strike (below), every additional attack against that individual is favorable.

**Dark armor:** Slamproof. Also, +4 goal roll to *hide* in dark or rocky areas.

**Dark strike:** Upon causing damage with a *claw* attack, a wave of cold passes through its victim, who must make a secondary-action Vigor + Endurance roll vs. Tough Resistance; failure renders them Hindered



for the rest of the span (or until they take a Revival or heal at least half their Vitality damage).

**Dark vision:** Rock trolls can see in total darkness.

**Light sensitivity:** Rock trolls are Seeing Impaired in daylight and in bright environments.

### Characteristics:

Str	7	Wits	4	Pre	5
Dex	5	Per	5	Int	4
End	7	Will	4	Faith	5

### Skills:

Fight	6
Sneak	4
Survival	6
Vigor	7

### Actions:

	Goal	Impact
<i>Claw</i>	13	4 dmg (Slam + dark strike)

**Resistance:** Body 6 | Mind 3 | Spirit 4

**Vitality:** 16

**Surge:** rating: 12 | number: 2

## STAR SALAMANDER

**Agent (creature) • Level:** 6-7 • **Size:** 4-9

Invisible, mysterious, and deadly, these entities exist in outer space in and around the Paracelsus Belt in the Gwynneth system. Some believe the fire spirits are demons, while others that they are of another genesis, not demonic but no less dangerous or cruel. Their behavior patterns bespeak a desire to cause escalating fear in their victims. Fortunately, the wicked creatures have never been encountered beyond the Gwynneth star system and will not (or cannot) enter Gwynneth's atmosphere.

Diprotians, also from the Gwynneth system, have a natural hatred for star salamanders, and their *ignite* ability can force the salamanders into their fire forms. Whether the two species have bad blood going from before humans came across them is unknown, but diprotians are considered useful ship mascots for this reason.

The numbers below are for a 7<sup>th</sup>-level Star Salamander.

### Special Abilities:

**Extra-dimensional nature:** When traveling through the void they are practically invisible, appearing as little more than wavering heat impressions. Ship sensors can detect star salamanders before they enter a ship, perhaps allowing the ship to take evasive action or to ignite the salamanders with on-board weaponry. Basic sensors can detect them within 1AU if actively scanning for their signatures. Military sensors can detect them while passively scanning out to their normal range.

Star salamanders can travel through ship hulls and bulkheads, taking three turns to permeate most hulls or five turns for military-class ships. However,

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energy shields that have not been activated during those turns will stop them. Once inside, they can pass through one ship section per turn.

They ignite into their fire form (below) when passing through electrical systems, such as in any ship section with active systems (engines, maneuver jets, bridge) and armaments (guns). This prevents them from travelling further that round. They can detect electrical banks and can typically reroute to sections without them. Similarly, a hit by the Flame or Shock attack property forces them into their fire form.

**Burn:** Star salamanders can burn enemies or ship systems within 10m when in their fire form.

**Fire form:** In an oxygen atmosphere, the creatures can either retain their near-invisible state or else burst into flames when ready to attack. They appear as balls, columns, or tendrils of fire, and have even been known to crudely mimic humanoid forms.

When in their fire form, salamanders are at their most dangerous but also their most vulnerable. Salamanders cannot ignite for more than one turn in a vacuum (or a ship system exposed to vacuum from a vented or breached hull) and forcing them to do so disperses them for a solar year.

It takes a full turn for a salamander to extinguish its fire form, and it cannot do so if it is caught in a fire or electrical field.

**Flameproof:** Star salamanders are completely immune to fire damage in any form.

**Heat form:** Star salamanders in this form are nearly invisible, appearing as heat distortions. All attempts to see or target a star salamander in this form requires a secondary-action *spot* maneuver against Tough Resistance each turn; otherwise, the attacker acts as if Blinded. Scanners TL5 or above, such as the cybernetic Etyri Eye, reduce the Resistance to Easy.

**Technology lore:** Star salamanders have an instinctive (or learned) understanding of technology, and know where to strike a ship to do the most damage. For this reason, some believe that their reputed home planet of Vanth may be an inhospitable repository of ancient technological lore.

#### Characteristics:

Str	1	Wits	7	Pre	5
Dex	8	Per	5	Int	6
End	6	Will	6	Faith	6

#### Skills:

Fight	6
Interface	4
Intrusion	4
Sneak	6

#### Actions:

<i>Burn</i>	Goal	Impact
	14	6 dmg

**Resistance:** Body 5 | Mind 5 | Spirit 5

**Vitality:** 17

**Surge:** rating: 14 | number: 3

## URROC

**Agent (creature) • Level: 6 • Size: 9**

Urrocs are giant birds of prey that live in the high mountain aeries of Ravenna. Serving as steeds for the planet's Hawkwood and Trusnikron nobility, these fearsome and intelligent beasts show great loyalty to their riders and those who attend them. With a horizontal flying speed of over 110km/h and a diving speed of 320km/h. Urrocs not only see very acutely in the visible range, but also the ultraviolet part of the spectrum. They are also sensible to polarized light and magnetic fields.

Urroc attacks are Dexterity-bolstered when in-flight and Strength-bolstered when grounded.

Lightweight armor barding is a custom item for the valued warbirds of the Solara and Trusnikron, usually priced at about five times the price of comparable human armor.

#### Characteristics:

Str	7	Wits	3	Pre	6
Dex	8	Per	7	Int	7
End	6	Will	5	Faith	7

#### Skills:

Fight	5
Vigor	8

#### Actions:

	Goal	Impact
<i>Bite</i>	13(11)	5 dmg
<i>Talon</i>	13(11)	4 dmg
<i>Wing buffet</i>	16	Knockdown

**Resistance:** Body 4 | Mind 1 | Spirit 1

**Vitality:** 20

**Surge:** rating: 13 | number: 2







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