

## Volume I: Rise of the Dragon – the Beginnings of the Draconis Combine

---

05/07/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the stars, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

The Draconis Combine was officially “born” in 2319 after a long, brutal military campaign by its founder, Lord Shiro Kurita, First Citizen of New Samarkand and Director of the Galedon Alliance. The founder of the Kurita dynasty, however, did more than single-handedly establish an empire. He also imparted his will and his beliefs onto this new realm, a spirit that lives on even now, eight centuries later. More than any other nation, the Draconis Combine reflects the culture and personality of its Coordinator and ruling family, House Kurita; but where did it all begin? How did a man born to a fractured world of city-states rise to create a nation today known at once for boundless beauty and harsh determination?

The rise of House Kurita and the creation of the Draconis Combine can actually be traced all the way back to the 2236 Outer Reaches Rebellion against the Terran Alliance, long before Shiro Kurita's birth in 2270. The two-year Rebellion ended with the collapse of the Alliance government and the near-total isolation of its former colonies. All cohesion between the far-flung worlds of the Inner Sphere shattered, as every world suddenly found itself unsupported and left to its own devices. Filling the void and maintaining a semblance of trade were numerous mercantile alliances. The most powerful of these in the Galedon region was the Ozawa Mercantile Association, a loose – but pervasive – trading coalition united under the Ozawa family of Terra's Japan. The OMA enjoyed unrivaled dominion in the “northeast” quadrant of human-occupied space, controlling all trade among the struggling colonies.

Motivated purely by profit, though certainly unafraid to use their influence to extract favors from local governments, the Association focused less on consolidating control and more on expanding their influence and stifling competition. The excessive arrogance of the Association's merchants, however, and the flouting of their wealth in the faces of those who barely managed to eke out an existence, led to widespread bitterness among the peoples and governments of the region. Into this age of simmering resentment came Shiro Kurita.

*Shiro Kurita may well have been an extraordinary individual, but like every such person, he was also a product of his environment. His father, Yamaro Kurita, was a prominent statesman in Yamashiro, one of New Samarkand's biggest city-states. He was also a strict disciplinarian, a follower of 17th century samurai traditions, which were en vogue on New Samarkand at the time.*

*Now, factoring in the post-Rebellion state of the Inner Sphere at the time, which was pretty much like Terra's Soviet Union, Shiro and his brother Urizen are growing up in an age of chaos. Their world is divided, and the Ozawas, who had built up a trading empire, are everywhere, rubbing the natives' noses in their affluence. It was even more personal for the Kuritas, however, who crossed paths with the Ozawas as far back as the second Terran World War. The Kuritas believed their family honor was stained by the Ozawas in that conflict, when Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa's fleet was destroyed at the battle of Leyte Gulf, leaving Admiral Takeo Kurita unsupported and forced to retreat in the face of an American task force.*

*Shiro Kurita, raised – and dare I say indoctrinated – by his father to revere his family's martial history, took all this to heart. He actually felt it, and that's what gave him the drive to do what followed.*

—Dr. Lorenzo Torres, Professor of History, University of Thorin

Shiro Kurita took an active interest in politics as he grew, following in his father's footsteps and far exceeding the elder Kurita with his relentless drive to unify the planet under his rule. He and his brother Urizen embarked on a campaign of diplomacy, blackmail, and even assassination. By 2296, at only 26 years of age, Shiro realized his goal, crowning himself first citizen of New Samarkand. This conquest would not, however, be enough. The Ozawas, after all, were a power to be reckoned with throughout the quadrant. Tackling the Association, however, was beyond the means of a single planet. Shiro Kurita wanted – needed – more.

*Galedon V was a logical next step for Shiro Kurita in many ways. First, the planet offered a heavy industrial base, a definite plus given the relatively resource-poor world of New Samarkand. It was also nearby, and its population also chafed under the perceived domination of the Ozawa clan. Wealth, productivity, and resentment were all tools Shiro needed to expand his influence and ultimately oppose the OMA directly. Playing to the collective ego of the Galedonians, he named his proposed coventure the Alliance of Galedon, and “humbly” offered to assume the “duty” of administering the technological and military resources of both worlds to oppose the Ozawas. Ever the eloquent speaker, it wasn't long before Shiro had the Galedonians eating out of his hands, and they signed onto his new alliance, allowing him to use their resources and gather manpower. Already eyeing his next conquests, Shiro went right to work raising an army – on New Samarkand.*

—Doctor Lorenzo Torres

In 2302, the Alliance of Galedon became a reality. Soon thereafter, other worlds began to join at almost breakneck pace, swayed by Kurita's oratory gift and their own bias against the Ozawa clan. When the alarmed Ozawas raised their rates to Alliance worlds, the tide turned firmly in Kurita's favor. Though the Ozawas attempted to rally, Shiro Kurita's agents dealt the

Association a death blow in late 2303, firebombing every known office within the Alliance – a violent reaction that has become a hallmark of Kurita leadership. Less than a month later, Shiro Kurita launched his next step in building an empire with history's first interplanetary assault. His target: the neutral world of Sverdllovsk.

*If anything, Shiro Kurita was a man of action, not words. The OMA's metaphorical body was barely cold when he took the army raised under the blessings of the Galedon Alliance and began invading his neighbors. Like many worlds of that era, Sverlovsk was fragmented, and could not muster an organized response to Shiro's well-trained army. The action also served as a warning to the rest of the Alliance to stay in line – a message that came through loud and clear that he could do the same to others what he had to Sverdllovsk.*

—Dr. Lanie Dresdenova, Professor of Military History, University of New Earth

Over the following decades, Shiro Kurita would combine his golden oratory, iron will, and the threat of military force and its occasional use to absorbing those worlds around him or binding them to his Alliance. Though some protested, they quickly felt his military might, and were brought to heel. By 2319, the collection of worlds sworn to Kurita's rule spanned almost from Terra to the Draconis Rift, and up to New Samarkand. Declaring this new empire the Draconis Combine, and assuming as its standard the symbol of the dragon, Shiro proclaimed himself Coordinator, establishing at once the title, the state, and its ruling dynasty. The following decades would see the expansion of the Combine until it met the borders of House Davion's Federated Suns, the Terran Hegemony, the Lyran Commonwealth, and the Principality of Rasalhague. The Dragon had truly risen.

When Shiro died in 2348, he left behind a legacy that endures even today, an empire of more than 60 star systems, tens of millions of citizens strong. More than that, he forged a society, and through his daughter, Omi Kurita, even established the code of conduct – the Dictum Honorarium – which still pervades Combine society. Though successive generations might be credited for the Combine's wholehearted adoption of the ways of the samurai, Shiro Kurita, the first shogun of the modern era, cannot be overlooked. Above all this, he established the Way of the Dragon, the immortal spirit of strength and power that cannot be separated from the nation. In his own words to his son, Tenno:

*I have chosen the dragon as our standard and our symbol, reflecting many facets of our existence. We must never forget the ancient Terran heritage of our line, with its samurai greatness. I remind you, too, that in many mythologies, the dragon is feared and respected for its strength, cunning, and willingness to destroy for the sake of its own power. Always keep the virtues of the dragon in mind, and use them to defeat your opponents.*

*Always preserve the dragon, and its magic will keep you strong.*

—Shiro Kurita to his son, Tenno, 2319

Join us next week, friends, as the saga of the Dragon continues into the glory days of the Star League. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume II: Unstoppable Force – The Combine and the Star League

---

05/14/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the stars, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

Imperial City, capital city of the Draconis Combine, sits under a hazy blue sky that shimmers even at night with an almost pearlescent glow. The skies over planet Luthien, tainted by centuries of rampant industrialization – even before the fires of the Jihad – earned this once-sleepy world its nickname “Black Pearl.” But while the air and water may seem poisonous to those taking in the world as a whole, Imperial City itself is a city of unmatched beauty, an almost fairy-tale image surrounded by verdant gardens. It is the crown jewel not only of Luthien, but also of the Draconis Combine as a whole.

*The eel rarely seeks the same prey as the goldfish. The eagle flies not with the pigeon. The tiger needs no friendship with the goat. Such are the paths of the Draconis Combine and the Terran Hegemony.*

—Shiro Kurita, in response to Director-General James McKenna’s offer of alliance, 2325

Upon its founder’s death in 2348, the Draconis Combine, barely 30 years old and composed of over 60 worlds, was already a force to be reckoned with. Shiro Kurita, its founder and first Coordinator, infused the realm with his determination and martial ruthlessness. Bred to embrace the severe, honor-driven mindset of the ancient samurai, his legacy set the tone for the Kuritas who followed. It comes as no surprise then that the Combine, driven by the Kuritas’ dream of one day ruling all humankind, refused to ever ally itself with any of its neighbors, preferring instead its own path, the way of the sword. For over two centuries, as its dominion slowly absorbed the entire quadrant, including near-total control of the neighboring Principality of Rasalhague, the Dragon walked alone.

But despite Shiro’s reluctance to ally with McKenna’s Hegemony, the Dragon would eventually become part of the Star League the Hegemony would one day forge. Signing the Treaty of Vega, Coordinator Hehiro Kurita, son of the diplomatic and visionary Coordinator Siriwan McAllister-Kurita, opened the Dragon to the League.

Under the Star League, the Combine prospered as never before. Trade with other nations combined with an explosion of technological advancements to produce a more powerful nation, though it was one that would eventually be weakened by cultural contamination and softened by a lack of warfare and struggle. At least this was the view taken by Coordinators Sanethia and Urizen II.

*Sanethia initiated the move of the Combine capital from New Samarkand to Luthien for one reason and one reason only, really. Far from simply relocating the command center for her troops to a more logistically effective region in the event of war on any front, the relocation was actually a test of – and reminder to – the people of the Combine itself. Her hope was that, by presenting the people with a common focus, a difficult task on behalf of the state, she could unify them behind a spirit of national unity, reminding them that they were citizens of the Combine first, and the Star League second.*

*Urizen II took this effort one step further, however, when he ascended to the throne after her. His own sweeping reforms, intent on imposing the widespread adaptation of the feudal Japanese culture at all levels of Combine society, included the so-called Kokugaku (“national learning”) Policy, which taught the Shinto religion, the cultural mores of the Dictum Honorium, and the Japanese language. All other cultures were effectively forbidden as the state turned inward. Using his authority, and the power of the ISF that was always a Kurita family prerogative, Urizen probably did more than any other Coordinator since Shiro himself to shape the Draconis Combine we all know and love today . . .*

—Dr. Lanz Rettig, PhD., Professor of Inner Sphere History, University of Academia, Kessel

The rise of a new sense of cultural identity, in the form of a stratified and structured way of life reminiscent of feudal Japan, was brutally enforced by the dreaded internal security force, though their role in enforcing culture would one day fall to the less severe, but no less dedicated Order of the Five Pillars. By the end of Urizen II’s reign in 2691 – when he was 101 years old – the diverse cultural mix that existed under the rule of the bushido-obsessed Kuritas was virtually erased, aside from the tenacious Azami and some Rasalhaguian holdouts. A rigid new hierarchy established roles for citizens in every walk of life, assuring a clear chain of command from the Coordinator himself down to the lowliest Unproductives.

Additional efforts to attain technological self-sufficiency and sharpen their trading skills helped assure the Dragon would indeed bow to no other power, and schools taught that the Kuritas joined the Star League only through a sense of pity and personal honor. Though brutally imposed in some cases, this new sense of identity and self-sufficiency would leave the Combine well-equipped in the years ahead, when the actions of Stefan the Usurper would bring about the death of the Star League and the end of humanity’s Golden Age.

*At the time of the Amaris Crisis, I think many who have vilified the Combine for its inaction would be shocked to realize just how ideal a position they were in to destroy the League. [Coordinator] Takiro Kurita did not have to stop at simply denying the SLDF passage through his realm to keep his captive cousins alive under Amaris’ “protection.” Indeed, he could have seized the moment and assaulted the League troops himself, hastening their demise while allowing Amaris’ Rim Worlds*

*troops to bear the blame. He was trapped, pure and simple, but willing to help any way he could. The fact that he did little more than deny the SLDF use of Combine space – rather than seizing the chance for personal conquests – should attest to that.*

*The SLDF's victories on Combine worlds near the Hegemony borders would prove that fact just as easily. Here, the SLDF faced Combine troops that retreated with only token resistance. Surely anyone familiar with the high value attached to personal honor by the precepts of bushido would know that Combine warriors simply did not retreat from a fight.*

*As it happened, though, doing nothing helped save the Kuritans' strength for the wars to come, when the League collapsed after the Liberation. Their highly polished, well-trained, and well-equipped military, suddenly free to act when the SLDF survivors launched their Exodus, served them well enough that they nearly overwhelmed House Davion in the First Succession War. Only the fallout from the Kentares Massacre, in fact, prevented the Dragon from delivering a crushing blow that would have claimed half of the populated galaxy in just over ten years of warfare.*

—Cedric St. Marcus, *The Dragon We Never Knew*, Republic Press, Terra, 3106

As fate would have it – or, rather, karma, by the Kuritan way of approaching things – the Draconis Combine would remain locked in almost continuous conflict with its neighbors for another three centuries before its next great upheaval. Amazingly, throughout these so-called Succession Wars, little would shake the sturdy foundations of the Kurita dynasty, or the faith and fanaticism of those who served it. None could overcome the truly unstoppable force that was the Draconis Combine.

Join us next week for part three of our four-part exploration into the Draconis Combine, our fascinating coreward neighbor, as we continue our tour of the galaxy! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume III: The Dragon's Crucible

---

05/21/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

As any historian in the galaxy will tell you, the 31st century was a time of tremendous change and growth across the Inner Sphere. Besides watershed events such as the Clan Invasion, the rise and fall of the Federated Commonwealth, and the Word of Blake Jihad, this era was important to the Draconis Combine for other reasons. Among them, the formation of the Free Rasalhague Republic, the War of 3039, the integration of the abjured Nova Cat Clan, and even the rise and fiery fall of the infamous Black Dragon Society. In its centuries-old, rigidly stratified state, few would have expected the Draconis Combine to survive these tremendous and rapid upheavals. Indeed, but for one man, it very likely might have shattered.

*Even before he became the Coordinator of the Draconis Combine, Theodore Kurita was perhaps the most visionary leader of his time. Even the ambitious, forward-thinking Katrina Steiner, Archon of the Lyran Commonwealth, with her monumental Peace Proposal of 3020, could not compete with the man who challenged the core of his nation's culture and beliefs for the better.*

*But for all his vision, one must wonder how much of his success had to do with the basic, and personal, differences between father and son. Theodore's father, Takashi Kurita, was a brutally rigid traditionalist, much like Shiro Kurita or Urizen II, with unbending rules about honor and a penchant for swearing blood oaths against enemies both real and imagined. Theodore strove to be everything but another Takashi. His more progressive views and actions included elevating the yakuza and other so-called undesirables to fight for the Dragon, supporting the release of Rasalhaguans from centuries of oppression, and generally lifting a lot of the harsher standards that held down the Combine people for so long. These steps flew in the face of everything his father held dear.*

*Of course, it was a miracle that, given the deadly methods of past Kuritan rulers, Theodore wasn't put to the sword by his own father. In that, one may suggest that the equally strong, and completely basic, feelings a father has for his son – even one so rebellious – spared the young Kurita's life.*

—Armando Sanchez, PhD., History and Psychology Professor at Greiger Institute of Modern History, Terra

Whether Theodore Kurita's penchant for reform was the result of childhood rebellion against his father, or the implementation of strategic necessity, the changes he wrought in the Combine were profound. Yet in enacting his bold new plans, Theodore walked a treacherous tightrope, balancing the survival of his realm against the passions of its peoples. Success often vindicated him during this time under his father's reign, even when he personally orchestrated the creation of the Free Rasalhague Republic. This action formed an instant buffer zone between the Combine and the Lyran half of the now-united Federated Commonwealth, while a side deal negotiated with ComStar gave the Combine access to Star League technology, including new BattleMechs for its war-ravaged army. Together with his new Ghost Regiments – staffed by yakuza and other "undesirables" formally recognized to serve the Combine's interests – Theodore saw to it that his realm survived the Steiner-Davion's efforts to destroy it in the War of 3039. No one, not even Takashi Kurita himself, could deny Theodore's success, and very few in the Combine did more than verbally criticize his departure from tradition.

The Clan Invasion spurred another wave of reform, especially after Theodore claimed the throne. Many Combine citizens relaxed cultural restrictions within the Combine, while others helped open the realm to its neighbors. Historical enemies became valued allies – and, in some personal cases, even friends of a sort. Though the Japanese cultural identity and national pride remained strong – as it does today – it became possible once more for long-suppressed cultures, such as the Muslim Azami, to celebrate their own strength of character. Unfortunately, in the years that followed the Battle of Tukayyid, in which ComStar won a 15-year respite from the invaders on behalf of all Inner Sphere powers, the reforms that allowed the Dragon to survive its most devastating wars in recent memory nearly tore the realm apart from within.

*The Black Dragons, the Kokuryu-kai, were a curious mix, to say the least. Allegedly an ancient group that always acted in the Dragon's best interests, they made their presence felt only from the mid-3050s through the 3070s. Ironically, what made it possible for them to exist and function as well as they did were the very liberal reforms they wanted to stop. In that respect, they were a group dedicated to cutting off their own nose to spite their face.*

*In practice, the Black Dragons were an Asian version of the fabled Illuminati Society, a loose alliance of like-minded criminal, business, military, and political leaders who met in dark rooms and plotted the downfall of their government with the pretense of saving it. The question, however, was who were they saving it for? Was it for them? Doubtful, as the reforms they acted against actually helped most of them accumulate wealth and power. Was it for the people, then? Absolutely not! Indeed, historians of the last century have argued that the Society actually worked – perhaps unwittingly – for only one man or a handful of men, who merely wanted their own shot at the throne.*

*Alas, who the Dragons actually worked for, and what their ultimate goals really were, may never be known, as the Society was all but annihilated during the Jihad. Their activities and goals, however, fit in nicely with those of the Word of Blake fanatics, so perhaps there is some credence to theories that the Dragons were never interested in the Combine's well being*

*at all. Rather than a misguided group of traditionalists, what if the Black Dragons were actually a carefully grown dissident group that actually – and unknowingly – served the Word of Blake itself?*

—John Kerrigan, author of *Who's Really in Charge?* Avalon Press, 3129

For the Draconis Combine, the triple threat of the Federated Commonwealth, the Clans, and the Black Dragons reached its apex in the mid-3060s, when all three groups dragged the nation into a war on every front. Coordinator Theodore, hoping to isolate his realm from the fighting, was thwarted when the Black Dragons successfully instigated a war with the neighboring Ghost Bear Clan. Renegade troops on the borders of the FedCom realms then attacked. Forced to assume a posture of aggressive defense, Theodore launched heavy counterassaults on every front, eventually securing each one, though at a severe cost to the Combine military. When the Dragon emerged whole from these crucibles, it became clear that House Kurita would persevere no matter the odds.

So it was believed, until the Word of Blake Jihad.

Their military already broken from the fighting on both former FedCom fronts, and by the slugfest on the Ghost Bear border, the Combine was only beginning to recover from the ravages of war in the months leading up to the Blakist holy war. Predations by the newly arrived Snow Raven Clan in the nearby periphery forced the Coordinator to deploy troops all around his nation, thinning them out to cover every possible avenue of invasion. In that weakened state, the realm was almost overwhelmed in the first days of the fighting that erupted almost everywhere at once.

Compared to the recent conflicts, the Jihad presented the most hellish years of warfare known since the Second Succession War. Nuclear weapons were thrown about faster than a 'Mech army could be assembled, and the Combine command structure was all but smashed when Luthien and other key worlds were bombarded by a blitzkrieg of WarShips and 'Mech regiments. At the height of all this, the tragic loss of Theodore Kurita, perhaps the best Coordinator since Shiro himself, left a demoralized realm to battle an enemy that would stop at nothing to bring ruin to all those it touched.

It is a testament, once more, to the iron will of the Kurita clan, that the Combine managed to survive at all, but it is a monument to Theodore and his progeny that the realm actually managed to turn the tide alongside Devlin Stone and his liberating armies.

In our final installment on the Draconis Combine, we'll take a look at how it exists today. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume IV: The Draconis Combine Today

---

06/03/33

We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!

### Fact Sheet

**Founding Year:** 2319

**Capital (City, World):** Imperial City, Luthien

**National Symbol:** A green, Asian-style dragon head coiled in a red field

**Location (Terra relative):** Coreward-Spinward Quadrant

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 243

**Estimated Population (3130):** 729,000,000,000

**Government:** Autocracy (Japanese feudal stylings)

**Ruler:** Coordinator Vincent Kurita

**Dominant Language(s):** Japanese (official), Arabic, English

**Dominant Religion(s):** Shinto (official), Buddhism, Muslim

**Unit of Currency:** Ryu (1 ryu = 0.94 C-Bills)

New Samarkand, the world where it all began an amazing nine centuries ago, lies beneath the glow of a yellow-white subgiant. On a clear day, the skies overhead are almost turquoise, gradually recovering the azure blue seen by the planet's first colonists, before centuries of rampant industrialization pumped billions of tons of harmful fluorocarbons into the upper atmosphere. Hillsides outside the capital city of Yamashiro, birthplace of the first Coordinator of the Draconis Combine, and once the seat of imperial power, are green once more, reclaiming land long marred by the empty shells of forgotten buildings. In the centuries following the relocation of the Combine capital from this place to distant Luthien, this world had become a proverbial "ghost planet," though one with a population just over one billion strong.

In the years after the Jihad, the Combine pieced together many of the worlds shattered by the Word of Blake fanatics, including the capital planet of Luthien. In the interim, Combine rulers returned to their roots on New Samarkand, revitalizing this tired and forgotten world. Even though the seat of power is once more the "Black Pearl" of Luthien, the all-too-brief return to prominence can still be felt and seen on this ancient, almost hallowed world.

The pride it takes to rebuild obliterated cities, on worlds nearly rendered uninhabitable by nuclear bombs and natural disasters, is part and parcel of the hard-working, proud spirit of the Draconis Combine. It is a pride that once had its roots in oppression—a government-sponsored effort to force people into conformity—but what exists today is far more than that.

What makes the people of the Combine so proud is the deep sense of honor and duty that pervades all levels of its society. More than almost any other society in the Inner Sphere, life in the Combine is structured and stratified by a caste system that provides a place even for the most nonconformist citizens. From the highest levels of government, even including the noble House Kurita itself, to the lowest menial laborer, beggar, or thief, all are regarded as an important facet of the greater whole.

At the top of this rigid social order sit the kuge, the nobility, who command and guide the realm in politics and in war. Just below them, the buke (warriors) serve as the Dragon's muscle, both in a military and paramilitary capacity, defending the realm against threats of every kind. The middle classes, including professionals such as merchants, corporate CEOs, manufacturers, and doctors, form an important third tier that in other cultures might be classified as "white collar." Though highly educated and esteemed for their contributions, even these talented individuals are nothing without the henin, or worker caste, whose sweat and skills make life possible.

The fifth caste, the so-called Unproductives, is an equally important part of Combine life, despite its dubious title. This is a caste not only of criminals, but also refugees and immigrants, or higher caste members demoted for some dishonor or subversion. If for no other reason than to elevate themselves to a better caste, Unproductives—such as the infamous Ghost Regiments who blur the distinction between the Unproductive and warrior castes—strive harder for recognition, and their efforts on behalf of the Draconis Combines simply cannot be discounted.

As foreign a concept as having an officially recognized caste that everyone wants to get out of might be to some, one must understand the core values of the Draconis Combine and its people. Duty, honor, patriotism: These common values, ingrained in the neosamurai culture of the Combine, have penetrated every strata of Dragon society so completely that its citizens cannot help but absorb these tenets to some degree. Even today, and even among those cultural groups that resisted efforts to "Japanize" the entire Combine, this sense of duty to the whole forms the basis of the average citizen's self-worth. So that he or she may one day be elevated, an Unproductive may work longer hours, enlist in some form of military or paramilitary service, or possibly even risk life and limb for the benefit of other citizens.

On the streets of New Samarkand, once overrun by yakuza and roving bandits, homes built in the classical Japanese architecture, pristine in bold colors of white and red and almost all uniform in appearance, line streets that are immaculately swept, matching beautifully kept lawns with evenly cut hedges. Every day, just one hour before sunset, a man can be seen hard

at work in his stone garden out front of one such house. He is just over 90 years old, and his once-raven hair has long since grayed and all but disappeared. Age has stooped him low, but he toils every evening nonetheless, a sense of pride filling every stroke of his rake. He is Taro Nusaka, and he helped build this community. Once, he was a member of the Unproductives.

In his native Japanese, Taro smiles as he tells of the day the local Friendly Persuaders—the Combine’s colorfully dressed, yet well-armed and trained civilian police force—conscripted him and others in his street gang to the revitalization project. The Dragon was finally calling upon its forgotten sons and daughters. Their chance to serve had come at last. Their reward? A life off the streets, the promise of more work in the future—a return to a civilization they themselves helped to build.

To Taro, those decades of reconstruction spared him a life as some yakuza foot soldier, and spared his fellow citizens on New Samarkand from a life in squalor. Pride, Taro says, was his greatest reward, though he did rise above the ranks of the Unproductives. He found a job in city administration, met a fine woman named Kiria, and settled down in a house his own hands helped build. They had children who have long since grown to contribute in their own way to the common good. Karma was realigned. Where else, Taro asks, can one get such a second chance?

Contrary to popular belief, the Draconis Combine is not an exclusively Japanese warrior society, though the existence of the caste system might lead one to think so. The past efforts to enforce Japanese mores and impose the *Dictum Honorium* merely established a “state” culture that others coexist alongside. For instance, the Azami, a Muslim society descended from the Middle East and North Africa regions on prespaceflight Terra, have clung to their customs and traditions despite centuries of repression, and have earned their right to identity and a degree of self-governance. Near the Combine’s periphery borders, a large Russian populace exists, lending their own unique flavor to the local customs and attitudes. And along the border with the Rasalhague Dominion, the customs of Clan Nova Cat are still observed. This balance of uniformity and diversity is a hallmark of Combine society, bringing together different beliefs and values under a single, guiding influence.

At its heart, the Draconis Combine, like any great and ancient nation, is a study of contrasts, more than the sum of the events that shaped it. Raised by equal parts blood and sweat, and bent to the iron will of the ruling Kurita dynasty through wisdom and war, this realm has attained a unity and strength of purpose that cannot be denied or understated. It is a place where order reigns, hand in hand with honor and power, where even an Unproductive, a *gaijin*, can contribute to the beauty and grandeur of something truly everlasting. In this way, the Combine’s soul is every bit as immortal as the dragon that is its symbol.

In our next four-part series, our tour through the history and cultures of the Inner Sphere will take us to the Wolf Clan Occupation Zone. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I’m Bertram Habeas.

## Volume V: Kerenskys' Legacy—Rise of the Clans

---

We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!

Tamar is a large, high-gravity world with a thin ozone layer unable to shield it from much of the ultraviolet radiation that constantly bombards its surface. The brutal heat has transformed an entire equatorial continent, Sahara, to desert; the planet's heat and gravity have prevented the rise of any native life more complex than short, gnarled oak trees. People native to Tamar are rugged, often stout and muscular, blushed almost crimson by the solar rays. Visitors, obviously, find this world a challenge to their endurance. With these features in mind, it is little wonder that the Wolf Clan, the self-proclaimed chosen of Kerensky's descendants, have made Tamar the seat of their power in the Inner Sphere. No doubt the Clans, who honor strength and revel in hardship, would use this place to proclaim their dominance.

But before becoming home to the Wolf Clan, Tamar was a provincial capital in the Lyran Commonwealth, a center for trade and industry. The Wolf Clan did not originate here; they originated far beyond the borders of the Inner Sphere. Like all the Clans that arose from the fires of war and betrayal, the origins of the Wolf lie nearly two thousand light-years from Terra, and four centuries in the past.

*Where nature's laws threatened the weary,  
When food, water, and even air itself ran low,  
It took just a command, a word, a smile,  
From the General to light the way.  
He was comfort, stern courage, compassion  
To our sires as he led them from the fires  
That grew and fed on those they left behind.*

—The Remembrance (Clan Wolf), Passage 2, 14:18 - 24

After a 12-year struggle to liberate Terra from the grip of Stefan Amaris, the Usurper who single-handedly destroyed the Cameron dynasty and tore the once-mighty Terran Hegemony asunder in wave after wave of horrible war, General Alexandr Sergeevich Kerensky, Protector of the Star League and Regent of a slain First Lord, could not have imagined a worse fate for humanity's greatest experiment. Over a hundred million lives lost, four hundred million more wounded, and over a billion homeless were the toll for freeing the Hegemony and bringing down Amaris' empire. Even killing the Usurper himself could not extinguish the nuclear fires raging on dozens of worlds, or cleanse the air of others choking beneath lingering clouds of poisonous gas. The SLDF itself was broken; of the 412 BattleMech and infantry divisions and affiliated regiments that went in, only half came out alive—a mere shadow of the international defense force at its peak. The industrial base of the Hegemony, core of the Star League itself, was in shambles, and the interstellar communications grid was in ruin.

In spite of Kerensky's hard-fought victory—or perhaps because of it—the various House Lords, in one of their last demonstrations of solidarity under the aegis of a mortally wounded Star League, ordered General Kerensky, its Protector, to step down. They further ordered the SLDF disbanded. In the three years that followed, Kerensky labored in vain to stitch back together the shattered League, ignoring calls by some of his comrades to depose the House Lords and claim the First Lordship for himself, even after the League officially dissolved in 2781. When House leaders, scrambling to upgrade their own armies against one another, attempted to recruit the few remaining SLDF troops, Kerensky finally gave in to the inevitable.

On 5 November 2784, he issued his single-word order—"Exodus"—to a fleet of over 1,300 JumpShips and more than 400 WarShips, which had steadily gathered over New Samarkand, original capital of the Draconis Combine. The House Kurita leadership, though relieved at the fleet's departure just when an overwhelming assault seemed imminent, nonetheless wondered—as did the leaders of every nation in the Inner Sphere—where they were all bound. The Exodus, planned since February of that year, amassed over seven hundred modern-day line regiments from the former SLDF. Over two million troops and another four million civilian dependents—all loyal to the dream of the Star League and willing to follow its most loyal son, Alexandr Kerensky—vanished into the unknown.

*" . . . we have left behind the only homes we have ever known to place the destructive capability of this armada beyond the reach of those who would use it, not for defense, but for conquest. Perhaps, with the might of our 'Mechs and ships out of their reach, the leaders who now grapple with one another will relinquish their dreams of subjugating their neighbors and learn to live in peace with them.*

*"Perhaps, one day, should mankind step back from the brink of the abyss, we, our children, or our children's children will return to once more serve and protect and guide the Star League in mankind's quest for the stars . . . "*

—General Alexandr Kerensky, 2786, recorded by the ISS Invisible Truth on 11 January 3060.

Whether General Kerensky truly considered the possibility of one day returning to the Inner Sphere to rebuild the fallen Star League is a matter of considerable debate. Indeed, as his exodus fleet traveled for more than a year in space, eventually landing on five marginally hospitable planets dubbed the Pentagon Cluster, his words to his followers, often urging them onward, have been interpreted many different ways. His Hidden Hope Doctrine, for example, also known as General Order 137, began by

saying "Return to the Inner Sphere is impossible for us," but then ended by saying, "When we return, and return we shall, our shining moral character will be as much our shield as our BattleMechs and fighters." Many have speculated that Kerensky himself didn't know his ultimate goals for the exodus fleet, which settled the five Pentagon worlds and underwent a forced demobilization that thinned the military's ranks for the sake of domestic productivity.

Alas, nobody may ever know what the man whom the Clans call "the Great Father" had intended, for he died shortly after his so-called "Star League in Exile" turned its collective back on him and descended into the same bitter feuding that was even then engulfing all five Successor States. Into this growing torrent of unrest, Nicholas Kerensky, Alexandr's son and chosen successor for command of the pared-down SLDF, rose to command a shaky alliance of loyal troops and civilians.

*From Kerensky's Stars came the eight hundred  
Beneath a banner of Truth and Righteous Light  
To lift up those who had suffered and to smite down  
With fearful vengeance those who had ruled  
In the name of Vanity or Greed.  
The thunder of their BattleMechs' feet, the lightning  
From their weapons, and the blood spilled in their name  
Created the Clan Spirit, the forge upon which  
We have fashioned ourselves to be the weapon  
Of the resurrected Star League,  
Honed to a razor's edge by Trials,  
By the Remembrance, and by the Words  
Of the Great Kerenskys, our sires, our saviors.*

—The Remembrance (Clan Wolf), Passage 98, 24:8 - 20

Although history records Nicholas Kerensky as a visionary, many would-be detractors came to regard him as merely another result of his times. Having grown up on Terra, hiding his identity as Amaris shock troops laid waste to anything connected to the SLDF or the Cameron dynasty, Nicholas saw the very worst side of humanity. In his later years, among his father's exodus fleet, he would witness the depths of human divisiveness as the forcibly downsized military force and a people struggling for identity reclaimed their old loyalties to the Successor States they left behind. As the Pentagon worlds erupted in civil war, and the conflict drained away the last of his father's life, many believe that Nicholas, suddenly thrust into a position of authority over the tattered remnants of his father's loyal troops, simply snapped.

But was it insanity, or a stroke of inspired brilliance that led Nicholas Kerensky, the man the Clans all acknowledge as their Founder, to lead his loyal eight hundred officers and their dependents on a second Exodus? Was it the lingering mental scars of the Amaris years that drove him to create the ritualized, stratified society of the Clans, or was it the well-learned lessons from history? The cause may never be known, but the effects will likely resonate throughout all time.

In the next installment of our four-part series, we will examine the ways of the Clans as Nicholas Kerensky conceived them, as honored by the Wolves today. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume VI: Trials and Glory – Ways of the Wolf Clan

---

06/11/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

*We will purge our old ideals and ethics; those belong to the corrupt stars of the Inner Sphere, and will not serve as we begin anew. Now, while our minds are open and yearning for new insight, we must remold them and fill them with the truth of our destiny. For we are destined not only to be different from those we left behind, but also better. My father knew this, and saved us from the holocaust of the Inner Sphere. I accept it as truth, and have returned to lead you, the survivors of this most bitter trial.*

—Nicholas Kerensky to his loyalists on Strana Mechty, 2802

Eight hundred loyal officers, their dependents, and thousands of civilians joined Nicholas in their new exile on the "Land of Dreams," leaving behind their former comrades, family, and friends to two decades of bloody, vicious warfare. Nicholas reformed these loyalists, dividing them into 20 Clans, and forbade them to speak of the Inner Sphere or its failed and corrupt cultures. He then established new rules around which each Clan would then form a unique society, built around rigid precepts of honor, equality, and the rule of might.

*Much have speculated as to why these followers would so easily accept such radical changes to their old lives – such as the five-caste system, which rigidly segregated warriors, scientists, merchants, technicians, and laborers into a pseudomilitary hierarchy where the warriors held sole right to govern. Perhaps they were traumatized by the compulsion to leave their lives behind not once, but twice in as many decades. Perhaps they felt for Nicholas the same almost religious reverence for his beliefs and ideals. Perhaps the horrors of warfare erupting even as they departed the Pentagon was the very last they could accept of chaos and bloodshed.*

—Dr. Lorenzo Torres, Professor of History, University of Thorin

Though Nicholas Kerensky declared all castes fundamentally equal—their functions vital to Clan existence—he established the warrior caste as the most powerful of all. Held to exacting standards and enforced by a selective breeding program and a series of grueling tests that began soon after birth, every warrior must earn his or her right to lead. But only the most honored – the Bloodnamed – have a voice and a vote in their Clan's council. But where the concept of a vote among warriors may seem unusually democratic for a strictly regimented society, Nicholas Kerensky added special rules for the ways of the Clans, an ultimate expression of "might makes right" that ritualized combat to decide any matter. Essentially recognizing warfare as mankind's natural state, Kerensky sought to control and focus that aspect of humankind, both to minimize waste and to clearly define the goals for combat.

All growth, advancement, and judgments within and among the Clans are governed by six primary Trials – ritualized battles that Nicholas Kerensky established when he formed the Clans. To outsiders, a Trial is merely an excuse to do battle, but those who know the Clans understand that every battle has meaning and serves to strengthen the whole. When applicable, a Trial is often preceded by a formal bidding, in which the terms of combat are established by the competing parties. In such cases, the right to do battle falls to whoever bids the fewest resources to accomplish the goals of the Trial. Moreover, the right to choose the means and terms of combat – if any – is often declared by the party who issues the challenge, while the venue for the Trial is often declared by the challenged.

The Trial of Grievance is one of the most commonly invoked Trials; it is a legally available resource for civilian and warrior castes alike. Conflicting individuals declare the terms and field of a fair battle between them alone in this Trial. Civilians often settle such disputes by declaring a test of comparable skills over a given amount of time, though intercaste disputes often force the Clan council to get involved. Warriors, however, prefer to resolve such matters by combat, and do physical battle in a Circle of Equals over which one is right and which is wrong. The Circle may not be violated by any outside parties during such a Trial, and the Trial continues until one combatant is killed, disabled, or is forced out of the Circle.

In all such cases, the one left standing in the Circle is declared the winner and the matter is formally considered resolved. Though this Trial may theoretically be fought even using BattleMechs, among the Wolves, such resolutions are considered frivolous – even wasteful – as is a Trial fought to the death, which costs the Clan an otherwise valuable contributor to the society. Thus, most Wolf Clan Trials of Grievance are resolved using hand-to-hand combat.

The Trial of Refusal, used to overturn Clan council decisions either during voting or judgment of warriors accused of some crime, allows individuals or groups on the losing end of a formal decision to challenge the result on the field of battle. In this case, however, the challenger may face overwhelming odds, as the challenged party is allowed to involve the same ratio of forces as the outcome of the vote. The ever-present possibility that a political decision may be challenged in such a fashion has helped keep Clan laws lean over the centuries.

"Attention, Falcon swine! This is Star Colonel Renuit Ward of Clan Wolf! I declare a Trial for the Possession of the Blood heritage of Star Colonel Vanessa Pryde! What forces dare oppose the iron fangs of the Wolves this day?"

Words like these signal the beginning of a Trial of Possession, the single-most common inter-Clan Trial, and one that is even fought between individual warriors in the same Clan. Subject to the standard bidding and challenge rules, this Trial may be fought over any item the warrior or his Clan deems worthy of possessing, from a rival Clan warrior's genetic legacy to an entire planet, and can be waged using any tools of warfare available to both sides. With this Trial and the use of bidding on both sides, would-be wars of conquest have been transformed into quick skirmishes, minimizing waste and settling – however briefly – the ownership of a given resource.

Trials of Position are a frequent occurrence for the warrior caste, and one of the most important. Unlike many Inner Sphere militaries, advancement through the ranks of a Clan is not simply a matter of seniority and politics, but one of martial skill and battle training. In this Trial, warriors must defeat at least one enemy to obtain (or retain in the case of established warriors) a rank in the Clan's fighting arm. The aspirant warrior typically faces up to three warriors at a time, but usually fights each in turn, according to the standard Clan battle rules known as zellbrigen. With each victory, the warrior may ascend another rank, having demonstrated the skills necessary to lead and win.

The Trial of Bloodright is the ultimate Trial for a Clan warrior born of the eugenics program. Centered on the names of the original eight hundred warriors who followed Nicholas Kerensky in his creation of the Clans, each Clan was granted a starting allotment of Bloodnames based on these loyal officers. In honor of their loyalty, only these names have been allowed to continue over the years. Via this breeding program, the genes of an honored, Bloodnamed warrior are used to create another generation of warriors. Some of these names have been lost through Trials of Annihilation and other Clan rites, but of those that remain, only a maximum of 25 warriors in a Clan may lay claim to any given name at any one time. Upon the death of any Bloodnamed warrior (whose legacy will usually go on to the next generation), his or her Bloodname again becomes available, and a new Trial of Bloodright begins.

Fought more like a tournament than a standard Trial, but with the same sense of balance and rules of engagement as a Trial of Grievance, a Bloodright determines the next holder of a Bloodname purely on the basis of the last person standing. These Trials can take days to resolve, and can vary from unarmed combat to BattleMech duels in the course of their resolution. Because the holder of a Bloodname is guaranteed immortality—by contributing to the eugenics program upon his or her death—these Trials are often among the bloodiest fought, even among Clan Wolf.

The last of the known Trials is also the most final of punishments handed down by Clan law: the Trial of Annihilation. Invoked only on the most grievous of offenses to Clan traditions, the Trial of Annihilation suspends even the Clan rules of engagement. Bidding does not exist, as the goal for those invoking such a Trial is the elimination of the offending party and all genetic links to him (or her). Trials of Annihilation are rare, and have been declared on individuals, units, and even entire Clans, though the focus of Annihilation is often limited to warriors only. In the case of civilians who must be annihilated in such a fashion, sterilization will do.

Nicholas Kerensky himself presided over the most famous Trial of Annihilation of all when he ordered Clan Wolverine's Annihilation shortly after the reclamation of the Pentagon Cluster. Though rumors persist to this day that some Wolverines might have survived the bloody war (which they brought upon themselves through the use of nuclear weapons), there are no known survivors of the so-called Not-Named Clan anywhere in human-occupied space.

In part three of our four-part series on Clan Wolf, we'll discuss the Invasion years: how the chosen of Kerensky led the charge that would change the Inner Sphere forever. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume VII: Kerensky's Chosen – The Rise of the Wolf Clan

---

06/17/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

*"We will not 'do what we must to win.' We will simply do what we must."*

—Nicholas Kerensky, 6 February 2802

Nicholas Kerensky's vision for a bold new society created what has evolved into the modern Clans. He accomplished this by breaking the bonds of family and patriotism as we know them and reassembling them into a new culture. The Clans are driven by harsh laws and rigid guidelines, dominated by warriors who settle disputes both minor and grand through ritual combat – often to the death. The very heart of Clan society boils down to that simplest principle of evolution: survival of the fittest. Though stressing an almost totalitarian unity, Kerensky still went on to separate his Clans into 20 factions. He even encouraged each to battle one another for control of the limited resources in Clan space, a tiny region of some 40 stars a full thousand light-years beyond the Inner Sphere. While to some, such a concept seems bizarre at the very least, these divisions within unity further encouraged the Clans to evolve and grow stronger, continuously testing their strength against their only opponents: one another.

Sharpened by almost 20 years of training, the Clans returned to reclaim the Pentagon worlds they had left behind with Kerensky's Second Exodus. Operation Klondike, as it was called, assigned four Clans to each world, to crush the warlords they left behind and establish Clan domination with ruthless efficiency. The bitter fighting would last almost a year before the final resistance ended, and would be followed by many more months of brutal, humiliating punishments on the surviving warlords captured during the operation. The shock of millions dead at the hands of the warlords and the public punishments by the Clan "liberators" ultimately helped bring war-weary populations into the Clans' fold, but it would not be long before the Clans faced their ultimate tests.

It was in this period, shortly after the reclamation of the Pentagon, that ilKhan Nicholas Kerensky bestowed upon the Wolf Clan the ultimate honor: He and his wife joined with the Clan, allowing the Wolves alone control of the Founder's bloodline thenceforth. The momentous occasion was cause for celebration for the Wolves, but left all the other Clans – particularly Clan Jade Falcon – with the bitter taste of jealousy. But the feud between the Falcons and Wolves that would one day result in a great conflict of its own would take a backseat to one of the most defining moments for not only Clan Wolf, but also for all Clans.

*"Those who break faith with the Unity shall go down into darkness."*

—ilKhan Nicholas Kerensky, 11 October 2823

*These days it's common practice, I think, to ascribe a sinister intent to [Nicholas Kerensky] for declaring the Wolverines worthy of annihilation, but as the old saying goes, "Judge not, lest ye be judged." Nicholas had already seen the worst of mankind on Terra, during the first Exodus, and through the Pentagon Civil Wars. His father, a guiding light for the Star League - in-Exile, was dead, and Nicholas had to lead a second Exodus and forge a completely new society in the hope of averting more such holocausts. When the Wolverines started to break ranks – their Khan going so far as to declare Kerensky a megalomaniac in front of the other Khans – well, he saw the storms of fate for what they were. A mushroom cloud later and there had to be no doubt in his mind what had to happen next if he were to avoid another age of no-holds-barred fighting.*

*So, coming at it from that point of view, I would ask anyone what their own heroes would do. What would Victor Steiner-Davion have done? Or Theodore Kurita? Or even Devlin Stone?*

—Dr. Lanz Rettig, PhD., Professor of Inner Sphere History, University of Academia, Kessel

Even as the Wolves led the campaign to annihilate the Wolverines for the sake of all Clan-kind, it became evident that the cracks in Nicholas' unity were forming along inter-Clan lines. A rivalry between the Widowmaker Clan and the Wolves began even as the two battled for the right to annihilate the Wolverines. The Ghost Bears, slighted at being overlooked for the honor of the kill, allegedly allowed some Wolverines to escape, creating a rift that even today remains unhealed between them.

Shortly after the Wolverines were exterminated, their civilian survivors sterilized, and their names forever eliminated from the Clan eugenics program, a Trial fought between the Wolf and the Widowmaker Clans culminated in the unexpected death of ilKhan Nicholas Kerensky himself in 2834. The death so shocked the Wolves that the Clan flew into a near-insane rage and triggered an inter-Clan war directed solely against the Widowmakers. Only a handful of the Wolves' rivals lived to be absorbed into the triumphant Wolf Clan. Yet for all the death and destruction, and despite the loss of their founding father, the fall of the Widowmakers heralded a century of prosperity – if not true peace – for the Clans.

*The Golden Century is what truly defined the Clans. Not only did they survive the death of their visionary Founder, but the 18 surviving Clans also even prospered, their individual strengths and influences developing each to their own gifts. Some,*

*like the Jade Falcons and the Sea Foxes, became prominent merchant powers. Others, like the Smoke Jaguars, honed their fighting capabilities. Still others explored aspects of their social unity, like the Ghost Bear and Hell's Horses Clans. Through it all, of course, were the innovations that affected them all: the refining of the eugenics program, the first Elementals (and Elemental Armor), and advanced BattleMechs that rendered even the Star League - era machines then dying out in the Inner Sphere completely obsolete.*

*But I think what most people tend to forget is that gold always tarnishes in the end . . .*

—Dr. Lanz Rettig, PhD., Professor of Inner Sphere History, University of Academia, Kessel

As the Clans prospered, internal pressures began to rise among their growing populations. Trials gave way to feuds as the Clans grew further apart. By the closing years of the Golden Century, these pressures took on a strange new form as Clansmen – warrior and civilian alike – turned longing eyes back toward the Inner Sphere. Many Clans gradually began to believe that the Successor States teemed with bountiful worlds now in the hands of “barbarians.” As decades passed, some grew to advocate a return to those worlds, to conquer and “save” the Inner Sphere from itself.

For the Wolves, however, any return to the Inner Sphere, per their interpretation of Kerensky’s Hidden Hope Doctrine, would be for the express purpose of guiding it after centuries of Succession Wars, or to protect the Inner Sphere from an external threat that was never named. This political viewpoint formed the heart of the Warden philosophy, and colored the debates that raged in the Clan Grand Council throughout the 30th century and the early half of the 31st century, but it was a debate the Wolves, and other Warden Clans, were eventually destined to lose.

In 3048, spurred by a chance encounter with a ComStar explorer ship in Clan space, the Crusaders, championed by the Jade Falcons and the Smoke Jaguars – both rivals of the staunchly Warden Wolves – won their fateful vote to launch Operation Revival: the invasion of the Inner Sphere. Ostensibly in honor of the Founders’ legacy within their Clan – but more, some say, as a punishment for their political views – the Wolves were given a place in the Invasion force. By 3049, the Wolves spearheaded a drive straight through the heart of the Free Rasalhague Republic, flanked by six other Crusader Clans who had to fight for their right to take part (Diamond Shark, Ghost Bear, Jade Falcon, Nova Cat, Smoke Jaguar, and Steel Viper). Despite their Warden leanings, the Wolves were ferocious in battle, making gains the other invading Clans could only dream of, until just three years later they claimed an occupation zone that included over 80 inhabited systems, forever changing the face of the Inner Sphere.

In part four of our four-part series on this remarkable warrior society, we will look at the Wolves today in an age of unprecedented peace and prosperity. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I’m Bertram Habeas.

## Volume VIII: Clan Wolf Today

---

06/25/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** Clan Wolf Occupation Zone

**Founding Year:** 3050

**Capital (City, World):** Vladivostok, Tamar

**National Symbol:** A brown wolf's head against a tan rectangular bar with six gold, five-pointed stars

**Location (Terra relative):** Coreward, between the Lyran Commonwealth and the Rasalhague Dominion

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 56

**Estimated Population (3130):** 467,000,000

**Government:** Clan (caste-driven, warrior-dominant hierarchy)

**Ruler:** Khan Seth Ward

**Dominant Language(s):** English (official), Russian, German, Swedenese

**Dominant Religion(s):** None

**Unit of Currency:** Kerensky (1 kerensky = 5.13 C-Bills)

*The Lyran standard still flutters highest over Old Connaught, capital of Arc-Royal, a mere three jumps from the occupation zone claimed by Clan Jade Falcon. But in front of the office of the Grand Duke, hereditary ruler of the planet since the close of the Fourth Succession War, the mailed fist of House Steiner is flanked by two others. On the left, the Arc-Royal planetary flag, crimson and black with a stylized hound's head in its center, reflects this planet's link to the famous Kell Hounds mercenary regiments who still call this planet home. On the right, just slightly lower than both, flies the brown wolf's head standard of Clan Wolf, set against the same black-and-red backdrop.*

*This is the flag of the Wolf Clan - in-Exile, often referred to as the lost brethren of the Wolf Clan.*

Though broken away from the Wolf Clan since 3057, and despite their symbiotic relationship with the Kell Hounds who also claim this world as their home, the Exiled Wolves maintain the same Clan traditions and culture. The warrior caste still claims sole governing rights over their enclaves. The Trials are still waged between fellow warriors. And the eugenics program still selectively breeds hundred-strong companies of troops. Only their politics, colored by the conflict that formed them and the decades since among the "Spheroids," differ from those of their estranged kin.

The fracturing of the Wolf Clan was the inevitable result of the events that brought the Wolves into the Clan invasion to begin with. Having long championed the Warden stance, believing the Inner Sphere something to be protected and nurtured, rather than conquered and ruled, the Wolves were forced to take part as a final punishment by the Crusader Clans who craved new opportunities in the Inner Sphere. Wedged between other invading Clans, the Wolves were not expected to succeed as spectacularly as they did, and in so doing, they drew only more ire from the other invaders.

In 3051, as part of perhaps another failed effort to force the Wolves into compliance, the Clans voted Ulric Kerensky, Khan of the Wolf Clan, to lead the invasion after ilKhan Leo Showers died at Radstadt. Rather than contain the Wolves, however, Ulric's position made it possible to negotiate for a potential halt in the invasion: by fighting a proxy battle for Terra – the Clans' stated objective – against ComStar's military. Each invading Clan fought for the honor of seizing Terra in what amounted to the largest Trial of Possession ever waged, but after a 10-day battle, only the Wolves could declare a complete victory, not just in the field of battle, but also on the political battleground as well. With the majority of the invading Clans defeated, the invasion was stalled under a new 15-year truce.

*What is 15 years? An eye blink, perhaps? To those of the Inner Sphere, perhaps it was. Or more like a loud clock, ticking down the days to Armageddon it made the leaders of the Successor States more nervous with every passing day. House Kurita obsessed about it, as did Victor Steiner-Davion, the man who would one day lead the final battles of the Clan War on Strana Mechty. House Steiner feared it, and all scrambled to prepare for the inevitable sounding of those bells of fate.*

*But to the Clans, who live in a constant life of battle, 15 years might as well have been eternity. In this eternity, they could hear their enemies laughing, knew the disgrace of having failed, and found themselves surrounded by barbarians, forbidden to strike further toward coveted Terra. In 15 years, almost two full generations of trueborn warriors would pass for the Clans, unable to test themselves in the crucible of war, while the industrial might of the Inner Sphere struggled to match Clan technology. Even the historically Warden Wolves began to chafe under this forced state of peace, and soon found more and more of their ranks embracing the Crusader ideals.*

*Is it any wonder they never made it even a third of the way through truce time before deciding to spill blood again?*

—Dr. Lorenzo Torres, PhD., Professor of History, University of Thorin

In 3057, Ulric Kerensky was branded a traitor to the Clans, charged with genocide by submitting to the Truce of Tukayyid to begin with. In an effort to discredit him, force the election of a Crusader ilKhan, and repudiate the Truce, the Jade Falcon Khans stood as his accusers, and nearly celebrated when the Council voted in their favor. Kerensky countered with a Trial of Refusal, however, naming his entire Clan – Clan Wolf – to his defense.

The resulting Refusal War pitted the Falcons and the Wolves against each other in a brutal campaign that touched nearly a dozen worlds. The war decimated both Clans and left the Wolves sundered along Crusader and Warden lines. The Warden Wolves, under command of Khan Phelan Kell, an Inner Sphere mercenary captured and converted by the Clans early in the Invasion, fled into the Inner Sphere to eventually settle on Arc-Royal, while the Crusaders, under the rule of Khan Vlad Ward, declared them abjured and rebuilt his Clan with an eye toward glorious conquests.

Close communication – even limited cooperation – continued between the fractured halves of the Wolf Clan, particularly through the chaos of the Word of Blake Jihad, when the Clan and Inner Sphere Houses united to face a common foe. Yet a long-hoped-for reconciliation between the “original” Wolves and those in Exile never materialized. Today, there are still two Wolf Clans, the “original” Clan, which claims an occupation zone centered on Tamar, and the Wolves-in-Exile, whose scattered enclaves dot Arc-Royal and other nearby planets.

But what is the modern Wolf, exiled and otherwise? What sets them apart from the average Clans, or are they the standard by which all Clans are judged? Well, as with any culture alive in the Inner Sphere today, there can be no easy answer to those questions.

Perhaps it is merely sufficient to say that the Wolves are what their beliefs and their history have made them. Guided by the philosophies of Nicholas Kerensky, and sworn today to carry on his legacy through times even the Founder himself could never have imagined, they have much to live up to.

Through it all, both Wolf Clans remain true to their founding ideals. The warriors still rule, governing by the rights of the strong, and protecting their own people, right down to the lowliest Laborer, from all who would threaten their sovereignty. Progressive by Clan standards, they respect ability far more than birth status, and even those of the “original” Wolf Clan will recognize the contributions of a freeborn as equal to those of the “trues” (though chances are an Exiled Wolf freeborn will rise in status somewhat faster).

For the warriors who rule, the Bloodname remains the greatest treasure one could wish for, guaranteeing the immortality of the eugenics program. Honor, prized almost as greatly, helps keep them on Kerensky’s path. In battle, the Wolves resolve conflicts and Trials with the same frugality endorsed by the Founder.

Meanwhile, those of the civilian castes do what they do best, serving the Clan as needed, building the cities, starships, and BattleMechs that make their Clan stronger. It is a Spartan culture for a Spartan people, an almost family-like unity bred to survive in the face of certain chaos; everyone contributes, lest the entire machine break down around them. In this, the Wolves are the unity that Kerensky must have sought so many centuries ago, after the horrors of so many wars.

In our next four-part series, our tour through history and cultures of the Inner Sphere will take us to the Federated Suns. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I’m Bertram Habeas.

## Volume IX: Rising Sun – The Dawn of the Federated Suns

---

07/02/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

The Federated Suns is a self-described bastion of freedom amid a universe of despots, and many of its citizens point to the Six Liberties of their national Constitution as proof of its egalitarian ideals. Critics, however, point to the ranks of armed 'Mech forces on FedSuns' borders, or the striking inequity between grand palaces on key industrial worlds and the impoverished masses who eke out a living on other, more far-flung planets. Both of these are faces of House Davion's Federated Suns, but does either face present the whole truth, or set this realm apart as better or worse than its neighbors? Like all such questions, of course, there can be no definitive yes-or-no answers. So instead we explore the history and the culture of today's Federated Suns. Where did it all begin? What compelled the formation of this realm from the chaos of the early 24th century to become the 434-world power it is today? Like all tales of great nations, the story of the Federated Suns is rooted in war and politics.

*What is interesting to note is that the Grain Rebellion itself was an interesting repetition of ancient Terran history, one that even led to the formation of a democratic state that eventually attained global prominence, just as the FedSuns itself eventually would do on an interstellar scale. A collection of angry locals – most of them farmers – raided the local spaceport, where their military-seized produce had been recently gathered for off-world shipment. They then sabotaged the assembled fleet of DropShips, essentially spoiling the efforts by Governor-General [Emil] Varnay to keep New Avalon in line.*

*In fact, short of dressing up like local bandit raiders and calling the whole affair the "New Avalon Grain Party," one might be hard pressed to come up with a more obvious link to the historical event that once signified the same fateful rallying cry for colonial independence on ancient Terra.*

—Dr. Byron Wolfe, PhD., Here We Go Again, Republican Publications, 3126

While the signing of the Crucis Pact in 2317 was the official formation of the Federated Suns, it was the New Avalon Grain Rebellion 80 years earlier, when the people of New Avalon said "no more" to Terran Alliance work quotas, that signified the birth of this nation. Sweeping aside the heavy-handed military governorship of the Alliance's strongman, Emil Varnay, the people of New Avalon first tried to rebuild their world in its newfound independence under a democratic rule, much the same way the former European colonists on North America did upon their own successful bid for liberty.

But where the North Americans would one day create a political, industrial, and military powerhouse from those seeds of a representative democracy, the "true democracy" implemented on New Avalon began to fail within its first decade. A handful of local industrialists quickly gained wealth, prestige, and their own private armies, and turned on one another as they jockeyed for planetary control. In their efforts to avoid the tyranny of oppressive rulers, the people of New Avalon soon found themselves ruled by the tyranny of chaos itself.

It was not until the cooperation of militia colonels Adam Davion and Nathan DuVall, who launched a seven-year campaign against the other feuding families on New Avalon, that peace and stability would return to this world, along with a neofeudal system to replace the failed experiment in "true democracy." The war-weary population readily accepted this change to an oligarchy for the stability and security it promised. But such security lasted only until rumors of a burgeoning Terran Hegemony reached New Avalon.

*It's striking to note that what brought New Avalon to such a position of prominence was the same anti-Terran concerns that led to the creation of the Draconis Combine, its greatest historical enemy. Lucien Davion, eldest son of Colonel [Adam] Davion, and successor to Prime Minister [Nathan] DuVall of New Avalon, perceived the rising Terran Hegemony as a threat to his world's sovereignty. Though many historians have called him a dreamer, Lucien was probably more pragmatic than most of his fellow New Avalonians, who tended toward isolationism. Fear of a new Terran domination and the need for a defensive alliance prompted him to devise and pitch his Crucis Pact to other world rulers.*

*Like Shiro Kurita did around the same time, Lucien spent a lot of time gathering political support for a local confederation of mutual defense. Unlike Kurita, however, Lucien stressed politics far more than military force; if a planetary ruler wanted no part of his deal, then he or she was on his or her own – theoretically speaking. This fair but pragmatic diplomatic approach won him a great deal of respect, and even got him elected President of the Federated Suns when that 20-world alliance formed officially in 2317.*

*But would it have worked out that way had there been no Terran boogeyman to rally against?*

—Dr. Lanz Rettig, PhD., Professor of Inner Sphere History, University of Academia, Kessel

Though the Crucis Pact theoretically granted the Federated Suns limited central authority to create an alliance-wide defense force, what existed at the end of Lucien Davion's reign was little more than an ad-hoc collection of local militias. Disorganized and ineffective, these forces were constantly mired in skirmishes on the Capellan frontier. Charles Davion, Lucien's youngest brother and successor to the dual titles of New Avalon Prime Minister and FedSuns President, addressed this problem by forming

the Federated Peacekeeping Force (FPF). This new standing army, loyal to the alliance as a whole rather than any individual world, became the core of the modern Federated Suns army. Henceforth, military strength would become a signature of House Davion's political power and resolve.

*The prominence of the military in the Federated Suns is a reflection of the ideals espoused by the ruling House Davion line since their original ascent in the 2300s. Even Lucien Davion, the dreamer and politician, hailed from a military background and resorted to the use of force to further his political aims. Though hardly as belligerent and eager to conquer as the Kuritas, the Davions were no less militaristic than their coreward counterparts. Indeed, their belief in military service as a prerequisite to political leadership – spelled out in the FedSuns Constitution – clearly demonstrates the value placed on the business of war.*

*Shortly after Charles Davion's death, his successor, Reynard Davion, would use the FPF in the realm's first true stab (but certainly not its last) at expansion through conquest, flexing the realm's military muscle against the neighboring Capellan states.*

*If the FedSuns' citizenry opposed the military adventurism of its rulers, however, few apparently felt the need to say so. With the clout of the FPF behind them, every Davion to become ruler of the realm was seen as a war hero, and through their military background they grew a powerful political base that would ensure Davion rule from then onward.*

—Dr. Lorenzo Torres, PhD., Professor of History, University of Thorin

By the time of Reynard Davion's death in 2371, the Federated Suns was completely dominated by the Davion family, who enjoyed the support of the military and no small degree of public opinion to effectively create the dynasty that even now continues to rule that nation. In the wake of Reynard's rule, however, successive Davion Presidents gradually drove the realm into a destructive, downward cycle. Some, such as Reynard's son, Etien Davion, proved mad or ineffective, while others, like Edward Davion, leaned toward the very despotism the realm was said to stand against.

The ascent of Simon Davion – ironically after willingly submitting to a trial for assassinating his cousin Edward – saved the Federated Suns from its decline toward corruption and collapse. Under Simon Davion, the Federated Suns was reorganized politically. The last vestiges of the Federated Suns' semidemocratic government hierarchy were swept aside in favor of an interlocking system of nobility – including several government leaders newly elevated to nobility – that would prevent future abuses of power. The March Lordships were created, establishing a secondary tier of national leadership that deemphasized Simon's personal rule over the Suns, but his fair-handed approach to this political reorganization still won him the title of First Prince, replacing the office of the President once and for all in 2418.

In part two of this series on the Federated Suns, we'll continue our exploration of the Davion realm. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume X: Manifest Destiny

---

07/09/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

New Avalon City, capital of New Avalon and the Federated Suns today, fills an area roughly six hundred square kilometers, and is surrounded by a three-river crisscross made possible by diverting the flows of the Albion, Rostock, and Burbank rivers to create what the locals affectionately call the New Isle of Avalon. The geography is no accident; it was a deliberately engineered effort to recreate a city—Avalon City—whose remains lie just 80 kilometers farther south, a ghost city of ruins, blast craters, and debris 50 kilometers in diameter. It stands as a silent memorial to the horrors of the Word of Blake Jihad.

Beneath an aqua-blue sky and lit by a small yellow sun, New Avalon City sprawls amid a collection of grand towers and the palatial estate of the Davion family—a dazzling modern castle as formidable as it is beautiful. Surrounding the city, beginning as near as the opposite shores of the Albion and Burbank rivers, the fertile plains of Albion give rise to massive agro-plexes, a rural landscape that contrasts sharply with the urban sprawl just one bridge-length away.

The Six Liberties of the Federated Suns' Constitution covers both the hard-working farmers who toil the fields of the agro-plexes and the First Prince, who resides in the castle at the heart of the city, with equal force, despite the presence of an aristocratic governing order. These rights – to personal liberty, fair treatment, privacy, ownership of property and weapons, and participation in planetary government – serve to protect the people and worlds of the Federated Suns from the excesses of a true dictatorship. These liberties imbue the people of the Federated Suns with a sense of pride and enthusiasm not often found in other realms, but has at times instilled equal – or even excessive – levels of arrogance and self-righteousness.

*For too many in the Federated Suns, pride in their democratic traditions easily turns to arrogance. The average citizen sees his homeland as the only truly free realm in human space and therefore superior to all others. Some take this righteousness a step further, believing themselves duty-bound to spread the Federated Suns' enlightened ways by any means necessary. They sincerely believe that, given a choice, any sane human being would live exactly as they do. When confronted with entire interstellar nations whose people live differently, they tend to either pity them as ignorant or despise them for intentionally rejecting a "better" way of life. Such attitudes bolster the promilitary mindset so prevalent in Federated Suns society, turning the frequently ugly business of war into an expression of manifest destiny . . . .*

—Anastasia Marcus, PhD., *On Setting Suns*, ComStar Press, 3064

The institutions that maintain fairness and help protect these fundamental rights date back to the original signing of the Crucis Pact. But as the realm grew more and more aristocratic, successive rulers tried to reign in the power of the nobility they themselves spawned. The 25th century, for example, saw the reign of Simon Davion, who assassinated his own despotic cousin, then threw himself on the mercy of the Suns' High Court in the name of controlling the excesses of the government. All but acquitted for his crime, Simon Davion established an interlocking checks-and-balances web of new nobility during his rule, while simultaneously dismantling the less-feudal government titles, including that of President. Power was decentralized, with five March Lords created to maintain a balance of power so that, in theory, no single Lord could claim command over the entire state—until the crisis of the Davion Civil War, that is.

*The Davion Civil War was a huge setback for the egalitarian system in the Federated Suns, and highlighted once again what's probably the feudal system's greatest weakness, just as the Amaris Coup would prove so aptly years later.*

*In the hope of ensuring that no single ruler stood above all others, the Davions planned to install five Regents, including two March Lords, to rule while young Alexander Davion grew up. Of course, by the time he had all but done so, some of these Regents grew ambitious enough to want to remain in power.*

*The details surrounding the kidnapping of the First Prince by two of his own Regents have proven bedeviling enough to fill a major holodrama or five on the matter. Living at first in captivity, then in hiding as his Regents fought for dominance, Alexander himself was the only person who apparently could bring an end to the situation—but only after more than 10 years of fighting had reduced the realm and its military to shambles.*

*Given the outcome of the war, Alexander can thus hardly be faulted for reorganizing the army, making military service for the First Prince mandatory, and curtailing the powers of the High Council and March Lords. Having seen for himself the horrors of ambition, it became clear to Alexander that there was indeed such a thing as **too much** power-sharing.*

—Arthur Luvonne, *The Long, Dirty History of the Federated Suns*, Commonwealth Press, 3100

The lessons that Alexander Davion learned from the Davion Civil War continue to have repercussions. Firstly, the powers of the March Lords and the High Council were redefined, placing more authority in the hands of the First Prince and effectively demoting all other nobles to emphasize their position in the hierarchy. Secondly, the FPF was reorganized and rechristened the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns (AFFS) to emphasize its loyalties to the entire realm, rather than to any March Lord. And finally, the First Lord himself would henceforth be required to serve in the AFFS for a minimum of five years before being eligible

to rule. These sweeping reforms strengthened the power of the First Prince, weakened those of the other lords, and more tightly bound the fate of the nation to its prominent military defenders.

Through it all, however, efforts to promote the freedoms of the people continued. Alexander Davion himself passed the Laws of Noble Conduct and Review in 2634, which granted the right of appeal to the common citizen, even against the ranks of nobility, and obligated planetary rulers to look into such complaints whenever they arose. Nobles could thus be judged for their conduct, found guilty of crimes, and stripped of title, land, money, and even their very lives if found to be acting in poor faith with the people.

But where the rights of the people are often looked after, the prevalence of the military throughout much of the Federated Suns' history created a far more serious imbalance that continues to plague parts of this realm even today. With so much of the national budget earmarked for defense, taxes are high and particularly hard on those worlds with fewer resources to draw upon.

On these worlds, the haves and the have-nots are sharply divided. Education is poor for those who work the fields and mines, particularly near the fringes of the Periphery, where children go to work as soon as physically possible. Perhaps a passing "vagabond school" JumpShip may happen by long enough for local children to learn at least how to read and write, but such government-sponsored measures are stopgap at best.

Yet, ironically enough, many citizens – even those who live on the poorer fringe worlds of Davion space – maintain their admiration for the military, either seeing service as a noble cause or as a means to escape a life spent in poverty. Still others cling to the freedoms they still enjoy, even without the prosperity known in the urban sprawls of New Avalon City. These are the people who look upon House Davion's neighbors and see nothing but oppression and hopelessness, for even the poorest citizen of the Federated Suns, they say, can hope for something better.

Join us for part three of this four-part look into the Federated Suns, when we'll look into the most well known of Davion rulers and the watershed events of the 31st century. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XI: The Fox and His Legacy

---

05/16/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

In 3013, Prince Ian Davion, ruler of the Federated Suns, died in battle with Draconis Combine forces on Mallory's World. Because he was a bachelor prince with no wife or child to succeed him, it fell to his brother, Hanse Davion, "the Fox," to lead his nation out of a war that had already run for nearly a full century and a half. Though he was never raised for statesmanship, Hanse Davion would nonetheless become a pivotal leader in the history of the Federated Suns, both for his skill and infamous luck on the battlefield, and for the political savvy that would soon change the face of the Inner Sphere forever.

*Though some have credited such wisdom to Jerome Blake, there is an old Terran adage that says, "It is better to be lucky than good." In the case of Hanse Davion, that phrase perhaps rang truest. Though unquestionably brilliant in the affairs of all things military, and a gifted diplomat even in his youth, no small amount of pure, dumb luck characterized his entire career, often turning certain defeat into total victory.*

*For example, no sooner did Hanse step off the DropShip on New Avalon after being named First Prince, than an assassin (hired by his rival Michael Hasek-Davion) just missed killing him, burning off a part of the bulkhead behind the new ruler of the realm at the very second he stooped to adjust an errant boot spur.*

*That Hanse Davion was also a man of astute leadership and keen foresight is undeniable, of course, but anyone who thinks he made his mark on the universe by skill alone fails to give credit to the divine whims of Fate itself.*

—Arthur Luvonne, *The Long, Dirty History of the Federated Suns*, Commonwealth Press, 3100

Even before assuming responsibility for the Federated Suns, Hanse Davion took an active interest in learning and refining House Davion's military edge. He personally spearheaded an initiative to reform the crumbling state of military competence on the Capellan front during the closing years of the Third Succession War, an effort that helped turn the tide of battle on that border.

He also led a daring assault on Halstead Station, an airless rock where House Kurita forces were massing supplies in advance of a new invasion. While hardly extraordinary events in and of themselves, these successes would set the Federated Suns in good standing by the war's end in 3025.

Of course, the most famous of Hanse's decisions as ruler of the Suns was his alliance with Katrina Steiner, Archon of the Lyran Commonwealth, after her Peace Proposal of 3020. This momentous event forged the first true formal bond between Successor States since the collapse of the Star League, an alliance that, upon its consummation, would ignite the Inner Sphere in the shortest and most dramatic of the Succession Wars.

*"Husband, in honor of our marriage, in addition to this cake, I give to you a regiment of BattleMechs and the means to support them in perpetuity."*

*"I thank you for the gift, beloved. Wife, in honor of our marriage, in addition to this morsel, I give you a vast prize. Here, my love, I give you the Capellan Confederation!"*

—Archon-Designate Melissa Steiner and First Prince Hanse Davion, upon their wedding night, 20 August 3028, Hilton Head Island, Terra

As any school child knows, the marriage of First Prince Hanse Davion to Melissa Steiner, designated heir to the Steiner throne, heralded the start of the brutal, two-year war between the united Steiner-Davion realms and the rest of the Great Houses. Bearing the brunt of this invasion was the Capellan Confederation, which lost roughly half its territory to the war machine of the Federated Suns, but both Houses Kurita and Marik also suffered losses in the highly organized, lightning-fast blitzkrieg. Despite a loose alliance of their own, the Draconis Combine, Free Worlds League, and Capellan Confederation could not coordinate an effective defense against the Davions and Steiners, who had spent the past six years preparing for the campaign.

When it was over, a bridge of worlds cut through the Confederation and League to link the Federated Suns and the Lyran Commonwealth in a new entity known as the Federated Commonwealth, and Lyran troops tore deep into the Combine's Rasalhague Prefecture. Even a ComStar interdiction failed to impede the victory that Hanse Davion and Katrina Steiner declared in the final days of 3029.

In the two decades that followed that conflict, the Inner Sphere continued to reel from the effects of Hanse Davion's alliance, which produced the largest, most powerful military and economic force since the Star League. Though efforts to finish the job begun with the Fourth Succession War fizzled, such as the abortive War of 3039 against House Kurita's Draconis Combine, and though internal unrest spiked from the ongoing efforts to integrate the realms, the reality of the unified Steiner-Davion realm became more and more a fact of life.

That was, at least, until 3049, when the luck of the Fox – and the Inner Sphere at large – finally ran out.

*Who knows what might have happened if the Clans had not shown up when they did? Some have linked the FedCom Civil War to the strain of fighting the Clan invasion, which bore down more heavily on the Lyran half of the Commonwealth than on the Davion realm.*

*Others, however, believe that even without this impetus, the alliance would have crumbled anyway. After all, the Commonwealth was in a state of simmering turmoil, a hotbed of unrest from separatist groups, made louder and bolder as the economy stumbled its way toward equilibrium. The Skye region even tried to secede during this time, until Archon Melissa Steiner-Davion settled the matter with surprising level-headedness.*

*But if the Clans had not come, what then would have been the straw to break the proverbial camel's back? What pretext of tension would lead Katherine Steiner-Davion, sister of Hanse and Melissa's heir Victor, to assassinate their mother and launch a propaganda campaign to tear the realm in half and seize the two thrones for herself?*

—Dr. Lorenzo Torres, PhD., Professor of History, University of Thorin

Hanse Davion died of a heart attack shortly after the Battle of Tukayyid, leaving his wife, Archon Melissa Steiner-Davion, and heir-apparent Victor Ian Steiner-Davion, to guide the united realm through the turbulent times ahead. Unfortunately, Melissa's subsequent assassination in 3055 at once gave official birth to the Federated Commonwealth and marked the beginning of its end.

Victor (unlike his father), trained for warfare and poorly skilled in the affairs of diplomacy and politics, proved unable to stem the rising tide of chaos. Though he would one day lead in the final campaign to defeat the Clans, and later on win back both the Davion and Steiner realms from the rule of his treacherous sister, Katherine Steiner-Davion, he destroyed the destiny to which he had been originally born and bred. Victor Steiner-Davion would be a hero to his home realms and the Inner Sphere at large once again, fighting alongside Devlin Stone to defeat the Word of Blake and their brutal Jihad, but the dreams of a Star League under the Davion standard were lost forever in the fires of the FedCom Civil War.

*"We must never forget the awful price we have paid to finally win this peace. The Commonwealth my parents once forged from both nations is lost forever, so I ask this of the Lyran Alliance and the reborn Federated Suns: May we never turn down this path again."*

—Public address by Victor Ian Steiner-Davion at the end of the FedCom Civil War, 24 April 3067

In our final installment on the Federated Suns, we'll look at House Davion's Federated Suns as it stands today, after the triumphs – and the tragedies – of the 31st century. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XII: The Banner Yet Waves

---

07/23/03

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** The Federated Suns

**Founding Year:** 2317

**Capital (City, World):** New Avalon City, New Avalon

**National Symbol:** A silver sword, blade upturned, against a golden sunburst on a red disc.

**Location (Terra relative):** Outward-Spinward quadrant

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 434

**Estimated Population (3130):** 1,302,000,000,000

**Government:** Constitutional Aristocracy (Western European feudal stylings)

**Ruler:** Prince Harrison Davion

**Dominant Language(s):** English (official), French, German

**Dominant Religion(s):** Christianity (Interfaith Church), Buddhism, Judaism

**Unit of Currency:** Pound (1 pound = 0.97 C-Bills)

Orbiting fourth from a cool, orange, K-class star, New Syrtis, capital of the Capellan March (the stretch of worlds along the Davion-Liao border) is a world most hospitable in the tropical equatorial reaches. There, the island continent of Copplin is the only one of the planet's landmasses not reached by the ice sheets that cover most of the planet. Yet despite the presence of this lush paradise, it is the harsh climate of the northern Mawreddog continent that is home to Saso, the ancestral heart of the Hasek family and capital of this world.

Saso is a city built with the same grandeur found in New Avalon City today, complete with the towering palace of the Hasek family at its heart. It is said that anything a person could want on New Avalon may also be found on New Syrtis, and that is true – right down to the BattleMechs and armored vehicles that patrol the streets, sharing the road with midday commuters who pass by as if nothing were amiss.

Despite decades of relative peace, the Davion military remains on alert throughout the Federated Suns. In cities such as Saso, New Syrtis, and New Avalon City, troops are a regular sight, their presence not only accepted, but also expected. Security, ever of paramount importance to the people of the Federated Suns, has been a national obsession for centuries.

It is this obsession, the people of the Federated Suns believe, that has preserved their freedoms throughout the history of their nation. Contrary to casual appearances in the major industrial centers and border worlds, the Davion realm is far from a police state. Tyrants have come and gone, but the Davion people have always enjoyed their freedoms under the Six Liberties of the Crucis Pact. A free press reports the news – both good and ill – of wars, politics, and celebrity lifestyles. Holovids and holoscreens tirelessly entertain billions of House Davion citizens with improbable plots, special effects, or enchanting tales of love and honor. Political action groups champion their causes to their hometown representatives. There is even the fundamental right to worship as one pleases, with no official state faith declared or imposed.

All of these freedoms have bred a wonderfully diverse people, united only by common freedoms and their love of the same. Though their rulers may not always be so enlightened, the structure of the Federated Suns government—and the lessons of its history—have given these people every right to be proud of their diversity, and they are willing to sacrifice anything to preserve that way of life.

Diversity in the Federated Suns, of course, comes in all forms. For every major industrial center, rich in the conveniences of modern life, for instance, are a hundred small towns on worlds that the average Davion noble has likely never heard of, where the ground is worked by hand, and muscles are forged from blood, sweat, and tears rather than the local gymnasium. On these worlds, education is not always a public privilege, but a luxury done without, save for the visits of a traveling vagabond school. Faith in a god, practiced however and whenever one's traditions dictate, precede the patriotism and pride of state, though one rarely eclipses the other. The people of the Federated Suns thus run the gamut from the rich nobility to the poor ne'er-do-well. Always, however, there is a chance for hope, and the freedom to pursue a better life is always there for those who are strong enough to earn it for themselves. This, more than anything else, perhaps exemplifies the spirit of the Federated Suns.

Paul Alison was a 32-year-old farmer on Bonneau—a backwater world he describes as “pleasant, but routinely wet”—before moving with his family to New Syrtis five years ago. The move was expensive, costing the family the combined savings of three generations, but they left in search of a better life. His arrival, he said, was a classic case of culture shock.

“I never saw BattleMechs in person before, except on the HV, but I gotta admit it sure was an impressive sight, especially stomping down downtown Leesburg. I turned to my wife when I saw it and said, ‘Why, that’s a curiously useless-looking AgroMech.’ Imagine my shock when she turned back to me and said, ‘Paul, there ain’t no farms ‘round here that use a ‘Mech like that. That’s a BattleMech!’”

For Paul, a dedicated Catholic and father of seven, the urban world of New Syrtis, even in a suburban city like Leesburg, located over a hundred kilometers south of Saso, was a major adjustment, not just for the 'Mechs and soldiers in the street, but everything from the way people spoke to the ways they worshipped.

"Back home, we went to church every Sunday morning, already dog tired from five hours of morning chores, and listened to the pastor's sermon on the glories of Heaven and the fires of Hell in a small, one-room, one-story building where the heat never worked and the roof always leaked. Here, it took us a while before we even found a church that carried our faith, and when we did, we still thought it was the wrong one. A pastor half the age of our Father Mackie spoke of the Golden Rule from a pulpit of crystal, under the glow of lights so bright and so warm you'd have thought God himself had shined a light down upon us all. Of course, it took us a good month and a half just to get over his accent.

"And chores? Hell, before too long the kids and my wife managed to find enough modern conveniences that it seemed the machines did all the work around the house – all while I was still going to school and learning the things they say every Avalon lad knows by age 9."

Today, Paul Alison still lives in the suburban township of Leesburg with his wife, Marie, and three of their seven children. Their Bonneau accents have all but faded, though they still attend services at the Presbyterian church. Paul is a professional landscaper, while Marie works as a secretary in a Leesburg law office. Their two oldest children, Daniel and Marko, now serve with the Armed Forces of the Federated Suns, and their holographic pictures rest on a hutch beside flat pictures of the family they left behind on Bonneau. This winter, Paul said, he and Marie plan to travel back home for a visit, amazed that they can afford in just a few short years what their parents and grandparents spent years only dreaming of. And while their thanks go mostly to God and their own perseverance, both of them also give their heartfelt thanks to a nation where such things are possible to those who dare to dream.

"Only in the Federated Suns," said Paul, "can a man strive to be something other than he was born with, and rise up to be something more without having to ask someone for their permission to do so. To live in a land so blessed and so free surely is the greatest gift of all. We may not be the richest, and we may never live in a palace, but we've never been slaves, and we never had to compromise the way we lived or who we worshipped for anyone, anywhere. That's freedom."

In our next four-part series, we'll return to the Clan occupations zones for a look at Clan Jade Falcon, the Followers of Turkina. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XIII: Turkina's Children – Birth of the Jade Falcon Clan

---

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

Sudeten is a fairly dry planet, with only about 40 percent surface water. Much of its interior lands is covered in rocky mountains and deserts. For centuries, its people mined the earth for common metals, and supported themselves with only sustenance-level agriculture. Once upon a time, this world was a backwater in the Tamar Pact, and a stop-over point on the trade routes to the Free Rasalhague Republic. That, of course, was before the Clan invasion, before Jade Falcon came.

Today the spaceport in Hammarr, the last city to be claimed during Jade Falcon's conquest of this world, is abuzz with activity. Clan merchant ships rise into the pale blue sky on pillars of flame, escorted by a squadron of Clan aerospace fighters. Falcon warriors stand guard outside the city and in the spaceport itself, ever vigilant, eyeing everything and everyone with suspicion, their weapons always in view. BattleMechs and armored Elementals make regular patrols, strictly enforcing the peace.

Today, the raptor-and-katana banner of Clan Jade Falcon flutters in a dry breeze over the domed Clan Council Chamber in Hammarr, seat of the military government of the entire Jade Falcon Occupation Zone since the Jihad.

Unlike most flags and battle standards, the Jade Falcon's banner is more than a mere abstract symbol of the Clan's power. The falcon it depicts, an example of the genetically altered peregrine falcons from which the Clan takes its name, is named Turkina. Falcon legend tells an extraordinary tale of Turkina, the magnificent bird that returned from the dead to give its mistress, Elizabeth Hazen, the drive to fight on through the darkness of the Pentagon Civil Wars. The katana, clutched in Turkina's claws, became the instrument Hazen used to defeat her enemies even after her 'Mech was shot out from under her. As fanciful as it sounds, within the halls of the Jade Falcon Clan Council, the sword of Turkina is said to reside as proof of this tale's truth.

Elizabeth Hazen went on to become the Jade Falcon's first Khan, after that terrible day when all she had lived for appeared lost in the fires of war. The Falcon's history begins with Hazen, who infused her Clan with the need to excel above all others, and her devotion to Nicholas Kerensky, the founder of the Clan way of life, but the same could be said of all Clans at the beginning. It was the fateful events following Operation Klondike, the Clans' liberation of the Pentagon worlds, which truly set the Falcons apart.

*"It is with great pleasure that I announce which Clan shall become home to my heart and the hearts of those Kerenskys who will follow. The Clan I have chosen possesses a collective intelligence I admire, the burning passion of true hunters that I desire, and, above all, is blessed with a spirit that will serve as a beacon to all the rest. I choose to mingle my blood legacy with Clan Wolf."*

—iKhan Nicholas Kerensky, 2822

Nicholas Kerensky's decision to join the Wolves disappointed Jade Falcon more than any other Clan. Though all had fought hard to reclaim the Pentagon, the Falcon warriors had grown convinced during their training and the fighting on Eden that their victories would be the most glorious, and their strength would be most prized by their iKhan. Though Khan Hazen initially tried to head off this vocal despair by suggesting that the Wolves needed Kerensky's guidance more than Jade Falcon, growing discontent and a sense of malaise took hold of her people. When that discontent verged on treasonous thoughts, such as Jade Falcon striking out on its own, Hazen and her saKhan, Lisa Buhallin, enacted "the Culling," a brutal inquisition and purge of the Clan's ranks.

Although the Culling brought Jade Falcon rank and file in line, lingering resentment over Nicholas Kerensky's perceived favoritism remained, feeding into what even today is a longstanding rivalry between the Jade Falcon and Wolf Clans. Since the Culling, Jade Falcon strove to follow the traditions and laws set down by Nicholas Kerensky to the letter, in opposition to the Wolves' seeming eagerness to "bend the rules" as it suited them. Even after Kerensky's death, and the so-called Golden Century that followed, the Falcon's way was to keep all castes under tight control, even as the Clans expanded among the worlds of their Kerensky Cluster.

Over the centuries that followed, Jade Falcon developed a reputation for rigidity and conservatism unmatched by any other Clan, denying their lower castes the relative freedom from Clan restrictions that those of other Clans enjoyed. Though in some cases such strictness prompted the lesser castes to rise up, swift and brutal punishment was dealt out by the Clan's warrior caste, reinforcing the tenets of Kerensky.

*For all the alleged oppression that took place, some scholars think it's a miracle that Clan Jade Falcon didn't simply shatter from its own social pressures during the century following Nicholas Kerensky's death. What these scholars often fail to realize, however, is that the Clan system was still forming, and many of the new Clan populations were at least the immediate survivors of those who lived through the Pentagon Civil Wars. The horror of the warlords and the promise of the Clan system to bring order made even the perpetual martial law of the Clan way much more appealing. And the Falcons, who followed these draconian measures to their limits, were simply one of 19 variations on the same theme. The only alternative to it, for most, was exile into chaos, and in the resource-starved Kerensky Cluster, that simply wasn't an option.*

*But Falcon leaders also had another reason to keep their people in line. Competition between Clans – particularly between the Falcon and the Wolves – increased during the Golden Century. This provided incentive for “loyal” Clanners to redouble their efforts to toe the party line. Thus, the constant threat of the Wolves’ rising power provided excellent motivation among the lesser castes – as well as justification for any draconian means to attain it by the warriors. This, too, was the Clan way.*

—Dr. Lanz Rettig, PhD., Professor of Inner Sphere History, University of Academia, Kessel

The strict adherence to the words of Kerensky and the occasionally excessive reinforcing of it among the lesser castes prevented Jade Falcon from expanding its territory as much as some other Clans, but did not impede its ability to stage effective Trials for new technologies and resources. At the same time, Falcon merchants worked on the overlooked aspects of intercaste trading, and became instrumental in the economic boom of the Golden Century. Accomplishing this while remaining strictly within the guidelines established by the Founder was a challenge, but one that paid enormous dividends in the years to come. And so the Falcon rose to prominence second only to the Wolves themselves – all without ever absorbing or annihilating another Clan to do so.

*“Because we adhere strictly to the words of Kerensky, all caste members, from the least-skilled laborer to the best warrior, hold only one opinion on the Crusader question.”*

—Khan Yvonne Hazen, addressing the Grand Council, 2980

Curiously, the decades of expansion and growth in the shadow of Kerensky’s legacy caused attitudes toward the Inner Sphere to change. More and more, the harsh life of the Clans led to a rising feeling, beginning among the lower castes but eventually infecting the warriors, that the worlds of the Inner Sphere were paradises, left in the hands of callous barbarians. Among the Falcons, who claimed that Kerensky himself intended the Clans to return one day, this changing attitude quickly gave rise to the Crusader movement. The rigid interpretations embraced by Falcon leadership soon guaranteed their leadership in the Crusader political movement that would eventually lead to Operation Revival.

In part two of this series on Clan Jade Falcon, we’ll explore the way of the Clans, Falcon style! I’m Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XIV: Honor and Tradition – The Ways of the Falcon

---

08/06/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches throughout the Milky Way, touching worlds as far from our home as Clan space, more than two thousand light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight we'll find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

From the Falcons' Clan Council Chamber, a great 17-story dome on Sudeten, the warrior caste rules more than 40 worlds with the near-absolute authority of martial law. The Clan Council represents a system of legislation and jurisprudence that extends back to the days of Nicholas Kerensky himself, almost unchanged since the start of Golden Century.

Since conquering these worlds eight decades ago, the Jade Falcons have focused their energies on remaking these various worlds, with their various native governments, in their own image. Today, though the region is still called an occupation zone, there are few inhabitants who recall a time when the Falcon's flag did not fly overhead, when the currency was not the C-Bill or the kroner, when they did not live in the rigidly structured caste society of the Clans. Many of them, with the mercantile heritage of the Lyran Commonwealth behind them, became merchants themselves in the new order, as have their progeny. Others became laborers, and still others had the mental gifts to become scientists or technicians. Their descendants have continued to serve the Clan ever since, born into a society their forebears had thrust upon them, forbidden to learn of their past except through Clan-approved media sources.

A privileged and gifted few, however, became warriors, and today a significant portion of the Jade Falcon's martial strength now includes the freeborn heritage of these captured peoples. But even today, thanks to the strict beliefs of the Jade Falcon Clan, virtually no native-born warrior exists who can claim a Bloodname, or a vote in the Clan Council.

*Nowhere but in their hallowed eugenics program are the Clans so opposed to change, and there is no Clan in which such opposition is so strident than the Jade Falcons. Though exceptions to the rule have emerged from time to time – such as the case of the freeborn warrior, Diana Pryde – such exceptions were flukes, and caused tremendous uproar within the Clan in order to allow them even once. Like a cancer, this bone of contention has waxed and waned within Clan Jade Falcon. At times this matter has lain completely dormant, with such events rarely occurring, and barely tolerated, but with each infrequent instance when a freebirth is allowed to participate in a Trial of Bloodright (even if the warrior fails in the bid) the uproar once again rocks the foundation of Falcon traditions. In one such case, in fact, such uproar even led to the downfall of a Khan. How long can the Falcons ignore this issue and survive more such traumas, one must wonder? Or will they face it, sooner or later, and cut it forever from their flesh?*

—Dr. Lorenzo Torres, PhD., Professor of History, University of Thorin

The freeborn/trueborn issue thus takes on whole new meaning for Clan Jade Falcon than it does for other, more flexible Clans. Effectively speaking, the chances for any freeborn ever to become part of the eugenics program or earn a Bloodname (and with it, the right to vote) is related to how much "trueborn blood" flows through his or her veins, and even then, he or she had better be a truly exceptional warrior to boot. With none of that going for the average native descendant of the Jade Falcon OZ, the chances of a "home grown" Bloodname holder drops so low it doesn't even register mathematically.

The traditionalism of Clan Jade Falcon is almost legendary, extending from the six Trials of combat to the other rites and traditions that take on almost religious overtones in this Clan. The rite of surkai, for instance, offers a ritualized method to atone for one's errors. As the successful conclusion of a Trial provides a final resolution to any conflict by Clan law, so does willingly practicing surkai, which may involve any manner of self-punishment from fasting to self-mutilation, depending upon the severity of the crime. In rare instances, the offer of surkai may be refused by the wronged party, a decision that may then result in a Trial of Grievance. But for the Jade Falcons, their strong sense of personal honor and the sacredness of this rite has ensured that most who invoke it do so with the utmost respect and sincerity.

The rituals of Adoption and Abjuration are two other important rites acknowledged by all Clans, but practiced most piously by Jade Falcon. Essentially two sides of the same coin, the Adoption is the ceremonial acceptance of a new warrior into the ranks of the Clan, while the Abjuration rite expels troublesome individuals or groups.

Falcon children, trained from birth to become warriors, often experience the Ritual of Adoption shortly before their first Trial of Position in the warrior caste, while bondsmen captured during battle – in those uncommon cases where they are deemed worthy – undertake a similar rite before regaining their warrior status as abtakha. In either case, the adoptee must face a test of courage (such as running toward the blade of an outstretched katana) and one of strength (such as personal combat with a challenger symbolically opposing the adoption) to complete the ceremony and symbolize the individual's acceptance into the ranks of the warrior caste. A formal Trial of Position then ratifies the ceremony, providing physical proof of the candidate's martial skills.

The Ritual of Abjuration allows the Clan to peacefully eliminate disruptive or shameful elements from within the Clan without wasteful combat, and is generally invoked by the civilian castes. Essentially similar to a court trial, the offender or offenders are sentenced to exile, and are expected to depart within a specified time, leaving all Clan equipment behind. Offenders who remain past the exile date may then be killed as an invader to the Clan. The abjured may appeal with a Trial of Refusal, but would be doing so on borrowed time, as a loss in such a Trial leaves him or her closer to the deadline stated in the original ritual.

But today, not all traditions are held as sacred as these rites and rituals. Tempered by defeat at the hands of the Inner Sphere barbarians they so long sought to conquer, and by what many within the Clan have viewed as treachery by their fellow Clans, Jade Falcon reserves the honor of fair combat – zellbrigen – only for their own kind.

*For the cultures of the Inner Sphere, whose populations are not driven by the rigid principles of this warrior society, the concept of Clan battle customs might seem trivial, but for Jade Falcon, they are a defining truth of the universe. Nicholas Kerensky believed that war could not be taken out of humanity, and so sought to control it by transforming it into a ritual – a clearly defined arbiter of success and progress. To that end, he came up with the Trials and the concept of zellbrigen, reducing all military affairs to clean one-on-one duels far from civilians or properties of value.*

*The Jade Falcons, like all the invading Clans, soon realized that the Inner Sphere wouldn't honor such principles, but it took almost two decades before they resorted to similar tactics en masse. For them, such a move was sickening, another sign of barbarity they sought to destroy. Council meetings and internal Trials were fought over how far these "tactical necessities" would be allowed to "infect" the Clan. Even today, the question of "how far must we sink to win?" has become a rallying cry for countless Falcon warriors, who see constant contact with the Inner Sphere as an ongoing corruption of the Clan soul.*

*Now, ask yourself this: If you felt the universe around you had forced you to become something you truly abhor – and you are actually introspective enough to realize that – how would you react?*

—Dr. Lanz Rettig, PhD., Professor of Inner Sphere History, University of Academia, Kessel

Tradition and honor define the Clans, and for Jade Falcon, they are as all important as the principles of any religion mankind ever held dear. They combine to form a Clan that is both strong and proud, and provide a sense of cultural identity that goes beyond the mere "might makes right" philosophy of the Clans. A sense of destiny still drives these proud people, but what is that destiny? Join us next time as we explore the hopes and dreams of the Jade Falcon Clan.

Join us for part three of our four-part look at Jade Falcon, to see how this Clan of honor and tradition contributed to the highlights of the 31st century. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XV: The Falcon's Flight

---

08/13/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

*"This day, fellow Khans, will be remembered years from now as the dawning of mankind's rebirth... We are returning; we are the sun of righteousness that will illuminate those who dream of peace, and burn to ashes the demons and devils responsible for the darkness."*

—Khan Elias Crichell, to the Clan Grand Council, November 3048

If one were to ask any Jade Falcon what one single event defined the Jade Falcon Clan, the answer would be Operation Revival, the Clan invasion of the Inner Sphere. No other event, they say, comes close – not even the Jihad, or the Clan Civil Wars that soon followed. To the warriors of this proud and traditional Clan, Revival was the inevitable culmination of three centuries in preparations toward a goal that many in the Clans believe was divinely preordained. When the Falcon and Smoke Jaguar Khans finally swayed the Grand Council to that fateful "go vote" in 3048, it was the realization of destiny, the return to the hallowed worlds lost to the ancestors of the Clans. The time had finally come for the barbarians who tarnished the name of the Star League to face the just fruits of their decadent labors.

For the Jade Falcons, it was a homecoming that was long, long overdue.

By June of 3049, the Jade Falcons joined with the Clans Ghost Bear, Smoke Jaguar, and Wolf for the trek across more than a thousand light years, loaded with the best troops three centuries of selective breeding and brutal, birth-to-death training could forge. A year later, the Falcon flag flew over 26 systems once belonging to the Federated Commonwealth, and a host of Periphery worlds. By the time of the Tukayyid Truce in 3052, 19 more would fall, establishing a sliver of space today still known as the Jade Falcon Occupation Zone.

In just two years of fighting, the Clans overwhelmed nearly a full quarter of the Inner Sphere, forever changing a map that had remained virtually static since the collapse of the Star League (excepting the formation of the Federated Commonwealth and Free Rasalhague Republic, of course). The battles were fierce, with Jade Falcon officers bidding against one another for the right to claim each world with the least casualties, the trying to overcome the defending forces without resorting to the "barbaric" tactics of the Inner Sphere. Falcon warriors commented time and again on the ease of their victories, and dismissed as aberrations the very few defeats they suffered. One Star Admiral even summed up the sentiments by scoffing calls from other Clan leaders for caution as the invasion dragged on: "...We are the Clans," he said. "We shall triumph in the name of the Star League. Caution? Let us throw caution to the Wolves..."

For the Jade Falcons, the 15-year truce won by ComStar at the Battle of Tukayyid was a cataclysmic end to their way of life, and as many would tell you the invasion defined their Clan, those same people would proclaim that fateful 21-day proxy battle for Terra as the turning point. After Tukayyid, nothing would ever be the same for the Clan, and among such staunch traditionalists, change was death. The Battle of Tukayyid was at once the Falcons' finest hour and its blackest day, with victory so near, yet so unforgettably far. Those who fell that day were heroes, fighting for the Clan; those who did not were failures who seethed with rage for a fate denied them.

*Remember those events that brought us these fifteen years of shame.  
But remember also those who fell to restore the glorious Star League.  
Above all, remember the blood legacy of Aidan Pryde, child of Kerensky;  
He made the final sacrifice so that the Clan could continue.  
For eternity, we shall praise him; in fifteen years, we shall avenge him.*

—*The Remembrance* (Clan Jade Falcon), Passage 417, 29:74-79

In the wake of their historic defeat, the Falcon leaders sought every means possible to repudiate the Tukayyid Truce. Rumors to this day even persist that then-Khan Vandervahn Chistu authorized a covert mission by a "bandit" force to raid the Inner Sphere, heading past the truce line, not only to demonstrate Inner Sphere inferiority, but to shatter the tenuous peace. They championed the fall of ilKhan Ulric Kerensky, and fell upon the Wolves in the so-called Refusal War, claiming a Pyrrhic victory. Even in the effort to avoid Absorption by another Clan in their weakened state, the Jade Falcons assailed the Lyran planet Coventry, a conflict that had the collected leaders of the Inner Sphere bracing for all-out war.

Under Khan Marthe Pryde, these years even saw a change in the Falcons' vaunted rigidity. The Trial of Position for the newest generation of warriors was now a live-field kill of a Spheroid opponent, rather than the ritualized and controlled arena-like battlefield environment. Freeborns rose in stature to fill the ranks of a depleted Touman. The most monumental allowance was the allowance of a freeborn warrior to claim a hallowed Bloodname. Some hailed these years as an age of progress for the Falcons, but warriors a generation later would see these events merely as necessary evils, and further proof of the corrupting influence of the Inner Sphere. This cycle continues to this day, with the debate among the Falcons of whether freebirths have the right to participate in a Trial of Bloodright as hotly contested as it was almost a century ago.

*It's hard, I imagine, for anyone in the Inner Sphere to understand the Jade Falcons because their concept of tradition is just so strong. Anything that forces them to change or deviate from what they regard as the will of Kerensky is resented. Where people on Inner Sphere worlds would hail the events of the late 3050s and 3060s as a time of change and growth – especially after the ejection of the Steel Vipers, who briefly shared their occupation zone when they were called in to reinforce the invasion – the Falcons themselves felt they had tarnished their own reputation. Passages in the Remembrance during that era are filled with bile and disgust, all aimed at the Inner Sphere or Clan Wolf, the two main influences on the Khan's decisions. And even though the Falcons did their part and helped the coalition under Devlin Stone resist the Word of Blake Jihad, the Clan clearly felt that the entire affair was the Inner Sphere's own just rewards for their corruption and power lust..*

—Sean Lasko, PhD, Professor of Clan Society and Politics, University of Thorin.

The fires of the Jihad left none untouched, not even the Jade Falcon Clan. Blakist terror agents and strike forces loyal to the fanatics appeared in the Clan's territory, waging a war on civilian and warrior castes alike, using underhanded tactics and weapons not seen even during the invasion of the Inner Sphere almost twenty years before. At the same time, Clan Wolf lunged forward soon after the original Truce of Tukayyid expired, launching a "liberation" of the Inner Sphere worlds now terrorized by the Word, and cutting off the Falcon corridor toward Terra. More insult to injury came when Clan Hell's Horses arrived from the home worlds en masse, their forces rolling over the weaker garrisons of both the Falcon and Wolf occupation zones. Though they would later on help to repel the Ice Hellion Encroachment, the Falcons and the Horses remain at odds today.

Then came what some experts have called the Homeworlds Civil War. Evidence does not prove conclusively what truly happened in the Clan homeworlds – or even if it was a civil war at all – but many have speculated about it ever since. The events surrounding what has, in effect, cut the Invading Clans off from their roots on Strana Mechty, remain a mystery, but enough clues have been revealed in the decades since to suggest some mass combat took place out there. Whatever happened, some say, was far more devastating, than even the so-called Wars of Possession of the 3060s, which followed the loss of the Ghost Bears, Nova Cats, and Smoke Jaguars from Clan space. Even the Jade Falcon Remembrance says little of this mysterious, yet monumental event, save to promise Falcons will one day return to those lost worlds and bring enlightenment back to their "lost brethren", just as they claim they have returned to the Inner Sphere.

In our final installment on the Jade Falcons, we will look at the Clan today, after the upheavals of the Jihad, and the Trials that followed. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XVI: Turkina's Chosen – Clan Jade Falcon Today

---

08/20/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** Clan Jade Falcon Occupation Zone

**Founding Year:** 3050

**Capital (City, World):** Hammarr, Sudeten

**National Symbol:** A jade falcon, clutching a katana, soaring against a blue and gray rectangular field.

**Location (Terra relative):** Coreward, between Lyran Commonwealth and Clan Wolf

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 44

**Estimated Population (3130):** 145,200,000,000

**Government:** Clan (Caste-driven, Warrior-dominant hierarchy)

**Ruler:** Khan Jana Pryde

**Dominant Language(s):** English (official)

**Dominant Religion(s):** None

**Unit of Currency:** Kerensky (1 kerensky = 5.13 C-Bills)

The city of Borealtown, on the planet Wotan, is a sprawling metropolis located on a large hill in the middle of the Boreal Heights. The view, on a clear day, is nothing short of breathtaking, overlooking not only some of the finest examples of 31st-century architecture, but an almost unspoiled valley below. Off to the east, on the shores of the large Lake Borea, one can just barely make out the towers of Oslo, the city that is home of the Jade Falcon Occupation Zone's largest MiningMech producer, a Clan-run factory once known as Wotan Mining Systems.

Today, Borealtown basks in the glow of its noon-day sun in eerie silence, the streets empty, save for a few utility vehicles and the odd merchant or warrior caste guardsman. Several sections of the city are little more than empty warehouses or patches of rubble. The largest structure is an administrative building, a half-domed complex over ten stories high, bearing the green broad-winged insignia of Clan Jade Falcon. This structure can hold over two thousand Clansmen easily, but today, a mere 57 laborers, technicians, and administrators perform their daily duties within.

The signs that Borealtown was once the heart of the Jade Falcon empire remain just evident enough to give a visitor the impression that he is standing in a ghost town. The site of a brutal, final battle between the Jade Falcons and the Wolves during the Refusal War, at which the Falcons ultimately claimed victory, this city was ravaged, but the waste-conscious Clan saw to its renovation and revitalization. Once centrally located in the Occupation Zone, the Hell's Horses invasion and the aftermath of the Jihad placed this world perilously close to one hostile border, and too far from the others to coordinate defense. Forced to relocate, the Falcon leadership moved its command centers to Sudeten.

Though this world no longer has the prominence it once did, the Falcons still station heavy guard here. Like all Clans, sharing a handful of worlds with oft-hostile neighbors for centuries has taught them to make the most of every square meter of soil, no matter how inhospitable or mundane. In and around the cities of Borealtown and Oslo, automated turrets lazily track every vehicle moving along the highways, and Elemental foot soldiers make irregular patrols. Occasionally, a pair of Donar assault helicopters fly overhead, backed up from time to time by a pair of Ares medium strike tanks.

More recently, the shorelines of Lake Borea, north of Oslo, felt the tremors of a BattleMech's footfalls, when a mixed force of Jade Falcon troops squared off against a Hell's Horses vehicle Star. The prize of this Trial of Possession: the contents of Oslo's IndustrialMech warehouses. Though the battle was intense, with no less than seventeen warriors killed or wounded from both sides, witnesses – most of them Falcon technicians – say the action was just a shadow of the greatness that once characterized Clan Trials.

"It was as if the warriors were merely actors upon a stage," said Myomer Specialist Rusl, who claims that he washed out of the Clan's strict training protocols. "They played at war, but there was no heart in it, for either side. Naturally, the Falcons carried the day, but even the Horses seemed to regard the challenge as a mere formality."

"This is what decades of imposed peace bring the Clans," said Marek, a third-level Actuator Specialist employed at the same facility as Rusl. "We engage in wasteful, empty Trials, as Spheroid barbarians watch and laugh, forgetting what it was like in the days when the Falcon soared over all, when BattleMechs marched across the plains of dozens of worlds, trampling all who would oppose them. The Inner Sphere forgets just how nearly victory lay within our grasp."

They are the words and thoughts of a frustrated people, a people trained for war, yet hamstrung by peace. The familiar pressures of the citizens, the lower castes, to whom Kerensky implied the warriors were beholden, once more rise up in anguish. Though it is a voice colored by those native to the Inner Sphere itself, that voice once more cries out against the Inner Sphere.

And it is a voice that is growing ever louder...

In the nearly empty city of Borealtown, people from all castes gather tonight, to witness another Trial of Grievance. The combatants are one of the planet's warrior administrators and the local emissary, himself a warrior. The scene, we are told, is played out almost weekly, and Wotan is not the only world where it goes on.

As the combatants grapple in their Circle of Equals, under the hot lights of the nearby street lamps of a broad – yet mostly empty – parking lot, those in the back of the surrounding mob can watch only through the closed-circuit holovid set up for the occasion. The entire scene is reminiscent of a Lyran prize fight, but with a far more informal feel.

In solemn tones, Star Captain Alis, the local emissary – her post regarded as an affront to the younger, more hot-blooded warriors of her Clan – is the challenged. The Grievance against her is one of politics, another subject that sickens the Clans, but which all acknowledge as a necessary evil. As an ominous hush settles across the crowd, her challenger, Star Commander Kynnet, proclaims his reasons for the Trial:

"I, Star Commander Kynnet, of the Borealton Garrison Star, do hereby declare this to be my Trial of Grievance against the Spheroid-lover before me," he snarls. "In clinging to your Wolf-like views of charity to the barbarians of the Inner Sphere, and for her disgraceful lack of ambition, I shall prove that no aging, dezgra 'emissary' can speak for the honor of the Falcon! In this solemn matter, let none interfere!"

Alis bears each insult in silence, though hatred burns her face ever-brighter shades of red with each verbal lashing. As Kynnet finishes, the crowd roars its approval, then it is her turn to speak:

"I, Star Captain Alis Jedefalcon, welcome the challenge of this surat-spawn, Kynnet, in the name of the honor of Clan Jade Falcon," she cries. "We are Falcons, and the blood of Kerensky flows through us all! Let none of the feral claims of this rabid vulture before you sway your hearts, and know that it is his own dishonor which shall bring him to his knees this day! In this matter, none shall interfere!"

The cheer on Alis' behalf is noticeably softer, punctuated only by both combatants shouting "Seyla!" as they drop into defensive stances, eyes locked only moments before the first warrior lunges, sword flashing in the light.

It is fought, some say, with more heart than the Horses' attack earlier this month, and in a blinding display of swordsmanship, Alis is dropped to one knee, her uniform in tatters, blood flowing from a gash in her belly. But it is her final thrust that carries the battle, nearly severing Kynnet's sword arm even as he prepares the final blow. Both warriors will be in the infirmary for days, but Alis has won.

The crowd, however, is not with Alis. Groans of disapproval fill the air as Kynnet drops to the pavement. Though the rights of the Clan say Alis has won her Grievance Trial, the issue remains a source of contention for warriors of every stripe. As the pressure builds, one cannot help but wonder how many more Trials will warriors such as Alis be forced to fight, while warriors like Kynnet continue to push for another showdown against the Inner Sphere.

In our next four-part series, our tour through history and cultures of the Inner Sphere will take us back to the Successor States, to House Liao's Capellan Confederation, a controversial – yet intriguing House . Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XVII: Celestial Unity—Birth of the Capellan Confederation

---

08/27/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

*You should never seek to hold any one thing, any one person, any one system, any one ideal above all others. For when you hold that single thing, that single person, that single government, that single value above all else, that thing, that individual, that order, that principle will come to control you and you will have forfeited your basic humanity. . . . Seek therefore to free yourself from unnecessary entanglements, and thereafter seek to free your neighbor, whether he would be free or no.*

—Elias Liao, leader of the New World Disciples, c. 2182

For many, mere mention of the Capellan Confederation conjures up images of a brutal and warlike police state, even more rigid and caste-driven than the Draconis Combine. Images of the Maskirovka, a secret agency of the state, watching over everyone and everything, empowered to drag helpless citizens away in the middle of the darkest night, haunt many a holodrama set in this realm. But is this the real Capellan Confederation, or merely an exaggeration of propaganda? What created the modern Capellan state, ruled almost absolutely since its formation by the iron fist and dao sword of House Liao?

Like most of the Successor States, the birth of the Confederation can be traced to the origins of its ruling family, House Liao. The Liao family effectively begins with Elias Jung Liao, an English-Nepalese political philosopher and one-time statesman in the later days of the doomed Terran Alliance. Elias Liao vanished after the Offshore Chinese Republic seized the Hong Kong Free State he presided over for barely a year. Resurfacing three years later as the head of a fanatical anarchistic cult known simply as the New World Disciples, he masterminded a campaign of terror that lasted from 2182 to 2188. Dozens of lives were lost in what Liao, personally, called "cleansing actions" aimed at shattering all local authority in Terra's Asian continent. It was only after government troops all but annihilated his Disciples and killed half his family that Liao departed, leading his two sons and scores of followers to an unremarkable world he dubbed Cynthiana.

*The fact that the Republic of Liao (formerly the colony of Cynthiana) was accepted so readily after Elias Liao's death has to be one of the biggest ironies of the Terran Alliance's final years. Here we have a planet founded by the very man who terrorized Terran citizens for over half a decade, ruled now by his grandson, Victor. No apologies or reparations for the hundreds killed in Hong Kong are ever demanded of Liao; it's like the Terrans just forgot about the 2180s.*

*Nor were any serious concessions demanded to assure Victor's loyalty; he was simply taken at his word and his signature when his world became part of the crumbling Alliance. When he set up trade deals with his neighbors, he refused—absolutely refused—to rely on Terran currency, instead working on a barter system, independent of the Alliance economy. All of these should have been signs that here was a man who was looking out only for Number One.*

*One has to wonder, then, if it really surprised the Alliance leaders that not only did Victor refuse to help them fight their Expansionist War to keep the colonies in line, but that he announced his own breakaway by beheading the Alliance ambassador to Liao.*

—Pedro Anderson, *Tyrants and Treachery: A Capellan History*, SPC Publications, 3121

After the fall of the Terran Alliance, many former colonies found themselves alone—far more independent than many had truly desired—and sought to keep their shaky settlements going by forming loose trading pacts with their neighbors. In addition to the Republic of Liao, the region rimward of Terra also included the Capellan Hegemony (nee Co-Prosperity Sphere), the Nanking Collective, the Sarna Supremacy, the Tikonov Grand Union, and the Sian Commonwealth.

Collectively, history books describe these minor realms as the Capellan worlds, but in their day each one had its own ambitions, and its own way of doing business. With the Free Worlds League forming on one side, the shrinking Terran Alliance on another, and the growing Federated Suns on a third, the worlds and resources available to these loose alliances were few and ever-threatened. In a desperate bid to claim dominion in the region, these small states battled one another through trade embargoes, blockades, and even military invasions. In all this fighting, even the one-world Republic of Liao was not immune from strife.

By the early 2300s, the Capellan worlds were in a state of crisis. Constant fighting between the Capellan Hegemony and the Sarna Supremacy had dissolved much of the Hegemony's infrastructure, pushing the economic alliance to its breaking limit. Worlds began to defect, starting with Arboris, to join with Liao, gaining the stability of the tiny mercantile republic's stability in an age of unabated chaos. At the same time, the Terran Hegemony, successor to the ruined Terran Alliance, began an invasion of all systems around Terra itself, even going so far as to seize Capella in 2320. Though the Terrans would eventually be repulsed, after fifteen years of guerilla warfare, the region remained dangerously unstable.

It was a combination of the ever-present threat of the Terran Hegemony's expansion and the Davion invasions that began in the 2330s that finally prompted the formation of a pan-Capellan union, the brainchild of Duke Franco Liao of the so-called Duchy of Liao. Decades of mutual distrust bogged down the negotiations to form a unified Capellan state, but in the end Duke Franco Liao

proclaimed the creation of the Capellan Confederation in 2366, with himself as its supreme Chancellor. The various states entering into this union became known as commonalities. Each commonality would be headed by ten military commanders, who were granted sweeping powers to govern their regions for the sole purpose of defense against foreign encroachment. Just five years later, how far the newborn Confederation would go to survive was demonstrated for all to see.

*Davion peacekeepers occupied Capella without opposition in mid-August 2367, scant hours after the departure of Chancellor Liao and his wife. Invading commanders were puzzled at finding the capital practically deserted by its citizens. That did not stop the 1st and 5th Victoria Lancers from setting up shop, preparing for a long stay. Plans for an extended occupation were cut short the following day, however, when combined elements of the Sarna and St. Ives navies, backed by hastily armed merchantmen from Franco's own commercial fleets, suddenly vectored into orbit above the Davion flotilla. In a seven-hour engagement, the newly constituted Confederation Navy destroyed the transports and supply ships of the Davion peacekeepers, establishing themselves in complete control of the Capellan skies. Having deprived the invaders of their way home, Chancellor Liao next ordered the unconditional surrender of Davion occupation forces.*

*Refusing to believe that Liao would ever order the destruction of his own capital, the Davions declined to surrender. Two minutes after the ultimatum expired, Chancellor Liao ordered an all-out laser and missile barrage of Capella Prime, and with it, the annihilation of three hand-picked Davion regiments . . . along with more than 2,000 Capellan citizens still in the city. . . .*

*Thereafter, the Capellan capital was moved to Sian, where it has remained ever since. Subsequently, a black-edged border was added to the official Confederation triangle, commemorating the sacrifice of the Capellans who died under their own navy's guns that day. It is interesting to note that the Davion regiments lost on Capella that day have never been re-formed.*

—Adal Corvin, ComStar Archivist, *Hell on Capella Prime*, 3025

The shocking destruction of Capella Prime, original capital city of the newborn Confederation, so stunned and unnerved the Davion commanders that they withdrew from Capellan space, though then-President Raynard Davion refused to recognize the Confederation. While fighting against the belligerent Free Worlds League would continue for some time, the extreme measures taken at Capella would forever be an example of the fanaticism of Capellan forces in battle. The Confederation, to this day, remains committed to taking any steps necessary to survive, regardless of the cost.

Thus did the Confederation rise, from the mind of a Terran statesman turned radical madman to a major Inner Sphere power whose equally dedicated warriors would stop at nothing to assure their realm's survival against any aggressor.

In part two of this series on House Liao's Capellan Confederation, we'll take a deeper look into the fascinating and ancient cultures that combined to create this small, yet powerful nation. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XVIII: Eternal Balance—The Ways of House Liao

---

09/04/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

Zi-jin Cheng (Forbidden City), Sian, is a city of remarkable beauty and grandeur—as might well be expected of the home of the Celestial Throne, and the heart of the Capellan Confederation. Nestled between five gently rolling hills and surrounded by a wall vaguely reminiscent of Terra's once-mighty Great Wall of China, every structure in Zi-jin Cheng features the delicate lines of classical Han Chinese architecture. Gardens, painstakingly landscaped for maximum effect, are common throughout the city, but few are so resplendent or so lush as those surrounding the soaring heights of the Celestial Palace, which dominates the city's western edge. Nowhere in this spectacular place can one find evidence of its near extinction during the Jihad, for House Liao invested billions of C-Bills in its reconstruction, down to the very last brick.

All over Sian, monumental cities mimic the style of Zi-jin Cheng, a style revived by the efforts of Sun-Tzu Liao, He Who Ascended. Even in death, visitors to Sian can easily understand how his people deify him, the Celestial Wisdom, who guided the Confederation away from a cycle of self-destruction, rebuilt and revitalized in the spirit of Xin Sheng (Rebirth). Were it not for him, who could imagine the Confederation's fate?

In the Confederation today, Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao's name is still revered, uttered as if sacred for what he accomplished in his six-decade rule. It was he who reclaimed St. Ives, he who brought a cultural renaissance to a broken people, he who led his nation to throw off the yoke of Blakist oppression during the Jihad—with little help from Stone's coalition. These are the reasons the citizens of the Confederation praise Sun-Tzu, but for all Liao chancellors before and since one might find the same reverent tone. Indeed, to the people of the Confederation, all Capellan chancellors, as the Chinese emperors before them, hold the same godlike standing—above reproach, above shame, and above all others—but none so much as the Liaos.

*Only four times in Capellan history has the Confederation lived under the rule of a non-Liao, and few of them have been viewed as positive for the nation. Adren Baxter, the first of these, may in fact be the single most reviled chancellor in Confederation history, because of his pathological hatred of the Liao family and all it stood for. Thanks to the near-disastrous effects of his rule, he had the Confederation and the Federated Suns ready for war on the eve of what many experts call their golden opportunity for peace.*

*But more than that, he gave the succeeding Liaos all the ammunition they needed to curtail the House of Scions, perhaps the only check on the chancellor's authority placed in the Confederation's charter. By the time of Edmund Salindar, who was technically not a chancellor, but a Liao regent, the House of Scions—once the voice of the Confederation nobility—had been reduced to a rubber-stamp office, with almost dictatorial power in the hands of House Liao.*

*Their authority was so absolute that it would not be until Chancellor Normann Aris' reign began in 2599 that anyone would think to change the path the Liaos had set, and even then it was only to strip away more of the powers of the Capellan people in favor of the state. When Normann Aris died—a most untimely death, I might add—he left behind a system the Liaos used to further cement their authoritarian regime.*

—Pedro Anderson, *Tyrants and Treachery: A Capellan History*, SPC Publications, 3121

Regardless of who was ultimately served over the centuries of Liao rule, the formative years before and during the Star League era created many of the basic aspects of Capellan society still seen today. The absolute rule of the Liao family, for instance, forms the backdrop of Capellan culture, thanks to the Liao family's own Chinese background. Mandarin Chinese is the official language of state, and while Buddhism and other Asian faiths are not mandatory, those who seek the favor of the Capellan leadership often worship as the chancellors do. Unlike the brutal imposition of Japanese traditions on the people of the Draconis Combine, the fact that most of the Capellan worlds already leaned toward Terra's Eastern nationalities made this cultural dominance a fairly painless process. Still, the fact that this facet of Confederation life rises from the personal beliefs, traditions, and upbringing of a single ruling line demonstrates the power of the chancellors over those they rule.

The rigid, caste-driven system, another major part of Capellan society, arose from the combined systems of controlled peerage established by past rulers, which limited the powers of all nobility, and established requirements to attain the privilege of citizenship in the Confederation. Unlike other realms, the right to the basic liberties as a citizen of the realm is available only to those who first serve the Confederation. Established both as a control measure and as a means to stave off economic collapse, this system assures that every Capellan has his or her place in society, and that all contribute for the betterment of the whole.

Reinforcing these beliefs, the Confederation formally adopted the Korvin Doctrine and the Sarna Mandate, two philosophies that loosely state that the role of the citizen is to serve. These rules helped to establish the rules for citizens that have gradually given rise to the caste system. The Troika, the realm's three-branch ruling body, described by the Chancellor, the Prefecture (legislature), and the House of Scions (nobility), forms the unofficial ruling class, but the actual castes of Capellan society are known by different titles. There is the directorship, which consists of highly placed administrators and bureaucrats, followed closely by the intelligentsia, who represent the Confederation's intellectual elite. After them are the supporters, the professionals such as business leaders, teachers, and other aides to the intelligentsia and directorship. Then come the entitled, who include

medical professionals, and finally the commonality, which represents the lowest of the Confederation's official castes. Below them are those who do not have Capellan citizenship. Often known as servitors, this class has none of the rights and privileges of the others, occupying a role somewhere between criminal and slave. Changing castes is a tricky business, but not as difficult as it might be in a Clan structure. Nevertheless, most Capellan citizens born into one caste will live out their lives within it, and carry their expected societal role with them all the way to the grave. Such is the life of a Capellan citizen.

But the rights of the citizens are not overlooked, contrary to popular belief.

*The mid-twenty-fifth century was a defining time for House Liao, especially in regard to its relationship with the common folk. Having just been pushed to the brink by Chancellor [Arden] Baxter's best efforts to destroy their realm and anything connected with the Liaos, the economy was a shambles from their effort to recover. The Capellans call this era their Time of Tribulations, but that doesn't begin to describe the social unrest that affected the nobility and the lower classes equally.*

*Chancellor Jasmine Liao's brutal imposition of her authority over the House of Scions and the Capellan military, curbing the powers of the nobility and the armed forces alike, helped stabilize the government, but more was needed to stabilize the people. Wisely, she enacted the Capellan Concordat, affirming the rights of all Capellan citizens to fair and just treatment by the military and ruling classes. Though one might have trouble believing it, more often than not these rules are followed—"state emergencies" notwithstanding.*

—Vanessa Cedrik, PhD, Professor of Capellan Studies, Cambridge University, Terra.

This Concordat remains in force today, and in addition to its laws, the citizens of the Confederation are promised free education, free health care, social security, and even the right to own properties free of government interference. Though, from time to time, many of these rights have been set aside for the duration of a state emergency, the most law-abiding and honest of the Confederation's citizenry may generally expect a remarkably high standard of living.

For all this, the people of the Confederation seem to be secure—perhaps even content—in the strict way of life they live. Though, in many ways, this police-state mentality may seem brutal and oppressive, it has accomplished the one thing the Confederation's founders set out to do: secure the freedom of the Capellan nation.

In part three of our four-part series on the Confederation, The Liao Himself brings rebirth and hope to a downtrodden people, guiding the fate of millions in a time of chaos and horror. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XIX: Xin Sheng and Beyond

---

09/11/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

*" . . . In honor of our marriage, in addition to this morsel, I give you a vast prize. Here, my love, I give you the Capellan Confederation!"*

—First Prince Hanse Davion, to Archon-Designate Melissa Steiner on their wedding night, 20 August 3028, Hilton Head Island, Terra.

With those words, the now-united rulers of the Lyran Commonwealth and the Federated Suns began a war that would profoundly change the face of the Inner Sphere, dramatically shifting a balance between the five Successor States that had held through nearly three centuries of constant war. No single nation in the Inner Sphere would feel the impact of that union as terribly and as profoundly as House Liao's Capellan Confederation, however.

In just two short years of fighting, the Steiner-Davion armies smashed through the Confederation with unprecedented efficiency, aided by spies insinuated at the very highest level of the small nation's high command. The Tikonov and St. Ives Commonalities seceded with help from House Davion's political machinations, with the former absorbed into the Commonwealth less than a year later as the latter formed its own independent state. At the same time, every other Capellan world within 175 light-years of Terra was simply absorbed into a region of space that would eventually become known as the Sarna March (and later, during the 3050s and 3060s, as the "Chaos March"). In all, over half the Confederation's worlds were lost to defection or conquest, the most proportionally devastating losses ever suffered by any Great House during the Succession Wars.

*For all his fabled strategic brilliance, the aftermath of the Fourth War was perhaps a key example of Hanse Davion's greatest military blunders. In 3039, instead of targeting House Liao once again and completely removing a potential threat to his realm, he instead turned the might of the FedCom against House Kurita, leaving the Capellans to stagger on. Or was it a blunder? After the way the Confederation handily repelled the Anduriens and Canopians just a couple of years after having its realm torn in half, perhaps "the Fox" was thinking more of the old adage about trying to corner a wounded animal. . . .*

—Arthur Luvonne, *The Long, Dirty History of the Federated Suns*, Commonwealth Press, 3100

The determination to survive—already a mainstay of the Capellan peoples—only grew stronger in the shattered Confederation, even as the so-called "War of Davion Aggression" left the nation's economy and infrastructure in ruin. Romano Liao, daughter of Maximilian Liao, who ruled during that war, instilled in her people a renewed devotion to the state. When the Magistracy of Canopus and the Free Worlds League's Duchy of Andurien launched a war against the Capellans in 3031, they faced a fanatic army determined to die to defeat them, and eager to drag as many of their enemys as possible along for the ride. This fighting spirit, sacrificing all to save the state, became the hallmark of the Liao people, who would not rise again until the ascension of Romano's son, Sun-Tzu Liao.

Though his Xin Sheng—literally, "Rebirth"—mandate did not officially begin until a few years after he assumed the mantle of Chancellor in 3052, Sun-Tzu Liao was intent on recovering all that had been lost in the Fourth Succession War. He backed the efforts of pro-Capellan guerillas in the Sarna March, allied his realm with the Magistracy of Canopus and the Taurian Concordat, the two nearest and most powerful Periphery realms. He even fostered an alliance with House Marik's Free Worlds League to check the ambitions of the Federated Commonwealth, and built up his defense forces quietly, preparing for the inevitable invasion of the Sarna March, which came in 3057.

Ironically, the creation of the new Star League in 3059, as part of a final effort to end the Clan threat, gave Sun-Tzu the means to carry out his Xin Sheng and reclaim the St. Ives Compact. Having been denied the time to complete his reconquest of the Sarna March by the League's declaration of an end to hostilities in 3058, Sun-Tzu instead used his elected position as First Lord to motivate his people and usher in a "brave new age" for the Confederation.

Opinions and theories vary wildly about what came next, but during Sun-Tzu's tenure as First Lord he ordered the new SLDF's peacekeeping troops into key parts of the Chaos March as well as the St. Ives border—the latter event after a strike by a pro-St. Ives mercenary command nearly killed Isis Marik, Sun-Tzu's then-betrothed (and one-time heiress to the Free Worlds League). The conflict that arose afterward, however, had nothing to do with the SLDF and, indeed, even the apparent assassination attempt on Marik may have been a planned event, according to Sun-Tzu's own words.

*14 April 3062*

*She served her purpose, and today I have set her free. Though I should not care one iota for the naïve child, our conversation today still echoes in my head. She clearly did not understand what it would be like to truly be Capellan, to be downtrodden, to always have to capitulate or compromise. No. No more. We have given up enough. Now it is time for our*

*rebirth. This is not my moment, as poor, short-sighted Isis [Marik] would have believed. This is our moment. This is the moment my people have waited for, like shadows in the darkness.*

*No. There will be no compromise this time. The Confederation deserves better.*

—excerpted from *The Words of Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao*, by Talon Zahn, Celestial Press, 3125.

Xin Sheng was far more than a military campaign. In fact, the earliest stages of Sun-Tzu's mandate were entirely cultural and political in nature. The return to their proud Chinese heritage gave the Capellan people a sense of identity and pride that had been stripped away in too many decades of mere survival. Meanwhile, new alliances with their Periphery neighbors (downplayed in today's Capellan history texts, even when considering the state's long-standing friendship with the Magistracy of Canopus, which remains evident even today) gave them the strength that comes from knowing they were not alone. New BattleMechs with Han names were developed. The ages-old standard and uniforms were given a makeover. Everything was reborn, fresh, new, and above all, Capellan. Some of the draconian measures enacted under Romano Liao's reign were relaxed, including the bloody purges meant to ensure loyalty. In doing so, Sun-Tzu made his people feel freer while conveying a sense of belonging and strengthening their political might. Nationalism colored the survival-by-any-means doctrine, but more than simply maintaining the status quo, the Capellan people began to realize they didn't have to just be survivors. They could, in fact, be winners—even leaders.

It took the Confederation three years to reabsorb the St. Ives Compact, a victory that effectively validated Sun-Tzu's plans and clearly demonstrated the renewed strength of the Capellan people. Indeed, in his state address after the final truce in 3063, he even addressed the Compact citizens as fellow Capellans, at once declaring an end to the fighting and to decades of hatred.

*"What we accomplished today has been bought at a high cost—paid by people of the Confederation and the St. Ives Compact, Capellans all. In paying this price, we find ourselves in unfamiliar territory. We can actually pity the Federated Suns."*

—Sun-Tzu Liao, 3063, except from his statewide address from Sian.

Xin Sheng continued long after the recapture of the St. Ives Compact, not only cementing the hard-fought victories of its early years, but also bringing back hope and the strength of the Chinese culture to the Confederation. During the FedCom Civil War, efforts began to reclaim the Confederation's next prize—the former Tikonov Commonality—but the Jihad would intervene. What followed would once more test the resolve, the unity, and the newfound national pride of a recovering people, in a ten-year crucible the Confederation faced all but alone.

*Of all the states hit during the Jihad, I'd have to say the Capellans showed the most heart while defending their lands, and that's only to be expected after centuries of being the smallest kid on the block and having nobody backing you up the whole time. I mean, think of it. After literally sneaking off with much of the Tikonov worlds during and after the FedCom Civil War, they stood accused of aiding the Word right alongside the [Free Worlds] League just because Sian was one of the last capitals hit. Nobody trusted Sun-Tzu but his people, and they fought—and died—for him and the nation he stood for. Leading people through that, no wonder they revere him as a god now.*

—Jaime Kalasko, *Who Speaks for Liao?* Underground Press Interstellar, 3112

In our final installment on the Confederation, we'll examine House Liao and the children of Xin Sheng today. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XX: From the Ashes – The Capellan Confederation Today

---

09/18/03

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** Capellan Confederation

**Founding Year:** 2366

**Capital (City, World):** Zi-jin Cheng (Forbidden City), Sian

**National Symbol:** A green arm raising a green dao sword, against a green triangle, edged in gold.

**Location (Terra relative):** Rimward

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 166

**Estimated Population (3130):** 228,280,000,000

**Government:** Dictatorship (Chinese feudal stylings)

**Ruler:** Chancellor Daoshen (Centrella-) Liao

**Dominant Language(s):** Chinese (Mandarin, official), Chinese (Cantonese), Russian, English, Hindi

**Dominant Religion(s):** Buddhism, Taoism, Hindu

**Unit of Currency:** Yuan (1 yuan = 0.56 C-Bills)

A tropical wind blows through the city streets of Tian-tin, warmed by a yellow sun that appears almost ghostly in the overcast sky. The capital of St. Ives is a busy metropolis, a sea of traffic that never stops, even well into the night. Rising proudly over the city, a magnificent palace dome, surrounded by lush gardens of native flora, and flanked by elegant spires, stands the ancestral home of the Allard-Liaos, heirs to the St. Ives Commonality.

If one looks closer, at the magnificent stone walls that separate the palace from the rest of the city, the telltale signs of carbon scorching on some of the rock become noticeable. Rusty grooves on the odd stone here and there hint at a previous life in some other structure, every one a memorial. It is said that Duke Kai Allard-Liao himself approved the use of the rubble as a major part of the rebuilding of the palace wall, and even the palace itself. Each stone used in this construction project, it is said, represents a building or life lost in the destruction of the city at the peak of the Word of Blake Jihad.

Over two million Confederation citizens and soldiers died beating back the fanatics' onslaught in Tian-tin, and a popular rumor says many of their ghosts now dwell on the palace grounds, where their memory is enshrined in the very structures.

The death of the original Tian-tin may echo the similar fate meted out to so many major Inner Sphere cities during the Jihad, but unlike the other Great Houses, House Liao stood alone when war came to it on the eve of recovery. From the ashes of this terrible crucible, the Capellan nation rose alone. To them, any aid rendered by the coalition under Devlin Stone was immaterial, for nearly every drop of blood spilled to win back the Capellan worlds was that of the Capellan people.

Sun-Tzu Liao led the Confederation on its own path through the Jihad, even though he was never trained as a warrior. His greatest tools, throughout the war and its aftermath, remained his gifts for motivating his people, and for misleading his enemies. These gifts would be put to their ultimate test even as the Blakists rained death upon the Confederation worlds. Nuclear bombs, chemical weapons, orbital bombardments—some with almost as much ferocity as was shown to the Free Worlds League later on—tore into the ravaged worlds of the realm, but Sun-Tzu survived to rally his people. Indeed, after the fall of Forbidden City on Sian in a massive bombardment, the thought that they had lost the first leader in centuries to make the Confederation believe in itself drove its warriors to incredible acts of bravery and fierceness. When Sun-Tzu returned just weeks later, and emerged again and again after Blakist terror agents sought his destruction, his aura of invincibility became a rallying point for the embattled nation. Sun-Tzu could not be killed, so neither could they.

Ironically, in the fires of the Jihad, Capellan nationalism became almost as fanatic as that of the Blakists themselves. Even those who once considered themselves enemies of the chancellor became grim-faced devotees as the darkness continued.

"I remember those days, as clear as though they happened yesterday," says eighty-seven-year old Quinn, a citizen of St. Ives who claims the dubious distinction of being part of the forgotten Free Capella dissident movement. "We wept—we actually wept—when the Celestial Palace fell. We couldn't believe it would have ever happened, no matter who sat on the Throne. My buddy, Pham, he said [Sun-Tzu] Liao was still inside. But even though we'd spent years hating him. . . Though we thought he'd put us through hell enough in the March, seeing those towers fall, and realizing the head of the Confederation was gone—just like that—we knew what we were seeing was bigger than any of us. We wept for all Capellans, even the Liao.

"When he showed up on the holovid a few days later, smiling confidently and planning revenge, some of us thought it was some kind of trick, the kind you know all Liaos are capable of. 'Maybe it's a body double,' I even said. But in the days that followed, the speeches, the plots and clever strategies . . . We knew then we had a leader—the leader—who could get our people through this. That's when I decided I was done fighting for myself."

To drive back the Blakists, the Capellans and the Canopians—their only “true” allies in that nightmarish war, according to Confederation history texts—unleashed the same firestorms as their enemies, demonstrating ruthlessness as never before, with every means at their disposal. As many as half of the nuclear and biological attacks that took place on Capellan soil are believed to have been launched by desperate Confederation forces. House Liao took few prisoners that weren’t shot soon after, no matter what their role in the Word of Blake’s Order was. It was at once the Confederation’s darkest and most valiant hour.

In the years that followed, a war-weary Confederation once more picked up the pieces under its Chancellor’s direction. Pride in the nation and its invincible ruler had become galvanized. In recognition for Devlin Stone’s “limited role” in saving his realm, Sun-Tzu ceded many burned-out worlds to The Republic, then focused his efforts on stabilizing the shattered remainder. But even this recognition could not dim the knowledge in the minds of the average Capellan that they owed their survival only to their own determination to survive, and to their Chancellor. Over the years, this nationalism continued to drive the Capellan people, as it does today, where only the Canopians are regarded as true friends of the realm—and then only because their ruler is the sister of the great Sun-Tzu’s heir, Chancellor Daoshen (Centrella-)Liao. It also explains in part why the CCAF was the last great BattleMech army to be decommissioned in the Inner Sphere in the years after the Jihad.

Sun-Tzu Liao’s spirit has not left the Confederation even today, over twenty years after his mysterious death on Liao. To many of his people, in fact, he did not die, but actually “ascended” to some higher state, and on some worlds there are those who still await his return, even while his son rules from a rebuilt throne, a son who emphasizes his father’s surname out of respect for the man regarded as the Capellan messiah.

The reverence for the Chancellor and the scars of the Jihad—still visible on many Confederation worlds—have created a curious mixture of pride and paranoia. Dedication to the state and to its rulers is expected to be absolute, and often is. The same level of devotion is also expected to the Chinese culture, which serves as a unifying standard throughout Capellan society and creates an atmosphere of quiet harmony, laced with underlying tension and almost xenophobic fear. Foreigners, even tourists and traders, are looked upon with scorn and suspicion. As the people remain determined to drive off or destroy any who would encroach upon their lands, all Capellans are taught that all their neighbors—save perhaps, those who dwell in the poor, misguided, but nevertheless well-meaning Magistracy of Canopus in the near Periphery—are potential enemies.

Despite the fires of cataclysmic war, House Liao’s Capellan Confederation remains a realm of great beauty and potential, albeit one where the natives have learned from the harsh lessons of history. Always on guard, even during peace, the Capellan spirit today resonates with that same defiant will that carried its people through four of mankind’s bloodiest centuries.

*“Our unity is our strength. Our Chancellor is our will. These two things no army of men, or of BattleMechs, can ever deny. Though we may die this day, or the next, first, last, and always remember this: we are Capellan.”*

—Sang-jiang-jun Talon Zahn, CCAF Strategic Military Director, Capellan statewide address, 3072.

In our next four-part series, our tour through the history and cultures of the Inner Sphere will take us to the Rasalhague Dominion, the peculiar fusion of Clan strength with Inner Sphere diversity. I’m Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXI: Collision Course—A Tale of Two Peoples

---

09/25/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

Fortune and fate are a fickle combination. They can take an ordinary man, raised in a harsh world, and hone him to the edge needed to found a mighty empire, or they can place a virtual terrorist forever in the annals of history as the founder of a legacy of crafty survivors. But for every tale of aspirations rising from a humble background, there are hundreds—if not thousands—where fate and fortune took a very different path.

One need only look into the early days of space travel for an example of these tales, when colonists—eager to escape overcrowding or the excesses of a corrupt Terran Alliance—sought new lives on far-flung, alien worlds. Many of these colonists would die from a host of dangers, some of which even defy the imagination today. Others would find their own paradise, only to have a powerful neighbor come and sweep it away just a short time later. Stranger still, some would form an interstellar alliance that would not rise to its true prominence until after being dominated by a conquering army not once, but twice in its centuries-long history.

If this last example sounds familiar, it very well should. It is the checkered history of the nation today known to all as the Rasalhague Dominion.

*[The Rasalhaguian colonists] hailed mostly from Terra's Scandinavian states, which had suffered severe economic hardships as a result of the Second Soviet Civil War [in the early twenty-first century] and its aftermath. By the mid-twenty-third century, things had become so bad that many of these citizens jumped at the chance to begin anew somewhere far, far beyond the grip of the Terran government. And, at the time, the farthest known inhabitable world was a tiny dot called Rasalhague.*

*What's interesting to note is that Rasalhague and its neighboring systems would quickly unite under nothing so elaborate—and yet nothing so basic—as these people's unifying cultural heritage, and their deep desire for personal and economic freedom. There were no big neighbors to fear at the time, but space was new, and these explorers were among the first wave of colonists to leave the homeworld en masse. Still, the rule of an oppressive government had forced them to leave Mother Earth behind with no few regrets, and they wanted nothing more than to live out a quiet and peaceful life. Only mutual defense against the unknown drove them to form an alliance.*

*Thus, these virgin worlds were settled and ruled by a very loose governing structure, based on clan-oriented families, with a planetary ruler—or valdherre—elected on an annual basis. Then, an Elected Prince, chosen once a decade, in turn ruled the entire "Principality of Rasalhague" (originally known as the Rasalhague Consortium). The actual authority of this prince, however, was limited solely to maintaining the confederation's overall defense, which was done through an already-established set of mutual defense pacts. Thus, the Principality itself had very little to do, and a recurring phrase in reference to the interstellar government was, "The Principality of Rasalhague was generally conspicuous by its absence."*

*It was a simple, almost anarchic, state, and the people were content and free. Unfortunately, the "conspicuous absence" of the Principality's central government during the Draconis Combine invasion in 2330—barely a century after the formation of this tiny nation—would lead to centuries of brutal repression.*

—Dr. Anne Oskar, *The Fallen Rise: A Tale of Rasalhague*, ComStar Press, 3120

Occupied by Combine forces in 2330, the Principality of Rasalhague would become the Draconis Combine's Rasalhague Military District a full century and a half later. There, its freedom-loving people would find their rulers replaced by warlords styled along the lines of feudal Japan, and would undergo many bloody purges aimed at bending their culture to conform with the Dragon's Will. Through it all, an ongoing resistance, the Tyr Movement, would continue to fight for a free and independent Rasalhague, but victory was centuries away.

And yet, even through the darkness of the Succession Wars, another undeniably powerful force, fated to one day entwine with that of the conquered nation, was growing into its own. . . .

*Drawing strength from each other, they survived; Tseng and Jorgensson emerged from the snow. And forged a Clan in the ghost bear's mold; Unity of purpose and strength of spirit, No task undertaken lightly or left half-done. To these ideals we hold true until we all shall fall.*

—*The Remembrance* (Clan Ghost Bear), Passage 45, 6:13–18

Clan Ghost Bear, formed alongside the other twenty of Nicholas Kerensky's Clans, was the only one to be founded by a married couple—and for that very reason, it almost did not happen. Hans Jorgensson and Sandra Tseng, two of Kerensky's most trusted advisors, actually fled to the frozen wastes of Strana Mechty upon learning they were to be assigned to different Clans. Legend has it that they survived their ordeal only by the grace of a family of native ghost bears, fearsome predators known for their

own sense of family unity, and it was this ordeal that led them to return and forge a Clan in that same family spirit. Nicholas Kerensky relented in his decision to separate these brave warriors, who did indeed mold their Clan along the principles of unity, strength, and compassion for one another.

The Ghost Bear Clan also became known as conservative hunters, cautious in all matters, but adopting a terrible resolve when threatened. This mindset led them to be the last to adapt to the changes in technology and society over the centuries to come, but lent them a very distinct “all or none” philosophy as well. The Bears became a Clan of extremes, be it extreme strength, extreme power, or extreme speed. Indeed, they rarely stood out during the Golden Century, until their frequent clashes with the neighboring Hell’s Horses Clan provoked the start of the greatest feud since the Jade Falcon/Wolf Clan rift formed early in Clan history.

*Wait and see. All or none. These two concepts define everything one needs to learn about the Ghost Bear Clan. They were the last to adopt the advanced technologies that became available in the Clan homeworlds once Nicholas Kerensky died, fearing any new development would be a departure from the tried and the true. Valuing personal strength as the basis of all things Clan, they honed their warriors’ combat prowess, devoted substantial energies to mining and production, and generally worked on building themselves to the exclusion of all other concerns. Sure, they clashed from time to time with their neighbors, but it was all in the Way of the Clans.*

*That is, until they saw the benefits of other ways. Once the powerful infantry phenotype was proven in battle—by their hostile neighbors in Clan Hell’s Horses—they were quick to stage Trials for the breeding protocols and mesh them with the same powerful Elemental armor as their fellow Clans. This, of course, eventually created a massive feud with the Horses when they staged a trial for that Clan’s most advanced BattleMech factory on Tokasha. Once again, like so many times before, the duel became one of epic proportions, as both Clans threw unprecedented numbers of troops into that fight, but it would be the death of a beloved Ghost Bear Khan, Kilbourne Jorgensson, that would spark over a century of bitter rivalry.*

*But, of course, it was how the Bears addressed the invasion of the Inner Sphere that really proved these twin concepts of caution and overwhelmingly decisive action. Historically moderate, they became hardened Crusaders quickly, before the eve of the invasion’s “go” vote, motivated by the rhetoric of such passionate pro-invasion leaders as Jade Falcon Khan Vandervahn Chistu and Smoke Jaguar Khan Franklin Osis. The rest, as they say, is history.*

—Dr. Anne Oskar, *The Fallen Rise: A Tale of Rasalhague*, ComStar Press, 3120

In the Inner Sphere, the Free Rasalhague Republic formed in 3034, with then-Gunji-no-kanrei Theodore Kurita’s official recognition of the rebellious district as an independent realm. The political decision created a buffer zone between the Draconis Combine and the Lyran half of the united FedCom, and realized the dreams of a people who had spent centuries fighting for freedom.

But the Rasalhaguians would have only a generation to enjoy their newfound liberty as the pendulum of fortune swung once more, for in 3050, the Clans came to Rasalhague.

In part two of the Rasalhague Dominion saga, we’ll look deeper into the nature of this first true integration of Clan and Inner Sphere cultures, and the forces that forged them into one. I’m Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXII: Two Peoples, One Destiny

---

10/01/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

Asgard, Rasalhague. Like many Inner Sphere capitals, this city boasts one of its realm's largest populations, over three million inhabitants whose roots can be traced either directly to the ancient history of the Principality of Rasalhague or to the former Star League Defense Force that fled to form the Clans. The architecture of this city is a curious blend of classical Scandinavian motifs and spartan—almost bland—Clan utilitarianism.

In the marketplace, uniformed Clan merchants barter with natives dressed in more expressive fashions consistent with the latest trends, exchanging Bear-krona for luxuries that would make civilian castemen in the neighboring Clan Wolf green with envy. At night, these people may even take in the latest holodrama out of the Draconis Combine, or catch the latest arena duels from Solaris VII on locally produced ClearSite X20 Tri-Vids.

The sacred hunting grounds in the northern lands are stocked with a carefully controlled population of ghost bears, transplanted from far-off Strana Mechty. Provided for hardened warriors undertaking the Ghost Bear's Clawing rite, local custom insists that no one venture into these lands armed with any weapon more potent than a simple pistol. A small and incredibly illegal black market exists in which non-Warriors are smuggled onto those lands and attempt Clawing rites of their own—none, so far, have returned.

It is a land of contrasts, where strict order and discipline clash with an expressive, freedom-loving people, and where a traveler's unintended offense is as likely to provoke a Trial of Grievance as a simple rebuke. And yet, nothing less can be expected from the heart of the Rasalhague Dominion—the first true fusion of the Clan Way with the abundance and freedom of the Inner Sphere.

Though plans were underway to make it the new seat of government for the Free Rasalhague Republic, Asgard was a small city in July of 3050, when the blue skies over Rasalhague were darkened by the approach of Clan DropShips bent on conquering this key Inner Sphere capital. Clan Wolf, having won a fierce bidding war against the Ghost Bears for the right to claim Rasalhague, nonetheless chose this city to be its staging area during the assault. Fighting for the heart of the new Republic ranked among the fiercest of the war to date, with three full front-line Clusters of Clan troops facing close to three and a half Inner Sphere regiments plus hordes of supporting troops. The natives sold themselves dearly, fighting even in the streets of the old capital city of Reykjavik, making the Wolves pay for every meter they captured, but in the end they could not stand up to the skill and firepower of the Clan forces.

Bloody as the fighting for Rasalhague was, Clan Wolf's rule in the aftermath was almost benign, at least until the Refusal War of 3058, when the Crusader Wolves inherited full control over the Wolf Clan Occupation Zone. Less devoted to engendering goodwill among the conquered peoples of the Inner Sphere than pressing for a renewed invasion, the Crusader Wolves turned more and more to the harsher tactics of Clan rule. The natives of the Rasalhaguian worlds they had claimed, true to their history, thus turned more and more toward armed resistance.

Yet, even as a simmering war of rebellion played itself out on the Wolf-occupied worlds of the shattered Rasalhague Republic, the worlds claimed by the Ghost Bears actually grew more peaceful. Though they, too, suffered from the sporadic fighting of rebel terrorists and resistance cells, the Bears gradually shifted from their previous Crusader stance, and turned their attention toward stabilizing their newly captured worlds.

*Many historians attribute the sudden change of the Bears' attitude from brutal oppressor—one that even needed the brief aid of the Steel Viper Clan to support its rule—to kind partner, as another example of the "all or none" philosophy. Yet, while it certainly does fit into that mode of thought, the Bears' change of heart also stemmed from a very practical reasoning that came to light after Tukayyid.*

*Simply put, the Bears suddenly realized they were going to be in the Inner Sphere for a very, very long time. As they came to terms with this realization, it also became clear that they would need to win over the hearts and minds of their new citizens, and doing so at gunpoint really would not be conducive to a lasting peace. With that realization came a newfound sense of compassion, an almost religious awakening, and the Bears suddenly concluded they were not among enemies but the very people the SLDF stood for. In the final analysis, they suddenly realized that they'd already come home. The more mystically minded among them even pointed to the fact that one of the Clans' founders, Hans Jorgensson, himself boasted the same Scandinavian origins as this realm as a sign of their inevitable union.*

*Whether or not it was preordained, however, thus was born the Great Plan, as some have called it. Easily the most ambitious undertaking ever conceived by a Clan, the Great Plan was cautious and methodical, and took years to accomplish in virtual secrecy.*

—Dr. Anne Oskar, *The Fallen Rise: A Tale of Rasalhague*, ComStar Press, 3120

Over the years that followed the Battle for Tukayyid, the Ghost Bears began—slowly at first, but then in greater numbers as time and resources became available—to move entire segments of their homeworld populations into the Inner Sphere. With the aid of volunteers from the various castes, and allied Clans such as the Snow Ravens and the Diamond Sharks (now Clan Sea Fox), DropShips, JumpShips, and even specialized ArcShips loaded with civilians and equipment moved to the Ghost Bear Occupation Zone.

At the same time, every effort was made to relax the restrictions of the native populations without compromising Ghost Bear authority. Local Rasalhagians and former citizens of the Draconis Combine gained increasing rights to self-determination, and were able to travel and communicate freely between worlds so long as they did not interfere with the Clan warriors who claimed to rule them. Though rebellion remained a problem, instances of domestic terrorism gradually declined, even as Clan civilians began to appear in droves. Factories and cities were rebuilt, enhanced, and a limited, internalized free trade spurred economic growth almost on par with the freer markets of the Successor States.

But what truly united the Rasalhagian people with the invading Clans? What turned a conquering army of invaders as reviled as those of the despotic House Kurita into the treasured allies of the fallen Free Rasalhague Republic? Ironically, the catalyst for this unlikely union was nothing short of the death of one Clan, and an ill-timed invasion by another.

*3060 saw the end of one destructive Path, and the start of another, hopefully more promising, one. Before that year, we—like so many of our brothers—saw the Inner Sphere as a den of corruption, worthy of nothing less than our conquest and rule. But with the fall of the most corrupt and feral among us, our eyes were opened to the reality that perhaps we are not always right. The universe, clearly, does not work in absolutes.*

*Then, just three short years later, we faced the dual threats of an aggressive Draconis Combine and the foolhardy Hell's Horses. On the field of battle, we learned of the honor of the Spheroids, and the lack of it in those we once knew as "our kind." When we returned home in victory, we thus sought the highest of honors for those once thought of as our isorla, our spoils of war.*

*With honor in our hearts, and hope for the future, we won back Rasalhague for its people, and gave it to those who deserved that which they called home. May we work together to defend that which we can now both call home.*

—Khan Bjorn Jorensson, 3065, excerpted from his personal journals.

The reclamation of Rasalhague after the Combine/Ghost Bear War and the Hell's Horses' First Incursion initiated the final phase of a Clan–Inner Sphere fusion and saw the first Clan-held worlds to be ruled by native-born inhabitants under a Rasalhaguan standard. Though the Clan remained the sole military power, supported by its own citizens and lesser castes, the culture, economy, and even political might of the short-lived Rasalhague Republic were once more on the rise.

Join us for the third of our four-part series on the Rasalhague Dominion, when we explore the first true test of the Ghost Bear–Rasalhaguan unity, in the face of the fires of mankind's darkest hours. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXIII: Standing Together

---

10/08/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

3067: The Year of Darkness. It was the year the FedCom Civil War finally drew to a close. The year the gathered leaders of the new Star League admitted to themselves that their noble experiment had failed. It was the year the Word of Blake, like a jilted lover, unleashed a hell arguably more horrendous than any seen during the days of Stefan Amaris.

History teaches that the Jihad began with simultaneous assaults on Tharkad, Luthien, New Avalon, and Outreach, with other major worlds and capitals falling a short time later. Whether by nuclear strike, orbital bombardment, or under waves of stampeding BattleMechs, the Blakists' so-called holy war doused the worlds of the Inner Sphere with the blood of millions.

For the people of the seven-star alliance that was all that remained of the Free Rasalhague Republic, the Jihad was not truly felt, however, until 3068, when the Word of Blake hit Tukayyid. Though the strike was meant as much to shatter the remaining ComStar forces stationed there as it was to throw off another potential power that could act against the Blakists, the strike drove home the fact that the fanatics were a force that endangered all nations—great and small. Amazingly, among the captured population of the Ghost Bear Dominion, the strike on Rasalhague prompted outrage and a plea to the Clan leadership to somehow safeguard their free brethren.

*There is, of course, a lot of speculation these days as to what finally led to the Bears' entering into the Jihad in force, much of it based on the disjointed news of that era, which was still plagued by the mass manipulation of the HPGs initiated by the Blakists soon after their first strikes. Many historians thus point to their move to absorb the remnants of the Free Rasalhague Republic (FRR) by 3070. But that really can't be considered jumping into the greater conflict, as I see it.*

*The absorption of the Republic's remnants, to the Bears and their own subjects—"conquered people" ceased to apply sometime around 3060, when the Bears and these people became neighbors—seemed a natural next step after reclaiming Rasalhague itself. Of course, it took close to a full year of negotiations for the Republic's remnant worlds to accept their own absorption, though, without Ragnar Magnusson, it's likely such a thing would never have occurred at all. Then it took another year to hash out what was to become of the surviving forces of the Kungsarme under Ghost Bear rule. This, of course, was partially solved by Trials, and partially by the new Dominion government.*

*But protecting the remaining Free Rasalhaguians from the Word of Blake was a pretext, an incidental fringe benefit, rather than a cause. The Bear leadership, I think, didn't really comprehend the threat of the zealots until the scouring of Tamar. Even then, of course, it took the Bears three years to get moving. . . .*

—Dr. Anne Oskar, *The Fallen Rise: A Tale of Rasalhague*, ComStar Press, 3120

Indeed, the Bears and the new civilian population seemed completely uninterested in taking steps against the Word of Blake until later in the war, and with good reason. The absorption of the leftover FRR worlds required delicate political maneuvering, and the question of absorbing an Inner Sphere military force proved a thorny issue to tackle. The FRR armed forces numbered some five BattleMech regiments—four, after Tukayyid—and the proud Rasalhaguian warriors weren't likely to surrender their only source of national pride. Eventually, the Bears relented, after a fashion, by allowing the KungsArmé troops to fight Trials for Position for a place in their warrior class. This at once boosted the Ghost Bear Dominion's armed forces and assured the Clan's continued exclusive control over its entire defense force. By further giving the Rasalhaguians full rights to rule over their own civilian affairs—so long as they acknowledged Ghost Bear supremacy—the absorption created years of political confusion.

The arrival of the Bears' historic enemy, Clan Hell's Horses, created another problem. Despite calls for normalization after the fall of Khan Malavai Fletcher—architect of a brief and foolhardy invasion of Dominion space in the early 3060s—rank-and-file troops on both sides continued to cling to the old grudge. However, when the Horses cut into the Wolf Clan territory instead of the Bears, it became clear that their new Khan, James Cobb, stood by his pledge to end the feud. Though clashes still occurred, the ferocity of the old Bear/Horses clashes was gone; the Clan forces met on the field of battle as equals—if not truly friends.

Then, in the mid-3070s, the Bears emerged from their hibernation. With the rear lines secure, and their new "separate-but-equal" government installed and running, the Clan jumped into the Jihad with both feet, true to their history. Pledging their arms to the defense of the Combine, they secured Hohiro Kurita's permission to jump through Combine space, assisting Combine and coalition forces in the liberation of key worlds, their blood spilling with that of their former enemies to beat back the zealots on Luthien, Pesht, and Dieron.

*Wait and see. All or none. Caution before overwhelming action. In the Jihad, as never before, the Bears proved their fierce dedication to the ideals of their Clan by fighting with a fervor never before seen among their kind. With every bombed city they witnessed, every mass grave uncovered, every hospital filled with the dead and dying civilians exposed to nerve agents and nuclear radiation, the Bears seemed to grow only more furious. A Trial of Annihilation was declared on the Word of Blake, and Bear troops bulled their way into every entrenched position the zealots claimed in the Combine, expecting and*

*giving no quarter. Bear troops took no prisoners and only invoked Clan honor when facing enemy mercenaries—a curious departure from the Clan’s anti-mercenary bent.*

*The fighting cost them dearly, however. Within the first three years, the Clan WarShip fleet, once again, was devastated, while two whole Galaxies of front-line troops were simply gone. By 3081, half the Clan Touman was dead; a quarter of the remainder was swearing fealty to Devlin Stone. Meanwhile, the strain of maintaining homeland defense and fighting a war of annihilation against a fanatical enemy had caused cracks in the Dominion government, forcing another reform that further integrated civilian and military leadership. . . .*

—Dr. Anne Oskar, *The Fallen Rise: A Tale of Rasalhague*, ComStar Press, 3120

What Bears returned home from the final victory returned to a Dominion in distress, their forces battered, and an uncertain future lay ahead. Random suicide bombings using weapons of mass destruction had hit every nation and lent a bittersweet taste to the final peace. Though, in the Dominion, the lines had held, the government was still shaky and the military was a shadow of its former self. Yet, through that crucible, the Rasalhaguian/Ghost Bear relationship was forever changed. Within the Dominion, Spheroid natives and invading Clansmen could look upon valiant heroes like the First Rasalhague Bears and the First Ghost Tyr Clusters with equal pride, recounting the glorious last stand of integrated Battle Clusters that placed trueborn Ghost Bear MechWarriors shoulder to shoulder with warriors raised from the captured Rasalhaguian and Combine planets. Freeborn, trueborn, Spheroid or Clan—all had proven their willingness to combat evil together. War had fused the Dominion together more solidly than any negotiations ever could, infusing civilians and warriors alike with a sense of purpose.

The Ghost Bear Dominion had entered into a new era.

*"The road ahead is filled with an evil that can only be cleansed with the fires of Annihilation. The road behind us is littered with the bodies of our fallen, given to that cause. As you fight today, know that each of us who dies this day will have spent our lives in the name of honor, in the name of Kerensky, in the names of Sandra Tseng and Hans Jorgensson! But above all this, know that we shall forever purge these nameless monsters in the name of that which is above what makes us trueborn or freeborn, Clan or Sphere. Follow me—for Rasalhague!"*

—saKhan Ragnar Magnusson, to his troops at the Battle of Dieron, 3077

In our next installment, we'll complete our tour of the Dominion with a look at the people of this dichotomous realm today. Won't you join us as we continue our tour of the stars? I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXIV: Symbiosis—The Rasalhague Dominion Today

---

10/15/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** Rasalhague Dominion

**Founding Year:** 3060

**Capital (City, World):** Asgard, Rasalhague

**National Symbol:** A white, roaring bear's head, set against a dark blue triangle

**Location (Terra relative):** Coreward, between the Wolf Clan Occupation Zone and the Draconis Combine

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 71

**Estimated Population (3130):** 280,000,000,000

**Government:** Republic (with Clan warrior-caste stylings)

**Ruler:** Prince Hjalmer Miraborg (Khan Dalia Bekker)

**Dominant Language(s):** English and Swedish (official), Swedenese, Japanese, German

**Dominant Religion(s):** Christian (Lutheran, semi-official), Shinto, Atheism, Neo-Norse

**Unit of Currency:** Bear-krona (1 bear-krona = 2.83 C-Bills)

Silverdale, capital city of Alshain, is a metropolis of towering high-rises, apartment flats, commercial centers, and even strip malls that surround the massive Alshain Interstellar Spaceport. By day, a warm, yellow-white sun lights the immaculate streets of this city, muted somewhat by the haze that gives the sky a purple cast. At night, fluorescent bulbs and neon lights enliven the inner city as it grows only slightly less congested than during normal daytime traffic. And yet, for all the hustle and bustle, Silverdale is one of the Rasalhague Dominion's cleanest and quietest cities. Crime is almost unheard of, the monorails run on time, a harmony of order characterizes even the morning rush hours—but, then, can anything less be expected of the administrative capital of the Dominion's Clan population?

The spaceport grounds host a full Cluster of some 150 aerospace fighters, backed up by two Ghost Bear DropShips always in dock for a defense force that can cut down incoming attack forces before they have a chance to land. In addition, a regular patrol of infantry (both Elemental armored and standard foot soldiers), armored vehicles, and even the occasional BattleMech, assures all is peaceful and orderly.

At the heart of this city, a massive hall, adorned with the Rasalhague Dominion standard, identifies the center of government on Alshain, and is home of the Dominion Council, guarded day in and day out by elite armored troopers who assure the safety of the leaders and lawmakers within.

Once the capital for the Rasalhague Dominion, the presence of the Dominion Council Hall harkens back to the days when the Ghost Bear Clan ruled its conquered territory from this world. Beginning with the recapture of Rasalhague and the absorption of the remainder of the Rasalhague Republic worlds in the 3060s, however, the seat of executive power has moved, reflecting the integration of the native people with the new Clan population. But with Alshain's dual significance as the home of many of the Ghost Bear Clan's genetic repositories and as the former regional capital of the Combine's fallen Alshain Military District, equal respect had to be shown to this world as well. Thus, when the final form of the integrated government was established after the Second Combine-Dominion War, few were shocked to see the new Dominion Council open on this world.

The Ghost Bear Dominion formally became the Rasalhague Dominion—an equal blend of Clan and Inner Sphere—with the election of its first Prince, saKhan Ragnar Magnusson, in 3103. The first and only Prince to ever hold the dual titles of Ghost Bear saKhan and supreme ruler of the Dominion, Magnusson relinquished his Clan title to help clarify the chain of command. Khan Aletha Kabrinski, his former commander and leader of the half-integrated Clan Ghost Bear, at once became his subordinate, a second-in-command and commander-in-chief of the Dominion defense forces under the new order. A new Council opened on Alshain that very year, consisting of a mandated equal mix of civilians, trueborn warriors, and freeborn warriors, who together formed a voting bloc and check against both the Khan and the Prince. The compromise government gave the Bears and their Spheroid companions equal voice, solidifying the bond forged between them over forty years. . . .

*For the Bears, it was a leap of faith. Though the trueborn warriors and their militarized subcastes maintained the ways of the Clan—including their hallowed breeding program, now maintained by warrior-techs and warrior-scientists, to prevent their loss to the restriction-free civilian sector—they actually bargained away their ultimate authority over the people they once governed. The Clan would rule all military affairs as before, but could no longer handle matters on its own initiative. As a concession to Clan sensibilities, of course, even the elected Prince has to have military experience—possible for civilians, since the Clan added the institution of retirement for its warrior class shortly after the influx of native-born warriors who passed the Trials to become Clan swelled its ranks. This assured that whoever ruled knew both the Ghost Bear way of thinking and represented the needs of the civilian classes.*

*The Clan's civilians already enjoyed the sweeping freedoms of Inner Sphere life, having been freed over time from their caste restrictions, which is probably one reason the Bears found letting go of their authority somewhat easier. But to assure these civilians had a voice, they also gained seats on the Clan's Council, a stunning move for a Clan long known for its*

*inability to adapt. To assure that the Council would be able to reach consensus, rather than be bogged down in civilian versus military debates, a third power bloc—the freeborn warriors—was added, and the numbers of all three are balanced by mandate, to assure no one bloc ever gains overwhelming voting clout.*

*Interestingly enough, though the Clan Council had now become “diluted” with civilians, certain Clan customs were adopted eagerly by both sides of the civilian- and military-rule debate, including the Trial of Refusal. Even the native Rasalhaguians, apparently, discovered that the threat of military action in response to poor policy decisions made for an excellent deterrent to bad politics. With clauses allowing civilian Council voters to choose a champion or risk personal defeat in a “bloodless Trial,” the Clan custom managed to survive its translation under the integrated government.*

*With their ability to remove a Khan or a Prince, and even to overrule the decisions of either leader, the Dominion Council may well have been a masterstroke for these two peoples, meshing the beliefs of the Rasalhaguians with those of their one-time conquerors, creating a workable political and social structure that continues to prosper even today. Sure, they have their problems from time to time, but the greatest hurdle was finally overcome on that wintry day on Rasalhague in 3103.*

*All it took was a little faith.*

—Dr. Anne Oskar, *The Fallen Rise: A Tale of Rasalhague*, ComStar Press, 3120

And so, unity, the ideal that all Clans promise, the Ghost Bears finally delivered with the birth of the Rasalhague Dominion. Politically ruled by a unique blend of Rasalhaguan democracy and Clan warrior ambition, its people—regardless of heritage—can rest assured that their voices will be heard. Meanwhile, the warriors still train and wage their Trials, honing the edge of the Dominion defense forces. It is a society where there are no castes, save among the trueborns, where reverence for Kerensky’s vision stands alongside that of the devout Lutherans whose practices had been long denied under a nearly forgotten era when the Dragon’s banner waved over all. It’s a bold experiment, but one that seems to have worked so far, and while the culture may seem alien to their Inner Sphere and Clan neighbors alike, there is no denying the strength of the Rasalhague Dominion’s devotion to unity, and to freedom. Twin goals, from two peoples, brought together in a common destiny.

*“Friends, comrades, fellow Rasalhaguians, today we have ushered in a new age of peace, trust, and prosperity, for ourselves and those who shall follow us. We stand together, Clan and Sphere, as a testament to two unstoppable spirits, forged into one with the fires of Trials well fought, and bargains well bid.*

*“Together, let what we have built today stand until we all shall fall. The Rasalhague Dominion is born this day; look upon your neighbor and see conquerors and subjects no more. Today, we are both free.*

*“Seyla!”*

—Prince Ragnar Magnusson, inaugural address to the newly formed Dominion Council, 3103

In our next four-part series, our tour through the history and cultures of the Inner Sphere will take us to the Lyran Commonwealth of House Steiner, the economic and industrial powerhouse of the Inner Sphere. I’m Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXV: Profit and Power—Birth of the Lyran Commonwealth

---

10/22/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

Almost lost to the ages, an insignia flutters on a flagpole before the Donegal Museum of Antiquities. Gray, with a lyre at its center, three strings of gold cross this flag, crisp and clear, catching the light from Donegal's pale yellow sun. Even native tourists to this place, seeing this banner for the first time, wonder at its meaning, but it is plain to anyone who knows the history of their realm—this flag was once the standard of the Lyran Commonwealth.

Though today the Steiner fist, set against a field of striking blue, is the recognized standard of the Lyran state, the three-stringed Grecian lyre told of a more optimistic time, when the leaders of three mercantile alliances joined forces to create the nation whose name has become synonymous with economic stability. As much for mutual profit as for mutual defense, the three leaders, Thomas McQuiston of the Federation of Skye, Kevin Tamar of the Tamar Pact, and Robert Marsden of the Protectorate of Donegal, met on the Tamar world of Arcturus in 2339 to discuss a political and economic merger.

Like all leaders who forged their realms during the period of darkness after the Terran Alliance turned in on itself, all three recognized the threats of a growing Draconis Combine on one front, a resurgent Terran Hegemony on another, and the might of the Free Worlds League on yet another. More than that, however, all three claimed rulership over wealthy realms, any one of which would be a tempting morsel for its neighbors. By uniting, they could at once forge a greater defense against their neighbors, while lowering restrictions on trade amongst one another, tripling their markets at no cost in resources.

In 2341, after two years of negotiations, the Lyran Commonwealth was born, named for the three-stringed Grecian lyre proposed by Robert Marsden as a symbol of the three realms and their equal standing as partners. It was to be ruled by nine archons—three from each partner-state—with an Archon Basileus to be chosen as its leader. Established with high-minded—even egalitarian—ideals, the three leaders saw a future of hope and profit ahead of them.

However, even the best-laid plans can go astray, and for the newborn Commonwealth, truer words could not be spoken. . . .

*The first sign that something had gone terribly wrong should have been, of course, the fact that the Lyran Commonwealth existed only on paper for its first five years. The three founders couldn't even decide who the nine archons would be, or how to effectively combine their economies. Marsden, Tamar, and McQuiston were brilliant businessmen, but their concepts for running an interstellar nation of some 100 billion people were hopelessly flawed. Although they built a lovely capitol building on Arcturus, by the time the first rulers of the Commonwealth had gathered in it the new nation was in the grip of an economic upheaval and teetered on the edge of ruin.*

*Though unable to lead, the nine archons quickly learned how to profit, and the next decade displayed their avarice in the face of crumbling prosperity among their subjects. Add to this mix the growing threat of an aggressive Draconis Combine, massing troops near the Tamar Pact border, and rumors that Tamar would secede to sign a treaty with the Kuritas if things didn't improve, and it comes as little wonder that people thought the Commonwealth was doomed.*

—Kevin Duelli, *A Cynic's Guide to Politics, 3rd Edition*, Dark Skye Press, 3090

Robert Marsden, often regarded by Lyran history books as “the last of the nine archons who gave a damn” was an impatient man, yet he stood by in the shadows of the government building on Arcturus for close to thirty years before finally taking action. Some say this delay was a sign of the same corruption that infected the other archons, others paint a picture of eternal optimism—a hope that everything would turn out right without extreme measures. Still others wonder aloud if he hadn't deliberately stayed his hand to gather his evidence against the others and let the people of the Commonwealth know how truly bad things could get. For whatever reason, Marsden waited until 2375 before finally doing what someone probably should have done a long time before. After touring the realm, winning support among local leaders and gathering evidence on his fellow archons, he announced to the Commonwealth that he was crowning himself Archon Basileus, and publicized the worst excesses of his fellow archons.

Moral outrage and the results of his backroom deals did the rest. Fueled by a quarter century of failing economics and rampant corruption, with promise of a new, stronger government that included only one archon and an elected body of planetary representatives as his council of advisors, the majority of the Lyran people rallied to Marsden's banner. By December of 2375, Robert Marsden was officially recognized as the sole ruler of the Lyran state, and the other eight archons were serving life terms in prison.

Making good on his promises, Archon Marsden submitted to all Lyran member-worlds his Articles of Acceptance, allowing each world to sign off on his new government. Because the laws outlining the rights of individual worlds were so loose, most planetary leaders signed on eagerly, though a few required more urging than others. While a few remaining holdouts—notably Tamar and Skye, whose leaders were among the eight archons sentenced to imprisonment—required military action, Marsden's plan for a strong, unified Lyran Commonwealth was finally realized.

Over the next fifteen years, the Lyran economy not only stabilized, but improved vastly, and Marsden focused his efforts equally on consolidating his authority, stabilizing the financial situation, building and improving trade with neighboring realms and within his own borders, and building the Commonwealth military. The Lyran Commonwealth quickly became known for its mercantilism, and for having one of the best-equipped militaries of all the nations in the Inner Sphere. Even so, events would soon unfold to teach the Lyran people that money wasn't everything. . . .

*So, let's see if this sounds familiar: It's a time of crisis. A beloved leader of the realm has died. His successor publicly grieves, but soon announces to the gathered masses that she will lead the state in the name of peace, then sends her closest rival to fight a war, hoping he'll get himself killed. Who would I be talking about?*

*If you guessed Katherine Steiner-Davion, you're only half right.*

*No, I'm talking about the founder of the Steiner legacy herself, Katherine Steiner (though she was known as Katherine Marsden to her people at first).*

—Mikhail Brein, *Endless Loop: A Steiner History*, Avalon Press, 3059.

The events that led to the foundation of House Steiner actually began with the Commonwealth's one Achilles' heel: the general incompetence of its military forces. A disastrous and unauthorized assault on the Free Worlds League planet of Promised Land demonstrated that simply having the best equipment doesn't win a war, and is alleged to have contributed to Robert Marsden's death from a coronary after public sentiment turned against the aging Archon. In his place came his younger brother, Alistair Marsden.

As the Age of War began with the Capellan-Free Worlds border disputes, and the eventual Combine invasion of the Commonwealth, Alistair Marsden repeatedly found his military commanders ill suited to the task of protecting the realm. The threat was so great, it had forced Marsden to relocate the Lyran capital to Tharkad, lest it fall to the Dragon. In fury and frustration, he eventually dismissed his military commanders, and went off to lead from the front personally.

It was while repelling a Combine assault that Alistair Marsden was killed in action, leaving behind a grieving widow, Katherine Marsden (nee Steiner) and a newborn son, also named Alistair. As a woman whose beauty, intelligence, and eloquence had won over the hearts of the Lyrans even before the death of her husband, Katherine's passionate eulogy of the lost Archon and her obvious grief gained the people's sympathy as well. When, just two months later, the grieving widow proclaimed her name change back to Steiner, and her intention to rule as Archon Basileus, with her son as Archon-Designate, a shocked Commonwealth reacted with whispered rumors, but surprisingly little opposition.

Katherine Steiner's winning charm and keen intellect even helped her win the support of the leaders of Tamar and Skye, rebellious provinces since the days of Robert Marsden. She even made Timothy Marsden, her late husband's uncle and a contender for the throne, her commanding general on the Free Worlds front. When Marsden died in battle against House Marik, the last obstacle to the foundation of House Steiner died with him.

Join us next time, for a closer look at the nature of House Steiner and the rise of a nation known for its wealth and power even today. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXVI: People, Politics, and Profit—The Steiner Equation

---

10/29/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

The Triad, Tharkad City, and the neighboring city, Olympia, lie under a thin layer of springtime snow, reflecting sunlight as the world's distant yellow G6-class star peeks out from a rolling gray cloud cover. On the outer limits of the twin metros, construction vehicles continue a decades-long effort to restore the original city limits. Their labors complete a campaign of demolition and reconstruction that began in 3068, when the survivors of the worst fusion plant meltdown in Inner Sphere history—a meltdown that occurred just as hordes of Blakist zealots dropped on Tharkad in a WarShip-supported blitzkrieg the likes of which has never been seen in the history of this proud realm—finally trickled back to their homelands.

On that fateful day, when mankind's darkest time was launched in a fury of nuclear bombs, BattleMech rampages, and WarShip bombardments, the mighty, city-sized fusion plant buried deep beneath the Lyran capital lost containment and spewed enough radiation into the surrounding lands to force the evacuation of every man, woman, and child not killed in the initial blasts for a distance of 150 –kilometers. Even as MechWarriors and foot soldiers fought and died on the streets, lethal radiation spewed from ruptured lines, forming a cloud of death that lingered and drifted over the countryside for years afterward. Though understandably attributed at the time to the Blakists, modern analysis shows that the Tharkad City disaster was actually a simple accident, a horrible fluke of coincidence, compounded by the chaos that accompanied the first volleys of the Jihad.

Today, over sixty years and billions of kroner later, the last scars of the Jihad are only now being obliterated, save for the massive crater dug into the frozen, glassy earth to remove the remains of the ruined reactor. As if memorializing the most heroic phase of the reconstruction, the crater remains a testament to the brave DropShip crews who sacrificed themselves to pull the radioactive material from their beloved capital world and send it hurtling into space.

Nothing in Tharkad City, the new Triad, or Olympia, quite resembles the original capital city of the Lyran Commonwealth, built during the Age of War, when it seemed Kurita troops would overrun the original capital of Arcturus. No expense was spared in that original effort, and thus none was spared for the post-Jihad repair either. Of course, for a realm as wealthy as that ruled today by House Steiner, “no expense spared” takes on new meaning.

Founded by three mercantile alliances, the Lyran Commonwealth, unlike some of its fellow Successor States, has enjoyed the strongest and most stable economy in the Inner Sphere, eclipsed only briefly by the Free Worlds League during the invasion of the Clans and its aftermath. While some have claimed this comes naturally from possessing some of the richest and most industrialized planets in the Inner Sphere, what many people may fail to realize is that the Lyrans' economic might actually stems from a much more basic relationship, an understanding between government and business born even before the leaders of Tamar, Skye, and Donegal joined forces to create the Commonwealth itself.

Free enterprise remains the cornerstone of Lyran identity, a capitalist mindset that has made empires of colonial nations even before man reached out to the stars. This system, made possible even after the Commonwealth discarded its nine-archon system in favor of a dynastic rule—thanks to Robert Marsden's Articles of Acceptance—gave the people the right to pursue their own happiness and fortune. The rights applied not only to world governments, but also to common citizens. In the days before feudalism truly took hold in the Commonwealth, merchants and entrepreneurs had already begun staking their claims to a life of prosperity, unfettered by artificial government restrictions.

Openness and tolerance were encouraged as well, as any Lyran worth his salt knew that even a foreigner could be a customer or a business partner. Regardless of sexual persuasion, ethnic background, or even political views, the Lyran way is to keep an open mind to all people, everywhere. Even on the national level the governments of member-worlds vary wildly, reflecting this tolerance on the interplanetary level. This variety truly is the spice of life for the Commonwealth, allowing its people to sample a myriad of lifestyles, while also providing an endless series of internal markets based on the social, cultural, political, and even practical needs of the various member-worlds.

Interestingly, however, a few constants do permeate the Commonwealth. German and English are the languages of state, though most merchants and diplomats speak a host of others to facilitate trade. A strong work ethic, the offshoot of the free enterprise economics and the lack of restrictions on rising through the social classes, means that most Lyrans one might encounter are hard workers, constantly driven to improve the quality of their lives. The culture and the class structure, like those of all the Great Houses, have their roots in the spirit of the ruling family.

*If there is a weakness in how the Steiner family rules, it is that they show too much intelligence and imagination. Let something happen to a Steiner Archon, whether it be an assassination or the most mild but incapacitating illness, and the entire realm comes to a screeching halt. The Steiners might be good at making others feel an important part of the government, but don't be fooled. The Steiners rule with an iron hand.*

—Hervsas David, Political Advisor to Hanse Davion, c. 3024

After assuming the title of Archon Basileus and handily bringing all internal opposition under control with deft politics and personal charm, Katherine Steiner (the first) turned her own flair for business and government toward rebuilding the war-ravaged realm and cementing her dynasty. Offering no-interest loans for the reconstruction of damaged industries in exchange for a share of the afflicted company's stocks, she opened the markets and gained access to amazing new sources of wealth at the same time. In addition, she funded planet-scouting programs to locate prime real estate throughout the Commonwealth, either for further colonization efforts or to bestow such lands on particularly loyal subjects.

These efforts not only accomplished the goals of rebuilding a realm ravaged by the Age of War and solidifying Steiner power, but also gave new life to the old institution of noble peerage. Over time, the social structure of an aristocracy would form alongside the common classes and their blue- and white-collar strata. Even more subtle was the gradual impression of the Steiner family's native German heritage and cultural bent on the Commonwealth, a development that grew more from the people's reverence toward Katherine and her successors than from any nationally instituted campaign.

Indeed, by the time of Katherine Steiner's retirement in favor of her son, Alistair Steiner, in 2445, the Commonwealth had been forever changed from a mere alliance of merchants to a viable state with the beginnings of a unifying culture, values, and way of life.

*One needs to know very little to get by in the Lyran Commonwealth: who to talk to, who not to talk to, and who to persuade with the appropriate number of C-bills.*

—Cyro Tsluo, ex-ComStar Precentor of Donegal Station, 3025

Of course, an open mercantile society brings its share of problems and challenges as well. Though the Lyran Commonwealth can trace its prosperity to the industrious nature of its people, the laws of capitalism are not so far removed from the laws of Darwinism. Not without compassion—innumerable charity funds are still sponsored by all manner of corporate and government agencies—the affluence of the Commonwealth is nevertheless most available to those who work for it, or who are on good terms with those who do. And some have amassed such wealth and power that they have become political and social entities in their own right.

Advancing one's fortune or prominence in the social strata is thus vastly improved as much by who one knows as much as it is by how hard one works. Even before the resurgence of the aristocratic and noble classes, the lines of ruling classes began to form among the corporate executives, the statesmen, and the master tradesmen. It's thus little wonder that shrewd negotiation skills, political finesse, or the occasional ethical flexibility in business are cultivated as art forms by even the most common Lyran citizen, who has come to see all deals, prices, and conditions of service as open to haggling.

In our third installment on the Lyran Commonwealth, we'll look at the rise, fall, and resurrection of House Steiner through the Succession Wars, and the subsequent years that changed this realm forever. Please join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXVII: The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of the Lyran Commonwealth

---

11/05/33

We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!

Founded by three merchant kings, united under one powerful dynasty, the Lyran Commonwealth rose to economic and industrial prominence in the Inner Sphere, emphasizing trade over military prowess. With the ascendance of House Steiner and the foundation of the Steiner dynasty, the Steiner fist replaced the three-stringed lyre of the Commonwealth. But the promise of prosperity was not enough to safeguard the Lyran people from the threats of hostile neighbors. In the years of the Age of War, the Commonwealth lost more and more territory to its aggressive neighbors as its military—well-equipped, but poorly trained—fell in battle after battle. This run of misfortune would surely have swallowed the realm up had it not been for the capture of BattleMech blueprints from the Terran Hegemony's Hesperus II factory, enabling the Steiner forces to gain the advantage over its enemies with the newly invented tools of war.

*The Commonwealth owes its existence to the BattleMech—a funny realization, no doubt, for a nation built to pursue mercantile goals. Even though the "advantage" over houses Marik and Kurita lasted all of five years before spies and commandos captured them in turn from Steiner factories, had it not been for the success of Archon Alistair Steiner's Operation Prometheus to capture 'Mech plans from the Hegemony, the Commonwealth military might have been totally shattered. The combined weight of the Marik and Kurita drives, in the face of Lyran military ineffectiveness, was smashing border defenses with ease, and creating a political crisis at home as the leaders of Tamar and Skye saw their chance to get even with the Commonwealth leadership. These pressures continued to build, leading to the so-called Dark Years after Alistair's assassination, but the early successes of Steiner 'Mech armies over those of its enemies gave the nation breathing room at a critical time.*

—Liam Rolf, *From Terra to Tharkad*, Commonwealth Press, 3125

The strain of various social and political pressures created by the ascent of the Steiner line and the near loss of the Commonwealth to its enemies eventually led to the assassination of Alistair Steiner, the second Steiner Archon to sit on the throne. In the four decades that followed, the Commonwealth faced a period of uncertainty. The Duke of Fatima, framed for the crime, was cleared, and a new generation of Steiner leaders took Alistair's place, including the indecisive Archon Steven Steiner, whose mystic wife, Margaret Olson, all but subverted his authority and would then enter into an alliance with the leaders of the Skye and Tamar regions.

When Steven Steiner died in 2501, he left no heir, a wife in the clutches of mystical charlatans, and a realm now more powerfully in the hands of its nobility than the central government. The atmosphere was ripe for civil war, which erupted soon after Robert Steiner, Steven's illegitimate nephew, came to claim the throne, supported by a massive public following. The conflict ultimately resulted in an end to the Tamar and Skye bids for independence—at least for the time being—but when it was over, any advantage House Steiner possessed over its neighbors had been lost.

*The last shots [of the Lyran Civil War] had barely been fired in 2505 when Robert Steiner put the realm back on the course of reconstruction and revival. The Age of War, though still fifty plus years from its official end, had begun to wind down for the Lyran quadrant. Increasing trade, promoting business, even paying war reparations to the people of Skye and Tamar from his personal fortune. In the run-up to Tracial Steiner's decision to sign the Tharkad Accords and thus make the Commonwealth part of the unborn Star League, the Lyran economy flourished and grew. Business ethics were refined, with government support for small and large corporations alike, and civil rights were reinforced with the creation of the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth. All the while, the Steiner family restored the integrity of the central authority over the nobility, which had been weakened during the conflict between Robert and Margaret.*

*In 2558, when Tracial Steiner made history with the stroke of a pen, the Lyran Commonwealth was once more the economic giant of the Inner Sphere, so much so that many Lyran merchants and business leaders questioned why they needed League membership in the first place. . . .*

—Kevin Duelli, *A Cynic's Guide to Politics*, 3rd Edition, Dark Skye Press, 3090

Through the Star League era, and even the Succession Wars that came after, the Lyran state continued along its path of financial prosperity, industrial prominence, and—admittedly—military mediocrity, earning a reputation as one of the most static realms in the Sphere. There were internal difficulties, of course, but the worst came during the Star League era, when rumors that the Dukes of Skye and Tamar had taken part in the abduction of her son set Archon Viola Steiner-Dinesen against their forces during her infamous "Day of Rage" during the Reunification Wars. In actuality the work was of the Steering Committee of the Estates General—a fact that led to the brief disbanding of that body—the sheer violence unleashed that day forever marred the relations between the Steiner family and the Kelswas and Lestrades, who ruled Tamar and Skye, respectively. For the Succession Wars themselves, much of the fighting done by House Steiner was defensive in nature, with a few offensives thrown in to reclaim lost territory or secure a vital border world. Indeed, until almost three centuries after the fall of the Star League, the Lyrans never initiated any of the wars that engulfed the Inner Sphere, but attempted time and again to broker peace initiatives to end them.

When, at last, one such effort finally did bear fruit, the course of history changed forever.

*No historical account of the Lyran Commonwealth would be complete without some address to the Fourth Succession War and the peace proposal by Archon Katrina Steiner that precipitated it. Hanse Davion's realm, which rarely confronted the Commonwealth, of course made the ideal candidate for alliance, given much of the same views on planetary autonomy, human rights, and even their shared western-European cultural bent. It's ironic to note, of course, that the Lyrans actually bought into the plan even after Hanse further proposed that its final objective would necessitate yet another war.*

*Yet go with it they did. Gladly. Eagerly. For the first time, Steiner troops began their own war of conquest, pushing deep into the Draconis Combine and along the Free Worlds front to support Davion's war against the Capellans and House Kurita. In two years, the two states claimed more victories than any nation could claim in the three centuries before. But the bloodlust subsided soon afterward. After losing their military gains to the political maneuvers that created the Free Rasalhague Republic, it seems the Steiners lost their stomach for war once again, as evidenced by their dismal showing in 3039.*

—Kevin Duelli, *A Cynic's Guide to Politics*, 3rd Edition, Dark Skye Press, 3090

The unification of the Steiner and Davion realms with the Fourth Succession War and the marriage of Archon-Designate Melissa Steiner to First Prince Hanse Davion created a military and economic power bloc that none of the other Successor States could hope to match, but it was one that began to crack almost immediately. The separatist district of Skye attempted to rebel, and the rulers of the Tamar Pact, having seen their hard-fought conquests lost to the newly formed Rasalhague Republic, grumbled about following suit. Both perceived the union with the Federated Suns as one more sign that their mother nation was out of control, but soon Melissa's Steiner strength and firm yet even-handed rule, reassured the people that Steiner leadership was as strong and secure as ever.

Before the Clan invasion, odds strongly favored the eventual conquest of the Inner Sphere by the united Steiner-Davion alliance, with Lyran economic might and flair for diplomacy bolstering the military prowess and efficiency of the Federated Suns. The arrival of Kerensky's descendants, however, dashed these dreams of empire, reawakened the old rivalries, and strained both nations' military and economic bonds to their breaking point. For these and a host of other reasons, the time was right for chaos in 3057, the year the Federated Commonwealth finally crumbled.

Join us next time for our final look at the Lyran Commonwealth of today, as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXVIII: The Mailed Fist—The Commonwealth Today

---

11/12/33

We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!

**Fact Sheet:** Lyran Commonwealth

**Founding Year:** 2341

**Capital (City, World):** Tharkad City, Tharkad

**National Symbol:** A brown leather-gloved fist set against a rectangular blue field

**Location (Terra relative):** Coreward and Anti-Spinward quadrant

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 319

**Estimated Population (3130):** 955,000,000,000

**Government:** Constitutional Monarchy (with German feudal stylings)

**Ruler:** Archon Melissa Steiner

**Dominant Language(s):** English and German (official), Scottish Gaelic, Italian, French

**Dominant Religion(s):** Christian (Protestant), Judaism, Muslim

**Unit of Currency:** Kroner (1 kroner = 2.13 C-Bills)

Lying beneath a pale yellow sun made hazy by the smog of heavy industry, New Marsdenville, the rebuilt capital city of Donegal and home to the Commonwealth Supreme Court, overlooks the northern seas off the coast of the Hinterlands continent. The original Marsdenville, home to the Marsden family that founded the Protectorate of Donegal, lies under tons of natural and man-made rubble some five hundred kilometers inland, another victim of the Word of Blake Jihad. Fortunately, however, the Blakists' strikes on Donegal were only cursory, a smattering of low-yield tactical weapons aimed at the major on-planet industries and administrative centers to sow chaos and fear, but over half a billion Lyran citizens lost their lives on those fateful, dark days.

And yet the people of this world, still known today as the "Trader's World," rallied and rebuilt, burying the dead and pledging their young survivors to the defense of the Lyran state. The businesses that conducted operations here grew back, like the limbs of the native unsterblich oaks that grow mostly on this planet's Lockenar continent. Like Tharkad, no expense was spared in the recovery of this important world. Like Tharkad, here on Donegal the spirit of the Lyran people has again prevailed.

Amazingly enough, Donegal survived the wrath of the Amaris Crisis, all four Succession Wars, and even the FedCom Civil War with little more than the proverbial scratch. Indeed, in the final years of the Civil War, Donegal's contribution was little more than the dispatching of its two 'Mech regiments to Tharkad. The war erupted inevitably, after years of tension between supporters of Victor Steiner-Davion and his sister, Katherine, finally spilled over into open hostilities. Its outcome in 3067 left both the Steiner and Davion realms in tatters, their military might decimated, their economies and industries exhausted, and untold tens of thousands (perhaps millions) dead—civilian and military alike. It ended the experiment begun in 3028 with the unification of the Lyran Commonwealth and the Federated Suns into the Federated Commonwealth, and left a shocked and war-weary people facing an uncertain future.

But the devastation of the Civil War miraculously spared some worlds, like Donegal, thanks in part to its location deep within the Commonwealth, its heavy protection by 'Mech forces, and the shadow cast by nearby Tharkad. Yet the Blakist zealots who launched their Jihad saw in their campaign of terror enough time to devote to an attack here. Even now, the cleanup of the original Marsdenville, Wellington, and Palar continues as tons of radioactive debris are gathered and loaded aboard star-barges for off-world disposal.

Yet even as the old wounds still heal, commerce and industry have returned in force. Donegal is once more a booming center of economic prosperity, a beacon of all that the Lyran Commonwealth (renamed from the Lyran Alliance in 3084) stands for today. The Donegal Stock Exchange is again the most active of the Commonwealth's stock markets, and Lockheed/CBM Aerospace continues to produce aerospace craft for the Lyran navy and commercial interests. It is also one of many core worlds where the Commonwealth's traditional free press gathers and disseminates the latest news from a realm that spans almost four hundred light-years in diameter.

The small town of East Harlow stands in the shadow of Media City, a suburb of one of the few urban sprawls spared the Blakist assault. From this town, Commonwealth Press maintains a satellite printing office, producing hardcopies of everything from fashion magazines to the latest copies of Bryn Charlotte's sci-fi thriller, *The Invincible*. It is here that our author got his start, working in the editorial offices as war tore the Federated Commonwealth apart.

The print editions told of a nation in the grip of fratricidal conflict. Steiner versus Davion. The riots that broke out on Solaris in 3062 paled in comparison to the stories of battle on Kentares, Coventry, Hesperus II, or the Falcon Incursion. The sales figures for the Battle of Tharkad went through the roof in 3067, as another phase in Lyran history came to an end.

And it was here that a young Bertram Habeas felt the very earth shudder as a miniature sun rose on the eastern horizon—marking the death of the city of Chekswa, home of the Chekswa School of Literature, under a five-kiloton atomic blast.

Without a doubt, the Jihad was the worst single event in the history of the Inner Sphere. For the Lyran Alliance, barely coming to grips with the final, terrible costs of the FedCom Civil War, its impact was doubly felt for the sheer volume of economic and industrial devastation it wrought. The loss of Tharkad, the bombing of Donegal, the bombardment of Skye—all these events sent central authority spinning wildly out of control. With the loss of the HPG network, chaos reigned across the realm and the battered remains of the Lyran armed forces, stripped of their command structure, could barely coordinate even the simplest operations in opposition to the fanatics.

Interstellar trade, the backbone of Lyran economy and infrastructure, collapsed completely as fleets of JumpShips were attacked or pressed into military service. This sent whole worlds—even entire sectors—into an economic depression the likes of which had not been seen since the First Succession War or the early days of the nation's formation. Meanwhile, the most industrial worlds of the Skye region, closest to Terra, faced the brunt of the Jihad, and—for the first time in history—Hesperus II actually fell to a foreign power. By the time interstellar communications came back on-line and the people could see what had become of their nation, the Lyran Alliance had been ravaged.

*With the chaos of the Jihad raging, it's almost a miracle that the Clans did not simply surge across the border to claim as much of the Lyran Commonwealth as they could, truth be told. Though many historians consider this no more than a stroke of dumb luck, the fact was that the sudden HPG blackout gave the Clans cause to pause, unaware of just what exactly was going on in the Inner Sphere. Adding to that was the arrival of more Clans from the homeworlds, keeping them distracted until a new picture of the situation unfolded.*

*What's truly a testament to the Lyran people, however, was the Steiner willingness to make a deal. With their military in disarray, it would be Archon Peter Steiner-Davion's role—backed by Devlin Stone's coalition, of course—to request aid from his realm's Clan enemies and truly make it possible to turn the tide on the Lyran front. The real triumph, however, was convincing the historically separatist people of Skye that they needed help.*

—Rossel Schendt, *Jihad: A Tale of Survival*, Commonwealth Press, 3111

Ultimately, it took a coalition under the leadership of Devlin Stone to break the Jihad and bring the Steiner realm back from the brink, and it would be in gratitude for its survival that the Archon of the Alliance would grant much of the once-rebellious Skye province to Stone's new Republic. Since that day, the Lyran Commonwealth has struggled hard to regain its place as the industrial and economic powerhouse of the Inner Sphere. With numerous trade deals between the Commonwealth and its neighbors in The Republic and the Draconis Combine, the economy ultimately recovered. Factories smashed during the war benefited from several initiatives launched by the Steiner leaders. JumpShips once more plied the space lanes. As a new age of peace finally took hold, hope—the real wellspring of Lyran prosperity—returned to this battered nation. Though it would take decades to come back fully from the abyss, the hope and the hearts of the Lyran people would one day restore this wonderful nation to prosperity and dignity.

In our next four-part series, our tour through the history and cultures of the Inner Sphere will take us to the gypsy merchants of the Clans. Won't you join us for our next volume, as we look into the fascinating world of Clan Sea Fox? I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXIX: Profit, Progress, and Honor—Origins of Clan Sea Fox

---

11/19/03

We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!

*Hark, children of the Clans, To the wisdom of Kerensky and your forebears. Know what has come before Remember it as you strive toward the future.*

—*The Remembrance* (all Clans), Passage 1, 1:1-4, attributed to Karen Nagasawa

First impressions can often be the most lasting.

When Kerensky's descendants first appeared in 3050, they tore into the Inner Sphere with a ferocity and brutal efficiency never seen before. Their armies rolled over those of the Successor States, carving a wedge of worlds deep into the territories once united by the Star League. For a couple of years, myths of monsters and powerful aliens were the only rational explanations for who these invaders could be, though their identity would soon become clear enough.

The misconception of the Clans rose from the power of their military, their use of strange tactics and speech, and the vast superiority of their military technology, more advanced even than the lost weapons of the Star League itself. As the people of the Inner Sphere learned more of the invaders, they discovered a common history, and came to realize that the Clans were as human as those Kerensky's troops left behind. But while those misconceptions died, others remained. One of the most eternal, of course, was the concept that the Clans were born, raised, and died for a single purpose: war.

Like all misconceptions, this belief was born of knowing only the basics about Clan life, and from the very distinct first impression that only a horde of invading armies can bring. It was believed that in Clan society, the warriors dominate, dedicating their lives to perfecting the art of combat, while the civilians serve to make their weapons stronger, faster, better. Today, however, is a different story. Today, we know that the Clans are more than simple killing machines. Each has its own goals, desires, and culture.

And none is so strikingly different from the norm as Clan Sea Fox.

*Clan Diamond Shark occupies a unique position among the Clans. Within a rigidly hierarchical blueprint for society, they have come closest to democracy; among people convinced that military strength depends on tight control and reverence for the chain of command, the Diamond Sharks have achieved remarkable battlefield prowess through the kind of flexibility other Clans disdain. Clan Diamond Shark is also the only Clan to have changed its name, a startling shift for a society that values order and stability above virtually all things. In changing its name, Clan Diamond Shark adapted to a unique set of circumstances. Its ability to do so most clearly demonstrates this Clan's unorthodox nature . . .*

—Commander Jaime Wolf, WolfNet Classified Report: Invading Clans—Clan Diamond Shark, 3058 (Declassified 1 January, 3068)

The Sea Fox Clan did indeed change its name to Clan Diamond Shark for a time, and it was under this name that the Clan first came to be known to the armies of the Inner Sphere in the early 3050s. Though the name has once more returned to its origins, however, Clan Sea Fox has continued to adapt to new circumstances, evolving well beyond today's preconceptions of what it means to be Clan. But how did they get to be where they are now? How does a Clan that embraces democracy and change evolve?

Formed, like all Clans, around a core of loyal warriors united under the vision of two Khans, Clan Sea Fox developed quickly around the progressive ideals of Karen Nagasawa. An eloquent and philosophical warrior, Nagasawa's words were credited for winning over many converts to Nicholas Kerensky's dream—including the Foxes' first Khan, David Kalasa himself. Nagasawa was also a progressive thinker, challenging the concept of the honor dueling practice known today as *zellbrigen*, even before it became a matter of Clan martial policy, a factor that put her Clan at odds with most of the others, but fostered a sense of battlefield cooperation. Under Nagasawa's lead (after Khan Kalasa died during the reclamation of the Pentagon worlds), this spirit of cooperation was extended into the lower castes, offering greater respect to them and encouraging them to expand the Clan's material prosperity. The Sea Foxes dove into the effort to expand their Clan, with the merchant and scientist castes enjoying the benefits of their greater freedoms to explore new markets and possibilities.

Thanks to the wider latitude granted them, the Sea Foxes earned distinction for their innovations in science and commerce before and well into the Golden Century. Sea Fox scientists perfected the iron womb technology still used today by the Clans, and Sea Fox merchants—as adept at the game of information as at that of commodities—developed the Chatterweb as an information-exchange network between all Clans.

*To be fair, all of the Clans were out to expand their power and influence, just as the Sea Foxes, and all made a fine display of claiming the equal importance of their various castes. But where some—like the [Hell's] Horses with their teamwork ethics, or the [Ghost] Bears' sense of "family"—actually tried to walk the walk, the Foxes did that and more. The merchant*

*and scientist castes weren't merely allowed to push their limits, they were encouraged to do so. After iIkhan [Nicholas] Kerensky's death, the Sea Foxes aggressively sought new colony options, entered into deals with fellow Clans for information and materials, and kept a quiet ear and eye on all their neighbors through the Chatterweb.*

*More than that, however —and possibly most critical—was the fact that the Foxes became a "bargain first" Clan, whereas their neighbors believed in the sanctity of the Trial of Possession. Rather than fight for the newer generation of 'Mech designs, the Foxes bartered with Clan Coyote to assist them in developing it. They exchanged partial rights to the vital supplies of HarJel with the Horses to gain access to their super-infantry breeding protocols. And when they did fight, the information gleaned from their Chatterweb made aggressive, preemptive battle challenges possible, guaranteeing some degree of success—as with their challenge to claim Elemental armor from the Wolves.*

*As a side benefit to this policy, the Sea Fox Clan came through the Golden Century not only wealthy and strong, but also with very few lasting grudges against its fellow Clansmen. This, of course, was deliberate as well—as a general rule, merchants never want to alienate a potential customer.*

—Sean Lasko, PhD, Professor of Clan Society and Politics, University of Thorin

Not all was profit and progress, however. What helped the Sea Fox prosper was an affront to more conservative Clans. The merchant caste, its prominence rising beyond dispute, seemed to call the shots when the Foxes did engage in Trials, guiding their Clan to profit while the warriors appeared to do their bidding. This so offended Khan Liam Howell of the Snow Raven Clan that he ordered his scientists to engineer a predator powerful enough to wipe out the Sea Fox Clan's totem on Strana Mechty. This event, once uncovered, led to an extraordinary reaction from the Foxes. Rather than be bound to a totem that was verging on extinction, and rather than engage in a wasteful feud against the Clan whose Khan was responsible, the Sea Fox Clan simply decided to change its name, in a rare election where even the civilian castes were given a vote. In 2985, after fighting and winning a Trial of Refusal against the Grand Council's decision to block the name change, Clan Sea Fox became known by the name of the predator that had all but wiped out their original totem, and Clan Diamond Shark was born.

*Ironically, the decades following their greatest step toward democracy and change saw a more unwelcome change in the newly renamed Diamond Sharks. Previously navigating a narrow line through the increasingly divisive Crusader and Warden debate, the Sharks had avoided making enemies. But as the time for a decision neared, this ambivalence won the Sharks fewer friends. It was into this tense political standoff that Ian Hawker became Khan of the Sharks. A reactionary conservative in a liberal Clan, it's still a baffling puzzle as to how he ever got elected to his post. Perhaps it was pressure from the merchants, who saw his Crusader leanings as playing into their hands for a shot at new markets. Or perhaps it was an outside influence. Whatever the cause, the Sharks were firmly in the Crusader camp under Hawker's command.*

—Sean Lasko, PhD, Professor of Clan Society and Politics, University of Thorin

Once restored to a position of prominence, the warrior-merchants of Clan Diamond Shark began to push open the waiting markets in earnest. After the Clans' final, collective defeat at the Great Refusal, the Sharks, freed of the Clan-wide view of the Inner Sphere as an enemy to be conquered and ruled, advanced their trade from merely servicing the Clan-held territories to open negotiations with Inner Sphere agencies. Even Clan-designed 'Mechs became available to the eternally hungry Inner Sphere markets. It was the profits from this new venture that began the gradual transformation of the Sharks.

In part two of our examination of this unusual Clan of warrior-merchants, we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXX: The Shark and the Fox, Evolution of a Clan

---

11/26/33

We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!

Baking beneath a large, white-hot star, this world of sand and windstorms was once the capital of the Trelshire Province of the Lyran Commonwealth's Tamar Pact. Today, however, the low, fat buildings of Camora, one of this planet's larger cities, surround a sprawling outdoor marketplace. Here, holographic monitors and computer terminals stand beside low-technology booths where live merchants in homey attire peddle their wares and make a fine art of haggling. In the nearby spaceport, no less than five massive, ovoid skyscrapers stand a silent vigil, constantly loading and offloading cargo, which is taken into massive, subterranean warehouses, and is always under the heavy guard of the finest Clan-made military hardware any currency can buy.

Emblazoned on the 'Mechs, the DropShips, and even the troopers who see that all transactions and businesses run smoothly, is the ever-alert image of the Sea Fox, coiling up from the waves and bowing, at once honoring and pouncing upon its prey.

The gathering of material wealth is supposedly beneath the Clans, who value martial glory over all other pursuits. The only honor comes through victory in a fairly fought Trial, where equally matched opponents put their lives on the line to prove their worth and their way is superior. But what does that say about the mercantile nature of the Sea Fox Clan? Does their relentless pursuit of commodities, information, and wealth make them less of a Clan? Do they demonstrate the same kind of honor in combat? Do they believe in the vision of Kerensky?

Like the Ghost Bear Clan, the Sea Foxes have adapted to life in the Inner Sphere, but theirs was an evolution already underway before they even arrived. Granted freedoms beyond those of other Clan civilians, the Foxes' merchant caste grew to dominate the politics and policies of their Clan. Driven by the guidance of Karen Nagasawa, one of the Clan's founding Khans, the Foxes sought material gain before all other objectives, in hopes of quickly assuring their continued survival in the relatively resource-poor worlds of the Kerensky Cluster. Yet in their quest to expand, the Sea Foxes never truly violated the codes set down by Nicholas Kerensky. Instead, they merely tested the limits of their flexibility, amassing wealth, resources, and power in the bargain. However, the worlds of the Kerensky Cluster were few.

*What's perhaps most ironic about the Diamond Shark/Sea Fox Clan is how they came to be in the Inner Sphere to begin with. Preferring the bargain to the Trial, they always sought to avoid long-standing feuds, yet, in time for the go-vote, they were in the Crusader camp. Some theorists suggest that this was due to pressures from within—the merchant caste, smelling new markets the way their totem could smell blood in the water—but the anomaly in that theory is that their leader at the time was a rare warrior caste elitist. Thus, as the merchants were finally gaining access to the untapped riches of the Inner Sphere, they were brutally oppressed, their rights stripped away.*

*And yet the disastrous results of this leadership would ultimately pave the way for success. Under Khan [Ian] Hawker, the Diamond Sharks would suffer from a bad showing during the invasion—so bad, in fact, that he would be forced to again relinquish control to the stifled merchant caste, in order to rebuild and avoid absorption.*

*Thus, in effect, the Diamond Sharks' decision to join in the invasion would prove to be both their greatest mistake and their greatest boon. It would simply take many more years before they truly swam their own path . . .*

—Sean Lasko, PhD, Professor of Clan Society and Politics, University of Thorin

Indeed, in the wake of the Clan Invasion, the Diamond Sharks' merchants suddenly found their opportunity for the growth their Clan craved. The markets of the Inner Sphere gradually opened to accept Clan-made goods, first on a sort of black-market level, with smaller items in trade for Inner Sphere goods. Because Clan military and engineering technology was forced for so long to rely on fewer resources, practical tools and weapons made using Clan techniques were better than their Inner Sphere counterparts and thus highly prized. But the Clans lacked luxuries and conveniences that the Inner Sphere had long developed for its own use, even in the poorer realms. Trade blossomed, gradually expanding to the point where even BattleMechs were among the commodities exchanged. Though other Clans voiced alarm that the Sharks were trading away their military edge, the Shark merchants noted that Inner Sphere technical parity was inevitable ever since the invasion began, and trading obsolete models of military hardware hardly did anything to upset the balance of power.

At almost the same time, the Sharks bartered their transportation services as well, first to the Ghost Bears, and later to the Hell's Horses, assisting in the relocation of whole colonies aboard their surplus JumpShip fleets. As tensions rose in the Clan homeworlds, these relocations would expand to include many Diamond Shark holdings as well. It would not be until 3067, when Diamond Shark prominence in the Inner Sphere became so great that they could seize and hold their own worlds from among the other Clan Occupation Zones, that their fellow Clansmen realized what was happening. For all intents and purposes, the Sharks were migrating to the open seas, leaving behind the shallow depths of the home worlds.

It was also during this time that the Clan began posting permanent, large-scale forces to its WarShips; a strange, but apparently insignificant change at the time that would eventually demonstrate itself to be a precursor to radical sociopolitical changes for the Clan to come.

The upheaval caused by a new generation of Clans leaving the home worlds apparently proved too much to bear for those left behind. Though even the Sea Foxes today won't part with that kind of information, the rumors and reports of a massive conflict engulfing the home worlds for over a decade have proven too persistent to simply disregard. Whatever occurred there, the result was a hasty, enforced relocation of the remaining Diamond Sharks to the Inner Sphere; a process made easier by the trading alliances built up over the years and by the gradual relocation of much of the Clan's merchant and labor castes to support their recently won trading worlds.

Worlds such as Twycross in the Jade Falcons' Occupation Zone, Trondheim in the then-Ghost Bear Dominion, and Itabiana, among the Nova Cat holdings in the Draconis Combine, all became holdings of the Diamond Sharks. These worlds were transformed into the Clans' clearing houses, bases of operations not for military conquest, but for the perpetuation of trade, the Diamond Sharks' single greatest occupation. Yet inviting off-worlders to come and trade on these few planets would not be enough to sustain an uprooted Clan. Newer markets had to be opened, without making enemies of them. Though each world had been won by the rules of the Trial, the Sharks knew their intended markets—those of the Inner Sphere—would not be receptive to the warrior ways of the Clans. To open new markets, the Clan would have to expand without conquest. Thus began the rise of the aimags, and the Khanates they serve, and thus also did the Sharks reclaim their original name, presenting to their new markets a face no longer sullied by the reputation of a failed invader, but honoring their ties to the noble sea fox.

Night falls on Camora, and the markets are closed for the day. As the last rays of the sun, cast in red by a distant sandstorm, fade off to the west, one begins to realize how cold the desert wind has become. The city itself is not yet asleep. Children still play in the streets, under the glow of lamps, engaging in games that mimic the bargaining techniques of their elders. This is a merchant's city, and even the warriors do not interfere; their BattleMechs stomping off in an endless patrol around the spaceport.

The towering ovoid buildings are fewer now, however, with only one left behind as the last departing drive flare rises into the nighttime sky. With good binoculars, one can make out the waiting vessel, an oblong form, its metal hide gleaming as the last rays of sunlight reflect off it. Though WarShips hovering in close orbit have in the past been a harbinger of invasion, on Twycross few people notice, for the Sea Fox ArcShips are merely a harbinger of business as usual, and on this night, the ArcShip of the Skate Khanate is preparing for its next "fishing expedition," the eternal quest for new markets, perpetuated in the vastness of space itself.

In our next volume, our tour of the Sea Fox will examine how the Jihad made possible the unexpected but no less inevitable rise of this nomadic Clan of warrior merchants. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXXI: Challenging the Void—Clan Sea Fox Ascendant

---

12/03/33

We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!

From its inception among the often-desolate and resource-poor worlds of the Pentagon and the Kerensky Cluster, the Sea Fox Clan has striven to amass material wealth, equating riches and resources with survival. As the Sea Fox Clan, it forged an economic empire, less dependant on Trials than on deals, but the inevitable rivalries forced it to change, to evolve into the Diamond Sharks, a Clan more democratic in nature, yet often guided as much by the passions of war as the lure of opening new markets. With the invasion of the Inner Sphere, the pendulum once more swung slowly back to the nature of the Sea Fox—less bloodthirsty, more honorable, but still a predator to be feared and respected. It was, however, an evolution, as should be expected, that would take several decades to complete.

*[Clan Diamond Shark/Sea Fox] was an enigma during the early years of the Clan invasion. To the citizens of the Sphere, they were the invaders who were never seen. To the other invaders, they were more like remoras than sharks themselves, parasites swimming with the real predators of the deep. Yet few among the Clans could say the Sharks had no place in their society. As each Clan functions under the collective efforts of the five castes—warrior, scientist, merchant, technician, and laborer—so the Clans as a whole had their castes—those who led as warriors, and those who served, as the Shark merchants did so well.*

*But the Sharks were a democracy compared to the martial nature of the other Clans, and in a democracy, even the common folk have a voice in their destiny. So it was for the Sharks. Born, bred, and raised to seek strength through profit and wealth, they brought with them to the invasion that same sense of manifest destiny the more warlike Clans embraced. In their view, however, there were other ways to get there. The Clan's failure at Tukayyid became stark evidence of this, and with the resulting decline of Khan [Ian] Hawker, the Crusader mentality burned itself out in favor of a new Warden philosophy. If the Sharks couldn't beat the Inner Sphere on the field of battle, they would carve their own conquests in the marketplace.*

*Much like spoiled children, the warrior Clans, of course, protested the Sharks at every turn, but the Sharks won all the right Trials and said all the right things. They sold their services to Clan and Inner Sphere patrons alike. Ironically, however, serving both would lead to the choice of one over another during the dark years of the Jihad.*

—Sean Lasko, PhD, Professor of Clan Society and Politics, University of Thorin

The early 3060s saw waves of fighting in both the Clan home worlds and the Inner Sphere. With a Clan destroyed, another Abjured, and still another entirely relocated to the greener pastures of the Inner Sphere, a massive power vacuum was created which all the remaining home Clans tore into each other to fill. The Wars of Possession, as they were known, would take years to burn themselves out, even as the Inner Sphere erupted in the fires of several wars, ranging from the Capellan–St. Ives war to the FedCom Civil War. But even as the initial conflicts ended, new ones began. The Word of Blake Jihad was launched in 3067, turning the war-ravaged Inner Sphere upside down once more, and as the Spheroids fought for their very way of life, the Clans, too, felt the strain.

The match that lit the fuse came from an unexpected source, however. Clan Hell's Horses, an ascendant home Clan, which had recently been forced out of its briefly held Inner Sphere occupation zone, initiated its own plans for an invasion, aimed at the Crusader Wolves. Recognizing the long journey ahead, and having learned from their earlier failures, the Horses recognized the need to relocate at least a healthy portion of their support structure with their armies. To assist in this endeavor, they turned to the Diamond Sharks as their nemesis, Clan Ghost Bear, had done a decade before. Unlike the Bears, however, the Horses' move was not subtle enough to be overlooked, and the apparent wholesale departure of yet another Clan may have ignited the chaos in the Clan home worlds that followed.

The lack of hard details on what some historians have called the Clan Civil War has led to many prevailing theories on what exactly happened in the 3070s and 3080s. The massive upheaval that apparently followed the Horses' relocation, and the brief Ice Hellion incursion, evidently led to the severing of all effective contact between the invading Clans and their brethren back home. However, the exact details are still a secret jealously kept by those Clans in the Inner Sphere. What is known, however, is that one of the many results was the loss of the Diamond Sharks' enclaves back home, forcing a truncated Clan to remake itself once again.

*With only three worlds to stage from, and the entire Inner Sphere at war, the Sharks saw a unique opportunity, even in the grip of disaster. Fleets of their JumpShips, arriving in the Inner Sphere with whatever they could carry, became an instant lifeline to other factions in the Inner Sphere; their supplies sold at bargain prices, often in exchange for raw materials and components the Clan itself had lost.*

*As the Jihad continued, and security issues became paramount, the Foxes included their WarShips—the troops' attachment only a short time before proving almost prescient—leaving the balance of their Touman to guard their market worlds. Military and logistical needs hastened these changes, and crystallized the Aimag-and-Khanate organization used today,*

*including the creation of additional saKhans to oversee each Khanate fleet, as well as the institution of the formal rank of ovKhan (Aimag leaders).*

*As the last of the Blakist holdouts fell to the coalition of Inner Sphere forces, Clan Sea Fox began to morph into the four roving Khanates (spacefleets) seen today—Spina, Skate, Tiburon, and Fox—each led by a saKhan, under a fifth (the ilKhanate), that is led by the Clan Khan. Though it would take until the dawn of the thirty-second century for the Sea Fox to fully blossom into their current incarnation, there can be no doubt that the Jihad proved a catalyst which shaved decades off of what would otherwise most likely have been a century-long transformation.*

*As the new century began, to signify their own new beginning and win over additional Spheroid markets, the Clan leaders voted to change the Clan's name back to Sea Fox in 3100. This event was pulled off with nowhere near the inter-Clan fighting that had erupted before the invasion years, as the Grand Council simply was in no position to refute them.*

*Though derided by their fellow Clans as mere gypsies, the Sea Fox Khanates proved themselves an effective adaptation to the chaos of the Jihad and its aftermath, and a natural extension of the Foxes' evolution.*

*We should all learn such lessons, and implement them so well. . . .*

—Petiri Nova Cat, *Survival of the Fittest: Clans of the Inner Sphere*, Commonwealth Press, 3127

Reorganized, and revitalized, even as the rest of the Inner Sphere dealt with the horrifying aftermath of the Jihad, the Sea Fox Clan could make its presence felt anywhere in the Sphere that a new market beckoned. The arrival of their modified WarShips (today known as ArcShips and CargoShips) soon became a welcome sight, signifying the presence of a Khanate in one system while its five attendant JumpShip fleets (Aimag) extended their offer of goods and services to other nearby worlds, often supporting worlds left stranded by Blakist attacks. During the final days of the Jihad, and the first decade following, these JumpShip fleets claimed only a small percentage in profit for their services, but the sheer volume of markets opened by these nomadic Khanates created the single greatest boon to the Clan's economy since the creation of its Chatterweb. Thus, the Aimag and Khanates assured their own continued existence with their proof of profitability, bringing the wealth, prominence, and of course glory of the mercantile Clan to Inner Sphere—and even Periphery—markets, wherever they might be found.

In the last part of our look at the ways of Clan Sea Fox today, our tour will take us inside the gypsy ArcShips and CargoShips of the Sea Fox Clan. Come join us as the tour of the stars continues! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXXII: Warrior-Merchants—The Sea Fox Clan Today

---

12/10/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** Clan Sea Fox

**Founding Year:** 2810 (initial), 3068 (modern)

**Capital (City, World):** ilKhanate ArcShip Poseidon, no home system

**National Symbol:** A silver-blue sea fox, bowing as it rises from the water

**Location (Terra relative):** Various worlds and spaceborne colonies scattered across the Inner Sphere

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 3 total control; 14 world enclaves

**Estimated Population (3130):** 428,670,000

**Government:** Clan (Caste-driven, warrior/merchant-dominant hierarchy)

**Ruler:** Khan Mori Hawker

**Dominant Language(s):** English (official)

**Dominant Religion(s):** Atheism

**Unit of Currency:** Fox-Credit (1 fox credit = 1 C-Bill)

Long, slender, looking for all the world like silver pens with four humps like grasping fingers on the haft, hanging in the inky blackness of space from reflective parasols, two *Monolith*-class JumpShips await their complement of DropShips on the world below; the four humps are permanently attached DropShips, heavily modified into collective living quarters for thousands. Emblazoned on the solar sails of each is the rising sea fox insignia, portrayed in its customary bow of respect and honor. On the nose domes of each vessel the insignias repeat, but overlap a large red letter A, under which appears the silhouette of a diamond shark, curved as if swimming around this curious logo. The nose dome insignia at once identifies these vessels as those of Clan Sea Fox's Alpha Aimag, of the Tiburon Khanate, and today these JumpShips bring deals on everything from high-resolution holovids to the news from Tharkad to the isolated Lyran world of Kaumberg.

For over two weeks, Alpha Aimag has lingered in the Kaumberg system, exchanging the goods and services of the Sea Fox Clan with those of one of the Lyran Commonwealth's largest exporters of timber and classic furniture. Three days from now, when all the Aimag's DropShips return from their journey of profit and deal-making, the Aimag's sails will be retracted and both JumpShips will return to nearby Costinbrod, where the *Titanic*, a massively modified *Potemkin*-class ArcShip, awaits a rendezvous with the other Aimags of Tiburon Khanate.

The Sea Fox Clan today is a curious mix of the original Clan society and the modern corporate merchant fleet. The warrior caste still maintains its dominance over all others, with a Khan claiming ultimate authority over the Clan's direction, and saKhans directing where to send their Khanates and Aimags in accordance with that direction. When battle is mandated—either for training purposes or to resolve a dispute between warriors, Aimags, and even against other Clans—the appropriate Trials and rituals are invoked. Bloodnames are still revered, and the honors of the batchall (battle challenge), zellbrigen (dueling rules), safcon and hegira (safe arrival and departure from a combat zone, respectively) are still respected. These are all hallmarks of the Clan system, as set down by Nicholas Kerensky so many centuries ago.

Yet in other ways, the Foxes are vastly different from their more traditional brethren. Their merchant caste, far more numerous than the warriors, has its own conclaves, where they discuss and identify the markets their Khanates should exploit, their voice carrying great weight even if they truly have no authority to dictate terms to their leaders. Indeed, many in the merchant caste hail originally from the ranks of the warriors, having voluntarily stepped down to take up the important duty of seeing to the Clan's profit margins; in several cases, the saKhans themselves, while still actively warriors, are almost more of the merchant caste than not. In addition to these dedicated advisors, the Sea Fox warriors know they also have the support and cooperation of other lower-caste councils. The laborers coordinate their manufacturing efforts, making the most efficient use of the facilities on the Clan's few 'clearing-house worlds' scattered throughout the Inner Sphere, as well as those on board each ArcShip and CargoShip, with the technician and scientist councils overseeing the needs of the Clan's equipment and technological needs.

Representatives from each of these caste conclaves reside on every DropShip and JumpShip of the Clan, always coordinating their far-flung fleets, to avoid doubling up on the Clan's needs, while at the same time encouraged to maintain the smooth operations of their own Aimags. Amazingly enough, though few of these Aimags ever truly gather in one place at any one time, the cultural values of these scattered spaceborne sub-Clans remain largely synchronized; how long this can continue without such separations causing divisions is unknown. Profit and the art of the deal still motivate the majority of these warrior-merchants beyond all other glories, but battle, while not sought out, is never, ever shied away from.

*It is a common enough mistake to presume that the fragmentation of the Sea Fox indicates a breakdown of cooperation and coordination within the Clan, especially after examples like the fractured Clan Fire Mandrill, which spent centuries warring with itself to the point of its own near collapse. But in the case of the Foxes, the fragmentation did not occur from the usual internal stresses. There was no major difference of opinion that drove the Khanates apart, but the necessities of war and the ongoing search for newer and better markets. This segregation was arrived at through a mutual understanding, offering a level of independence that allowed a greater flexibility within its ranks, yet still bound by the goals of the Clan itself. The*

*Bloodname Houses remained open to all Khanates, and periodic Clanwide Trials kept them united by their common culture and traditions, even while each Khanate was permitted its own degree of self-determination, with glory defined as much by battlefield conquests as by securing a profitable deal.*

*But because the Clans themselves were formed in a similar way—with Kerensky assigning a unifying system of values on the whole, then splitting them into twenty groups left to find their own ways through the centuries—it is perhaps only natural that the Clans would be the first to mistake the Sea Fox's Khanate system for a breakdown, a weakness if you will.*

*In the most striking example, a Wolf Clan attack force attempted to capture the Beta Aimag of the Sea Fox's Swimmer Khanate in 3097. Thinking the mere Cluster of Beta's troops to be an easy mark, especially while escorting their fleet through the Wolf Clan system of Feltre, the Wolves dispatched an aerospace-heavy force to overwhelm the merchant flotilla. Not only did the Wolves fail to secure the two JumpShips and attached DropShips when the Foxes proved most adept at defending themselves and jumping out, but they also received a swift reply from no less than two full Khanates, which assaulted Feltre with a Galaxy of assault troops later that year. Fortunately for the Wolves, the Foxes were uninterested in total conquest, but the loss of two Wolf Clusters in that incident, as well as the sudden 200-percent increase in Sea Fox prices that affected all other Wolf Clan merchant dealings, proved that the Foxes were anything but an uncoordinated band of nomads. . . .*

—Sean Lasko, PhD, Professor of Clan Society and Politics, University of Thorin

The Sea Fox Clan has come a long way since its foundations, nearly four centuries ago. United under the principles of the Kerenskys, yet divided into roaming sub-Clans and a handful of clearinghouse enclaves, they swim the deep black seas of space, rarely knowing the luxury of unrefined air or the warmth of natural sunlight for more than a week or two. They hold less than a handful of worlds they might call home, and even those planets dominated by a Sea Fox government merely see to the needs of their own people, while encouraging outsiders—and even native peoples, in many cases—to settle alongside them as a kind of permanent market for the Clan's goods and currency. This has kept the Clan small, yet pure, and free to move about at will. Indeed, millions of Foxes know only the artificial confines of DropShip and JumpShip bulkheads as their true sanctuary. And yet they remain united by common bonds, and the common, never-ending goal to survive, to expand, to evolve, and to always come away with the upper hand in any deal.

Another sure sign of their success are their CargoShips and ArcShips. Not only do they move freely across every House and Clan OZ, but the time and financial stability needed to create these vessels is a testament to the Foxes prosperity. Following the Word of Blake Jihad and the destruction of so many WarShips, the Foxes took note of the writing on the wall and began a massive revamping program that continues to this day. Taking their own WarShips—and salvaging discarded hulks where they can—the Foxes stripped away weapon systems, and armor, expanded the internal bays and quarters to accommodate freight and passengers, for long-term voyages. These dedicated CargoShips became roving, long-term habitats and mobile supply stations that formed the backbone of the new Khanates, while the more heavily-modified, ultra-massive ArcShips became societal points of congress and core governmental structures for the entire Clan. These "harmless" vessels, then, have allowed the Foxes to gain access to almost every world within the Inner Sphere and even the Periphery; a marketing edge that they've used with brutal efficiency.

In the end, the legacy of the Sea Foxes, the Clan of Nagasawa, is its phenomenal ability to adapt to its times, challenging every precept of Clan and Inner Sphere life alike in the name of enhancement. Seeking bargains, not conquest, yet ruled as ever by a warrior caste, they challenge the ideals of the Clan way, yet never the laws handed down from the Father of the Clans. And though they may slowly drift apart as the Aimags and Khanates spread themselves out among the stars, who can say that even this may be just another part of a noble Clan's quest to evolve and adapt to a changing universe?

Join us next time for a special six-part series as our tour of the stars brings us back into the Inner Sphere one more time, for a look at the realm once known as the Free Worlds League. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXXIII: Hatching Destiny—Birth of the Free Worlds League

---

12/17/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

United in their love for independence, yet divided against one another. Economically and socially powerful, yet strangled by a nightmarish entanglement of bureaucracy and conflict. These were the descriptions often made of the Free Worlds League, a nation that has ever been a study in contrasts. From its formation to its eventual collapse, and even into the present day, entire volumes have speculated on how this realm could have formed to begin with, with such severe differences among its member states. Scholars have marveled over its continued existence through almost eight centuries—much of that time plagued by near-constant warfare. Even after the League's fall, experts have marveled at the remains of this once proud, yet hopelessly conflicted realm, and how many of its wayward offspring even now appear devoted to one day reclaiming the state they themselves sundered.

As with the other Successor States, the formation of the League began with the slow demise of the Terran Alliance. As more and more colony worlds declared their independence, the power of the Alliance deteriorated further, eventually leading to its inward turn, which all but cut off the young colonies from any support. In the chaos that followed, poorer worlds became victims of piracy and raids that sapped away their strength and destabilized their fledgling governments. To survive, alliances formed, like the Alliance of Galedon that would one day culminate in the creation of the Draconis Combine, or the economic powers of the Federation of Skye, the Tamar Pact, and the Protectorate of Donegal, which formed the Lyran Commonwealth. But before these alliances came those that led to the formation of the Free Worlds League—the Marik Commonwealth, the Principality of Regulus, and the Federation of Oriente.

The Marik Commonwealth, centered on the rich mining world of Marik, began as a single world, ruled by the family of the same name. Charles Marik, its ruler and a man who hailed from a long line of affluent leaders, declared his world's independence from the Terran Alliance in 2238. Under his rule, the rechristened Republic of Marik united under a strong central government, bolstered by its formidable industrial capacity. Marik also raised an army from his Republic, an army that was eventually used in conjunction with his diplomatic acumen to help bring more worlds under his banner. By 2271, the Marik Commonwealth—the Republic's name after it expanded beyond a single world—ruled a total of twenty worlds, sixty light-years from the edge of Terran Alliance space.

At almost the same time, the Principality of Regulus began to form as a consolidation of trading contracts between several rimward Terran colonies. Dominated by the wealthy Selaj family, whose core power base included five of the most developed worlds of the region, the Principality coalesced into a quasi-corporate political union of seventeen worlds by 2270.

The Federation of Oriente, meanwhile, formed around a core of diplomatic networks among the worlds closest to Oriente, which declared its independence from the Alliance under the rule of Tomàs Allison in 2241. A cosmopolitan mixture of ethnicities—in contrast to the mostly Eastern European Marik Commonwealth or the Indian- and Pakistani-dominated Principality of Regulus—the Federation was dedicated to its own freedom as well as the advancement of science and the arts.

Each of these three confederations grew under its own unique structure of government and culture. The Marik Commonwealth was a military-oriented realm with a powerful central government, if not absolutely so. The Principality was an oligarchy of wealthy families. And the Federation was ruled by a parliamentary democracy. But for all their differences, these three alliances soon saw their own rising prominence, as well as the inevitable decline of the Terran Alliance, as potential threats to their own stability. Allison, with a flash of insight, became the first to offer the option of alliance, together with his special envoy, Sir George Humphreys of New Delos.

*Given the vast differences in the colonies established during the height of the Terran Alliance, it is rather amazing that more of the Great States did not encounter the problems the Regulans, Orientes, and Mariks did when attempting to forge their Free Worlds League. Language, a core element in any culture, became a focal point for the Treaty of Marik. Mindful of their recently won independence, and of the varied populations they ruled over, the leaders of the Commonwealth, Principality, and Federation argued over language and terminology as much as about the actual substance of their work. Eventually they settled on English, the only language spoken by all three leaders, though the majority of their populations did not normally speak this tongue.*

—Shaunna Verizi, *Fractured States: Politics and the (Former) Free Worlds League*, Republic Press, 3099

After years of debate over everything from their new state's official language to the modes of government, the Treaty of Marik was finally—some might say, miraculously—signed in 2271, creating the first of what scholars today call the Successor States, the Free Worlds League. Its guiding principles: the mutual benefit of the Marik Commonwealth's strong military with the economic power of the Selajes' Principality of Regulus and the diplomatic skills of the Federation of Oriente's diverse and independent-minded leadership. The Treaty of Marik granted all three realms internal autonomy, with their leaders established prominently in the parliamentary government. The post of Captain-General was created as an emergency title only, bestowing upon an elected military leader all authority over the League's military during times of crisis. Built into this government was a further incentive to seek economic prosperity as well: the influence of delegations in Parliament was proportionate to the

economic might of a world's tax contributions to the state, rather than its planetary population, a fact which assured—for a time—the dominance of the Marik, Oriente, and Regulan states. True power rested with the Ministers of Parliament (MPs), rather than a central leader, but the voice of power blocs such as these resulted in a fairly cohesive government, most of the time.

Though fractious, and often slow to respond to change, the Free Worlds League did indeed prosper and grow after its formation. Several neighboring worlds and small federations eventually joined with the League for mutual protection, while others were annexed. One such conquest, the Stewart Commonality, a six-world military dictatorship that the Marik Commonwealth regarded as a sufficient threat to win a Parliamentary declaration of war upon, was assaulted in 2293. The crisis was sufficient to elect the League's first Captain-General, Juliano Marik, setting the stage for a fundamental change in the League's destiny that would take centuries to run its course.

*That a Marik was chosen to be the League's first Captain-General came naturally from the fact that the Marik family had forged the League's most militarily experienced member realm, but the sweeping powers of the post, I think, delivered the most unexpected and far-reaching results. In its first implementation, for sure, the League swiftly absorbed the Stewart Commonality, a process that took only weeks to accomplish. Just twenty years later, however, the Captain-General would be called upon again, with Juliano Marik once more coming to the League's rescue as the Terran Hegemony emerged on the scene. Rather than fight an unwinnable battle (with the armed forces of the Terran Alliance behind it, reorganized by the militarily astute Admiral James McKenna, the forces of the Hegemony outclassed those of the League), Marik instead used his broad authority as Captain-General to open a dialogue with the Hegemony, paving the way for trading relations that would lead the League to another economic boom. The League PMs did not object to this solution at all, even though it represented a heretofore unheard of combination of military command and state policy. For all intents and purposes, a Captain-General could assume complete authority over the guidance of the state during times of emergency.*

*Naturally, this very early example paved the way for Resolution 288, and the longest running virtual suspension of the powers of the Free Worlds Parliament. . . .*

—Kevin Duelli, *A Cynic's Guide to Politics, 3rd Edition*, Dark Skye Press, 3090

In the next installment of our special six-part look at the Free Worlds League, we'll examine the latter years of the League, with a glimpse of the events that led to its final downfall. Join us as our tour of the stars continues! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXXIV: The Eagle's Flight—Rise and Fall of House Marik

---

12/24/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

In 2398, the world of Andurien was assaulted by forces from the neighboring Capellan Confederation, marking the beginnings of the Age of War. From that time forward, the League—and the rest of the Inner Sphere—would find their borders under almost constant assault, at least until the formation of the Star League. It also marked the end of the Free Worlds League's good years, as the coffers began to run dry from the expense of ongoing fighting. But more than that, it also initiated the longest single term of the Captain-Generalcy to date, and led to a political struggle between the Marik family and the League's Parliament.

Peter Marik, appointed in 2396 to handle the Andurien crisis, not only managed to reclaim the worlds assaulted by House Liao, but also turned the League's formidable strength against the Lyran Commonwealth, riding high on a wave of popularity as a hero to the Free Worlds' peoples. When Parliament, in an effort to rein in their Captain-General, ordered Marik to call an armistice with the Lyrans, he defied them and continued a campaign of conquest, claiming several Commonwealth worlds before ending his campaign in 2418. Parliament struck back with the War Powers Act, establishing government oversight of the Captain-General and vastly limiting his authority, only to find Marik unwilling to return to the post just two years later when war against the Lyrans resumed.

Joseph Stewart, of the Stewart Commonality, became the League's next war leader then, but demonstrated lackluster performance in dealing with the Lyran front, losing five worlds to Steiner advances in the 2420s. Considering Stewart a disastrous failure (the League had grown accustomed to martial success under the Mariks), the Parliament begged Peter Marik's son, Terrence, to assume the Captain-Generalcy, only to find him unwilling to accept as long as the War Powers Act remained in place. The political standoff ended in compliance to Terrence's demands, releasing the new Captain-General from the chains of Parliamentary control.

And so did the Marik family all but cement its dominance over the League's military and politics, a dominance that held with minimal challenges into the Star League era, when the post became the recognized head of the Free Worlds state in the Star League Council.

*The deal to enter the Star League was probably one of the Marik clan's biggest coups to date. Not only did they receive the support of the Terran Hegemony in ending the longstanding conflict over the Andurien region—Liao was on its third campaign to seize control over the territory—but they also assured that the post of Captain-General would remain active even when a lack of wars should necessitate that the post be vacated. Of course, while technically it never guaranteed House Marik would always hold the post, the fact that Mariks have always been the best military strategists and leaders in the Free Worlds' history all but assured that Mariks would sit on the military throne of the Free Worlds League as a member of the greater Star League.*

—Kevin Duelli, *A Cynic's Guide to Politics, 3rd Edition*, Dark Skye Press, 3090

After the Star League's fall, of course, came the Succession Wars. No longer protected by the recognition of the League's central government, House Marik might have faced the end of its virtual reign over the Free Worlds, had the universe not suddenly erupted in warfare. With the departure of Kerensky's troops into the unknown, Kenyon Marik, the standing Captain-General, persuaded a panicked Parliament to pass the famous—some might say, infamous—Resolution 288, granting the Captain-Generalcy sweeping discretionary powers “for the duration of the crisis.” Curiously enough, few Parliamentarians thought to question the definition of “the crisis,” and conditioned by centuries of Captain-Generals dictating state policy, the resolution passed, legally granting open-ended control of the Free Worlds League to the office of the Captain-General. It was thus that the Marik clan assured its control, as successive Mariks—chosen by their outgoing forebears and friends of the family—each assumed command from their predecessors, invoking Resolution 288 without fail.

Through the centuries of the Succession Wars, though challenges to the Captain-General rose time and again, the Marik family maintained its grip on the helm of the Free Worlds League. Yet this grip was tenuous at best. By the mid-twenty-ninth and early thirtieth centuries the various minor states of the League—such as the Duchy of Andurien, the Duchy of Orloff, and the Border Protectorate—had managed to pass the Home Defense Act, allowing them to retain up to three-fourths of the troops raised in their provinces regardless of the Captain-General's desires.

This balkanization would eventually lead to the Marik Civil War in 3014. Led by Anton Marik, brother of the sitting Captain-General, Janos, the rebels found support among more than a few regional dukes. While some larger provinces, like Andurien and Regulus, declared their neutrality, the Marik brothers waged a bloody war across the realm that ended almost as quickly as it had begun, but left behind lingering divisions among the League's member states.

*Imagine having a bunch of close friends together in one room, when one of the more popular suddenly accuses another of something horrible, something like, say, theft, or rape, or murder. Now, imagine the others taking sides, hurling insults, trading blows, drawing blood. Now imagine that some outsider comes along and shoots the accuser, leaving the others alone to contemplate the shock. The accusation dies with the man, perhaps, but all the bad blood that these friends could*

*only suspect was there all along—all the secret jealousies and resentments toward their most popular friend—have now had their voice. Now, all the “I’m sorry”s and “Please forgive me”s in the world can’t fix it; those friendships won’t ever be the same again.*

*As high schoolish as it sounds, such was the state of the Free Worlds League after the Wolf’s Dragoons killed Anton Marik and effectively ended the Civil War. Suddenly, House Marik saw who its real friends and enemies were, and there were damned few of the former and too many of the latter. In fact, were it not for the threat of the united Lyrans Commonwealth and Federated Suns, it is quite likely that the League would have gone through another civil war, one much more final than Anton’s revolt.*

—Shaunna Verizi, *Fractured States: Politics and the (Former) Free Worlds League*, Republic Press, 3099

Indeed, the League’s fragmentation did begin soon after the Fourth Succession War, when the Duchy of Andurien announced its secession and launched a campaign against the Capellan Confederation with its allies in the Magistracy of Canopus, a nearby Periphery realm. Janos Marik, the aging leader of the League, reacted by moving for the passage of his Emergency Act of 3030, formally curtailing the powers of the League’s provinces “for the duration of the emergency.” An echo of Resolution 288, this law allowed the Captain-General to consolidate his power further to handle the Andurien crisis, but also angered the smaller provinces that were its target. This crisis would culminate in the assassination of Janos during a strategy meeting, and the eventual—apparent—return of his son, Thomas, some months later.

History, of course, knows that the Thomas Marik who claimed the throne was an impostor placed there by ComStar in its darker days, but that impostor proved to be perhaps the most gifted leader in the history of the League. Repealing the Emergency Act in favor of his Addendum to Incorporation, a law that allowed the provinces their autonomy and strength in exchange for the Captain-General’s veto power, he won over those provinces tired of being “Marik doormats.” With near absolute political and military authority, Thomas went on to win the Andurien War, reclaiming the renegade province under a newer, stronger central authority.

In the years that followed, this false Thomas Marik would work not only toward strengthening the central government, but for rebuilding the League’s military and industrial base. Yet it was not until the Clan Invasion in 3048 that the League’s greatest opportunity to seize its destiny would arrive. In a power deal with the other Successor Lords, Thomas Marik made the League the premiere military manufacturer and supplier for the embattled Inner Sphere, and forged a close alliance with the Capellan Confederation to assure its security against the Steiner-Davion alliance. At almost the same time, however, he also played host to the Word of Blake, the breakaway faction of ComStar that would one day consume his realm in fire.

Thus did the Free Worlds League assure its place as one of the Inner Sphere’s most potent and respected powers, while simultaneously sowing the seeds of its own horrific demise.

In part three of this special series on the Free Worlds League, we’ll take a closer look at the alliances that made up the League and how they stand today. Our tour of the stars continues. I’m Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXXV: Epitaph for a Realm

---

12/31/33

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

By the mid 3060s, the Free Worlds League's troubles seemed all but lost to the haze of history. The Marik Civil War was but a memory. Thomas Marik, rightful heir to the realm (or so everyone thought) sat upon his throne on Atreus, secure in the rejuvenated power of the Captain-Generalcy, while a growing splinter faction of ComStar, the Word of Blake, lobbied to make him their Primus in Exile. The alliance with Sun-Tzu Liao, once a crutch to ward off FedCom ambitions, no longer seemed important as the mighty Steiner-Davion alliance had collapsed, and the ever-present threat of the Clans, even with the end of the Invasion, had kept the realms of the Inner Sphere dependent on the League's arms trade. Even the chronic threat of internal strife had become a waning memory, at least on the surface, as all lauded the Captain-General, who—with his vaunted Knights of the Inner Sphere—seemed wholly devoted to the causes of peace across the Inner Sphere and honor when battle was joined.

The casual outside observer even had to envy the League for its remarkable stability in the turbulence of the 3060s. As these years saw the closing shots of the Clan wars, the First Dominion/Combine War, the St. Ives/Capellan conflict, the FedCom Civil War, and all its attendant side-wars, the League saw no major political or military threats in this time. Yet within the very heart of this realm, a time bomb of politics, fanaticism, hatred, and desperation was ticking. Even though some evidence remains today that the Blakists probably did not plan the start of the Jihad as such, they continued to maneuver in secret even among themselves, dark and sinister elements aligning for a moment that should have brought untold glory under the new Star League.

Unfortunately for the Word, their prophesied ascent ended abruptly when the assembled leaders of the Inner Sphere—minus Sun-Tzu Liao, the Capellan Chancellor who'd already declared his intent to withdraw—admitted the new Star League was a sham. Rather than prevent wars, their alliance had actually facilitated some, and with many member realms too battered by waves of recent fighting to fulfill their obligations to the new SLDF, the organization simply served no more useful purpose. Thus did the leaders abandon their attempted revival of the vaunted Star League.

Every Inner Sphere schoolchild knows the rest, of course. . . .

*The first strike, they say, was Outreach, but only by a few hours, and then only because the Word truly believed the [Wolf's] Dragoons to be a threat after years of fighting in the [Chaos] March. Before 28 November was out, however, the skies over New Avalon, Tharkad, and Luthien were ablaze with the heat plumes of inbound DropShips covered by a torrent of orbit-to-surface fire from WarShips, which materialized as if from nowhere.*

*Lots of people liken the Jihad to the Amaris Crisis or the First Succession War, because the Blakists showed no hesitation in using nuclear weapons, biochemical agents, or even compromising vital life-support systems on marginal worlds. However, there is one fundamental difference of note: Unlike the Usurper's troops or the armies of the Great Houses, the goal of the Word was never conquest, but terror and destruction. Outreach was sterilized, not held. Avalon City was pummeled to the point where it simply became a ghost town battlefield. Tharkad was poisoned by a cloud of radiation from its failed reactor. The Word's troops lingered in few of these areas, and then only to tie up forces and sow more chaos.*

*Atreus may have taken it worse, though, for those who dealt out their destruction were the very troops once regarded as the cream of the Free Worlds League military. Coupled with the Blakist agents who bombed Parliament and the Captain-General's command center—killing most of the Knights of the Inner Sphere—with a lethal nerve agent, over half of the League's navy was on hand to bombard their own capital into dust. The assault came fresh on the heels of the public revelation that "Thomas Marik" was an impostor, placed on the throne by ComStar during the troubled times of the Andurien crisis. Ironically, the attackers' most important target, the false Thomas Marik himself, was spared from the assault, having taken shelter even as the Parliament Ministers continued to debate (among other things) the repeal of Resolution 288.*

*The sacking of Atreus was only the beginning. . . .*

—Shaunna Verizi, *Fractured States: Politics and the (Former) Free Worlds League*, Republic Press, 3099

Word of Blake agents infiltrated all levels of the Free Worlds League, having been permitted to do so by a decade and a half of misplaced trust. They subverted countless League military units and WarShips, adding them to the Blakists' impressive arsenal. Thomas Marik—or rather, the man who all believed to be Thomas Marik—was so appalled by these actions that he attempted to turn on the Blakists, only to bring the wrath of the Jihad upon his own realm. When the zealots and their allies assaulted Atreus in 3068, the attack was their most decisive yet, for it did more than wipe out the governmental heart of the League, along with its most sterling example of a noble military (in the form of the First Knights of the Inner Sphere). It also immediately shattered all faith in House Marik.

What followed next was, to many minds, inevitable. Bereft of solid leadership and disillusioned by the treachery in their own midst, the various substates of the League turned inward, each frantically seeking its own security against the Jihad. The six largest of these centered on the worlds of Regulus, Marik, Oriente, Andurien, Tamarind, and Lesnovo, and while most would

eventually proclaim their rebirth as independent states under historic boundaries, they would all eventually grow to encompass smaller worlds and alliances, creating the six nations still present today. Against the Word, they stood together, but no longer as well unified as before. Indeed, Thomas Marik (Thomas Halas, after 3080) would be forced into a kind of self-imposed exile on Oriente after the war's end, where he would remain under the care of his wife, Sherryl Halas. Through the remainder of the Jihad, his actions would be limited to intelligence support for the splintering League and for Devlin Stone's coalition against the Word, all his political clout and accomplishments as a false Captain-General lost.

Meanwhile, the Word of Blake's predations assured that these separate provinces had more to worry about than coordinating against the Blakist threat. Blakist troops, disguised as Marik forces, assaulted the Lyran Alliance's Skye region, prompting a reprisal that kept the Stewart Commonwealth and Duchy of Tamarind occupied. At the same time, every effort was made to replicate the effect for Oriente and Andurien on the Capellan border. The communications grid—seriously disabled across the shattered League—left most of the fractured leadership completely in the dark. Though the remaining loyal forces, including the Second Knights (whose last stand during the doomed first counterassault on Atreus is legendary), fought valiantly on every front, the Blakists simply had every advantage in the war.

Victory would finally be purchased for most of the League by warriors of Stone's coalition and their own people's willingness to resort to the same level of barbarity as their attackers. Gibson, for instance, once the heart of the Word, was "sanitized" as a world in 3078 by a massed nuclear bombardment launched by free Regular forces. This action, one of the most brutal of the war, effectively shattered the Word in the Free Worlds League, but also hammered the last nail in the nation's coffin. With the immediate crisis past, Parliament destroyed, and all faith in the imposter lost, the League's provinces went their separate ways. Though they would retain some diplomatic ties, mostly to coordinate mutual defense against their less fractured neighbors, they would also compete for the unclaimed worlds and smaller alliances scattered throughout the former League territories.

And so fell the solidarity of House Marik and the unity it once brought to the Free Worlds League. Over the years that followed, miniature wars, against each other and their neighbors—Lyran, Capellan, Periphery, and Republic—would characterize this turbulent region of space where once a mighty economic and political power had stood. Six large powers and around four-score unclaimed worlds now are all that remain, each eking out its own existence day to day.

And yet, within these lost people there is still hope, for not all believe that the Free Worlds League will remain dead. To some, it is only a matter of time before the eagle becomes the phoenix, rising again from its own ashes.

Up next, follow me as we tour the Marik-Stewart Commonwealth and the Regular Fiefs, two successors of the once-great Free Worlds League. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXXVI: Legacies of the League—Marik-Stewart and Regulus

---

01/07/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** The Marik-Stewart Commonwealth

**Founding Year:** 3082 (2238 as Republic of Marik)

**Capital (City, World):** Dormuth, Marik

**National Symbol:** a black eagle and banner before a golden disc and purple rectangle

**Location (Terra relative):** Rimward-antispinward of Terra, interior

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 31

**Estimated Population (3130):** 91,200,000,000

**Government:** Parliamentary Democracy (currently operating under military rule)

**Ruler:** Captain-General Anson Marik

**Dominant Language(s):** English (official), Slovak, Czech, Romanian

**Dominant Religion(s):** Judaism, Islam, Christianity (Orthodox)

**Unit of Currency:** Eagle (1 eagle = 0.52 C-Bills)

Dormuth, capital of Marik and of the Marik-Stewart Commonwealth, is a remarkable urban sprawl with a skyline of exotically angled towers, domes, and spires that gleam in the orange light of the noontime sun. Orbiting close to that star, Marik is a hot, dry world, but one rich in metals and active in manufacturing. Much of the world has been rebuilt in the decades after the formation of The Republic. Thus, much of what the casual observer sees in the sprawling metropolises astounds those historically astute, who expect a trip back in time on this birth world of the Free Worlds League. And yet, for all the changes, there is much that remains the same here on Marik. The government and military command buildings in Dormuth and Malkent are Spartan in nature, nothing like the grand palaces of other realms. And the biggest tourist draw is the annual races out of the Burlingrad Hoverdrome, which locals proudly say inspired the hover-derby races on Solaris VII.

The largest of the former Free Worlds League member-states, and including the former capital of Atreus, the Marik-Stewart Commonwealth is actually the fusion of the original Marik Commonwealth and the Stewart Commonality, plus several neighboring systems and minor alliances either annexed or brought into the alliance in the years following the Word of Blake Jihad. Once the power base of the Marik family's dominance over Free Worlds politics and the core of the Captain-General's power, today it is one of the most fractious of the former League states, an echo of the fallen League itself, if you will.

Duchess Alys Rousset-Marik of Augustine, who actually called for the repeal of Resolution 288 (and with it, the title of Captain-General), in 3067, ironically was in the running to be this realm's first Captain-General after the League's final collapse in 3078. But when even this state began to erupt in internal conflicts, she instead ceded her world and several others to the nascent Republic of the Sphere. Corrine Marik instead would claim the Captain-Generalcy over the Marik Commonwealth in 3082, and lead the battered nation in a military effort to secure its sovereignty against The Republic, the Capellans, the Lyrans, and even its former fellow League members, such as Oriente and Regulus.

Nominally, the Marik-Stewart Commonwealth claims to be a parliamentary-style democracy, but a Captain-General has sat upon the throne since the state went independent in 3082, citing a state of emergency in an eerie reminder of the old House Marik tradition. This democratic basis has given voice to many of the Commonwealth's subject worlds, many of which chafe under Marik leadership not because it is heavy-handed so much as because it has made minimal effort to reclaim lost ancestral worlds today claimed by House Steiner and The Republic of the Sphere. Other political factions within the Commonwealth also call for military action against Regulus and Oriente, many with an eye toward rebuilding the Free Worlds League as a stronger, more unified realm than ever before. Understandably, these vocal political factions and the ongoing rule by a military hierarchy "for the duration of the crisis" have led to many confrontations and frosty foreign relations, but have also contributed to the strength of the central government and the military that protects it.

The people of the Marik-Stewart Commonwealth, however, are a more cosmopolitan society. Claiming many of the former League's most industrialized worlds and thriving with trade—even to hostile neighbors—the Commonwealth is the wealthiest as well as the largest of the former League states. Having been an interior realm for much of the reign of the Free Worlds League, the Commonwealth suffered little damage during the Succession Wars, allowing it to flourish as an industrial and cultural power. Many of those hailing from the original Marik Commonwealth are among the former League's greatest patrons of the arts, literature, and entertainment. And despite their realm's current political strife, many of the people here are remarkably friendly and trusting, hardly a picture of the warlike state many of their neighbors paint in the mass media.

**Fact Sheet:** The Regularan Fiefs**Founding Year:** 3086 (2243 as Principality of Regulus)**Capital (City, World):** Tunis, Regulus**National Symbol:** a blue eagle rising behind the world of Regulus**Location (Terra relative):** Rimward-antispinward of Terra, central.**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 27**Estimated Population (3130):** 18,000,000,000**Government:** Constitutional Monarchy (currently operating under martial law)**Ruler:** Captain-General Lester Cameron-Jones**Dominant Language(s):** English (official), Hindi, Urdu, Mongolian**Dominant Religion(s):** Hindu, Islam, Christianity (Orthodox)**Unit of Currency:** Rupee (1 rupee = 0.58 C-Bills)

Regulus, capital of the Regularan Fiefs, is a warm world, orbiting a hot yellow-white giant. Made wealthy by centuries as a hub of commerce throughout the Free Worlds League territories, this world, like Marik, is also well developed. Huge agro-complexes and massive cities dot the striking landscapes of the temperate and tropical zones, with the largest by far being the capital and port city of Tunis. Home to over five million Regularans, Tunis is as much a work of art as it is a center for trade and government, and the architecture here is a magnificent blend of classic Eastern Indian, Middle Eastern, and even Asian styles, still reflecting the cultural influences of the planet's founding Selaj dynasty centuries after their departure.

Once the second most powerful of the Free Worlds League's three founding nations, the Principality of Regulus experienced a waning of political strength after the rise of the Marik family. This waning only increased with the disgrace of the founding Selaj family, which fled the League in the 2550s, after several efforts to depose the Captain-General. Though rarely overtly disloyal—even refusing to ally with the Anduriens during their brief bid for independence in the 3030s—the Regularan leadership has ever opposed the increasingly centralized rule of the Captain-Generals. Indeed, after Andurien, many historians have tended to regard Regulus as one of the most secessionist of the League's member-states, despite the relative absence of violence.

And yet, ironically enough, for all their centuries'-long political struggle for independence under the League, the Regularans have embraced a monarchic style of government. (Regulus itself is a reformed dictatorship, presently ruled by the Cameron-Jones clan.) Their leader has even gone so far as to assume the title of Captain-General for himself. What does this say about the ambitions of Regulus? Well, like their counterparts in the Oriente Protectorate and Marik-Stewart Commonwealth, the Regularans, too, perhaps dream of one day restoring the fallen League and ushering in the prosperity lost in the fires of the Jihad.

An interior realm, spared much of the fighting throughout the Succession Wars, the Principality of Regulus enjoyed the fruits of its own economic stability for centuries before the Jihad, despite its loss of political clout. The Regularan people's hard-working nature, a relentless drive to succeed in all affairs, particularly in business and politics, has created a nation that now bears few scars even from that war, while at the same time raising a powerful enough armed force to challenge its neighbors.

And challenge is certainly a Regularan specialty. Soon after the fall of the League, Regulus moved to secure its neighboring provinces, the Regularan Free States and the Principality of Gibson, before any of their neighbors. Redecaring themselves the Regularan Fiefs in 3086, the realm is now wedged between the Marik-Stewart Commonwealth and the Oriente Protectorate, while virtually covering the entire rimward-antispinward border of the Commonwealth. Their military has clashed with those of Marik-Stewart, Oriente, Andurien, and even the Rim Commonality. Twice since securing these neighboring worlds, the Regularans have even assaulted Atrous, former seat of the League government.

Yet the people of Regulus do not see their nation as warlike, but merely a survivor of the League's legacy, and perhaps even the vessel for its eventual salvation. There is a pride here, a pride that has grown ever since Regularan forces obliterated the surface of Gibson and, with it, the stain of the Word of Blake's deadly reign of terror in the League. It's this pride that tells these people that someday, perhaps very soon, they will bring their neighbors back down the path of enlightenment, and rebuild the fallen Free Worlds, stronger and better than ever before.

In our fifth segment on the former Free Worlds League, the legacy of the League brings us to the territories on the Capellan border! Join us, for a look at the Oriente Protectorate and the Duchy of Andurien. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXXVII: Legacies of the League II—Oriente and Andurien

---

01/14/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** Oriente Protectorate

**Founding Year:** 3086 (2241 as Federation of Oriente)

**Capital (City, World):** Amur, Oriente

**National Symbol:** a silver eagle before a purple-and-black disc

**Location (Terra relative):** Rimward of Terra, antispinward of Capellan Confederation, central

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 29

**Estimated Population (3130):** 85,500,000,000

**Government:** Representative Commonality (currently operating under military rule)

**Ruler:** Captain-General Jessica Marik

**Dominant Language(s):** English and Greek (both official), Chinese

**Dominant Religion(s):** Christianity (Orthodox), Islam

**Unit of Currency:** Drachma (1 drachma = 0.31 C-Bills)

Amur, capital city of Oriente and the Oriente Protectorate, is a city of remarkable beauty that seems to transcend time itself. Virtually carved out of the woods surrounding the base of the Amuraelius mountain chain—and, in some cases, actually crawling up the side of the snow-capped range—the city features some striking examples of modern neo-Classical architecture, styled along the lines of Terra's ancient Greece. Even the city's skyscrapers, whose upper floors reflect and scatter the rays of the planet's giant yellow-white sun, feature majestic columns and other pseudo-Grecian design features closer to street level. Amur is a commercial megalopolis, its population of five million gathered almost exclusively for the business of trade. Traffic rarely slows down on the streets here, with businessmen, tourists, off-world traders, and government leaders alike constantly on the move to their next appointments.

The Oriente Protectorate, initially founded in 2241 as the Federation of Oriente (later known as the Duchy of Oriente for much of its history), is the third of the founding member-states of the Free Worlds League, and the second largest today. Like its fellow founding states, Oriente was a populous and prosperous realm, its founders blessed with a flair for politics and diplomacy. This diplomacy, however, did not often protect them from raiders and invaders from the neighboring Capellan territories. It was an Orientian who first proposed the formation of the Free Worlds League, in fact, seeking a stronger alliance as a check against the resurgence of Terra and the ongoing hostilities on the Capellan front.

With the ascent of House Marik, Oriente became known as the "loyal opposition." Their ever-pragmatic leadership has broadly supported the office of the Captain-General throughout the years, but has also often provided the tempering voice in Parliament, a check against Marik excesses. At the same time, Oriente has been a focal point for commerce and technology. During the relative peace on the Capellan front that followed the formation of the Federated Commonwealth, the people of Oriente knew an age of economic and industrial prosperity, while Oriente merchants exported their products and technical expertise throughout the Inner Sphere.

In the chaos following the League's collapse, the forces of Regulus moved against many of that nation's neighbors, including Oriente, primarily because the Halas family gave refuge to the false Thomas Marik. Forced to fight a defensive war against suddenly hostile neighbors, the Duchy of Oriente united under the joint rule of Thomas Marik's impostor and his wife, Sherryl Halas, after the death of Duke Christopher Halas in 3080. To signify his willingness to surrender a claim to the Free Worlds' throne, the false Thomas dropped his assumed name in favor of his wife's, but the change did not appease the Regulans, who felt the impostor and his host realm deserved severe punishment for decades of deception.

For a time, the Regulans were beaten back, but in 3084 they returned their attention to Oriente when they were unable to overcome the forces of the Marik-Stewart Commonwealth. Fighting like this continued throughout the remainder of the century, and raged until as recently as the 3120s, with all three former League founders vying for dominance and the right to reestablish their fractured realm. During that time, Oriente was forced to annex the Protectorate and unite with the Duchy of Orloff, absorbing the two smaller League republics in an effort to check Regular ambitions and better defend against Capellan aggression.

Politically, Oriente's position remains precarious even today. Jessica Marik, daughter of the false Thomas Marik (Halas), has herself been at the heart of the latest conflicts since assuming the Marik name that most consider to be ill-gotten. Her argument in claiming the name was that she did so to honor the man she claims should have been the true Captain-General of the League, citing that the real Thomas Marik was a madman who deserves no honor under a new League. Yet most see such maneuvering as naked ambition to reestablish a Marik dynasty over all of the fractured League states.

**Fact Sheet:** The Duchy of Andurien**Founding Year:** 2791**Capital (City, World):** Jojoken, Andurien**National Symbol:** a silver eagle, perched atop a purple castle, set against a black field**Location (Terra relative):** Rimward of Terra, antispinward of Capellan Confederation, exterior**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 25**Estimated Population (3130):** 71,200,000,000**Government:** Hereditary Oligarchy**Ruler:** Duke Ari Humphreys**Dominant Language(s):** English (official), Italian, Mandarin**Dominant Religion(s):** Catholicism, Confucianism, Agnostic**Unit of Currency:** Andurien dollar (1 dollar = 0.47 C-Bills)

Breathtaking with the striking colors of over a thousand exotic species of flora, the botanical gardens of Jojoken are the pride of this capital city, not only of the terrestrial planet of Andurien, but of the entire Duchy of Andurien. The gardens of Jojoken offer visitors a glimpse of beauty and serenity not easily found on the streets of the city itself, which are crowded by monolithic buildings and chronically choked with heavy traffic. Like its counterparts on the former League's founding worlds, the capital of Andurien is a busy metropolis, home to some six million people, who make their home a hub for trade and government. Yet, in stark contrast to the hustle and bustle of the crowded city, on the far side of the gardens rises the palace of the Humphreys, hereditary rulers of Andurien—and, by extension, all of their Duchy.

Andurien has long been a battleground, frequently fought over by the armies of the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation, even before the Duchy was first founded in 2791. For that reason, many Anduriens are understandably wary of foreigners, and are especially contemptuous of those who would seek to dominate them. Throughout their time as members of the League, the people of Andurien chafed under what they considered to be nothing less than an occupation. Their leaders became known as easily the most vocal opponents of the Captains-General outside of the founding nations, and secessionist sentiments always ran deep.

In the 3030s, Dame Catherine Humphreys finally acted on this trend by announcing the secession of the Duchy and allied her realm with the Magistracy of Canopus in a war against House Liao's Capellan Confederation. The Andurien Crisis created the greatest challenge for the Free Worlds League in the thirty-first century after the Marik Civil War, forcing the League to send in troops to reclaim the renegade province. A terrorist's bomb placed in a Marik family planning session, however, opened the door for a sinister plan by the old ComStar regime to replace Thomas Marik, heir to the Captain-Generalcy, with a double. The false Thomas Marik led a successful campaign to reintegrate Andurien after its doomed invasion of the Confederation ended.

Yet, even in defeat, with their military stripped away, the Anduriens never surrendered their desire for independence, and seized upon the opportunity when it came about in the closing years of the Jihad. Unlike many of its fellow League provinces, the Anduriens never sought to reclaim the League; instead striking out on their own, absorbing many neighboring worlds, including the Mosiro Archipelago, one of the League's smaller provinces, in order to secure a buffer against the Capellans and the Oriente Protectorate.

The typical Andurien retains this fiercely independent will to the present day, and most believe that the trinity of the Marik-Stewart Commonwealth, Regular Fiefs, and Oriente Protectorate, must be prevented from ever reforming the Free Worlds League, much as the Capellans and Canopians must ever be opposed. Nothing is to come between these people and their freedom, and from the Duke himself to the lowliest factory worker, all are willing to resort to any means to retain their hard-won independence.

In our final segment, the legacy of the League extends outward from Terra with the Duchy of Tamarind-Abbey and the Rim Collection! Won't you join us as we examine these nations more closely? I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXXVIII: Legacies of the League III—Tamarind-Abbey and Rim

---

*Touring the Stars with Bertram Habeas* We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!

**Fact Sheet:** Duchy of Tamarind-Abbey

**Founding Year:** 3078

**Capital (City, World):** Zanzibar, Tamarind

**National Symbol:** An abstract purple eagle, with five-pointed stars in each wing, being clutched at the tail by a human hand, set against a green field. The eagle's claws are each holding cornstalks.

**Location (Terra relative):** Antispinward of Terra, exterior

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 26

**Estimated Population (3130):** 75,000,000,000

**Government:** Military Governorship

**Ruler:** Duke Fontaine Marik

**Dominant Language(s):** English (official), Spanish

**Dominant Religion(s):** Christianity (Catholicism), Judaism

**Unit of Currency:** Peso (1 peso = 0.48 C-Bills)

Zanzibar is an oasis of civilization that seems to rise abruptly out of a stretch of badlands that historical records once claim was a lush green forest. Straddling the Zanzibe River, the city looks from a distance almost like an inverted cyclone, with increasingly taller buildings rising the closer one gets to its center. The tallest of these structures, however, is actually a mere antenna, part of the central planetary communications hub, though it is as much a work of sculpture as it is a practical construct. On the streets below, traffic is modest, and the largest gatherings are often found in the open markets scattered throughout. At each marketplace, however, one can be sure to catch a glimpse of Tamarind's militiamen, whose duties include policing this metropolis. Most residents don't pay these men and women another thought, but visitors are often struck by such obvious signs of martial rule on Lesnovo.

The Duchy of Tamarind-Abbey is actually the fusion of the Duchy of Tamarind and the Abbey District, as well as several of the independent worlds that were scattered between them. Though many of its dominant members—including Tamarind itself—are representative democracies, the nation as a whole is a military alliance, rather than a political one, and is currently operating under martial law. This mix of politically free worlds under a military dictatorship has effectively remolded the Duchy into a miniature version of the Free Worlds League itself.

The goals of the Tamarind-Abbey alliance are nothing short of maintaining its own existence in the face of Periphery and, most especially, Lyran threats. In the wake of the League's collapse, Lyran forces surged across the border to "stabilize" a host of former League planets, many of which once flew the Steiner banner, centuries ago. The alliance between Tamarind and Abbey became clearly necessary in response to this threat, lest these once-loyal members of the League be swallowed by the Lyran Commonwealth as well.

Ironically, the military leader of Tamarind-Abbey, Duke Fontaine Marik, may hold one of the strongest claims to the legacy of the Marik family. As a direct descendant of Therese Brett-Marik, second-oldest child of Janos (the oldest was the real Thomas Marik), Duke Fontaine has followed in the tradition of his predecessor, Proton Brett-Marik, in dropping the Brett surname in favor of Marik. The Duke has also repeated his father's claim to the Captain-Generalcy for himself, though few outside this realm—especially those of House Marik—are willing to recognize it; Therese Brett-Marik had been disowned since before Janos Marik's death.

Today, despite the aspirations of its leaders, the Duchy of Tamarind-Abbey remains aloof from the fighting between Regulus, Marik-Stewart, and Oriente. However, this realm has been known to form temporary defensive pacts with Marik-Stewart in an effort to counter Lyran aggressions. Along the Periphery front, the Duchy has also been actively expanding, hoping to counter a threat from the Marian Hegemony, the imperialist Periphery realm that seized three former League worlds in 3092.

The people of the Duchy are a hard-working and productive bunch, most eager to do their share in securing their freedom from invaders. However, a good many also pine for the days of the Free Worlds league as well, and political rallies in favor of the current Duke's claim to restore order among the former League realms have gone from just the few random gatherings of a few years ago, to a full-scale political movement in the Duchy's civilian democracy.

**Fact Sheet:** The Rim Commonality**Founding Year:** 2681**Capital (City, World):** Zletovo, Lesnovo**National Symbol:** a yellow sunburst on a red field, at the heart of which is a silhouette of an eagle**Location (Terra relative):** Rimward-antispinward of Terra, exterior**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 15**Estimated Population (3130):** 39,600,000,000**Government:** Feudal Autocracy (with democratic leanings)**Ruler:** Prime Minister Michael Cendar**Dominant Language(s):** English, Greek, Macedonian, Arabic**Dominant Religion(s):** Christianity (Orthodox), Islam**Unit of Currency:** Dinar (1 dinar = 0.31 C-Bills)

Zletovo, capital city of Lesnovo, seat of the Rim Commonality government, is easily the largest population center on the planet, with over three million residents calling this sprawl of angular, plain-looking buildings and church steeples home. The DropShips at the southeast spaceport, however, are by far the most impressive structures here, towering over the skyline as the last rays of Lesnovo's orange giant sun fade away for the night. Despite the influx of money drawn in by being a hub of local trade, however, much of the city consists of run-down slums, rarely patrolled even by the local police force. The legacy of centuries of economic hardships and constant raids from the periphery, after all, do not vanish overnight.

Long ago, Lesnovo and the rest of the Rim Commonality were part of the Principality of Regulus, until a referendum in 2681, advanced by House Marik, severed it from the League state as part of a political campaign to break down its opposition. Since that time, the Commonality and the Principality have enjoyed a fruitful trading relationship, although ever since its imposed breakaway, its economy has been only a fragile shell of its Regular days.

Yet, despite a shared origin and history of defiance to the rule of the Marik family, the Rim Commonality grew into its own during the latter years of the Free Worlds League and the Jihad that brought it down. Suddenly faced with aggressive neighbors on all sides, the Commonality took a cautious approach to ensure its survival, rather than risk everything to military action. The Periphery world of Astrokaszy, long a haven for pirates, was absorbed by this nation not through force of arms, but by political means, along with a host of other realms threatened by the waves of internal strife that followed the collapse of the League government.

Regulus, meanwhile, lost some of its luster as a friend and ally. Once viewed as a lost parent by the Rim, the Regular leaders' insistence on military action, rather than diplomacy, allowed them to quickly secure the Regular Free States and the former Principality of Gibson. By the time their eyes turned toward the Rim, however, they faced a people who suddenly saw Regulus as anything but a benevolent force.

In constant battles against Regulus, over the independent worlds between them, and defensive actions against Marian and Canopian raiders, the military might of the Rim has proven itself capable of holding its own, at least for the time being. Meanwhile, their policy of peaceful expansion has continued, providing not only an increase in trade and resources, but also demonstrating that might need not always make right.

The mix of cultures among the Free Worlds League's peripheral regions, and the addition of Astrokaszy, have created a curious culture in the Rim Commonality. Most worlds here are democratic or nearly anarchistic, their economies a blend of barter and free enterprise, and so many subcultures flaunt their differences. They are a melting pot of political and social thought, brought together by a mutually accepted need for defense, and ruled by a feudal autocrat who embraces the trappings, if not the mechanisms, of true democracy. Most of the Rim's citizens, however, are proud of their realm for its ability to survive and prosper without too much aid from bigger neighbors, and without the need for violence.

In our next Tour of the Stars, we return to the Dragon's banner for a unique look at the Clan all but lost to the chaos of war and the struggle for survival. Next stop: the worlds of Clan Nova Cat. Won't you come along? I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXXIX: Visions of Honor—Origins of Clan Nova Cat

---

01/28/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

They exist among the population of the Draconis Combine. No nation of their own, yet free to claim self-governance and to practice their beliefs. They are a culture unto themselves, which struggled for centuries against their own kind, only to find salvation in the bosom of the Inner Sphere. But what does the rest of the Inner Sphere really understand about the enigma that is Clan Nova Cat? How did they survive three centuries after Nicholas Kerensky forged his utilitarian Clans, guided by visions and faith more than dreams of martial glory?

The Nova Cats' origin is unique among those of Nicholas Kerensky's Clans, but not solely for their mysticism. Indeed, their faith had yet to crystallize when Kerensky forged his new warrior-societies on Strana Mechty. What truly separated the Cats at first was purely political, the fact that their first Khan was, in fact, once counted among the enemies of the Star League. Yes, Phillip Drummond, first Khan of the Nova Cat Clan, once served in the armed forces of Stefan Amaris the Usurper himself. Together with Anna Rosse, a woman who saw the horrors of the Amaris crisis from an entirely different angle as a survivor and resistance fighter on Terra, Drummond would bring about the unique nature of the Cats not by himself, but through his offspring.

*Trauma. Shock. Horror. All these factors and more have been attributed to Nicholas Kerensky's desire to mold a new society, where warfare would be controlled, structured, yielding peace and prosperity without politics and pettiness. He'd seen the horrors of Amaris' occupation on Terra, where friends and countrymen died—often in unimaginable ways—on the whims of a bloodthirsty despot. Then again, in the Pentagon, the scene repeated, bloodier than ever, as the old hatreds and loyalties returned. All that psychological damage might have killed another, but Kerensky prevailed.*

*But what about those who followed him? Surely, they had seen the same horrors of war and greed, hadn't they? Enough to feel the same deep, burning desire to right such wrongs? Certainly! And in no such case was this more evident than in the cases of Phillip Drummond and Anna Rosse. For Drummond, destroying his inner demons meant swearing himself wholeheartedly to the cause of his personal champion, Aleksandr (and later Nicholas) Kerensky.*

*Rosse was another matter. Orphaned by Amaris' war, rescued, trained, and raised to fight a covert war by spiritual women, only to see the Star League falling again, she fled with Kerensky's exodus, and knew still more trauma when her husband, Peter Karpov, was among those who rebelled first against Kerensky. Even Kerensky's legendary inspiration did not ease her loss at his justice, which involved the execution of her husband, and arrival in the Pentagon Cluster offered only a brief glimpse of normalcy before the eruption of the Pentagon Riots.*

*The spiritualism she used to heal her old wounds became her crutch, her means of getting through the chaos and the formation of the Clans. Though she would never herself become a warrior, through her beliefs, imparted to her and Drummond's daughter, Sandra, she would show a Clan how to heal and guide itself through the troubled years to come.*

*Perhaps, as the saying goes, that which does not kill one truly does make one grow stronger, for among the founders of all Clans, the best have always been those who survived the worst traumas, lived through the worst shocks, and overcame the worst horrors imaginable.*

—Dr. Lorenzo Torres, Professor of History, University of Thorin.

It was Sandra Rosse, not Phillip Drummond, who would turn the Nova Cats into the spiritual force they have become today. Her father, Phillip, led the Clan to victory in the campaign to retake Circe, while her mother, drawing on her experiences as a logistical wizard in the Terran resistance, would serve as the chief of the Clan's merchant caste. Raised by her mother, yet every bit as much her father's daughter, Sandra came of age fully entrenched in the same strong, mystical faith as her mother, with her father's ability to fight, lead, and inspire. Both of these traits would lead her to become a warrior and, inevitably, the Clan's next Khan, when her father confided in her the nature of the degenerative disease that would strip him of command. After three days of fasting and meditation, it is said, Sandra emerged from her sanctuary, determined to unseat Phillip Drummond and claim the Khanship for herself, which she did in a bloodless Trial. Though challengers quickly emerged, she defeated each one in Trials of Refusal, validating her claim to lead the Clan.

Rosse's first acts as Khan were key to the Clan's evolution. She instituted the office of the Oathmaster, a position that—in the Nova Cat Clan, at least—confers the responsibility for managing the Clan's spiritual needs to a single warrior. She wrote the Ways of Seeing, a collection of her and her mother's mystic experiences, and guide for other Nova Cats to pursue their own spiritualism. Much of Sandra Rosse's guidance can still be felt today, with rituals from the Ways of Seeing still practiced throughout the Clan's holdings. Whether for personal or communal reasons, most Nova Cats continue to seek their destiny or resolve difficult decisions by seeking visions of the future. Though not always accurate or immediately clear, many of the most famous vision quests have had profound impact on the lives of the Nova Cat people.

Ironically, it would be Rosse's own visions that would have a lasting impact in the Nova Cats' destiny, when she found herself enamored with the saKhan of the Smoke Jaguar Clan, Liam Ismiril. Despite the differences in their Clans' philosophies—greatest

of which, perhaps, was a much more lax attitude toward the lesser castes among the Cats, compared to the Jaguars' unquestioned warrior-supremacy—the two allegedly became lovers, until a vision convinced Rosse to break the relationship off. The tale goes that the Jaguar saKhan reacted to the unexpected jilting with hatred. A ranking Nova Cat warrior was soon killed by apparent accident, and a dead nova cat animal was found in one of the Nova Cat Clan's iron wombs. The message was all too clear: thenceforth, the Nova Cats and the Smoke Jaguars would be enemies. Three centuries of simmering hostility and relentless challenges and counterchallenges would follow, and all because of a simple vision.

*A fact that few people point out these days is how [Sandra] Rosse's leadership was succeeded by, of all people, her own father. Despite a growing Clan bias against aging warriors, Phillip Drummond's return was undeniable after he passed all his Trials and even made an impassioned speech before the Nova Cat council. That he was cured of his medical condition by Clan science was undoubted, but how he found the strength to return and lead again has been at the core of much debate. Some say that he, too, saw a vision demanding his return, but that merely raises the interesting fact that Drummond was never quite as mystical as his daughter or her mother.*

*What then, led Drummond to return and strengthen the sense of spirituality his daughter had instilled in his Clan? What possessed him to reclaim the Khanship and remain there until the amazing age of 112? Perhaps we will never know, but to the Nova Cats, it was like the natural closing of a circle of life, a positive omen for the future of the Clan.*

—Iridashi Hitomo, *Signs and Portents: A Look at the Nova Cat*, Luthien Press, 3109

Guided by visions, yet driven by Clan pragmatism. Led by the spirit and heart of a strong warrior caste, yet embracing a level of trust in its lower castes almost unheard of. Thus did the Nova Cat Clan grow and prosper during the Golden Century. Together with the Sea Fox Clan, they would colonize several worlds in the Kerensky Cluster, while their warriors would defend the Clan's expanding holdings from Trials, mostly fought against the Smoke Jaguars. The Cats' desire for growth would eventually push the Clan into the Crusader camp when the Great Debate about an invasion of the Inner Sphere began, yet the Cats would wait over half a decade before that vision of glory could be realized.

In part two of this four-part series on Clan Nova Cat, we'll get a glimpse of the ways of the Nova Cats, the visions and the traditions that bind them despite their seven-decade divorce from their fellow children of Kerensky. Join us as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XXXX: Faith, Tradition, and Fate—the Ways of the Nova Cat

---

02/05/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

*And in her vision the wolf howled,  
But the nova cat paced steadily on,  
Undisturbed by the petty battles  
Others fought, trying to cage it within the bars of  
Thoughtless sameness. The nova cat gazed  
Straight ahead, its heart and mind devoted to  
The Ways of Seeing, devoted to a more perfect life.*

—*The Remembrance* (Clan Nova Cat), Passage 50, 5:26-32

The innovations first enacted by Khan Sandra Rosse founded what today is widely known as Nova Cat mysticism. Lacking a god—unless one is presumptuous enough to attach divinity to the whims of fate—this system of beliefs has become a religion, of a sense, that bears no true name, yet seems to borrow from the faiths of more ancient cultures on Terra. The cornerstone to this belief comes from the Ways of Seeing, a collected journal of Anna and Sandra Rosse's mystical experiences, as well as a guide to performing both personal and communal rituals. Over the decades following the Clan's foundation, belief in these rituals has grown to the point where an overwhelming majority of the Nova Cats' warrior caste, and even the civilian classes, profess their unswerving devotion to the Ways.

Yet, to presume this Clan favors the path of mysticism to the Way of the Clans, even after their Abjuration in 3060, would be a grave error. The Nova Cats still invoke the familiar practices of the various Clan Trials to resolve disputes and political debates. They still raise their best and brightest in the iron wombs, and the Bloodname represents one of the ultimate achievements for the warrior class.

The Ways of Seeing, however, add a deeper sense of culture to their militaristic lifestyle, particularly among the warrior caste. It was for the warriors originally, after all, that the Rite of the Vision was developed, and for the warriors only that the Oathmaster Grand Melee, the Chronicle of Battles, and the Ritual of Battle, are intended.

The Rite of the Vision, a core practice of the Nova Cat faith, is the ceremony in which the individual Nova Cat may glimpse a vision of the future that will help guide the Clan to glory. Initially regarded as a warriors-only rite, in the aftermath of the Abjuration, the conflicts that followed, and the dark years of the Jihad itself there was a profound expansion of the Rite to include the lower castes. Today, merchants have been known to seek visions to guide them in business dealings, scientists consult the flames for a glimpse of new possibilities and inspiration, and even the members of the technician and labor castes occasionally undertake the Rite in an effort to guide their path and better help their Clan.

The ritual itself is simple in approach. After a period of fasting, lasting anywhere from three days to a week, the body is brought to its limits of physical endurance. At the end of this time, the Nova Cat will sit before a bonfire with his accumulated vineers—trophies or other small mementos of a past battle or other career-defining moment.

As the Nova Cat stares into the flames, considering his past and his future, he feeds the flame with his vineers, most typically under the guidance of the Oathmaster (or, in the case of lesser castes, an approved lower-caste deputy of the Oathmaster). The goal of this exercise is, of course, to see a vision of the future in the flames, a vision that is then interpreted by the presiding Oathmaster.

The sacredness of the rite is so great that there has never been a known, documented case of any Nova Cat lying about the results, if any. No shame is typically attached to failing to receive a vision, in part because the sacrifice of vineers bestows glory to the Nova Cat willing to do so. At the same time, no Nova Cat is barred from attempting to seek multiple visions (though the practice of sacrificing vineers, which are collected during many career-defining events throughout one's life, does put a practical limit on such attempts). It is said, in fact, that Santin West, the Khan who would lead his Clan to its defection and sanctuary in the Draconis Combine during the Clan Wars, sought as many as five visions in his lifetime, the most ever attempted under the guidance of an Oathmaster. His visions, according to the Nova Cat Remembrance, led to the Clan's change in allegiance and inevitable relocation to the Inner Sphere.

Other forms of the Rite of the Vision do exist, however, on a more personal level. Used by warriors or lesser castemen who lack the vineers or cannot obtain the services of a recognized Oathmaster, these more private rites follow much the same routine, but the visions they yield often produce much more cryptic results—if any come at all—and are open to the interpretations of the vision seeker alone.

The Oathmaster Grand Melee, another vital part of Nova Cat mysticism, is the Clan's yearly Trial to decide who will hold the title of the Clan's Oathmaster. Held on the longest day of the year in the capital city of New Barcella, on Irece, the Oathmaster Grand Melee begins like a Grand Melee fought during a Trial of Bloodright. It is open to everyone in the Clan, regardless of caste, and is

held in a massive Circle of Equals, where participants fight unaugmented (without weapons). The winner from this Circle of Equals then must prove his or her knowledge of Clan law, the Nova Cat Remembrance, and the traditions of the Clan, in the Forum of Law. If the winner of the Circle of Equals fails the test in the Forum of Law, then the last opponent he or she defeated in the Circle receives a chance in the Forum. If this second individual fails in the Forum, however, the standing Oathmaster retains the post for another year.

The Chronicle of Battles and the Ritual of Battle are variants on the same theme, and remain exclusively linked to the warrior caste. In both cases, warriors of a given unit (for the Ritual, a unit about to see combat) meet at a designated location at local midnight, outdoors if possible. There, before a roaring bonfire, and to the twenty beats of a ceremonial drum (one beat for each Clan founded by Nicholas Kerensky), the warriors, clad in ceremonial leathers, recount tales of past battles and victories of the Nova Cat Clan. The tales are told in ritualistic fashion, in the same oral tradition as the Remembrance, and their telling is intended to inspire and unite the gathered warriors.

The Ritual of Battle differs from this standard by including elements of the Rite of the Vision, with warriors fasting for days beforehand in the hopes of seeing a vision in the flames. In addition, the Ritual of Battle also incorporates an elaborate dance around the bonfire, on a loud bandstand that acts as a counterpoint to the rhythm of the twenty drumbeats, and even the presence of a live nova cat, which is seen as a focus of bonding for the gathered warriors. In rare instances, the ring of warriors undertaking the Ritual of Battle is further surrounded by a ring of BattleMechs, which provide a striking, larger-than-life backdrop for the ceremony.

Ironically, despite their formal exile from their fellow Clans, the Nova Cats remain as deeply devoted to the ways of the Clan as they are to their Ways of Seeing. Indeed, they even seem to celebrate the various Clanwide holidays, such as Liberation Day (26 May, commemorating the day the last of the Pentagon worlds fell to the Clans), and Founding Day (24 August, commemorating when the Exodus fleet first reached the Pentagon worlds in 2786), more fervently than their former brethren do. In addition, the Nova Cats also recognize Homecoming Day (1 May), commemorating their final return to the Inner Sphere as a people, rather than an invader. A period of solemn reflection and thanksgiving, Homecoming Day perhaps embodies the greatest nobility of this Clan, as well as its devotion to the ongoing cause of living beside the peoples of the Inner Sphere in peace.

In part three, our tour of the Nova Cat Clan will look at the Abjuration of this noble Clan, and its survival through some of the darkest years since Stefan Amaris. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XLI: Destiny Before Honor—The Nova Cats' Darkest Years

02/12/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

Destiny. Fate. If they exist, is it theoretically possible to know the path laid out before you? But then, if your future is already written, what good would knowing such information beforehand do? These are the kinds of questions philosophers have argued about since the dawning of human consciousness. However, in the case of the Clans—and indeed, many Inner Sphere peoples—the answer is simple: destiny is not written in stone; humankind has the ability to forge its own fate. Even the Nova Cats are not immune to this simple vanity, though their belief in visions might suggest otherwise. In fact, their belief in the Ways of Seeing treads an interesting line between accepting fate and the belief that destiny can be altered. For the Nova Cats, the Rite of Seeing presents but one possible future—the most likely at the time, perhaps. It is then up to the seer to act on their visions, either to change them, or to realize them.

Even in the time of Khan Sandra Rosse, it is said that the future invasion of the Inner Sphere was foretold. Rosse allegedly saw “the cat and the jaguar sharing a kill, under the watchful eye of the wolf,” a reference that later generations ascribed to the invasion itself, when Clans Nova Cat and Smoke Jaguar would share a corridor under the command of ilKhan Ulric Kerensky of Clan Wolf.

Centuries later, when the Clans grew divided along the Warden/Crusader issue, the Nova Cats initially balked at taking up the Crusader side, believing that only a Nova Cat ilKhan could lead such an effort. But, like so many other Clans, the “evidence” of a danger presented when a ComStar JumpShip suddenly appeared in Clan space proved compelling enough to change their minds. Interestingly enough, the Cats' Oathmaster at the time, Biccon Winters, predicted a disaster even then. In her vision, the wolf, the cat, the falcon, and the bear sliced easily through the Inner Sphere, trailing mists of white that eventually transformed into a roiling cloud that consumed Kerensky's children. Instead of heeding the warnings, however, the Nova Cat Khans read into the vision what they wished to read: the swift conquest of the Spheroids by Nova Cat forces, and disregarded the ambiguous outcome. Even during the Invasion, when Winters, on a chance meeting with ComStar's Precentor-Martial Anastasius Focht, went into a frenzy and declared him the “white mist come to destroy” her Clan, the Cat war leaders ignored the signs. In the hindsight of the mid 3050s, after the Clans' defeat at Tukayyid, many of the Nova Cats considered Biccon Winters' vision a foretelling of their defeat in that battle. Today, however, this ominous portent has been reinterpreted.

*In many ways, Oathmaster [Biccon] Winters' vision runs analogous to the initial Inner Sphere invasion, of course. The “white mist,” obviously, could have represented ComStar, which at first aided the Clans by administering Clan-conquered worlds, only to turn on the Clans and the Inner Sphere during Operation Scorpion. But the Tukayyid truce did not destroy the Clans, per se, and Operation Scorpion came nowhere near destroying Kerensky's children.*

*Could it have been a portent, then, of the Nova Cats' abjuration, when the Inner Sphere reunited the Star League and targeted their nemesis, Clan Smoke Jaguars, for annihilation? This has been proposed, but hardly fits, as ComStar was but a small part of the Inner Sphere coalition there, and again the “destruction” is mitigated by the fact that the Cats and other Clans survived the chaos fairly well in the aftermath.*

*What, then, was the “white mist,” and how did it consume the Clans? Well, now it seems the event foretold in Winters' vision may have actually been the Jihad. Word of Blake, still clinging to the white colors of pre-reformed ComStar, swirled around the entire Inner Sphere, even in the Clan occupation zones, their war one of terror and chaos. In the midst of this total war, the homeworlds suffered some unimaginable upheaval that actually sundered all connection between them and the invading and encroaching Clans, leaving them marooned within the Inner Sphere.*

—Dr. Lorenzo Torres, Professor of History, University of Thorin.

The total eradication of the invading Clans still has not happened, but the severing of ties to the homelands has effectively transformed the invaders left among us into states of the Inner Sphere. From the Nova Cats' point of view, some Clans have transformed even further, in fact. The Diamond Sharks, for instance, have become the Sea Foxes again, a gypsy Clan roving the Sphere for profit. The Ghost Bears have fused their Clan ways with those of the Spheroid populations, even going so far as to accept an often-subservient position in the Rasalhague Dominion. For the Cats, their own Clan has become bereft of worlds to call its own, limited instead to a “reservation” within the heart of the Dragon. Could this have been the vision of death Winters actually saw so long ago? Perhaps. Then again, perhaps not. Perhaps this vision instead refers to an as-yet-unseen calamity, a greater threat still to come. Perhaps it was a disaster already averted somehow. Or perhaps—just perhaps—it is simply the product of an overactive imagination.

In truth, the Nova Cats' fortunes both rose and fell with the invasion of the Inner Sphere. Though they were defeated at Tukayyid, forced for years to fend off the Smoke Jaguars, eternal enemies who shared an occupation zone with them, they would play a vital role in the Inner Sphere's effort to end the Clan Wars. From there, (once more guided by visions) they would join with the Inner Sphere forces and their new Star League, to help smash the Jaguars and end the Invasion for all time. Yet rather than earn glory among their brethren, they would be Abjured, their people slaughtered in the homeworlds as the Clans fell upon one another in the name of greed and power. Their strength decimated, their lower castes nearly wiped out, the Cats

would withdraw to their sanctuary, under the wing of the Dragon, there encouraged to live their mystical way of life not in the pursuit of war, but in the hope of peace. Though war would continue to dog them even there, with the brief Ghost Bear–Combine War of the early 3060s, the Nova Cats had at last found some kind of home, and a future of promised prosperity. Their way of life had survived the trials of the past intact, even though they continued to struggle for reconciliation. To many Nova Cats, there was no way to go but up; a spirit of hope—or at least hopeful determination—had begun to glow anew.

And then came the Jihad.

Touched off, ironically enough, by the shattering of their own vision, the Word of Blake, ComStar’s reactionary splinter faction, engulfed the Inner Sphere in a holy war of nuclear weapons, neutron bombs, biochemical weapons, orbital strikes, and fanatical, rampaging armies of BattleMechs. Their assault spared no one, not even those who saw their own visions of peace and prosperity shattered with the death of the new Star League. The Nova Cats, every bit as stunned by the breakdown of the League they had sacrificed so much to join and preserve, were all but lost when Blakist assault forces struck at their enclaves on Itabiana. The strike attempted to fan the flames of the nascent Ghost Bear–Nova Cat feud, but the revelation of the truth came in time to avert a disaster.

In fact, Clan Nova Cat would be the first of Kerensky’s children to see the Jihad for the threat it was, and Nova Cat troops were quickly mobilized to assist the Inner Sphere in the struggle against the zealots. The war would take a heavy toll on the Cats, however; all but shattering the remains of their military forces, while Blakist counterstrikes nearly laid waste to the Combine worlds they called home. Yet, through it all, the Cats fought on. Fulfilling their own destiny, seeking their own honor on the battlegrounds of a hundred worlds, they defended peoples they once viewed as mortal enemies through the darkest years they ever knew.

Next week: The Nova Cats today, closer than ever to the Inner Sphere, yet still undeniably bound to their history and the traditions of the Clans. Come join us as the tour of the stars continues! I’m Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XLII: Warriors of Vision—The Nova Cat Clan Today

---

02/19/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** Clan Nova Cat (Irece Prefecture, Draconis Combine)

**Founding Year:** 2810 (initial Clan founding), 3060 (abjured from Clans, resettled in Irece region)

**Capital (City, World):** New Barcella, Irece (Draconis Combine)

**National Symbol:** A snarling, black nova cat, superimposed on a Cameron Star

**Location (Terra relative):** Central region, Combine border with Rasalhague Dominion, Coreward

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 13

**Estimated Population (3130):** 12,040,000,000

**Government:** Clan (Caste-driven, warrior-dominant hierarchy)

**Ruler:** Khan Jacali Nostra

**Dominant Language(s):** English (official)

**Dominant Religion(s):** See Volume XXXIX for an explanation of Nova Cat spirituality, Shinto and Buddhism also supported.

**Unit of Currency:** Ryu (1 ryu = 0.94 C-Bills)

New Barcella, capital city of the Nova Cat enclaves throughout the Draconis Combine's Irece Prefecture, is a magnificent metropolis that bears remarkably little resemblance to its origins. When first seized by the Nova Cat Clan in December of 3051, it was a minor township, albeit one with a spaceport to handle traffic from nearby LexaTech Industries (a now-obliterated BattleMech production facility). In the years following the Cats' occupation, however, the renamed and redeveloped city has become the administrative and spiritual heart of the Nova Cat Clan.

At the heart of the city, just north of the hundred-square-kilometer expanse of Rosse Spaceport, stands a high wall that encircles the Ways of Seeing Park. Hallowed ground to the Nova Cats, this Park includes a circular, waist-high hedge that forms a ring two hundred meters in diameter. The grounds are carefully kept, and none may tread upon the lush grasses here, for this is this place that hosts the annual Oathmaster Grand Melee.

On the northern end of the park, perhaps the most important structure in all of Nova Cat space rises almost three hundred meters into the pale blue sky. Designed in the style of a neo-Gothic cathedral, and ringed by eleven smaller, house-sized chapels, carved from local limestone, this structure is the home of the Nova Cats' genetic repository, the very heart of the Clan's eugenics program. Though damaged during the chaos of the Jihad and again during the Second Combine-Dominion War, this sacred place is the emotional heart of a Clan sundered from its roots. Though the administrative, military, and industrial might of the Nova Cats is also housed within the boundaries of New Barcella, it is what stands within the Ways of Seeing Park that truly identify this Clan.

The Nova Cat Clan endures, no mean feat for perhaps the most downtrodden of Kerensky's children. Its existence has seen the death of the Wolverine and Smoke Jaguar Clans, the absorption of the Widowmaker and Burrock Clans, and the loss of contact with all others, save perhaps the occasional Sea Fox, Wolf (in-Exile), or even Ghost Bear trading expedition. And through it all, this Clan of honor and spirit continues to survive.

Unlike many of the Clans that now dwell within the Inner Sphere, the Nova Cats claim no worlds unto themselves. Instead, their enclaves are scattered, their civilization surrounded by peoples who still live under the laws and the samurai codes of the Draconis Combine. Once, the Nova Cats were conquerors, but today their fate appears little different than that of the Azami, another unique culture absorbed into the bosom of the Dragon, permitted their own autonomy, but only at the sufferance of their Inner Sphere hosts.

To mistake this arrangement for that of the conqueror becoming the conquered, however, would be foolish indeed. The Combine has no more conquered the Nova Cats than it has the middle-eastern/northern African warrior culture of the Azami. Like those warriors, the Nova Cats earned the respect of the Combine's samurai culture on the field of battle, demonstrating a tenacity and a zeal that could not be crushed by the will of House Kurita. Though the events of the Second Combine-Dominion War did limit them to their enclave "reservations," the Nova Cats were never really conquered, as the Principality of Rasalhague once was. Instead, they have merely received sanctuary, in exchange for their courage and strength. Today, like the Azami, the Nova Cats' way of life is only scarcely challenged, their loyalty to themselves and the needs of the Combine that supports them is unquestioned. Even under the xenophobic precepts of Combine government and society at large, the Nova Cats remain unbowed.

*No discussion of the Nova Cat resettlement, I think, would be complete without touching on the Combine-Dominion Wars of the early 3060s and late 3090s. Curiously enough, though both wars could be blamed on the machinations of the Black Dragons Society, an organization dedicated to an imperial Combine, the fighting invariably included, to a major degree, a brutal clash between the Ghost Bears of the Dominion and the Nova Cats of the Combine. In both conflicts, of course, the Nova Cats fought with fanatical fervor, knowing that their very existence depended upon it, and in both wars the Clan earned the respect of its Kuritan hosts.*

*But the subtleties of politics would warp the effects on the Nova Cats themselves between the two wars. Where the first War reaffirmed Kurita's faith in the Cats' abilities to hold the line against Ghost Bear aggression, the second actually saw the return of Combine troops to the Irece Prefecture, curtailing to an extent the Cats' autonomy. The first Combine-Dominion War also saw the ascent of Minoru Kurita/Nova Cat as the Clan's Oathmaster, further strengthening the bond between Kurita and Nova Cat. But the second drove a wedge between the two camps again when Minoru's brother, Hohiro Kurita, found himself forced to keep Combine troops in place, effectively restoring Kurita supremacy in the Nova Cats' gifted domains.*

—Dr. Lorenzo Torres, Professor of History, University of Thorin.

Though Combine forces now stand on the Dominion border throughout the Irece Prefecture, and though some elements of the Draconis Combine may still be hesitant to accept the presence of the Clan culture in their midst, after seventy years the Nova Cats are clearly here to stay, even if they are viewed as a separate, but equal, culture under the Dragon. Indeed, "separate, but equal," has even applied to the Nova Cat military, which stands guard over the Clan's scattered enclaves, outposts, factories, and training camps. These troops nominally answer to their Khan, not to the Coordinator, and bear no crest or colors approved by the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery. Their dedication is to the Nova Cat people first, and the Combine second, though because their goals often coincide when it comes to defense, House Kurita has at times been able to persuade some to act in support of their host state. In this way—and perhaps only in this way—the arrangement between the Draconis Combine and the Nova Cat Clan differs from that between the Combine and the Azami. It is a balance of cultures and politics, made possible through mutual respect and strength of will.

And this is how the Nova Cat survives today, still embracing the ways of the Clans, the rites of the Trials, the honor of the Bloodname, the reverence of the Kerenskys. Though their merchants now trade freely with those of the Combine and its neighbors, and though their Touman is but a fraction of its pre-Jihad strength, the Nova Cat survives. The Clan's story is a testament to faith and spirit, the courage to take chances, and the will to never give up when destiny beckons.

Next time, join us for a special six-part series on the realms beyond the Inner Sphere. The Periphery is the destination for our next tour. Won't you join us? I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XLIII: Living on the Edge—Origins of the Periphery

---

02/26/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

The Periphery. Few in the Inner Sphere like to think about it. Fewer still ever want to visit it. To them, the very term is a catchall for the dregs of humanity, a haven for pirates and lost mercenary commands, an untamed expanse of stars and worlds filled with untold dangers. To these people, one region of the Periphery is no better than any other, and even some otherwise astute historians often point to these regions as the cause—and the ultimate result—of mankind's follies.

Of course, like many popular notions, this one, too, is rooted in overgeneralizations and plain ignorance. The nations and worlds of the Periphery are a diverse lot, perhaps even more diverse than those of the Inner Sphere. They range from the political and industrial powerhouse of the Magistracy of Canopus, to the Clan-Periphery hybrid state of the Raven Alliance, to the fragmented, frontier-like nation-worlds of the Barrens. While most of the rumors of pirates and privateers roaming the Periphery may be true, they are no less true within the boundaries of the Inner Sphere. What truly unifies the Periphery is not its level of barbarism; it is the collective spirit of freedom embraced by its people, a spirit that has kept the mighty empires of the Great Houses from swallowing up these fringe regions for centuries.

*It's strange to think of the Periphery as part of the Inner Sphere. For so long, we've prided ourselves on not being any such thing. To a lot of people out here, "Inner Sphere" still means the Great Houses that made the Star League, imposed it on us, and then broke it when they got tired of it. Wherever they run things, an ordinary person can't call her soul her own. Or so thought plenty of our forebears, who struck out for the Periphery in search of freedom from rules and regulations and bureaucrats.*

—Naomi Centrella, Canopian Military Coordinator, *The Inner Sphere*, ComStar Press, 3063

By its very nature, there is no historically defined foundation date for the Periphery. Instead, what historians refer to when discussing the formation of the modern Periphery is the settling of a few key worlds, which would then rise to become some of the most powerful nations in the region. Apollo, Alpheratz, Canopus, Taurus—these worlds would become the capitals of new states. Their alliances formed—one way or another—from the same spirit of independence that created the Successor States, in reaction to the excesses of the Terran Alliance, but driven further outward as their founders disagreed with even these nascent governments.

The Taurian Concordat, for instance, began when Samantha Calderon, inheritress of a substantial fortune from a husband killed during the Outer Reaches Rebellion against the Alliance, financed and led an expedition to the Hyades star cluster. Over the years that followed, the new world would prove so resource rich that other colonies would follow, creating a small league of colonies known as the Taurian Homeworlds, until the Taurian Concordat was formally founded in 2335.

By way of comparison, the Rim Worlds Republic, centered on Apollo, was founded by a band of freebooters led by Hector Worthington Rowe, an Alexandria native who harbored a deep grudge against the Terran Alliance, and who personally launched a renegade war with the Alliance even as its power waned. Fleeing coreward, and resorting to piracy to sustain his forces' supplies and manpower, he would eventually settle on Apollo, to found a nation created along his own warped interpretation of Plato's Republic.

By contrast, the Magistracy of Canopus and the Outworlds Alliance, nations formed in reaction to the Age of War, were both created by fugitives and deserters from the nearest major powers. In the case of the Magistracy, its founder, Konstance Centrella, led numerous dissidents and fellow soldiers from the Free Worlds League away from that realm to found a place where like-minded dissidents could gather. Meanwhile, the Alliance was forged when Julius Avellar, a prominent FedSuns naval officer, disgusted by the excesses during the Age of War, retreated to his own sanctuary, and became a reluctant leader when his critical denouncement of war and military adventurism attracted a following that included the antitechnology Ommiss philosophical sect.

Thus did the four great realms of the Periphery form, to escape the excesses and the restrictive governments of the rest of the Inner Sphere. There were hundreds of other colonies in these days, of course, but either through fortune, or wisdom, these four centers of power grew over the years that followed, even as the six mighty powers closer to Terra turned their energies upon one another. The Age of War allowed most of these smaller fringe realms to expand, growing in territory, prosperity, and stability, until each came to possess the strength of a smaller Great House. Defense needs, made apparent by the infighting throughout the Inner Sphere, led all of them to create defense forces, increasing their appeal to nearby, unaffiliated worlds, which then joined them in turn. Of course, this prosperity only lasted as long as they posed no threat to the nearest Great House, which actually made the end of the Age of War and Ian Cameron's efforts to forge a new humanity-unifying mega-alliance a foreboding omen.

Who is to say what would have happened next if Cameron hadn't come along? It took his efforts at diplomacy to help bring an end to the Age of War, and it was his diplomatic savvy that paved the way for the formation of the Star League, which mainly focused on the six Great Houses. Meanwhile, the Periphery states were out there, growing. The Piranha Principle—a suggestion

that the Periphery powers, like a school of piranha, would be too difficult to overpower, because doing so invited attack from other corners—no longer applied when all the Great Houses became friends.

Thus, when the League formed, and First Lord Cameron officially declared an end to inter-House warfare, the Inner Sphere may have celebrated, but those living beyond the boundaries of the Great Houses' influence knew better.

*There are many different reasons why the Star League, so soon after its founding and allegedly dedicated to peace across the stars, turned its attentions toward conquest of the Periphery. The ones sold to the people, for instance, included such high-minded ideals as enlightenment, or civilizing, of these supposedly lawless regions, since the Star League's goal also included securing the peace for all of humankind. Others justifications that caught on focused on local issues, such as the alleged "aggressions" of Periphery states—the Taurian Concordat in particular—against Star League members (though plenty of evidence suggests the naval engagements between the Davions and the Taurians boiled down to honest misunderstandings). Piracy, of course, was yet another excuse, though in many cases, the alleged Periphery "pirates" were, in fact, hirelings or even agents of the Great Houses themselves, used to continue settling scores left over from the Age of War.*

*But the truth, of course, was far more sinister, and yet ludicrous at the same time, for the Cameron Dynasty realized it could not cement its power over the newborn League without focusing its members on some unifying threat. Sooner or later, they realized, the House Lords would turn their ambitious eyes toward taking over the mighty empire they had built. It was thus that the Camerons hit on an elegant concept: If they were to outlaw war amongst the Houses, then the Houses would have to fight a new foe.*

*And the Periphery made a perfect scapegoat.*

—Sir Hedgeswick P. Rothchild, *Deconstructing the Golden Age (Fifth Edition)*, Canopus Free Press, 3110

The stubborn refusal of the Periphery states to join in the Star League reached a head in 2574, after the four major Periphery nations once more refused to bow to diplomatic and economic pressures imposed by the League and clung to their independence. The following year, with his infamous Pollux Proclamation, First Lord Ian Cameron effectively declared war on the Periphery. If they would not join his League willingly, then they would do so at gunpoint. The next twenty-two years came to be known in the Inner Sphere as the Reunification War, and would see the four proudly independent realms on the fringes of human-occupied space brutally crushed beneath the combined weight of the Star League and its member states.

In the next installment of our special six-part look at the Periphery, we'll see how the fall of the Star League, the Succession Wars, and the beginnings of a revival affected these frontier nations. Join us as our tour of the stars continues! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XLIV: The Periphery's Long, Hard Climb from the Abyss

---

03/02/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

The Star League's war against the Periphery was actually four smaller wars rolled into one. In the Rim Worlds Republic, League troops, with House Steiner support, were actually putting down a rebellion that had usurped a nominally pro-League government, ruled by House Amaris. In the Taurian Concordat, the war was more a Davion-led campaign to crush a defiant and well-armed neighbor, one willing even to resort to the use of weapons of mass destruction and scorched earth to secure its liberty. In the Magistracy of Canopus, the war's theme ranged from severe fighting against an impressively well-equipped army to a rather comical effort to resist the seductive ways of the nation's hedonistic culture, and atrocities here were lessened by House Marik's leadership and insistence on "a clean fight." In the Outworlds Alliance, despite the largely agrarian nature of its people, Kurita-supported League troops quickly grew frustrated at the determination of the resistance, and resorted to mass executions in an effort to gain compliance. This served only to drag the war on for years as the Alliance ranks swelled, rather than diminished. In the end, however, all four realms were forced to capitulate, with the Alliance surrendering in 2585, the Magistracy in 2588, and the other two states succumbing to Star League rule in 2596. By the following year, all four nations were placed under virtual Star League military rule, branded as Territorial States of the League.

In the century and a half that followed, the Territorial States did eventually come to recover, with some survivors of the Reunification War coming to realize that maybe—just maybe—life under the Star League wasn't so bad after all. But all of that would come crashing down again in 2751, when First Lord Simon Cameron was killed in a freak accident on New Silesia. The First Lordship passed to his juvenile son, Richard, under the regency of General Alexandr Kerensky, and suddenly the five House Lords were in effective political control of the Star League. They wasted no time in consolidating their power, and even went so far as to pass taxes on the Territorial States, placing a heavy financial burden on the conquered lands of the Periphery.

During this time, the young Richard Cameron was seduced by Stefan Amaris, leader of the Rim Worlds Republic, the only one of the Territorial States that did not openly complain about the unfair taxes. In the years leading up to his final ascension to the Throne, Cameron fell more and more under the spell of the charismatic Amaris, and came to see the other House Lords as jealous rivals. How many of Cameron's edicts were really the work of Amaris may never be known but, by the time he was of age to claim the First Lordship, he had already been convinced that General Kerensky and the House Lords were all against him, and he had alienated virtually every one of these leaders. Worse still, a crippling tax levied by the First Lord himself set all Periphery realms but the Rim Worlds Republic into rebellion, with several Taurian planets among the first to secede. In response, Cameron mobilized the bulk of the Star League Defense Force, under Kerensky's direct command, leaving the Terran Hegemony with a skeleton garrison, augmented by supposedly loyal House Amaris troops.

What happened next, one fateful December day in 2766, would mark the beginning of a time so dark for all of mankind that only the Jihad, over three centuries later, could compare.

"General:

*I, with my infinite skills and aided by my loyal subjects, have struck, with a swiftness given only to the righteous, a blow that has corrected decades of injuries and slights to my family. I rule where the Camerons once called home. I control the Cradle of Humanity. All within the Hegemony have bowed before me; those who didn't are dead. Join me, General Kerensky. Become my sword arm and help me impress my word and wisdom upon the other realms. I've no reason to hate you; I wish only peace between us. Join me and convince your men and women to follow you, and I will give you power second only to mine.*

*But should you dare turn a blind eye to the wisdom of my offer and decide not to join, then heed my warning: I control everything the Hegemony has. All its defenses, all of its fortifications, are now manned by people loyal to me. Should you try to attack, every inch of Hegemony soil will be stained with the blood of the fallen, and every drop will be a burden upon your soul, which must already be heavy with guilt for allowing me to accomplish the complete control of your homelands."*

—Communiqué to General Alexandr Kerensky from "Emperor" Stefan Ukris Amaris, 16 May 2767

Kerensky's war to liberate the Terran Hegemony began with the effective annihilation of the Rim Worlds government as he withdrew his forces committed elsewhere to smash the power base that made Amaris' coup possible. In the thirteen years that followed, Kerensky and Amaris turned their energies fully upon one another in a devastating war of attrition. By the time it was over, the Terran Hegemony was a collection of charred cinders and hopelessly shattered industries, and the Star League had effectively died.

In the Periphery, the fall of the League met with mixed feelings; an age of prosperity—but one that had been forcibly imposed—had come to an end, freeing the surviving realms to go their own ways. As the Inner Sphere states turned on one another, go their own ways these realms did, rarely interacting with their counterparts in the Great Houses (and then only at great cost). Still, freed of the constraints of the Star League, these nations grew, though at a far slower rate, thanks to the predations of waves of pirates and occasional infighting between neighboring realms, both ancient and newborn.

Having started off hobbled by the Star League, the Periphery's technological level remained below that of the Inner Sphere throughout the Succession Wars era, though in some areas these nations excelled even beyond the capabilities of their interior neighbors. The Magistracy of Canopus, for instance, gained a reputation for medicine that rivaled—and in some cases, even exceeded—the capabilities of the Great Houses. The Taurians, meanwhile, boasted a remarkably high literacy rate. The Outworlds Alliance, eschewing BattleMechs and mercenaries for much of its existence, raised a highly adept aerospace defense force, completely homegrown and capable of fending off pirates and Great House raiders alike.

As the thirty-first century dawned, new Periphery states had even begun to form, many of them from among the bandit lords who had, for generations, preyed on the borders of the Inner Sphere. The Marian Hegemony, a pirate realm with a government based loosely on ancient Rome, and the Circinus Federation, a loose coalition of agrarian worlds ruled by pirates and mercenaries, are perfect examples of these "bandit kingdoms" that earned a semblance of respectability over time. Others, such as Morgraine's Valkyrate, the Confederation of Oberon, and the Tortuga Dominions, also formed from pirate bands, but remained truer to their origins. Still others, such as the Fiefdom of Randis, the Niops Association, and the Rim Collection, formed along more benign lines, creating realms founded on ideals, rather than force of arms, adding more color to the sociopolitical tapestry of the Periphery.

The trickle-down from the technological renaissance of the mid-thirty-first century further boosted many of these powers, making the larger, more industrial realms, such as the Magistracy and the Concordat, true players in the universe. Of course, as the balance of power would shift in the Inner Sphere, both due to the recovery of lostech and the political changes caused by the short-lived union of Houses Steiner and Davion, so too would the realms of the Periphery suffer an upheaval from these new events. Somewhat surprisingly, it would be the Magistracy of Canopus that would first bring the nearly forgotten Periphery back into the minds of the denizens of the interior worlds, in a bold move that would have ramifications for decades to come.

In part three of our special series on the Periphery, our spotlight shines on the Magistracy of Canopus, one of the Periphery's most powerful realms, and its trials through mankind's darkest hours. Our tour of the stars continues next week. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XLV: Periphery Nations, Pt. I—Magistracy of Canopus

---

03/09/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** Magistracy of Canopus

**Founding Year:** 2530

**Capital (City, World):** Crimson, Canopus IV

**National Symbol:** A trio of gold, five-pointed stars and an ovoid starfield, set against a green circle with a blue rim.

**Location (Terra relative):** Rimward, beyond Capellan Confederation and Duchy of Andurien

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 39

**Estimated Population (3130):** 70,200,000,000

**Government:** Monarchy (matriarchal rule)

**Ruler:** Magestrix Ilsa Liao-Centrella

**Dominant Language(s):** English (official), Spanish, Greek, Romanian, Mandarin Chinese

**Dominant Religion(s):** Buddhism, Christianity, Wiccan, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism

**Unit of Currency:** Dollar (1 dollar = 0.54 C-Bills)

From the penthouse suites of the Majesty (formerly Mindstar) Enterprises' Grand Triumph resort hotel, one can survey the entire Majesty compound, a sprawl of holovid theaters, casinos, restaurants, massage parlors, malls, and amusement parks the size of a small city. This center of the Canopian entertainments trade is brand-new, the decades-long reconstruction of the fire-gutted remains of the old Mindstar compound only now reaching completion. Likewise, to the south, the city of Crimson features all-new architecture and fresh-laid exotic gardens. Shiny new cruise boats ply the waters of the once debris-choked River Tethis and its delta to the open sea. Only to the north, on the outskirts of the Thistle town Fields spaceport, can the remains of the Word of Blake's hellish firebombing still be seen, in the form of a mound of charred and rusted metal, pushed beyond the outskirts of several blackened hangars along a disused stretch of runway.

Canopus was not spared the horrors of the Jihad, but the Blakists' use of conventional incendiary weapons, rather than nuclear devices or orbital bombardment, made possible the relatively easy reconstruction of the capital city and the mega-resort nearby. Despite the horrors of that war, the people here are friendly, carefree, and all visitors are welcome, be it for business, pleasure, or a little of both. The climate, however, continues to deteriorate thanks to years of strip mining and the damage wrought during the Jihad. Nowadays, it seems that the winters in this once-temperate region grow decidedly colder and longer with each passing year.

Under Star League rule, the Magistracy of Canopus, though technically an occupied state, fared better than most of its contemporary Periphery realms. Generous aid from the League helped restore the pleasure industry ravaged by the Reunification War, and the nation benefited from an age of peace and prosperity. By the time of the Amaris Crisis, these fortunes had reversed, and the Magistracy declared its independence and immediately switched to defensive mode, hoping to survive the difficult times ahead from a posture of armed neutrality.

Unfortunately, such neutrality would not be enough to weather the three-hundred-year storm that was the Succession Wars. With civilian interstellar travel limited at best, the Canopian economy slowly declined, while territorial disputes with the Taurian Concordat, communications breakdowns, and the predations of Inner Sphere and pirate raiders, all sapped the Magistracy's military and economic strength. The few surviving industries were more practical than the tourist-based trades of yesteryear, and diplomats frantically worked to resolve any political crises, lest another costly war rage on Canopian soil. Though these years were relatively peaceful (at least, from the Canopian point of view), the grandeur of the old Magistracy was lost over the centuries.

Ironically, it would be their one and only stab at imperialism that would revive the struggling Magistracy in the early thirty-first century. Hoping to capitalize on the end of the Fourth Succession War, the Canopians allied with the Free Worlds League's rebellious Duchy of Andurien, to assault the weakened Capellan Confederation. Though defeated in the end by a fanatical Capellan defense, this ill-fated campaign prompted the ascension of Magestrix Emma Centrella. A truly visionary leader, Emma managed to make peace with the Free Worlds League before a feared Marik invasion could punish her realm for its role in the brief Andurien secession. She also managed to single-handedly revitalize the Canopian pleasure industry with hefty personal bailouts to its remaining major corporations, such as Magliss Spirits and Mindstar Enterprises. The profits from this support allowed Emma to further diversify the Canopian industrial base, helping to recover some of her realm's lost prosperity.

With the Clan Invasion, the Magistracy once more turned to diplomacy to secure its survival, fearing the eventual arrival of Kerensky's descendants. Emma Centrella endorsed an ambitious plan to unify all Periphery realms in a coalition against the Clans, should they ever threaten them, but while such a coalition failed to materialize, the plan did result in an alliance between Canopus and the Taurian Concordat. Ironically, this bold political move eventually attracted the unlikely attention of Sun-Tzu Liao and his Capellan Confederation.

*The thought of an alliance with the Capellans shocked practically everybody, including Magestrix [Emma] Centrella herself. Here, you had the socially open, militarily unremarkable, matriarchal Periphery state approached by a Great House. And not just any Great House, but House Liao, the very same people the Canopians had fought barely a generation before, and who had a notorious reputation for brutality—as far as most outsiders were concerned, anyway. Sun-Tzu had to be crazy, right?*

*His proposals, however, were valid, well thought out, and unexpectedly respectful of Canopian culture, taking into account the military, economic, and sociopolitical needs not just of the Confederation, but of the Magistracy of Canopus, and even the Taurian Concordat (if they desired to join in this venture as well). Sure, it was obvious, even then, that the Capellans mainly wanted more troops to recover their losses of the Fourth Succession War, but the gains to be had were substantial, and that was just on the opening offer. The offer promised that, before long, the Canopians would have the power and the stability to rival any Great House, all without any binding contract of marriage or political union (Sun-Tzu was engaged to Isis Marik at the time, anyway).*

*To Emma Centrella, it was the most generous offer she could have imagined from a House Lord. Wholeheartedly dedicated to restoring and securing her realm better than it had been in centuries, she simply could not resist an offer like this.*

—Valerie DuBois, *The Trinity Alliance: What Went Right?*, Hardcore Press, 3120

As it happened, Canopian and Taurian troops did indeed assist the Capellan state in reclaiming its lost territories in St. Ives and along the Chaos March front. This effort strengthened the so-called Trinity Alliance and proved that the warriors of the Periphery were actually a force to be reckoned with. Sun-Tzu Liao would even eventually wed Naomi Centrella, one of Emma Centrella's daughters, in the midst of the Jihad. While both realms fought side by side against the Blakists—the Taurian Concordat having already fallen out of the alliance due to internal and external matters—they would never formally unite under a single banner. Sun-Tzu Liao's promises not to force a political union beyond their alliance proved genuine to the last.

Today, the Magistracy remains its own entity, militarily formidable, economically vital, and socially free. Its government, remaining under the steady rule of the Centrella line (though Ilsa Centrella is actually the eldest daughter of Sun-Tzu; a situation which has caused a small minority within the Magistracy to contend that Sun-Tzu has indeed forced a Capellan rulership onto Canopians), is still a matriarchy. House Centrella still rules, though an electoral system technically has the authority to choose a non-Centrella Magestrix when an incumbent dies. A multilayered court system still oversees the rights of Canopian citizens, and their needs are represented by both a popularly elected Central Committee, which forms a legislative review board, and the Crimson Council, which handles all affairs for the nobility—all without Capellan oversight.

All three tiers of the Canopian nobility (the Froness, descended from the Magistracy's original settlers; the Durachi, merchant princes; and the Girin, recognized citizens lifted into the nobility) enjoy far more privileges than the underclasses—including the right to choose a substitute for military service, the right of females to choose their own mates (who cannot refuse, under Canopian law), and the right to trade outside Canopian borders. Yet, despite this, the system sees remarkably few abuses.

Canopian citizenship is open to all individuals desiring freedom from political, religious, or social persecution, in keeping with the spirit of the state's foundation, and all such citizens are free to own land, or pursue any desired social status. In exchange, all are required to contribute to the nation's defense in some way, be it through military service, involvement in the educational system (which has always been viewed as a cornerstone to the Magistracy's defense), or by donation of land or materiel to any war effort during times of crisis. Political parties are banned under Canopian law, but all citizens are required to participate in all elections. These systems help assure a sense of belonging among the people of this socially liberal realm, while contributing to its ongoing vitality.

The Magistracy of Canopus, a Periphery realm dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure and entertainment, yet strong and determined enough to defend itself in time of crisis, is certainly nothing like the stereotypical image one gets when thinking about the fringe worlds of human space. Indeed, there are few today who could possibly argue that House Centrella and its longstanding Magistracy are any less a major power than any of the Great Houses today.

Up next, follow me as we tour the Taurian Concordat, another of the Periphery's most noteworthy realms. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XLVI: Periphery Nations, Pt. II—Taurian Concordat

---

03/09/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** Taurian Concordat and Calderon Protectorate

**Founding Year:** 2335 (2253 as Taurian Homeworlds, Concordat); 3066 (Protectorate)

**Capital (City, World):** New Samantha, Taurus (Concordat); New Taurus, Erod's Escape (Protectorate)

**National Symbol (Both):** A bull's head with exaggerated horns that curl downward and encompass three gold five-pointed stars (Calderon Protectorate uses black stars.)

**Location (Terra relative):** Rimward, beyond Capellan Confederation and Federated Suns

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 22 (Concordat); 13 (Protectorate)

**Estimated Population (3130):** 33,031,000,000 (Concordat); 15,310,000,000 (Protectorate)

**Government:** Democracy (currently under military rule, Concordat); Democracy (Protectorate)

**Ruler:** Protector Kaff Doru (Concordat); Protector Sam Calderon (Protectorate)

**Dominant Language(s):** English, Spanish, French

**Dominant Religion(s):** Deism (official), Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism

**Unit of Currency:** Bull (1 bull = 0.12 C-Bills)

New Samantha is a city that serves as both a grim reminder of the horrors of war, and as a symbol of the Taurian will to overcome any adversity. Once an extensive metropolis that dominated a vast flatland, at the juncture of two major rivers and a glacial lake, the original city of Samantha became so expansive that it overtook the once-separate spaceport, establishing a central point between the Old City and its South Quarter. Today, however, few who had looked upon such vistas would recognize the city of New Samantha, or its surrounding countryside.

The Word of Blake's strategy for the Taurian Concordat centered on the virtual annihilation of the Taurian capital, in a strike more treacherous than ever conceived before. Covert agents and engineering teams slipped past the defense networks and worked for months on their complex plot, finally sending several of the planet's smaller local asteroids—a natural feature of the system that has long served as the basis of the homeworld defense—hurtling into the surface, many aimed right at New Samantha. The unconventional bombardment smashed the heart of the Concordat in a short, merciless rain of DropShip-sized boulders, which flattened huge swaths of the surface and wiped Samatha almost completely off the map.

The Taurians, a proud and determined people, eventually rebuilt their city over the now-rugged landscape, around the triple-crater lake that filled up from the inadvertently diverted flow of the local rivers. Structures built to withstand heavy weapons' fire now dominate the low-slung skyline of this new metropolis, seeded with all manner of anti-aircraft batteries and missile defense systems. Scattered among the streets of this rebuilt city are monuments to fallen heroes of the Concordat, as if the stern-faced people needed more reminder than the cratered vista all around them.

In this, the oldest Periphery realm still standing, the people of the Taurian Concordat loved their independence so much that the struggle to integrate them into the Star League was among the worst fighting of the Reunification Wars. As the first realm to openly rebel against the tax edicts levied by the League's last First Lord, more fighting ravaged the industries and defense forces that a century of Star League rule had nearly restored.

When the Star League fell, the Concordat, like the Magistracy of Canopus, opted for a position of armed neutrality, save for a brief but inconclusive conflict against the Canopians during the early twenty-ninth century. With a longstanding grudge against the Capellans and the Federated Suns, thanks to several incidents during and prior to the Star League era, the Concordat turned most of its energies toward beefing up its military industries, eventually producing the strongest armed forces in the Periphery. Each generation of Calderons, the monarchs whose dynasty ruled the Concordat throughout most of its existence, carried on this paranoia, focusing especially on the so-called "Davion bogeyman," many times to the nation's detriment. And it was after decades of high alert along the Concordat border, in anticipation of an attack that never came, that the power structure of the Concordat first began to unravel.

*Marshall Hadji Doru was the first one to really step up and denounce Protector [Thomas] Calderon's paranoia for what it truly was—utter madness. Many in the Concordat, perhaps, hoped he would then either usurp power for himself, or place Thomas' son, Jeffrey, on the throne. Jeffrey, by all accounts a bright and insightful young man, was at almost the same time working to curry favor with the Canopian Magestrix, having secretly accepted her olive branch toward the formation of a pan-Periphery alliance. Knowing that the crippling effects of the heightened military alert were killing his realm's economy, Jeffrey laid the groundwork for a formal alliance in anticipation of the showdown with his father he knew was coming.*

*As it happened, the Concordat's Ministry of Trade and Colonization acted first. In 3055, they stormed in on a Privy Council meeting with the Protector and demanded an end to the alert status and civilian conscriptions, as well as a loosening to trade and travel restrictions, threatening to take the matter to the Court of Judicial Review when Calderon refused. When the Protector then demanded of Marshall Doru that he arrest the ministers, he set off the coup that toppled him from power. Instead of arresting the ministers, Doru arrested the Protector, and convinced Jeffrey Calderon to ascend to the throne.*

*Unfortunately, the people of the Concordat would know a Golden Age under Jeffrey Calderon for all too short a season. . . .*

—Valerie DuBois, *The Trinity Alliance: What Went Right?*, Hardcore Press, 3120

Jeffrey Calderon did indeed bring sweeping changes and a new Golden Age to the Taurian Concordat in his brief rule, repealing many of the state-of-emergency edicts passed down by his father and those before him. He also brought the Concordat into an alliance with the Magistracy of Canopus, and worked together with the Canopians in colonizing the open space between their realms. Calderon was prepared to discuss entering into the Trinity Alliance with the Capellans when renegade Colonial Marshals from this New Colony Region took him and the Canopian leader hostage in an effort to forge an independent state. Jeffrey Calderon would die before the crisis ended early in 3061, leaving no heirs, and a reactionary, Lord Grover Shraplen, would ascend to the Protectorship.

Shraplen's ascent rocked the realm to its core. Though technically a democracy, with many layers of councils and ministries to serve as advisors and checks against the absolute power of the Protector—all intended to ensure the sanctity of civil liberties—the traditional ruler of the realm had always been a member of House Calderon. More than merely a change in tradition, however, was the fact that Shraplen was a known opponent to many of Jeffrey Calderon's reforms, a man who held to the same anti-Davion paranoia as the previous administration. His rise would prove a throwback to the days of Thomas Calderon, but ironically enough, it would be the Concordat's entry into the Trinity Alliance that would accelerate the collapse.

After throwing its weight behind Sun-Tzu and his campaign against St. Ives and the Chaos March, where the Taurian Defense Forces were savaged, the TDF began to rally for a breakaway. The New Colony Region seceded from the alliance, forming the Fronc Reaches, even as the Concordat military fought in foreign lands. Taking up the banner of change was Marshal (Baron) Cham Kithrong, an outspoken opponent of the Protector, who championed Jeffrey Calderon's illegitimate son, Erik Martens (Calderon), as a replacement for the Protector.

Rather than debate the issue, Shraplen attempted to bring Kithrong to heel by force, resulting in a brief civil war that tore the Concordat in two. Kithrong and his followers retreated to form the Calderon Protectorate, leaving Shraplen with only half a realm and an economy on the brink of collapse. In the midst of this crisis, a task force from Davion space entered the Concordat, sparking a conflict with the Federated Suns. Concordat troops, under Shraplen's orders, lashed out at the Davion realm, seizing several worlds before their offensive stalled in the Pleiades Cluster. Battered, divided, and on the brink of collapse, the Concordat forces held their positions, switching to a defensive posture and focusing only on surviving long enough to solidify their gains while the government rallied.

Then came the Jihad.

During that terrible war, the Word of Blake, taking advantage of Shraplen's paranoia of House Davion and his misplaced trust in their "advisors," enacted a terrible plan. Using their Erinyes system, the Blakist assault consisted solely of dropping several of the smaller asteroids near Taurus upon the planet itself, leaving just enough evidence behind to incriminate the Federated Suns. The horrendous attack, though seen a few more times during the Jihad, all but decapitated the Taurian leadership, leaving the rest of the Concordat convinced that the Davions had launched the strike. The Blakists' classic example of divide-and-conquer strategy succeeded brilliantly in setting the Taurians on the Federated Suns like a pack of bloodthirsty hounds, and in the fierce fighting that resulted, Taurian and Davion forces were horribly savaged, while several FedSuns worlds bore the scars of Taurian nuclear warheads.

The decimation of the Taurian Defense Force all but laid the realm bare for attack by pirates and Calderon revolutionaries, disrupting the government hold over several Taurian worlds, which remain independent to this day. Tenaciously clinging to the worlds seized from the Suns, the new Taurian leadership found itself in charge of an ever-shrinking nation, but even to this day, their troops remain on alert, holding onto these few gains made decades ago.

Today, the Concordat and the Protectorate are struggling shadows of what they once were, still fighting a low-intensity civil war despite generations of separation. Both nations maintain the trappings of the democratic system of the original Taurian Concordat, intended to ensure the civil liberties of all citizens. Both of these governments are also supported by massive bureaucracies, which include ministries of defense, trade, education, and the interior, as well as an extensive court system to resolve legal disputes on all levels of government and review legislation. But where the Calderon Protectorate is ruled once more by a hereditary member of House Calderon, the Concordat itself is operating under military rule, its Protector, Kaff Doru, raised from the ranks of the Taurian Defense Force, and operating under emergency powers.

Though they remain divided today, both of these realms maintain not only a shared history and government, but both also maintain the same famous Taurian stubbornness and love for freedom. In this ideal, they remain, as always, united.

In our fifth segment on the Periphery, we'll examine the Marian Hegemony, the fourth most powerful Periphery state to survive the Succession Wars and the Jihad that followed! Won't you join us? I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XLVII: Periphery Nations, Pt. III—Marian Hegemony

---

03/09/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** Marian Hegemony

**Founding Year:** 2920

**Capital (City, World):** Nova Roma, Alphard

**National Symbol:** The bust of an armored Roman warrior against a tan banner that bears the name "Marian Hegemony" in English at its center, and the Latin words "Pax" (Peace) and "Mortis" (Death) on its opposite ends.

**Location (Terra relative):** Coreward and anti-spinward, beyond Duchy of Tamarind-Abbey and Rim Commonality

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** 22

**Estimated Population (3130):** 28,605,000,000

**Government:** Monarchist Republic

**Ruler:** Caesar Ignatius O'Reilly

**Dominant Language(s):** English and Latin (official), German, Spanish, Greek

**Dominant Religion(s):** Christianity (Lutheran), Judaism, Islam, Agnostic

**Unit of Currency:** Talent (1 talent = 0.22 C-Bills)

Anyone walking the streets of downtown Nova Roma would almost believe they had stepped into a time warp, what with the classical Roman architecture and the virtual absence of motorized transportation in the heart of the capital city. Unlike most modern metropolises, the skyscrapers and office blocks of Nova Roma ring the downtown area, rather than cluster within it, creating a virtual oasis of a classical age in the heart of a modern industrial city. Powered transportation is almost completely forbidden in the central districts, where the roads are narrow and traffic lights few and far between. Instead, the locals here are encouraged to rely on unpowered bicycles, public shuttle cars styled as multipassenger chariots, or the subway for all their downtown transportation needs. Though electric lamps and neon lights may still be found by night, their presence almost vanishes by day, adding to the illusion of time travel.

Nova Roma was not physically annihilated during the Word of Blake Jihad, as many other state capitals were, despite then-Caesar Julius O'Reilly's resistance to the Blakists. Instead the people of this city died in the horrific blasts of neutron bombs, which left the buildings standing, desolate and haunted. A reconstruction was nonetheless ordered by Prefect Michael Alexander, regent for Julius' successor, Cassius O'Reilly, who enhanced the Roman feel of the downtown area, in keeping with the style of the rest of the realm.

For all its splendor and style, the Marian Hegemony is neither ancient nor as cultured as its rulers and tour guides might have one think. The realm was founded barely two hundred years ago, when Johann Sebastian O'Reilly, a Periphery native, struck it big with his discovery of a storehouse of germanium on Alphard (left over from the former Alphard Trading Company) valued at over fifty billion C-bills. With his newfound wealth, O'Reilly wasted no time hiring BattleMech units to help establish a colony on Alphard, and installed himself as its leader. As a former trade center, Alphard's modest industrial base and stores of germanium made it possible for O'Reilly to build a small empire, which he styled after Terra's ancient Roman Empire and named after Gaius Marius, a seven-time Roman consul.

But for all the classical styling, in truth, O'Reilly could not support the empire he dreamed of on a finite stockpile of germanium and the limited industrial capacity of a long-abandoned frontier world populated by refugees of the Succession Wars. To support his ambitions, he authorized and encouraged raiding along the borders of nearby states, including the Illyrian Palatinate, the Magistracy of Canopus, the Circinus Federation, and even the Free Worlds League. The Hegemony became just another pirate realm, albeit one with delusions of grandeur.

The rise of Johann's grandson, Marius O'Reilly, led not only to the increase of these pirate attacks but to an outright effort to conquer neighboring systems and assimilate them. Viewing expansion as the key to the Hegemony's survival and prosperity, Marius moved against worlds claimed by every interstellar neighbor save the Magistracy of Canopus. The stepped-up raids and assaults reaped far greater booty than two generations of casual raiding had, and Marius funneled these funds into the development of new industries, the foundation of educational institutions, and other efforts to strengthen the national infrastructure and military. Though the basis of this transformation was piracy, the result was a nearly self-sufficient realm on the threshold to being a respectable nation.

A foiled assassination attempt, allegedly ordered by an unknown Free Worlds League agent on Astrokaszy, spun the Hegemony back on the path of conquest with a brief foray to the unclaimed and fragmented Periphery planet on a mission of retribution and conquest. Only the marshaling of several other nearby realms' military forces forced the Hegemony to back down. In the years that followed, the Marians expanded through colonization, and it was while leading the colonial expeditions of the 3040s that Sean O'Reilly, Marius' son and successor, began to build his own power base.

*A coup was most certainly in the works when Marius [O'Reilly] died—apparently quite by accident—in 3048. Up until this point, his son, Sean, was currying favor with almost every high-ranking officer in the First Marian Legion. Moreover, thanks*

*to his siphoning funds from the Imperial Treasury to cover his rather wild lifestyle, which included no end of mistresses and gambling debts, relations between father and son had been strained for some time. In fact, there was a definite threat in place that the elder O'Reilly planned to bar his son from succession and turn the realm over instead to his grandson, Julius. All that taken into account, it's no wonder that Marius' death was often rumored to be no accident, though no evidence found to date supports a theory of patricide.*

*Whether or not Marius was assassinated, of course, became a moot point when Sean ascended to the throne and, with his first proclamation as ruler of the state, replaced the title of Imperator, the title for Marian rulers since the Hegemony's inception, with a more ominous title: Caesar.*

—Dr. Nickolas Smith, PhD, *Pirates and Politicians, What's the Difference?*, Tamarind Publishing, 3099

Sean O'Reilly's reign prompted the Marian Hegemony's greatest surge in military strength and aggressive expansion. He revitalized the military and reorganized it even more along Roman lines, and consolidated his own political power base, giving himself near-dictatorial powers over the Senate and the military. In the early 3050s, while the Great Houses were locked in struggle against the Clan Invasion, O'Reilly launched the Hegemony's most ambitious campaign ever against the nearby Lothian League. The conquest took longer than expected, thanks to League mercenaries who tried in vain to fend off the Marian Legions, but the realm did eventually fall after less than a year of fighting. Though resistance continued for many years, the Caesar declared victory and almost immediately began seeking new targets.

In the late 3050s, Word of Blake agents, attempting to destabilize the region further, entered into a secret alliance with the Marian Hegemony to upgrade its military and turn it against the Magistracy of Canopus. The plan's failure, however, prompted the Caesar to look desperately for a new conquest, a victory to assure the masses that the Hegemony remained strong. But while Caesar Sean was at the helm, it was his son, Julius, who would steal his thunder by launching an unsanctioned—yet tremendously successful—conquest of the Illyrian Palatinate. The Illyrian conquest became Julius' crowning achievement after negotiating a settlement with the Lothian resistance, and proved that the younger O'Reilly had not only built a power base within the Hegemony military (much the same way his father had), but was also adept at using it. Furthermore, unlike his father, Julius would see this power base used before an accident could claim the Caesar's life. During a ceremony honoring his accomplishments, the coup was launched, with the backing of more than just a majority of the Marian Legions, but also of a Senate swayed by Julius' declarations of his father's failures and indiscretions. By nightfall of 8 August 3063, Sean O'Reilly was gone, impaled on Julius' sword.

Under Sean O'Reilly, the Hegemony reached its peak of power and political standing, and drew ever closer to the classic Roman model after which it had first been forged. With his reforms to the government, he gave a voice to the plebe (lower) class in the form of the Plebian Tribunate, a body that won the right to vote in Hegemony affairs during the reconstruction period after the Jihad. He declared both the conquered Lothian League and the Illyrian Palatinate united territories in the Hegemony, and granted both nations a voice in the Marian Senate.

But it was Julius' triumph over his father that would also doom his reign as surely as it had begun. With Sean's ascent, the primary ties bringing the Hegemony covert support from the Word of Blake were cut off. Julius' decision in 3066 to assault the nearby Circinus Federation next pitted his Legions against Circinans who were, surprisingly, armed with Blakist-provided weapons. With the collapse of the Hegemony offensive, it became apparent that the Federation was profiting from Blakist support, and the rift between the Marians and their one-time backers widened, erupting in open conflict during the Jihad.

Though Blakist agents savaged the Hegemony in the latter years of the Jihad, after first exterminating the capital city in a lightning blitzkrieg, the Marian forces acquitted themselves well. But, while able to hold onto most of their territory, renewed resistance in the conquered Lothian League would eventually result in that state's effective separation from the Hegemony. The decades of reconstruction since have not seen this loss reversed, though every Caesar since Cassius O'Reilly has reinstated the Hegemony's claim to its "wayward protectorate."

Today's Marian Hegemony has come a ways from its days as a pirate state with dreams of greatness, but to many, its roots are still visible. Though a democratic system forms the basis of the Senate, which handles all day-to-day affairs of government, the patricians who elect the senators are hereditary nobles, a class that rules over the plebes, or ordinary citizens. Slavery is still condoned in the Hegemony, though laws granting very limited rights to this class have been passed in recent years. Yet all of these rights remain in place only at the sufferance of the Caesar, who retains the ultimate authority over the military and the patriarchs.

Yet, for all its flaws, the Marian Hegemony remains a player on the frontiers of the Inner Sphere; a harsh nation, for a harsh region.

In our final segment on the Periphery, the scattered minor realms and independent powers of the Periphery will be our focus, along with a brief mention of the pirates who even now stalk the space lanes beyond the boundaries of the Great Houses! Please join us. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XLVIII: Denizens of the Periphery

---

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

Tourist guides today don't bother with the Periphery world of Antallos, except to caution folks to stay away. But back in the time of the Star League, this planet was a hub of trade between the League and the nearby Federated Suns, Draconis Combine, and Outworlds Alliance. With the fall of the League, this world and its stores of lostech became a prime target for savage raids by neighboring realms, until all semblance of government finally collapsed in the late 2800s. The entire social structure here eroded into a fragmentation of city-states, many of them ruled by nomadic tribes and descendants of refugees from House Kurita and the old Outworlds Alliance, all patterned on unique sets of governments that often come into conflict. But it wasn't until 200 years later that Port Krin would arise as the dominant force in planetary politics, united by force and thriving on piracy and slave trading.

Outside the city of Port Krin, located on the southern shores of Talisea, is a world made up mostly of blasted desert wastes and badlands, with a smattering of city-states, only a few of which possess BattleMechs. Prospectors, scavengers, pirates, and nomads wander these wastes, their means of survival a potential hazard for any unwary traveler who crosses their paths. Out there, there is no law but survival of the fittest, and with pirates and lost mercenaries running the cities, treachery lurks around every street corner.

Antallos is the kind of world we tend to think of, if and when we do think about the Periphery. We imagine blasted wastelands, perhaps seeded with the decayed remains of a glorious past. We envision brigands and scavengers, scratching out a living in these wastes through murder and plunder. Our minds focus on these negative images, believing them to be all there is on the fringes of human expansion.

Yet, as we have seen, there are realms in these regions as rich and complex as any nation of the Inner Sphere. The Magistracy of Canopus, with its strong economy, rich cultural history, and economy of luxury, provides a striking contrast to the militant police state of the Capellan Confederation nearby, as does the fiercely independent Taurian Concordat to its monolithic neighbor, the Federated Suns. Even the Marian Hegemony, pirates made good by generations of ambition and struggle, stands as a curious counterpoint to the nearest former Free Worlds provinces of the Rim Commonality and the Duchy of Tamarind-Abbey.

Beyond these realms lie even more unique nations and minor powers. Beyond Lyran space, for instance, lies the Rim Collection, a seven-world democratic state founded in 3048 by a Free Worlds League expatriate and a local town councilman with dreams of greatness. Struggling for many years against pirate raids and the natural strife that comes with the birth of any nation, the Collection has remained a democratic realm, a confederation of worlds united for trade and self-defense, but free to elect their own leaders and create their own laws. The people here are as hard-working and independent as their nearest Lyran neighbors, and generally as benign.

Not so far from this realm lies the Rim Territories, an eleven-world bandit kingdom, forged from worlds that broke away from Lyran rule in the chaos of the Jihad, plus colonies settled by refugees of that same horrible conflict. Desperate for order and for protection, these people came easily under the sway of powerful bandit leaders based in the area, and continue to scratch out a living while their "protectors" prey on neighboring realms.

Further rimward, past the shattered remains of the Circinus Federation (a pirate state cut almost from the same cloth as the Marian Hegemony, but annihilated in the final years of the Jihad along with its capital world), is the Lothian League, a confederation of six icy worlds, founded by Taurian refugees from the Reunification War, and briefly conquered during the Hegemony's rise in the mid-thirtieth century. Though regaining their freedom in the chaos of the Jihad, the League and the Hegemony maintain strong ties, and there is still a distinctly Roman flavor to the governments that now maintain the Lothian worlds.

Wedged between the Hegemony and the Rim Commonality of the former Free Worlds League another tiny realm, a three-planet alliance known as the Niops Association, is located. Founded as a Star League-era astronomical research base, these worlds grew into a microstate after an influx of refugees from the Succession Wars arrived, and have lived in relative peace and isolation under the rule of noble intellectuals, descended from the original researchers.

Following along the rimward regions of the Inner Sphere, we find the Fronc Reaches, an eleven-world alliance once known as the New Colony Region between the Magistracy of Canopus and the Taurian Concordat. Since winning their independence in the mid 3060s, these worlds have remained loosely affiliated with the Magistracy of Canopus and—by extension—the Capellan Confederation, with a weak central government and a standing army that is composed of mercenaries and "rehabilitated" pirates. Much like the Taurians and Canopians who originally founded these worlds, the inhabitants here are hearty folk, determined to survive by their own blood, sweat, and tears, and equally determined to fight and die for what they have earned.

Beyond the boundaries of the Federated Suns lie two more Periphery realms as different from each other as night and day, with the Filtvelt Coalition, a seven-star breakaway state of the Federated Suns, definitely belonging to the "day." Culturally linked to the Davion realm, the Coalition is civilized, but no less determined to remain free of its motherland, its rulers sworn to hold onto the power they claimed when the Jihad cut them off from New Avalon. The Tortuga Dominions, of course, are the "night," by

comparison, consisting of six planets ruled by pirates; a true bandit kingdom, where justice belongs to the strong, and rulers are determined by their prowess with a BattleMech.

Farther coreward of these realms is another three-world league, like a twin to the Niops Association, but separated at stellar birth. The Mica Majority, a trio of mining worlds long run dry, was founded originally as a penal colony for criminals of the Draconis Combine. The men and women who live in the domes of these frigid worlds manage a modest existence through mining and trade with nearby systems, secure that the fruits of their labors are insufficient to draw the attentions of even the most desperate pirates.

As if to prove that Periphery realms can come in an even smaller size, however, we come upon Randis IV, a world dominated by an ancient brotherhood of MechWarriors, each of whom undergoes trials so grueling they could even test the mettle of an elite Clan warrior. The Brotherhood of Randis, like a band of Knights Templar, has protected this peaceful agrarian world for many generations, forming the pinnacle of a one-world feudal hierarchy known as the Fiefdom of Randis.

In the coreward regions, beyond the occupation zones of the Clans and the boundaries of the Rasalhague Dominion, lie the Barrens, an expanse of worlds where no laws hold sway, but where pirates and renegade Clansmen are a constant hazard. The true frontier, these worlds lost all semblance of the order brought to them under Clan domination; when, shortly after the terrible fighting of the Jihad, there were twin invasions by the Hell's Horses and Ice Hellion Clans (not to mention the catastrophic fighting among the Clan homeworlds, fighting the Clans refuse to discuss, which cut them off from Clan space). Once known as the region where three minor powers held sway—the Oberon Confederation, the Greater Valkyrate, and the Elysian Fields—these worlds are now united only in their people's fierce determination to remain free of Clan and Inner Sphere rulers. In this region it is not uncommon to find pirates at work, not looting or raiding these planets, but acting as mercenaries and protecting them in a series of informal alliances. Descendants of refugees from the Jihad may also be found here, working hard to develop respectable colonies far from an Inner Sphere they now see as corrupted beyond measure, a strange mix of the barbaric and the noble, in a region that has, for centuries, seen nothing but the former.

Scattered about these realms and regions are, of course, the independent worlds. Often preyed upon or preying upon their neighbors, or secure in their isolation and lack of valuable resources, these worlds are as homesteads in a vast frontier of space. Many are the homes of refugees from mankind's millennia-long folly of war, while others are treasure-seekers, after that odd, rumored Star League cache leftover from the Golden Age.

They are as different from one another as any two people can be, yet united in that they live on the fringes of known space. They are the people of the Periphery, the hearty and independent souls who dared to look beyond the bounds of the Successor States and find a future of their own.

The next leg in our tour of the stars will bring us to an unusual power, both immense and ineffable. They serve all, yet claim few territories of their own, surviving in perfect symbiosis with all of the Inner Sphere, though once they may have sought to dominate it. We review the history of ComStar next time on our Tour of the Stars. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume XLIX: After the Storm—The Dawn of ComStar

---

03/09/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

The technology is as old as mankind's Golden Age, and rarer than even the mighty BattleMechs spawned from that same era, yet all of us rely on it in some way, shape or form. Indeed, even these words, written here on Mother Terra, have traveled through dozens—if not, hundreds—of star systems, to reach your eyes that you might learn from them. Of course, I am speaking of the communications network of hyperpulse generators that bind our worlds together and link us to the universe beyond. Communications, the lifeblood of any great civilization, has always been one of mankind's most overlooked yet most critical achievements. Thanks to the determined organization of a chosen few, you and I can see, hear, and learn from each other, even over the gulf of interstellar space, where radio waves would take years—even centuries—to reach.

The organization known today as ComStar formed from the merging of two major Star League-era interstellar communications conglomerates known as Communications Enterprises, Incorporated, and Starlight Broadcasting, Limited. Contrary to popular belief, this organization, often referred to as the Order of ComStar, was not the first steward of the hyperpulse grid, but it has certainly been the longest lasting. In its long history this Order has evolved from a mere corporation with a monopoly on the communications service into a political and military power in its own right that has at times been mankind's greatest champion as well as its worst enemy.

But what is ComStar today? And how did it come to be?

*To understand where ComStar came from, we must first acknowledge the state of the hyperpulse generator network and what a monolithic system it had become under the Star League. Indeed, it took the scientific and technical resources of the Star League to even develop the system at all, much less distribute it among the worlds of the Inner Sphere. Prior to the HPG, communications between worlds were limited to laser-pulse messages, beamed to courier DropShips and JumpShips in a Pony Express system, or simple faster-than-light transmitters that were limited to scanned or text-only transmissions. Messages took months to reach Terra from the worlds of the Periphery. Obviously, this made running any star-spanning empire difficult, to say nothing of the Star League.*

*Thus, in 2614, did the League commission the development of FTL communications based on the theories of Cassie DeBurke, a professor at the prestigious University of Terra. The theory was simple enough: to transmit messages in the form of energy pulses in the same way that JumpShips travel through hyperspace. The result, first successfully tested in 2630, was the hyperpulse generator (HPG), effectively a huge "gun" capable of "shooting" complex messages as far away as fifty light-years. To reach the entire League, a network of these HPGs was then put in place, based on a simple two-stage system of primary HPGs (the First Circuit), and a secondary network of hyperpulse relay stations (the Outer Circuit). That the Star League footed the bill for the development of HPGs throughout all its member states was arguably its most magnanimous and longest-lasting contribution to human history. On a more practical level, it also allowed the Star League's ruling family, House Cameron, unparalleled access to all of the Inner Sphere, which they studiously maintained by developing a massive bureaucracy of technicians and communications specialists to run this network, the Star League Communication Network (SLCOMNET).*

*By the 2750s, SLCOMNET had become so huge and so specialized that no one could argue its vital importance to the Star League. The network was so large as to be almost incomprehensible, handling all data transmitted across interstellar distances—from letters between families to urgent orders from Terra for the massive SLDF. Transmission volume included signals as short as a single word of text, to as large as a three-hour holoivid program, shared with every world in a given region. Security and privacy became paramount concerns, as much as the technical expertise and the mathematical skills to assure that signals reached their destinations intact and ungarbled. This tremendous undertaking was beyond any one mere bureaucracy, and so, by the closing days of the Star League, SLCOMNET was heavily reliant on the support of such private companies as Starlight Broadcasting and Communications Enterprises just to maintain operations at a cost-effective rate. These companies would eventually prove vital to the survival of the network long after the Star League that put it together had crumbled to ash.*

—Vladimir Toolippi, *Enlightening the Dark Age: A ComStar History*, New Avalon Press, 3125

By the time of Stefan Amaris' coup, the Star League's communications network was at its peak of development, linking every single inhabited world throughout the Inner Sphere and Periphery, backed up by mobile transmitters aboard many official Hegemony civil-service and military JumpShips and WarShips. It was a network entirely dependent on the technical expertise and massive bureaucracy that only the Star League could fund and maintain, and for that reason most people took for granted that the League would endure forever. With a single laser blast, however, Stefan Amaris proved such people wrong. As the Star League began to crumble like a house of cards, finding someone willing to maintain this vital, yet wholly overlooked and incredibly massive apparatus, became one of the last things the various House Lords could agree on.

The man entrusted with restoring the war-ravaged communications network was none other than Jerome Blake. As the highest-ranking member of the SLCOMNET hierarchy who was not captured or killed during the Amaris coup, Blake's heroic efforts to

maintain communications during the crisis, and to tap into the Usurper's transmissions in support of the SLDF's campaign of liberation, brought him notoriety and a reputation for integrity sorely lacking among other leaders of the day. Blake was named to head the reconstruction in 2780.

Yet, even as the House Lords approved his appointment to head the reconstruction of the Star League's vital communications network—a choice, ironically enough, advanced by Nicoletta Calderon of the historically anti-Star League Taurian Concordat—the same rulers were also dismantling the nation that gave birth to it. Kerensky's Exodus hammered the last nail in the coffin of the Star League, leaving Blake and the tattered remains of the SLCOMNET alone and unsupported as war began to grip the Inner Sphere.

By 2785, Jerome Blake did indeed manage the Herculean task of rebuilding the First Circuit of the former Terran Hegemony, linking the reconstructed A-stations on several key Hegemony worlds, but the accomplishment was a bittersweet victory. Already, tensions had escalated among the House Lords to the point where the only question was when—not if—war would come. With most of the SLDF gone—save those who turned mercenary, those who joined the regular armies of the Great Houses, or those who followed Kerensky's suggestion to swear allegiance to Blake's reconstruction effort—few remained who could protect the Terran Hegemony from absorption by its neighbors. Realizing that fact prompted Blake to work quickly on consolidating the gains of his years of effort.

As an entity, ComStar came into being in late 2785, when Jerome Blake gathered the chief administrators of all First Circuit HPGs and established among them a set of parliamentary rules and procedures for governing the interstellar communications network. His simple, two-page plan became the foundation of the Articles of ComStar, as the former Star League department of communications came to be known that same year. Having effectively transformed the bureaucracy into a loose corporate government, Blake gained the legitimacy and the support he needed from within the organization to not only better develop its infrastructure, but also to make use of its military forces, and to speak on behalf of his new organization in diplomatic relations with the other powers of the Inner Sphere. Among its first orders of business, this new order would seek to: establish its neutrality in the coming wars; assure its legitimacy—as master of the communications network—as a fair and impartial organization, to be dealt with and respected; and to secure a base world at the heart of the Inner Sphere, where it could maintain operations without interference from the House Lords.

Thus began Operation Silver Shield, the culmination of which included the occupation of Terra.

*"People of the former Star League. I am Jerome Blake, Prime Administrator of ComStar. As of now, 0900 hours Terran Standard Time, military forces under my direct command have seized control of the Sol star system. ComStar is now officially in control of Terra and all former Star League facilities remaining in the system. From this time forward, I proclaim Terra and the entire Sol system as neutral under the protection of ComStar, under the terms and conditions of the Communications Protocol of 2787. As the previous broadcast has made clear, ComStar has sufficient military force to defend the homeworld of mankind from any aggressor.*

*"Our goals are peaceful. We seek the unity and prosperity of mankind. This action was taken to save life in the devastating war that is unfolding. ComStar will continue to offer its communications services to all member states, as long as the Sol system and our neutrality are honored."*

—Jerome Blake, 28 June 2788.

With Terra firmly under his control, ComStar's neutrality assured by treaties with the Great Houses, and the introduction of the ComStar letter of credit (the C-Bill) as a common unit of exchange among all Houses and nations for ComStar's services, Jerome Blake's Operation Silver Shield was an unqualified success.

Join us next week for our second part of this fascinating four-part tale on the origins and evolution of ComStar through the dark years of the Succession Wars. I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume L: Mystic Technocracy—The Ways of ComStar

---

03/09/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

Today, many peoples throughout the Inner Sphere look upon ComStar as an enigmatic order, a peculiar mix of high technology and quasi-religious spiritualism. Their organization is the curious mix one might expect if a profit-conscious corporation and a silent and secretive brotherhood of monks ever joined forces. The evolution of this mystical technocracy has had its extremes, of course, as anyone who remembers or knows the history of the Jihad could tell you. But while the extreme ways and philosophies of the Word of Blake may have soured the image of ComStar for contemporary and future generations, their origin and the development remain evident in the order even today.

*Though many have claimed that Jerome Blake was a mystic, the fact remains that it was not until the reign of Conrad Toyama, his greatest devotee and chief administrator of the Dieron HPG station, that the organization would become the quasi-religious power it now is. In fact, until Toyama, ComStar maintained a very corporate hierarchy, headed by a CEO (Prime Administrator), who held the strongest position over a board of directors (the First Circuit administrators), and which issued letters of credit, maintained its own corporate security force (known as ROM), dedicated to securing the organization's neutrality against outside interference.*

*In Conrad Toyama, Blake found his most fanatical believer, a man willing to do anything to achieve what he saw as the ultimate goals of ComStar, as Blake allegedly foresaw them. Prior to Blake's death, the charismatic and ever-loyal Toyama was a wellspring of support, who is even credited with coining the order's name from the names of the companies once employed to support the Star League's department of communications. His beliefs bordering on fanaticism, Toyama would turn to Blake's journals after the death of ComStar's founder, and it was from these that he founded the order's quasi-religion, the "Word of Blake."*

—Vladimir Toolippi, *Enlightening the Dark Age: A ComStar History*, New Avalon Press, 3125

Various theories have sprung up in the centuries since Conrad Toyama, ComStar's second—and final—Prime Administrator—took office. Some claim he hastened the demise of his beloved master soon after the aging founder of the order began to succumb to illness and age, seeking only to seize power for himself. Others say he did indeed receive an epiphany when he visited Jerome Blake on his deathbed in 2819. Regardless, few stood in his way when he ascended to the head of the First Circuit.

Soon afterward, based on his own fanatic interpretations of Blake's journals—and, some say, after a short-lived rebellion and subsequent purge made possible by ROM agents throughout the organization—Toyama instituted sweeping changes in ComStar's style and focus. Almost overnight, the First Circuit became the pinnacle of the ComStar Order, the Prime Administrator became known as the Primus, and planetary administrators became known as Precentors. Support staff for the Precentors consisted of Demi-Precentors, while technicians became known as adepts, and trainees became acolytes. ROM, the corporate security force, became all-pervading, its new mandate now included that it ensure total obedience to the dictates of the First Circuit and the Word of Blake. Membership in the Order became a lifelong commitment rather than a mere job, to ensure that none of the precious secrets and technology ComStar protected, developed, and maintained could fall into the hands of outsiders.

To justify these changes, Toyama made the Word of Blake required reading for all levels of the Order. These reprints of Blake's journals now included annotations by Toyama himself, interpreting what he—and others—saw as divine inspirations, prophecy, and a holy mission for ComStar. By the end of Toyama's reign, the transformation's effects were unquestionable. ComStar was as the monasteries of Terra's European Dark Age, a secret and ostensibly neutral order of chosen men and women charged with the sacred task of preserving knowledge for the day when mankind would again awaken from its folly and welcome the Order as its proper saviors.

*. . . Once the Great Houses have beaten themselves senseless and bloody, we can emerge, offering a new chance to recover what they have tried so hard to destroy.*

*All that saved mankind during its last so-called Dark Age were the churches and religions. These were havens for humanity's learning and they stood alone as beacons in the darkness and foulness that humankind had become. . . . If ComStar is to survive into the future, it must look to these religions as a blueprint for surviving the wars that are unfolding around us. [Salvation 4:18–24]*

*(In this one passage, Blake has laid the foundation for the mission of ComStar, to thrive and relight the lamp of civilization for mankind. Blake also foresees that by creating an oligarchy as the basis for ComStar, the organization's survival is guaranteed during the war of succession that the House Lords currently wage. Only by patterning ourselves after those religions that survived in the past will ComStar live on to the future.)*

—From *The Word of Blake, First Edition*, ComStar Press, 2820 (Original remarks from Blake's journals. Parenthetical remarks were interpretations and explanations added by Conrad Toyama)

Indeed, many of Jerome Blake's "prophecies" did come to pass as the Succession Wars dragged on. Ignoring the Ares Conventions, the House leaders assaulted worlds using biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons en masse, destroying factories, cities, and entire planets if they could not capture and hold them. WarShips and JumpShips, critical to transporting men and supplies to a battle zone, became favored targets, with the former dwindling to extinction in the first two conflicts, and the latter so depleted that the ability to even make war—let alone maintain any semblance of commerce and trade—became threatened after a time.

Through all this, ComStar maintained its control over the knowledge and technology of the fallen Star League, enshrouding its command over the advanced interstellar communications grid with rituals as bizarre as chanting an incantation before working a transmitter, or praising Blake for every successful jump of its spacecraft. To outsiders, after generations of war and the general decay of civilization on hundreds of worlds, the adepts and preceptors of ComStar seemed less and less like a cult and more like real-life magicians as time went on. Many joined the ranks of ComStar to receive the benefits of its enlightenment.

To further emulate the religious aesthetics supposedly called for by the Word of Blake, the members of ComStar took to wearing robes, and their members often shunned direct contact with the peoples of the worlds outside their stations. The hyperpulse generator compound became a modern monastery; its technicians and administrators became its monks and abbots. To be one of ComStar's enlightened required one to surrender all material wealth and titles, but that did not stop many House scions and minor nobles from joining the Order.

When threatened by outside forces, either politically, financially, or militarily, ComStar could even use its control over communications as a powerful tool, threatening—and in some cases, executing—a complete shutdown of interstellar transmissions. Such "interdictions" would affect the offending realm until ComStar's demands for compensation or repentance were met, carrying more political power even than excommunication had during the Dark Ages of Terra's European continent. They also served as an ideal means of maintaining the Order's sanctity without resorting to its long-hidden and vast supply of Star League-era war machines.

But while ComStar's self-imposed mysticism did help preserve its secrets and the integrity of the Order, it also served as a breeding ground for some of the worst crimes in human history. Indeed, many historians today claim that the roots of most of the Succession Wars and the decline of technology can be traced to the machinations of ambitious ComStar Primuses, acts that perhaps even foreshadowed the inevitability of the Word of Blake and its holy war against mankind.

*"The peace of Blake be with you."*

*For centuries, these words accompanied nearly every utterance of the acolytes and adepts of ComStar (and its Word of Blake splinter group). Even during the Jihad, both sides would intone this phrase as if in response to centuries of conditioning. These same words also hinted at ComStar's underlying philosophy, and the man the Order has revered among all others as its founder and greatest teacher. Jerome Blake saw a glimmer of hope among his followers that humanity would one day benefit from ComStar's efforts to preserve the lines of communication and maintain the knowledge they seemed fit to destroy in centuries of pointless warfare. This was the "peace of Blake" of which ComStar often spoke.*

*Unfortunately, Blake's followers, over the centuries, began to corrupt that same vision, building a religion around the basic principle of preserving knowledge. As successive Primuses saw, in the Inner Sphere, the ultimate prospect of control according to their interpretation of Blake's wisdom, some believed in helping the collapse of civilization along a little. In the end, is it any wonder that the most fanatical and reactionary among these children of "Blake's Word" launched the greatest and most vicious war mankind has ever known?*

*Sadly, today, the phrase "the peace of Blake be with you" has become yet another casualty of that terrible era, when the interpretations of fanatics transformed it into a curse spoken just before the pulling of a trigger or the detonation of a nuclear weapon. You'll not catch a ComStar adept or acolyte uttering the phrase today, as the hateful glares of those who remember only the worst in mankind have burned it away, proving that people can miss the message.*

—Rene Alosano, *Broken Promises: The Legacy of the Jihad*, Republic Press, 3127

In our third installment on ComStar, we will look at the greatest and darkest moments of ComStar's history. The Clan Invasion and the Jihad are our focus for next week's Tour. Won't you join us? I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume LI: Light and Darkness—ComStar’s Triumph and Tragedy

---

03/09/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I’m Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let’s find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

For good or for ill, ComStar remained the sole keeper of interstellar communications for the Inner Sphere and Periphery through the three centuries that followed the collapse of the Star League. Founded on the principles of Jerome Blake, and given a spiritual bent by successors such as Conrad Toyama and Primus Raymond Karpov, the Order grew increasingly mystical and secretive. Its influence in international affairs was both subtle and extreme, depending on the needs of the moment, and yet it retained the veneer of neutrality and peaceful intent as the guiding light for all of mankind—until the Clans appeared in 3048.

*One of the greatest ironies of the Clan invasion, perhaps, is the very event that supposedly triggered it. Although the Clans had already spent perhaps a century debating the matter of whether or not to invade and conquer the worlds Kerensky left behind, the Warden faction—advocating a protectionist hands-off policy toward the Inner Sphere—had managed to keep the pro-invasion Crusaders at bay. Societal pressures might have eventually forced the issue anyway, but it was the arrival of a ComStar Explorer Corps JumpShip in Clan space that lit the proverbial fuse.*

*Citing that the Inner Sphere had now found a way to the home worlds, the Crusaders gained enough momentum through fear and paranoia to win a majority; the invasion became a measure of self-defense against the inevitable arrival of barbarian hordes from the Inner Sphere.*

*But what truly made the event ironic was that ComStar’s explorer corps was created specifically because a past Primus, Adrienne Sims, had a vision of invading monsters from beyond the Periphery. That Sims’ dream-inspired creation of an arm of ComStar to explore the depths of space actually brought about the very holocaust she sought to avoid has at once affirmed and damned the Order’s mystic practices in the eyes of many historians.*

—Rene Alosano, *Broken Promises: The Legacy of the Jihad*, Republic Press, 3127

As it happened, the Clan invasion began during the Primacy of Myndo Waterly, a devout follower of the Word of Blake as interpreted by Conrad Toyama. Fully dedicated to the prophesied time when mankind would turn to ComStar to be lifted from the ashes, she saw the Clans as the force that would bring about the much-anticipated Armageddon. Playing a dangerous political game, Waterly advocated ComStar’s alliance with the invaders, under the guise of ComStar neutrality, offering the warlike Clans her Order’s services in administering their captured worlds while they continued to advance. Though this decision did not sit well with all members of the First Circuit, ComStar did in fact facilitate the invaders for the opening years of the invasion.

Until, of course, it became clear the Clans were after Terra itself.

What followed was one of the most epic BattleMech clashes ever fought on a single world at one time. Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht, leader of the long-hidden ComStar Guards (shortened to Com Guards) challenged the invaders to a proxy battle for control of Terra on the Rasalhaguian world of Tukayyid. An elite-grade military commander—though many historians have speculated on where Focht received such training and expertise in an armed force that had not seen the light of day in centuries—he studied the Clans at length, and squared his forces off against those of all seven invading Clans in a grueling twenty-one-day war, with the fate of mankind in the balance.

The battle of Tukayyid was an unqualified success for the Inner Sphere, but even as Focht and his warriors battled the invaders, Waterly launched an attack of her own—against all of the Inner Sphere. Attempting to bring the Inner Sphere and the Clans to their knees in one fell swoop, Waterly ordered all HPGs throughout the Inner Sphere to shut down, a command only a small portion followed. Warned in advance, many Inner Sphere powers managed to secure numerous HPGs to keep the communications lines open, minimizing the damage done in Waterly’s ill-fated Operation Scorpion. All at once, ComStar had become both humanity’s saviors and its greatest betrayers. The event also triggered the Schism, and created the Word of Blake as an actual faction.

*The story goes that Precentor Martial Focht and Waterly’s own protégé, Precentor Dieron Sharilar Mori, staged a coup within ComStar immediately upon Focht’s return from Tukayyid, removing Waterly and immediately announcing the Order would begin shedding its mystical trappings and trying to help the Inner Sphere. In Mori and Focht’s minds, the Inner Sphere needed a unifying force willing to help stand up to the Clans, and they were determined to do so as partners, rather than as manipulators. The plans, of course, were far too progressive for most. Centuries of ingrained training and dogma could not change overnight, after all.*

*Over the next few years, over half of ComStar defected, joining other hard-liners, such as Precentor Blaine of Gibson, and First Circuit members, such as Precentor Demona Aziz, in self-imposed exile within the Free Worlds League. Proclaiming Marik their Primus-in-Exile, the Word of Blake, a collection of various ComStar sects united in their belief that the old mystical ways of ComStar presented the true vision of Jerome Blake, would eventually rise again; first by reclaiming Terra in 3058, and later by launching the most horrendous war in human history....*

—Rene Alosano, *Broken Promises: The Legacy of the Jihad*, Republic Press, 3127

Indeed, the saga of the Word of Blake/ComStar Schism, initially regarded as an internal affair by most of the Inner Sphere, would become the most fateful development of the Clan Invasion. The majority of ComStar's ROM intelligence service defected with the other hard-liners of the Order, along with close to half the Com Guards, many of whom felt betrayed by Focht for so quickly embracing secularity after their hard-fought victory in the name of the divine Blake on Tukayyid. Despite this, ComStar insisted on regarding the Clans as the true threat, and helped broker the formation of the new Star League in order to counter that threat in the late 3050s. Even the loss of Terra, regarded as merely a symbolic prize by this point, did not seem to concern ComStar, which had made a home of its headquarters on Tukayyid, overmuch. As a result, the rest of the Inner Sphere also seemed oblivious to the danger.

Then came the fateful November day in 3067 when the assembled leaders of the Inner Sphere finally acknowledged that the new Star League was little more than a means to an end already realized. With the various House Lords too tied up in internal affairs spawned by the last two decades of near-constant conflict, the Star League dissolved, incidentally destroying a prophecy that all of the Word of Blake had lain in wait to see revealed. . . .

*Exactly what the "prophecy" was that the Word of Blake's "master" hoped to see revealed is a matter of much debate, especially since almost all of the Word's top-secret records and journals of this mysterious shadow leader vanished in the nuclear fires on Gibson and Circinus. What is largely believed is that, with the "third peaceful transfer of power" (a reference to the Fourth Whiting Conference on Tharkad, where a new Star Lord was to be chosen), the Word of Blake was set to become a fully active member of the new Star League.*

*Lying in wait in several key systems, ready to demonstrate its ability and willingness to uphold the Star League as guardian of all its members, the Word was hoping to be hailed as a savior, easily on par with its estranged kin in ComStar. In some cases, a much more aggressive stance was assumed and plans for military actions were even laid—as on Outreach, where the Wolf's Dragoons had long maintained an anti-Word military campaign, and were thus deemed a real threat—but all evidence suggests the Word merely intended its emergence from the shadows of space over all Inner Sphere capitals as a celebration of it—and the Star League's—greatness.*

*Instead, the League had fallen into disarray. Its moment had been lost, stolen by petty House Lords who could not comprehend the effort and the dedication that had gone into this very moment. What came next was a tantrum on a scale the human race had never known....*

—Vladimir Toolippi, *Enlightening the Dark Age: A ComStar History*, New Avalon Press, 3125

And so, with a wave of WarShips, nuclear weapons, biochemical attacks, and raging hordes of BattleMechs, the Word of Blake, deprived of an ultimate glory promised them during their long years in self-imposed exile, fueled by over three centuries of pent-up anticipation for a collapse of humanity that Blake had prophesied, yet which had never come, began a holy war against the universe. Trillions would die, planets would be shattered, and entire nations would collapse into anarchy before the flames of the Jihad finally burned themselves out, leaving behind an Inner Sphere forever changed.

Join us next week for our final look at ComStar today, after the horrors of the Jihad that nearly destroyed the keepers of interstellar communications, as we continue our tour of the stars! I'm Bertram Habeas.

## Volume LII: A Partnership for the Ages—ComStar Today

---

03/09/34

*We began on Terra, millions of years ago. Today, mankind stretches out among the stars of the Milky Way, touching thousands of worlds, as far from our home as Clan space, more than 2,000 light-years distant. Yet who are we, really? What have we become in our relentless push outward and onward? I'm Bertram Habeas, and tonight, let's find the answers to these and many other fascinating questions together, as we tour the stars!*

**Fact Sheet:** ComStar

**Founding Year:** 2785

**Headquarters (City, World):** Sydney, Australia, Terra

**Official Symbol:** A white inner circle, slightly offset toward the bottom of a gray outer circle. Extending from the center of the white circle and pointing downward is a single gray tail.

**Location (Terra relative):** Facilities on roughly 98% of all inhabited systems within the Inner Sphere.

**Total (Inhabited) Systems:** N/A

**Estimated Personnel (3130):** 14,687,000

**Government:** Corporate (with monastic stylings)

**Ruler:** Primus Lisa Koenigs-Cober

**Dominant Language(s):** English (official), others per station.

**Dominant Religion(s):** Agnosticism (official), others per station.

**Unit of Currency:** C-bill (1 C-bill = 1 second of text-only HPG transmission time)

From the outside, ComStar's massive Class-A hyperpulse generator complex just outside Sydney, Australia, on Terra, is an impressive structure. Part fortress and part office complex, it is dominated by several small satellite receiver dishes clustered around a single, massive dish that occasionally "fires" a burst of blinding, blue-white energy into the sky. A powerful thrum accompanies each of these bursts, as much felt as heard by any living creature within a kilometer of the compound. Each thrum, one every hour on the hour, represents a massive batch of data, hurled into space and beyond with unerring efficiency made possible by centuries of proven technology and the studious maintenance of men and women who make it their lives' work to see to its continued operation.

Inside the massive ferrocrete walls that surround the ComStar compound, security troops wear the ComStar logo, while supplemental vehicle and BattleMech defenders remain in hangars marked with the insignia of The Republic of the Sphere, sheltered from the hot noonday sun. These guardians scan every guest who comes to the compound, with Star League-era sensors capable of detecting any weapon, chemical, or explosive known to man, looking for threats to the sanctity of the complex that serves as both headquarters and home to close to a thousand robed representatives of the Inner Sphere's communications network.

The fires of the Jihad consumed countless lives, shattered mighty armies, and brought nations to their knees. They also turned every aspect of life in the Inner Sphere upside down. As the opening volleys of the Jihad demolished capitals and key command and control centers, the Word of Blake, using its intimate knowledge of the hyperpulse generator network, also sent an invasive virus through the system that affected HPG communications throughout the Inner Sphere by flooding all channels with repeating or scrambled messages.

Overloaded, the network collapsed in several sectors, destabilizing governments and devastating local economies, while paralyzing military command structures. Chaos reigned for several years as the various nations and Houses scrambled, mostly on their own, to recover and regain control throughout the crisis, while the Blakists continued to assault world after world, shattering entire military commands and major industrial centers. Targeted above all other objectives were the factories, facilities, and military bases of ComStar, the Word's nemesis since the 3052 Schism. Com Guard troops, decimated by waves of defections and infiltrated by Word of Blake ROM agents, were repeatedly lured into traps, isolated, and destroyed with ruthless efficiency, forcing many commands to ally with local House units in order to stand a chance. By the time Devlin Stone emerged on the scene, over two thirds of the vaunted Com Guard had already been annihilated, with the battered remains clinging to an ad hoc coalition assembled under the command of then-Precentor Martial Victor Steiner-Davion.

*Devlin Stone's arrival likely saved ComStar's military from immediate collapse as much as it saved the rest of the Inner Sphere from totally succumbing to the Word of Blake's Jihad. Although Victor Steiner-Davion had done a tremendous job with what he had, and even managed quite a few victories, his support apparatus had been so compromised that several coalition commanders were routinely subverting the Com Guards' command in order to fill holes in their own forces.*

*Stone and Steiner-Davion likely saw salvation in each other when the rebel leader finally made contact with the war-weary Precentor Martial. Stone saw in Victor a man who could provide vital contacts with the rest of the Inner Sphere commands struggling to beat back the zealots. Victor saw a man his Com Guards could further rally behind, and whose goals did not include self-aggrandizement. . . . Together, they could wield the Com Guards as a core unit in a coalition vaguely reminiscent of the short-lived new Star League Defense Force, a force that would unite nearly every Clan, the Inner Sphere, and the Periphery's power before the war's end.*

—Vladimir Toolippi, *Enlightening the Dark Age: A ComStar History*, New Avalon Press, 3125

The Com Guards, indeed, made their last stands during the final days of the Jihad, often becoming part of the vanguard during assault operations against the last strongholds of their renegade kin. The history of the Jihad is replete with many instances of Com Guard troops fighting to the last man, demonstrating every ounce as much fanaticism as the enemy they once called brother. Thanks to many of their heroics, in fact, the coalition forces managed to bring a final end to the Jihad and exterminate the Word of Blake threat once and for all. At the same time the rest of ComStar struggled to reclaim the damaged HPG network, even in the decaying Free Worlds League, where once the Blakists held sway.

In the end, ComStar remained, but a changed ComStar. Its mask of carefully cultivated neutrality and spiritual enlightenment had been burned away by what amounted to a civil war. Its army had been virtually destroyed, its survivors transferred under the banner of Devlin Stone and his nascent Republic of the Sphere. Faith in ComStar as the guardian of communication and technology had been all but destroyed, yet there was no one else with the means to rebuild what had nearly been shattered during the Jihad.

For decades, the men and women of ComStar rebuilt. More secular than ever, they nonetheless retained ties to their mystical past, wearing the robes of monks and using the titles first enacted by Conrad Toyama as a symbol of the old ComStar. Yet the Order no longer had the fanatic mysticism of its past. No longer did technicians pray to make their machines work. No longer did every profound utterance become the quote of a sainted Jerome Blake. Most importantly, no longer would the Com Guards field an army of BattleMechs piloted by fanatical devotees.

In place of secret fanaticism, the Order has combined spiritual roots with an open, easy manner; a marriage of a monolithic corporation and a monastic brotherhood. No longer were their compounds sacrosanct from infidels, but were instead open community centers, creating a synergy of good will to heal the horrible wounds of doubt and war.

In the end, ComStar became, as now, a partner to the Inner Sphere, its compounds including a standing garrison of troops from its host nations, or mercenaries approved to operate within said nations. These token military forces today are as much a legitimate protection force as they are a sign of the Order's new covenant with mankind. In entrusting the protection of its valuable facilities, ComStar thus ensures its partners—its customers—of its intention, its new spiritual dedication, to never again rise up as a military power, to never again be able to bring war to the Inner Sphere on such a scale as the Jihad.

Slowly, over the decades since humanity's darkest hours, the men and women of ComStar have found the redemption and the salvation the Order has long sought. Once more, they are the keepers of interstellar communications, the lines that connect all of mankind in a universe of balance and harmony, safeguarding a part of our lives so basic—and yet so vital—that we all tend to take it for granted.

