



HAUKWOOD FIEFS



Imperial Survey 1

FADING SUNS™

HAWKWOOD FIEFS

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Credits

Written by: Christopher Howard

Development and layout by: Bill Bridges

Art direction by: John Bridges

Art by: John Poreda

Maps by: Christopher Howard

Cover art by: John Bridges



Holistic Design Inc.
5295 Hwy 78, D-337
Stone Mountain, GA 30087

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UNDER THE LION BANNER

Allow me to introduce myself; I am Baron Geoffrey Antonin Hawkwood of Gwynneth. My father was a great noble, the lord and sole ruling authority on the continent of Hôd, a proud scion of the original brown-skinned colonists; my mother was a noblewoman of House Juandaastas. I was born in my father's mountain fastness by the Prosperene Sea in the year 4951, five years before the outbreak of the Emperor Wars. The al-Malik were our sworn enemies in the war's early years, bombing our civilian centers from space and killing our warriors on far away worlds. Then, almost overnight, they became our allies against House Decados and the resurgent Vuldrok raiders.

The vagaries of that war were tragic, bordering on the comical. House al-Malik had suffered a war on three fronts. House Decados, we Hawkwoods, and increased activity by the unholy Symbiots pressed the al-Malik to the bargaining table with us, just as barbarian and growing Decados/Hazat aggression forced us to embrace our former foes. As a soldier, I saw some of the damage that our own ships had wrought on the al-Malik and, far worse, the results of recent Symbiot raids on Shaprut against their weakened defenses. As the war shifted, front by front, alliance by alliance, I came to hear the call of our family leader — Alexius. After the war ended with a Hawkwood firmly on the throne, Alexius called, not for Hawkwood superiority, but for human unity among the stars, free of any one house's domination.

Since the war's end, there has been a growing awareness that the Known Worlds, what we now call the Empire, are hemmed in on all sides by hostile forces. The Vuldrok barbarians raid the Hawkwood worlds and the heathen Kurgans threaten the weakened Hazat. The Symbiots harry the al-Malik at the Stigmata border, and even the Decados and Li Halan face a silent and potential threat from the mys-

terious Vau. And throughout the Known Worlds, the stars themselves fade. We are now at the twilight of the old, perhaps the last, millennium. It is here, at this end or beginning of all things, that we must stand together or fall one by one.

To this end the Emperor has commissioned this volume, and others to follow, each describing the Known Worlds. They are dedicated to the proposition that that which divides us has ever been less than that which unites us. Each book will be written by a member of the Emperor's Questing Knights who is most familiar with the worlds involved. The Emperor has promised each author, regardless of house, the power to speak his or her mind without fear of censorship. It was decided that we Hawkwoods, the Emperor's family of origin, would speak first. I was chosen because I am a soldier, not a courtier, and not afraid to see things as they are. I left my home planet over two years ago with a retinue including two Charioteer pilots (one a stellar-cartographer), an Engineer, an Amalthean healer and an Orthodox scholar.

Since then I have traveled the Hawkwood planets by spaceship, boat, horse and often by foot. As one might expect, I found a great variety of people, traditions and opinions on my journey; I hope this book does at least some small justice to this diversity. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention for the record that the observations in this book are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of my house or Emperor. Nevertheless, I have made it my mission to report on the state of these planets in a manner that is fair and impartial. It is my sincere hope that those authors who are to follow my lead in these volumes will adhere to the example that I have striven to deliver.

Baron Geoffrey Hawkwood,
Gwynneth



Delphi

Bathed in the glow of its yellow-orange sun, from space Delphi appears broken into three horizontal bands. The center is a wide zone of green and ocean blue, capped by great domes of white ice at its two growing polar regions. Concentrated stretches of maxicrete gray and, at night, star cluster patterns of electric light give evidence of the planet's large and vibrant human population. Spiral cyclone cloud formations corkscrew their way through the planet's atmosphere, betraying its tempestuous climate. The cradle of House Hawkwood from its earliest days, Delphi has long stood as a powerful nexus of military, mercantile and political power.

History

The First Republic explorers who discovered Delphi in 2395 were quick to realize its future importance. Rich in needed resources, Delphi swiftly became the focal point for competing corporate and political claims. Similar in temperature and biome to Holy Terra, Delphi seemed a natural settlement to weary colonists. The ruling powers of the fraying republic sought to hold the new planet under their sway, while break-away elements saw it as a place to seek freedoms unavailable on more developed worlds. Bloodshed severed the planet's ties with the First Republic when one of the revolutionary leaders, Hans Nodol, stormed the capital city and executed the republican governor. After winning this freedom, the people of Delphi sought a return to normalcy. Sensing an opportunity to stabilize the situation, Gervaise Windsor-Hapsburg — a corporate leader who claimed royal blood dating back as far as pre-space Urth — publicly put the planet's remaining corporate interests to restoring order.

Through Gervaise's clever economic diplomacy, the revolutionaries and the remaining republican elements became dependent on him as he built his political base. He was soon the planet's *de facto* ruler, and pulled the plug on the two warring factions by arresting their leaders. He then made both sides a tempting offer they could not refuse: he allowed both factions a role in the new government while he launched badly needed reforms. Keeping the lion's share of power among his family and closest confidants, he built a loyal legacy. His philosophy of pragmatic idealism was perpetuated by his heirs long after his death.

In 2525 Gervaise's grandson, Sir Robert Hawkwood, formally founded House Hawkwood, solidifying the family's territorial claims. The house joined forces with both foreign powers and another embryonic royal family, House Justinian. The Justinians, in addition to holding their own planet of Paradise, gained control over the continent of Courai.

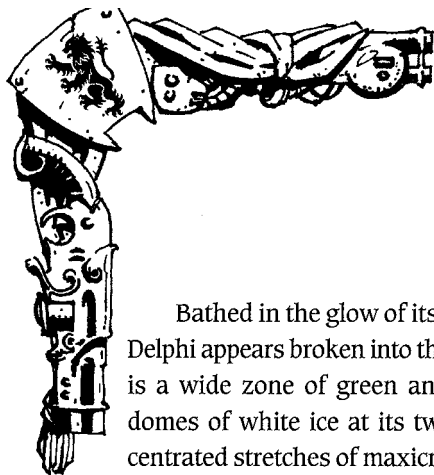
Throughout the ensuing Diaspora and into the Second Republic, Delphi's role in galactic history continued to grow. When the Prophet Zebulon first spread his teachings, his philosophies found welcome adherents on Delphi. The world gained even greater status with the Church when many of its sons and daughters valiantly fought and died during the Ur-Ukar War.

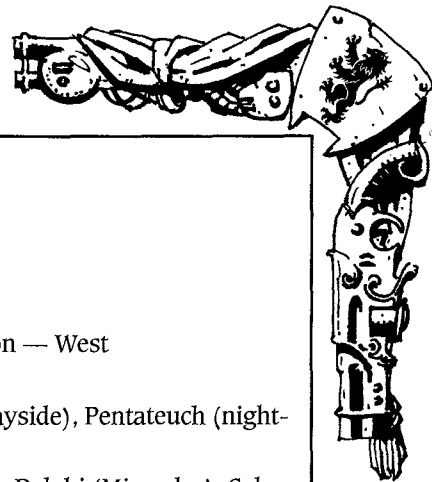
Delphi rose to the pinnacle of Second Republic power as a regional, if not truly galactic, power. Still considered nearly perfect in terms of weather and natural surroundings, Delphi required little of the dubious benefits of the terraforming craze. Its people spurned weather control technology, although many modern Delphians have since come to regret this decision. As the Republic crumbled, Delphi was one of the first planets to observe the fading suns phenomenon. The planet's Urth-like yellow sun swelled and turned orange within two generations; instead of growing hotter, however, the planet cooled precipitously as the sun faded. Increased sunspot activity added to the planet's troubles as violent new weather patterns swept across the planet's surface. Indigenous life forms perished, and only the artificial removal of species to better climes averted their total extinction.

Despite suffering rampant unemployment and political turmoil, Delphi successfully resisted the mass dissolution of its urban centers that occurred on other planets. Bending to Church mandates just enough to avoid heresy charges, the Delphian Hawkwoods nevertheless fell from favor with much of the Church hierarchy. This controversy lasted for centuries before Delphi once again proved its worth by shielding the faithful from the Barbarian Invasions of the 46th century. Delphi, buffered by Leminkainen and Ravenna, remained largely untouched, but nevertheless provided a great deal of aid to surrounding planets.

Delphi and other Hawkwood worlds joined forces with Vladimir Aleto as he united the stars against the barbarians. Another significant event at this time was the fall of House Justinian as a major power. Losing many of its best warriors in support of House Aleto, the final blow came with the closure of the jump route to Paradise, severing House Justinian from its power base. Suspected Decados (and perhaps Hazat) involvement in this event, and Hawkwood willingness to allow the weakened house to retain much of its power in Courai, placed Justinian firmly in the Hawkwood's camp.

By the 50th century, Delphi was the leading military and diplomatic force behind the Hawkwood bid for the throne





in the Emperor Wars. Again, safe from direct assault, Delphi benefited greatly from Alexius's rise to power, and it remains the Ravenna-born Emperor's most solid base of power. Since Alexius's ascendancy, Delphi has gained greater influence on Tethys and Byzantium Secundus than ever before. Never conquered during 2,500 years of Hawkwood rule, the "Lion of Planets" prepares to help lead the Empire into the next millennium.

Solar System

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

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

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

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

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

Rochala: Rochala is a small frozen rock in space. The planetoid once served as a Hawkwood listening post until several successive crews went mad and killed themselves. The house has recently reopened the installation and at least one *Hornet* class frigate remains close at all times.

People & Places

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

Delphi's main landmass is the Virigo super-continent, divided along two political boundaries: Virigo Major and Virigo Minor. Together with Courai (separated from Virigo by a thin expanse of water), this continental grouping constitutes 80% of Delphi's landmass. The remainder is in its two polar continents, Frisia and Davros.

Delphi Traits

Cathedral: Orthodox

Agora: Charioteers/Reeves

Garrison: 8

Capital: Anschok City Region — West

Jumps: 2

Adjacent worlds: Tethys (dayside), Pentateuch (nightside), Ravenna (parallel)

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

Delphi orbits a standard sized yellow-orange K5 star (surface temperature 7,000° F) at a distance of 125 million miles. Only slightly larger than Holy Terra's sun, Church and Charioteer astronomers rate the star's mass at 1.2 Holy Terran Solar Masses (HTSM). Delphi's sun is badly affected by the fading suns phenomenon and has a bleached orange-white tint, radiating far less heat than usual for a star of its kind.

Tech: 6

Human Population: 2,015,000,000

Alien Population: 150,000 (mostly Ur-Obun)

Resources: Granite, gold, deuterium

Exports: Granite, gold, deuterium, politics

Landscape: Delphi is a cool, windy planet with temperate conditions near the equator and in mid-latitudes during the summer months, although snow along the equator is not uncommon. Deciduous forests blanket the equator, while boreal evergreen forests, steppe and arctic tundra cover most of the rest of the planet. The planet's polar regions have grown far larger than the rocky continents that underlie them; the polar oceans freeze during the winter.

Virigo Major

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

Virigo Major is divided into a system of counties and baronies, ranging from vast regional fiefdoms to small townships. Ruling over the continent is Princess Victoria



Hawkwood, who is also Delphi's preeminent voice in inter-planetary affairs. Loved by her people, she rules with an iron fist in a velvet glove. Because of the death of a favorite nephew, Sir Erasmus Henry Hawkwood, she has taken a recent interest in Leminkainen politics. Below her, a system of lesser nobles, Church leaders and guild interests form a tightly-organized governing system that oversees the continent's domestic affairs. This system has been in place since the Fall and has served the kingdom well, making Virigo Major one of the wealthiest and most stable regions in the Empire.

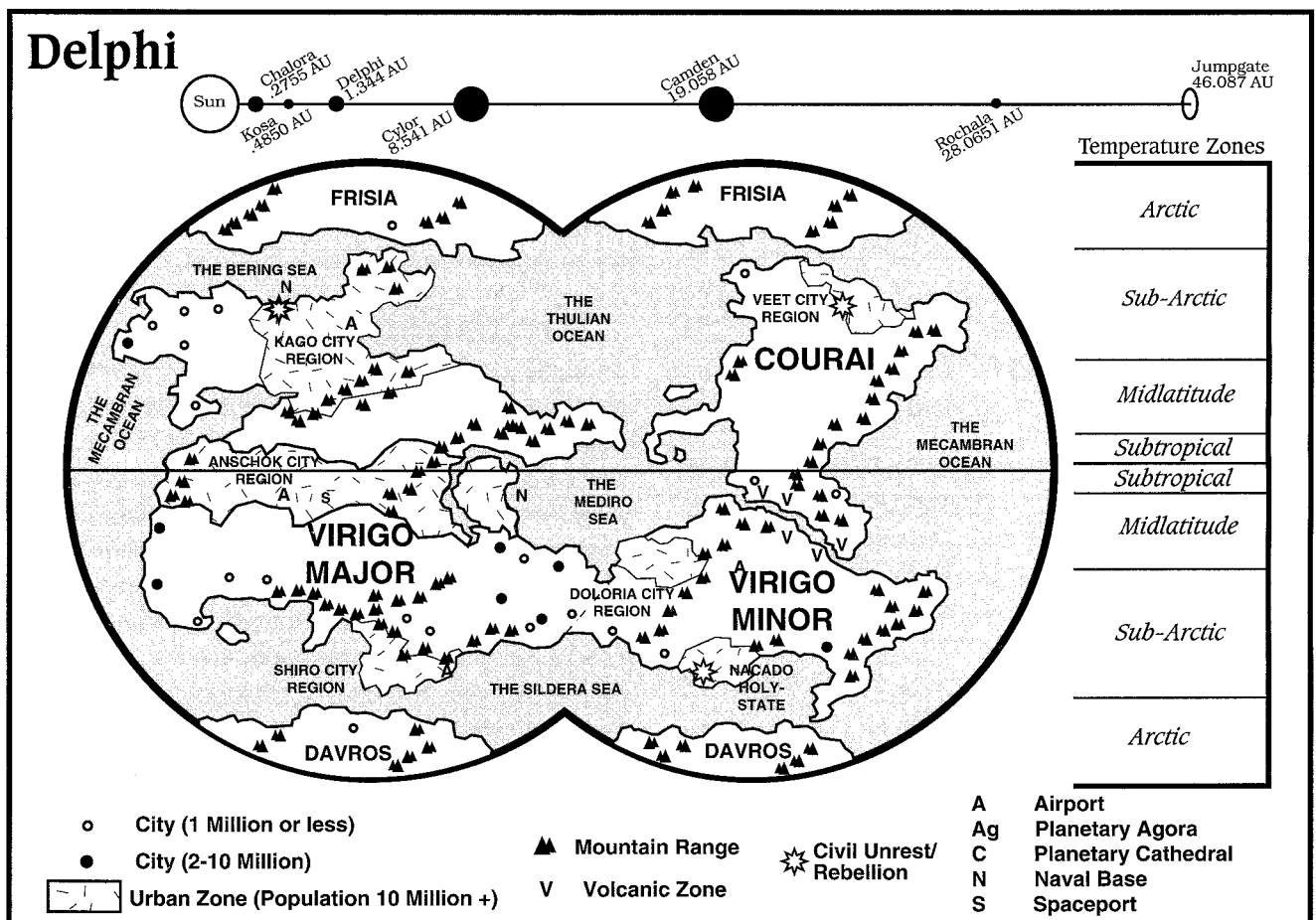
Urban Regions

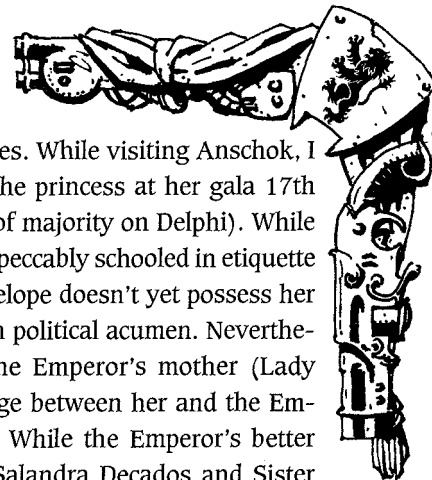
Virigo Major has three major urban areas that sprawl in parallel bands across the continent's northern, equatorial and southern expanses. These super cities consist of either uninterrupted urban areas that stretch on for literally hundreds of miles, or of large individual cities linked by smaller cities, towns and hamlets. Virigo Major's urban regions exhibit the highest degree of technology among the common citizenry on any Hawkwood world (even many serfs enjoy running water and electric lighting).

The Kago City Region: The Kago region hugs the continent's mountainous northern coast along the Bering Sea. Largely consisting of older individual cities, Kago is a confusing tangle of twisting highways, architectural styles,

massive shanty towns and heavy industry. Much of the region is covered by "stacks," similar to those found on Byzantium Secundus. These structures are multi-tiered lattices of steel and maxicrete, supporting systems of roads and buildings. They have an ant-hill quality and allow several layers of teeming humanity to live above each other in mountainous regions where land is at a premium. The Kago shipyards build most of the planet's seagoing merchant vessels, despite the fact that its ports are often frozen three-fourths of the year. Massive ice-cutting ships keep the channels clear enough for traffic.

The city also hosts a number of other industries, including: refineries, mining in the southern hard-rock regions, and even a small but growing automobile industry. Following the *Doctrine of Universal Inheritance*, Kago began a slow transition to fossil fuels to show its willingness to convert to more primitive forms of technology. Now mostly dependent on the dwindling resource, Kago suffers from energy shortages and is the most polluted city in Hawkwood space. Scravers, Muster and numerous minor industrial and social guilds are powerful in this region, employing millions of citizens. Thousands of homeless children wander the slums. Some are pitiful beggars while others form gangs, attacking strangers with clubs, knives and even firearms. Even the house militia cannot put a stop to the murder and mayhem that sometimes ensues here.





Kago was the first Delphian settlement and is rich in colorful urban legend. Perhaps the most notable of these is how, when the Disciple Hombor the Beggar visited the region (already a large city during the Diaspora), he heard about two demonesses who disguised themselves as priests, waylaying and eating passing pilgrims. The demonesses invited the disciple to their lair and, after feeding him a meal of goat and millrice, devoured him. Filled with the spirit of the Pancreator, however, the Disciple reformed in their stomachs. Bursting forth from his fleshy cage, he freed the region from their curse. While this story is not codified in the Omega Gospels, it remains a powerful legend in the Kago region. One of the greatest temples to Hombor exists in Kago and is staffed by Amalthean clergy who attend the poor.

The Anschok City Region: The planet's showcase city, Anschok is also the continent's capital and houses such sites as the Domaldo Cathedral and Princess Victoria's palace. Built as two nearly contiguous urban regions during the Diaspora and Second Republic, Anschok spans almost the entire continent. Architecturally, the city remains a fine example of both Hawkwood and republican architecture. Ancient and delicate looking terracite structures have survived a millennium since the Fall, mingling with modern glasteel guild towers, marble palaces and more modest maxicrete and brick structures. Taking advantage of its title as the "windy city," Anschok has harnessed wind power to supply its energy needs; vast fields of steel turbines dot the cityscape, imbuing the city with a thrumming heartbeat.

Anschok is a center of learning and commerce. Great Church universities, sprawling urban agorae, metropolitan museums and theaters educate and entertain the populace, giving the region one of the best educated populations in the Empire. The city is also a popular backdrop for novels and the magic lantern industry. The Muster and Reeves maintain power as the city's lords of finance.

Situated along the planet's equator, Anschok is also the warmest region on the planet. Summer temperatures here sometimes reach 80° F, luring pilgrims from around the globe to bask in its equatorial warmth. Especially popular are the Mediro beach resorts, which have garnered a reputation as retreats for the super-rich and havens for sin. There is a strong Charioteer contingent around the city's busy spaceport and smaller, less respectable, groups, such as the Courtesans, also ply their trade here.

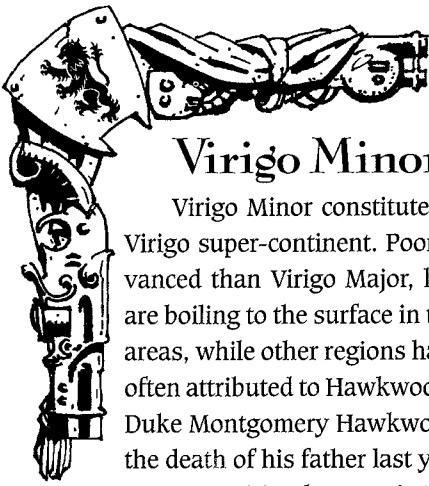
Perhaps the most well known personage in Anschok is Princess Victoria's niece and ward, Lady Penelope Hawkwood. Princess Victoria adopted her niece when the child's father, Duke Louis Cardalo Hawkwood, died in the wreck of the *Basilisk* (the same ship that carried Emperor Alexius's father, Utar Vincius, to his doom). Lady Penelope has also suffered a more recent tragedy in her life when her brother, Sir Erasmus Henry Hawkwood, died on Leminkainen

under mysterious circumstances. While visiting Anschok, I had the opportunity to meet the princess at her gala 17th birthday celebration (the age of majority on Delphi). While incomparably beautiful and impeccably schooled in etiquette and tender-hearted, Lady Penelope doesn't yet possess her step-mother's iron will or keen political acumen. Nevertheless, Princess Victoria and the Emperor's mother (Lady Regnus Octavia) see a marriage between her and the Emperor as a political necessity. While the Emperor's better known consorts — Duchess Salandra Decados and Sister Theafana al-Malik of the Brother Battle order — contest each other for the Emperor's attentions, this unassuming noblewoman has garnered a good deal of support in House Hawkwood.

Lady Penelope lived in a palatial manor on the Mediro coast until a love struck al-Malik noble was found climbing in her window; the young heiress now resides with her mother in the main ducal palace to reduce such temptations and protect her virtue. Nevertheless, Delphian romantics and scandal-mongers alike have concocted a long list of alleged paramours for the princess.

Another famous citizen is Dean Ebinezer Mek of the Reeves. Quite possibly the richest man in the Hawkwood kingdoms, Dean Mek has been the chief accountant of the planet's agora system for 85 years. He is widely credited with much of the planet's financial prosperity. On the other hand, his critics accuse him of deliberately stifling economic growth in some regions to benefit others. (His skimmer was recently stoned by angry mobs in the Nacado Holy-State.) Despite his fame, Dean Mek remains an enigmatic figure. The dean lives in a heavily-guarded estate built on an artificial island in the Mediro. He often goes off-world to Tethys and has questionable dealings on Leminkainen.

The Shiro City Region: Shiro is a thriving southern coastal city. Nestled along steep mountains and narrow fjords, the city region has developed a reputation for producing precision technology, including telecommunications, medical tech and components for the Tethys space industry; the region hosts numerous Engineers and lesser technological guilds. Despite this penchant for science, superstition runs rampant in the region's mist-shrouded valleys — often with good reason. Ice Wyrms and packs of wild Davros wolf-cats pick off citizens from outlying rural areas. Far worse, a psychic coven is reputed to make its home here, driving citizens inexplicably mad. These victims may stew for months, becoming more and more psychotic, before going on mad killing sprees. Often known by their red, blood-limned eyes, these victims quickly die of internal hemorrhaging — if they are not killed first. Of course, in this land of cold and snow, there are other reasons a person's eyes may become red. Orthodox Penitents and even the Imperial Eye have investigated the so-called "Scarlet Sclera" killings with little luck.



Virigo Minor

Virigo Minor constitutes the southeastern third of the Virigo super-continent. Poorer and less technologically advanced than Virigo Major, long simmering social tensions are boiling to the surface in the form of bloody riots in some areas, while other regions have the peace and serenity most often attributed to Hawkwood lands. The planet's new ruler, Duke Montgomery Hawkwood, took the ducal throne upon the death of his father last year. I met with Duke Montgomery on a spiritual retreat in Doloria. He shared his concerns with me about his recent ascent to the throne. Montgomery was crowned when his father — Egil Gordon Hawkwood — finally succumbed to injuries suffered during the Emperor Wars. (Decados genomorph gas is a hideous weapon.) The well-intentioned young duke quickly underwent a baptism of fire. In the final years of his father's rule, the ducal palace became a magnet for bad advisors, corrupt politicians and greedy guilders. The old duke's chamberlain, Count Humboldt Hawkwood, was a major force behind Egil's failed bid against Alexius for the Imperial throne and retains a good deal of sway within the ducal court. The chamberlain has, so far, resisted Montgomery's attempts to remove him from power.

Duke Montgomery has already faced unrest in the Nacado Holy-State: food riots, rising crime and ongoing conflict between the Church and League. The guilds want to modernize while the Church wants to maintain the region's pastoral traditions. The Church and the League have come to almost open blows. Duke Montgomery is a scholarly, quiet man in his early 20s and is currently considered the most eligible bachelor on Delphi, despite his bookish ways. I hear that beautiful heiresses from across Delphi and from other houses have visited local Hawkwood celebrations in the hopes of influencing the future of the continent.

Urban Regions

Virigo Minor has two major urban areas: the Doloria region on the Northwestern Mediro coast and the explosive Nacado Holy-State to the south. Possessing a lower level of technology than Virigo Major, Virigo Minor's urban regions are more traditional in their definition of Technosophy (the sin of technology adulation).

The Doloria Region: Doloria is a tranquil and relaxed urban setting, and serves as a welcome respite for those trying to escape Anschok's technological glitter and fast pace of life. Largely devoid of Second Republic architecture, Doloria exhibits a large collection of post-Fall Church and Hawkwood architecture, mostly of local granite and wood. The city's ruler, Countess Colette Hawkwood, is a devoted supporter of the Church. The city's hundreds of chapels, cathedrals and parish churches bare testimony to centuries of such ardent patronage. Largely serene, the city neverthe-

less serves as the planet's true center of theological debate, even though the main cathedral is in Anschok. When bishopric councils become stuck in their debates, little focuses their minds more than the natural serenity of Doloria's churches and hundreds of scenic lakes. The region also supports several Justinian mines, specializing in gold and other precious metals.

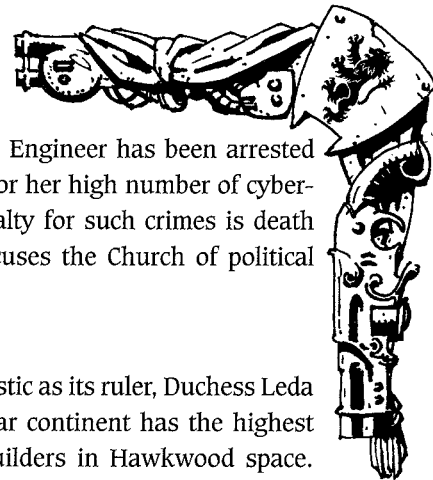
Doloria is home to Archbishop Lyander. The archbishop is the Delphian Metropolitan, and is thus responsible for the spiritual welfare of all four Hawkwood planets. A traditional middle-path Hinayana theologian with some reform leanings, the archbishop hopes to succeed Hezekiah the Elder to the patriarchal dais on Holy Terra when the ancient patriarch dies. Competing for the Syneculla's favor against other candidates such as Marcion Li Halan of Kish and Jordano of the Aragon Metropolae, Lyander's theological position has become increasingly conservative. This has greatly impacted recent clerical appointments throughout the Hawkwood worlds, though whether for better or worse, it is too soon to say.

The Nacado Holy-State: House Hawkwood gave the Nacado region to the Orthodoxy in 4120 as a sign of its faith. The Orthodoxy governed the region as an autonomous city-state, while the house took responsibility for its external security. Nacado swiftly threw off the remnants of Second Republic technology and many in its urban regions returned to an agrarian existence. This arrangement worked well for centuries but, as the fading suns phenomenon intensified and the planet grew colder, food shortages became a major problem. Now dependent on food shipments from elsewhere, Nacado faces increasing urban dissent. Openly demonstrating for both food and a softening of the Technosophy laws, urban dwellers find themselves at odds with the Church and rural citizens who largely wish to retain more traditional values. The region's presiding theological authority, Bishop Vereen, is a man of good conscience and works to balance these competing desires, but has recently had to call on House Hawkwood to restore order.

Courai

Courai was once part of the Virigo continent, but slow tectonic drift and sudden earthquakes have recently separated the two land masses. Earthquakes and volcanism are still intense in both south and east Courai; a dark smoky pall often hangs over the river between the two continents. Underwater volcanoes are also common, making the narrow Courai straits almost impossible to navigate by sea. By ancient treaty, Courai is the partial domain of House Justinian. After the house's ill-fortunes during the first Emperor War, House Hawkwood allowed the family to administer much of the region as part of a semi-autonomous constitutional/monarchical system. This system provides for a





Hawkwood noble (Countess Chirona Hawkwood) to preside over a ruling triumvirate. The triumvirate runs the continent's internal matters while House Hawkwood speaks for the region in foreign affairs. The current triumvirate consists of: Count Udoro Justinian, Bishop Megnasi and Dean Mozak of the Muster. This arrangement has recently crumbled due to the growing personal animosity between the triumvirate's members.

House Justinian and the Muster have become increasingly competitive for control of the planet's mineral resources. Count Udoro and other Justinian nobles have, much to the Muster's distress, been pushing hard to extend their influence off-world and gain mining concessions on Ravenna and Leminkainen. In return, the Courai Muster and other League groups, under the radical Dean Mozak, are pushing the envelope of acceptable League influence; Dean Mozak has even openly lauded the virtues of the Second Republic. Meanwhile, the Church — which has always objected to the triumvirate as a vaguely republican institution — has been pushing to eliminate the ruling body altogether.

Bishop Megnasi is a recent appointment to the Courai See by Archbishop Sigmund Dual, Orthodox Syneculla on Holy Terra itself. Usually this appointment would have been made by Archbishop Lyander, but he deferred this privilege to the Syneculla for unknown reasons. Bishop Megnasi is the most conservative appointment the region has seen in centuries. While the Church is officially a neutral party to the Justinian/Muster feud, the antipathy between the bishop and the almost openly republican dean have pushed the local Orthodoxy more and more in favor of the minor house. Count Udoro Justinian, a recent convert from the Eurygnostic tradition, has become a generous patron and supporter of the Orthodoxy. Some question his recent conversion, claiming he did so to gain Church support against the Muster. The region's Hawkwood governor, Countess Chirona, is a capable woman who maintains a cautious neutrality, acting only when necessary to maintain public order.

Veet: Veet is the planet's largest mining and refinery center, exporting quarried granite, deuterium and precious metals to almost a dozen worlds. Prosperous in most senses, much of the city's wealth is stolen by corrupt guild and Church officials, despite attempts by the planetary bishopric council to stem the corruption. Competition for House Hawkwood's lucrative mining contracts have lead to bitter feuds between House Justinian and the Muster, both of whom possess almost equal shares in the local mines. The battle lines are drawn, with the Church clearly favoring House Justinian as a champion of Church and noble rule, against an out-of-control guild with republican aspirations. Justinian guards and Muster roustabouts have met in open clashes on the street. The conflict threatens to drag in other League interests and there are whispers of imminent Inquisitorial

involvement; recently a major Engineer has been arrested and charged with soul death for her high number of cybernetic enhancements. The penalty for such crimes is death by burning and the guild accuses the Church of political motivations in the arrest.

Frisia

As rugged and individualistic as its ruler, Duchess Leda Hawkwood, this northern polar continent has the highest percentage of yeomen and guilders in Hawkwood space. These settlers hew a rough living from the region's remaining mines and the icy tundra. Frisia also attracts a wide array of fringe religious sects, accepting groups that might be tried for heresy in more conservative climes. Large numbers of hesychasts, Eurygnostic Incarnates from Gwynneth and even occasional wandering Children of Zuran find their way here. Rumors of Second Republic technological caches attract the occasional fortune hunter, although such finds are few and far between. The majority of the region's citizens toil a subsistence living through fishing or trapping. The region's most valuable (and dangerous) big game is the Frisian Ice Wurm.

Simultaneously the most powerful hunters and the most hunted creatures on Delphi, Frisian Ice Wyrms are large reptilian dragons who live in the polar wastes of Frisia and Davros. Large, graceful and utterly deadly, the Frisian Ice Wurm is a slender reptilian creature perfectly adapted to the planet's polar wastes. Standing up to 9' at the shoulder, Wyrms as large as 45' long are not unknown. Their crocodilian heads are tapered into snouts filled with long black teeth and their eyes hint at a frightening animal cunning. Colors vary, but most of the Frisian variety have glistening steely-blue scales that heat up red due to a poorly understood biological process. They use this strange ability to melt their way through the arctic ice and sometimes for self defense. During the Second Republic, massive sonic projectors and maxicrete walls limited the creatures to preserves where they became a major tourist attraction and a potent planetary symbol. As the Second Republic crumbled, however, so too did these technological defenses. Now, though the creatures' numbers have never reached their pre-colonial highs, their population is on the rise. Local religious traditions hold that they are holy, and forbid non-nobles from hunting them. Nevertheless, hunters have come from a dozen planets to test their skills against this awesome predator.

Duchess Leda is a no-nonsense ruler and staunch proponent of Hawkwood virtues. A respected war leader and early supporter of Alexius's predecessor, Regent Darius, the duchess has partially fallen from Imperial favor and is a frequent critic of Alexius (though she has also supported him on occasion). Leda is a rugged brown-haired woman in her late 50s who disdains the use of longevity drugs. I met her

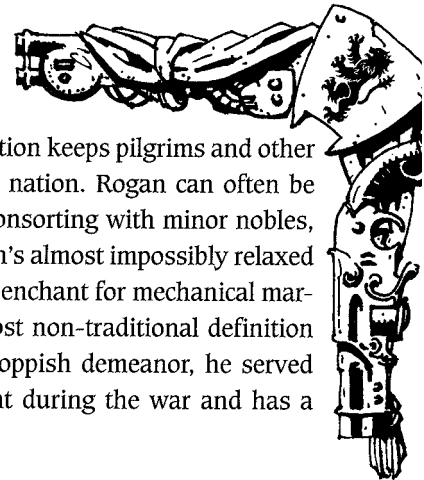


Davros

While the people are mostly at peace, the region's great wealth and penchant for attracting the rich and powerful have also attracted various criminals. Over the centuries, the region has played host to high-profile assassinations

Body: Strength 15, Dexterity 10, Endurance 13.
Mind: Wits 1, Perception 6, Tech 0
Natural Skills: Dodge 4, Fight 6, Impress 8, Observe 5,
Sneak 4, Vigor 8
Blessings: Huge (base move: 20 meters)
Weapons: Bite (8 DMG), Claws (6 DMG), Heated Scales
(5 DMG)
Armor: 10d
Vitality: -10/-8/-6/-4/-2/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/
0/0/0
Note: Skilled metalsmiths can make superb scale mail
(+2d normal rating, +2 Benefice, +10 firebirds) from a
properly skinned Ice Wyrm.





(including that of an al-Malik count last year), skilled jewel thieves, and more common crimes such as muggings and pick-pocketing. Other dangers include a golden variation of the Frisian Ice Wurm, landslides, freak blizzards and rumors of Scarlet Sclera killings from Shiro.

The region's ruler, Count Rogan Tiberius Hawkwood, is a colorful, populist leader. Sometimes called the "Purple Prince," Rogan is known planet-wide for his scandalous love affairs with partners of both sexes and even aliens. Despite this, his own people seem to have little problem with his

behavior, as long as his reputation keeps pilgrims and other travelers coming to the resort nation. Rogan can often be found attending parties and consorting with minor nobles, guild luminaries and the region's almost impossibly relaxed clergy. Additionally, he has a penchant for mechanical marvels that exceeds even the most non-traditional definition of Technosophy. Despite his foppish demeanor, he served with honor on the Sutek Front during the war and has a reputation as a skilled duelist.

Ravenna

A tranquil orb of blue and green, only the planet's mountain ranges and few desert regions mar Ravenna's impression of uniform serenity. A stellar anomaly of sorts, Ravenna has no set axis, but rather spins in a gentle, ever shifting pattern around the great gravity engines at its core. Bathed in the warm light of a stable yellow sun, Ravenna is often called a living paradise by those who call it home. Mirroring its geological stability, the nobles of Ravenna seemingly prize political stability above other considerations. This is a centuries-old proposition which only now seems to be unraveling.

History

During the Diaspora, House Hawkwood realized that it needed to expand if it was to survive against its competitors. At the same time, common citizens, long disenchanted with previous republican rule, were also suspicious of the new noble families. This was less of a problem in Hawkwood territories, where the family ruled with a (mostly) light touch. For the most part unobtrusive in matters of financial and personal freedoms, Hawkwood administration was a welcome change for settlers from more repressive regimes.

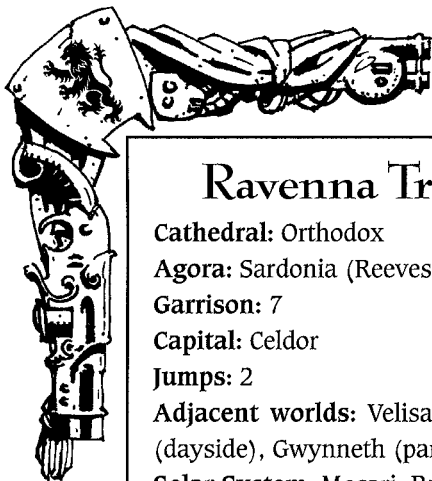
Independent explorers came across Ravenna in the year 2505 during the heady early years of Gervaise Windsor-Hapsburg's rule on Delphi. The world was the greatest mineral find to that date, but stormy and hostile. Its severe axial tilt created extremes of hot and cold. Earthquakes wracked the planet's rocky crust and primitive life forms, many inimical to human life, roamed its surface. Clearly, exploiting the mineral-rich planet demanded great sacrifices of human and financial capital. Along with the Hapsburgs, several other prominent families — including the Mountbattens, Hawkwoods and surviving First Republic conglomerates — staked their claims. Within 20 years of the planet's discov-

ery, however, Houses Windsor-Hapsburg and Hawkwood had joined. Another century saw most of the planet come under Hawkwood control.

In 2899 the Prophet Zebulon visited Ravenna, thereby changing it forever. Ravenna's harsh environment had bred an apocalyptic furor and the planet welcomed his words of salvation with the ardor of true converts. From then on, Ravenna became the most devout (and conservative) of Hawkwood worlds. When the Prophet died on his embassy to the Vau, the planet went into deep mourning. This bereavement was such that one of the Prophet's most pious followers, Lord Cato Hawkwood, followed the Prophet's lead; he took a ship full of the devout into space and crashed it into the jumpgate. Others sought to follow his example, but House Hawkwood repelled additional suicide attempts for fear they would damage the jumpgate. Saint Cato's image remains a prominent fixture in Ravennan stained glass windows and other iconography.

During the Second Republic, Ravenna underwent a physical metamorphosis to match its spiritual transformation. Fantastically prosperous because of its mineral wealth, Ravenna invested in the most advanced terraforming technology, remaking the hostile world into a garden paradise. With great effort, hunters wiped out most of the native predators, though some escaped into the planet's nearly endless underground caverns. Vast tracks of land were set aside as nature reserves and the planet imported less dangerous wildlife from a dozen other worlds. Indispensable to this project, the beast-speakers of House Trusnikron settled in the North Folari continent and have remained close allies of House Hawkwood ever since. Even more amazingly, Second Republic scientists used force fields and colossal gravity engines to correct the planet's flawed axial tilt, making its current changing rotation virtually unique in the Known Worlds.





Ravenna Traits

Cathedral: Orthodox

Agora: Sardonia (Reeves/Muster)

Garrison: 7

Capital: Celdor

Jumps: 2

Adjacent worlds: Velisamil (dayside), Leminkainen (dayside), Gwynneth (parallel), Delphi (parallel)

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

Ravenna orbits a standard yellow main sequence G2 star (surface temperature 10,000° F) at a distance of 95 million miles. Church and Charioteer astronomers rate the star's mass at 1.1 HTSM. Ravenna's sun seems only slightly affected by the fading suns phenomenon.

Tech: 5

Human Population: 450,000,000

Alien Population: 30,000 (mostly Ur-Obun)

Resources: Ravenna marble, gems, precious metals, deuterium

Exports: Raw mineral wealth, fine art, food

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

Many today view this as an act of ultimate hubris, altering the Pancreator's work. Indeed, some blame this act for the fading suns phenomenon noticed there a century later.

Despite its dependence on high technology, Ravenna was among the first planets to heed the Church's call and discard republican rule. Indeed, Ravenna was one of the few planets to avoid mass violence during that time. The faithful abandoned the cities and returned to a saner and more holy way of life in the country. The planet only reserved some technology to defend itself and to help its less agreeable neighbors (especially Gwynneth, Leminkainen and Velisamil) to follow its path to a more agrarian existence. Ensnared in what it considered a new holy age, the conservative populace was slow to adopt the *Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs*, allowing the clergy (and eventually nobles and guilds) freer access to technology. It was only the advent of the Barbarian Invasions in 4525 that partially shifted

most people's thinking on the matter. All Hawkwood planets suffered during the ensuing wars, though Ravenna, buffeted by Leminkainen and Gwynneth, avoided the worst of the invasion.

Another pivotal event in Ravenna history occurred in 4684 when Lady Avyryl Hawkwood, the planet's nominal ruler, married Bishop Halvor Li Halan of Kish and threw her political weight behind his bid to become patriarch and Emperor. The rest of the family, fearful that she might bring Ravenna into the Li Halan fold (and generally opposed to a theocracy) blockaded Ravenna. Challenged by Halvor's forces, the combined might of House Hawkwood destroyed the invading fleet and arrested Lady Avyryl. When Halvor died from a mysterious malady a year later, the family consigned the ambitious duchess to a convent on Velisamil.

Three centuries later, Ravenna has again come to galactic prominence as the birthplace of Emperor Alexius. Born to the family matriarch, the Duchess Regnus-Octavia and her paramour, Duke Utar Vincius Hawkwood of Leminkainen, Alexius grew up in a house at war. His uncle, the Regent Darius Hawkwood of Delphi, vied against the other noble houses for the throne. Upon Darius' death, Lady Octavia threw her support to her son. With the dowager mother's backing, Alexius was able to quell family dissension and out-manuever other rivals to Darius' power.

When Alexius ascended the throne, he surprised many by ceding most of his Ravenna lands to his brother, Duke Alvarex, and distancing himself from the family. This act does not sit well with many on his home planet. Ravenna ends this millennium in an almost unprecedented state. A planet historically known for its stability, it is losing some of its social cohesion and active war has broken out between family members in one region.

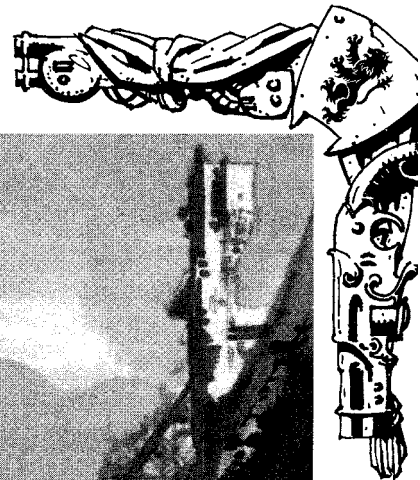
Solar System

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

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

Jualwa: Jualwa is a small, nondescript planetoid. Mined during earlier eras for its deposits of iron ore, it now seems to have little of intrinsic value.

Dro and Madro: Two great red gas giants of similar size and composition, Dro and Madro travel in opposing or-



bital directions and appear as two scarlet specs in the Ravenna sky. Often called the "Eyes of Azzurayelos" (the demonic Lord of the Gates of Death), their conjunction in the sky is supposed to portend death and calamity. The planets are almost impossible to explore because of their extreme gravity and whirling, poisonous atmospheres. They have over 40 moons between them, however, some of which have been settled in past centuries.

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

Jumpgate: The system's jumpgate follows an elliptical orbit beyond Nylus. Due to its proximity to barbarian-seiaged worlds, at least one *Hornet* frigate watches the gate at all times.

Ploo: Ploo is a small chunk of frozen rock. There are those who question if it should be classified as a planet at all.

People & Places

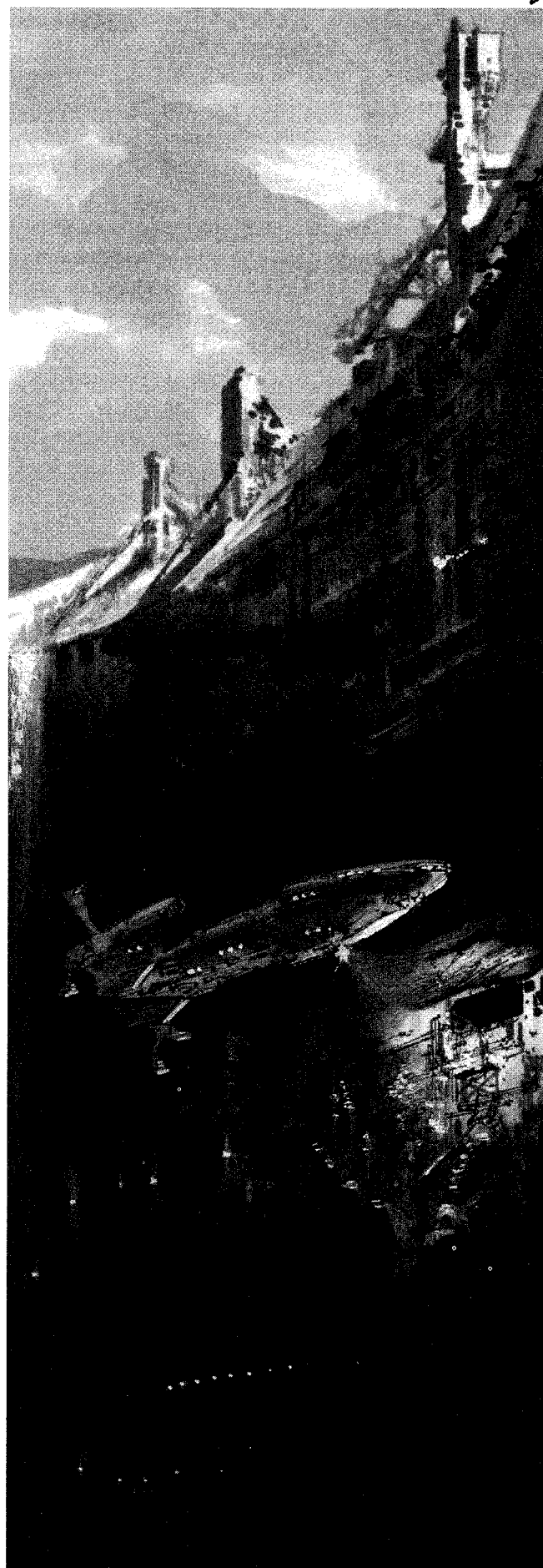
The most frequent stereotype of a Ravenna citizen is of a disapproving and taciturn zealot as typified by Father Scowler in the popular *Dan Comet Chronicles*. Of course, like all stereotypes, these take a dubious kernel of truth and use it to portray an entire people. While it is true that Ravenna is the most traditional of Hawkwood worlds, I found its people no more single-minded than on any other planet.

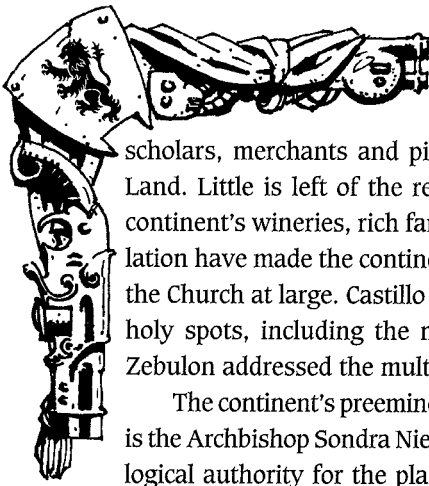
Ravenna has three continents (Castillo, Andyra and Folari) and eight major island groups (Chul, Kasi, Trieste, Austram East, Austram West, Lugano, Locarno and Bredonia). Originally torn apart by runaway tectonic activity, the planet's geological destiny is now determined by its aging planetary engines.

Castillo

House Hawkwood gave this continent to the Church after the Fall; diplomatically, Castillo is now considered *Terra Firma* (part of Holy Terra). Much of it is settled by citizens from Holy Terra and divergent sects from Delphi. The citizens of Castillo are now considered among the most holy and devout in the Known Worlds. Industrious and honest to a fault, crime and corruption really are virtually unknown among the continent's common citizenry. The Inquisition operates quite openly here, but unlike in many regions, they have a wide degree of support as keepers of public order. I frequently saw common citizens greeting them on the street. Despite this, accusations of clerical corruption remain. Whether the citizenry's honesty is a result of the continent's inherent holiness, or of the Church's draconian adherence to Orthodox law and codes of punishment is in question.

The Castillo Theological University is a major font of learning throughout the Empire; every year thousands of





scholars, merchants and pilgrims visit the Castillian Holy Land. Little is left of the region's mineral wealth, but the continent's wineries, rich farm lands and industrious population have made the continent a major source of wealth for the Church at large. Castillo is known for its cathedrals and holy spots, including the mount in South Castillo where Zebulon addressed the multitudes.

The continent's preeminent spiritual and temporal leader is the Archbishop Sondra Nies, who is also the supreme theological authority for the planet at large. The archbishop is an extremely conservative member of the Orthodoxy's Hinayana tradition and staunchly opposed to the concept of an Emperor of any house (and Alexius in particular). I visited the archbishop at St. Maximillian Cathedral in Southern Castillo. She received me cordially, despite her recent conflicts with my lord. She is an older woman, far taller than I expected (it is not often a woman can meet me eye-to-eye), and conveys a stern yet serene air. She reiterated her concerns about the Emperor's forays into space and his support of, as she put it, "dubious republican ideals." Despite my assurances that such concerns stemmed from propaganda and poor communication, she seemed unmoved. The archbishop remains one of the Emperor's most outspoken critics on Ravenna and has supported his brother (as a traditional Hawkwood noble) to the Emperor's detriment. The fact that the Emperor tried to have her removed from her position as planetary archbishop two years ago has done little to endear him to her.

Andyra

Emperor Alexius was born here but now, in his absence, Andyra is ruled by his brother, Duke Alvarex. Despite occasionally strident criticism by the Ravenna Orthodoxy, Emperor Alexius still remains wildly popular on his home continent, which remembers his even-handed rule. Even now, peasant homes across the region keep images of the Emperor in places of honor and pray every night for his well-being. Alexius's reign has also brought a new age of prosperity to the continent. Visiting pilgrims who wish to see the birth place of the Known World's longest-reigning Emperor flood the planet. More importantly, perhaps, the boom on Byzantium Secundus and other parts of the Empire has resulted in a new interest for Ravenna's mineral wealth and skilled stone masons.

Ravenna marble brings greater wealth to the region than at any time since the Fall and the continent still has the second richest mineral reserves on the planet (next to the barely tapped regions of the North Folari continent). Ravenna's citizenry are divided between a rural existence in agrarian communities and a partially technological way of life in its deepcore mining cities. Due to its status as a center of politics and major export center, Andyra maintains a large

interplanetary spaceport in its capital (Suryada) and also a comprehensive magna-rail train system. This system is widespread in the more populated southern regions; few places are more than a few hours away from each other. The rail system does exist farther north, but only reaches a few destinations.

I sought an audience with Duke Alvarex and waited in his hunting lodge/castle for two weeks before his chamberlain told me that he was unavailable for an audience; this despite a personal letter of introduction from his brother. I am, thus, unable to give my personal impression of his personality or of his reputed similarity in appearance to Alexius. The duke has lobbied to command the Imperial Fleet in the Emperor's name, but at the same time openly (and not so openly) worked to undercut the Emperor's position. The Emperor is resistant to greater Hawkwood control in the fleet because it would be disastrous for Imperial unity (the other houses wouldn't stand for it). Duke Alvarex has a keen military mind, as he proved in the Cadavus Offensive, but he seems a political novice. Nevertheless, Andyra has continued to thrive under his stewardship. The recent financial boom in Hawkwood space has put the duke in something of a quandary. He finds himself (like much of the planet) torn between supporting the planet's tradition of voluntary simplicity or encouraging more guild presence on the world.

Recently the duke took his personal fleet on a goodwill tour of Hawkwood space. In Leminkainen space he fired upon two Vuldrok ships, destroying them both as a warning to the Empire's enemies. He received a royal welcome on Delphi; only Gwynneth remained chilly, perhaps remembering Alvarex's celebration of the anniversary of Ravenna's bombing of Gwynneth during the Fall. Guesses to Alvarex's motivation in taking this trip vary, though most see it as another bid to command the Imperial Fleet.

Suryada: Suryada is a large, orderly city in the south-central portion of Andyra. While the capital has a low technology appearance typical of any Ravenna city, it has modern aspects. The guards who patrol the street frequently carry advanced firearms and higher ranking officials have personal shields. There is some motor traffic, though such vehicles are seen less and less as one travels north, where the roads fail. Almost all of the buildings in Suryada are made of quarried stone; the planet's builders mostly disdain synthetic materials such as maxicrete, and the population destroyed all the Second Republic architecture after the Fall. The most important buildings are made from Ravennan marble of various dazzling patterns and hues. Suryada contains such sites as the royal palace, the planetary agora (the Viceroy) and St. Regoe's Cathedral, where Archbishop Sondra Nies oversees services on state occasions. Twenty miles north of the city is the palace where Alexius was born. There are a number of active guilds in the city, far more than on the

planet at large. The spaceport in Suryada is large, opulent and displays a combination of the modern and the traditional.

Deepcore Cities

Deepcore cities are great urban complexes built around deep mining shafts during the Diaspora and Second Republic. Up to five miles in diameter, some are rumored to extend a hundred or more miles into the planet's interior. Originally built to exploit the planet's deep mineral wealth, and later to install and service its planetary engines, the cities are largely enigmas. During earlier times, the sprawling underground metropolises supported hundreds of thousands of workers. Grand concourses, shopping and entertainment plazas and spaceship landing pads jutted out hundreds of yards over the yawning precipices. Abandoned and placed under Church interdiction during the early Dark Ages, some of them became active again after the Barbarian Invasions of the 46th century. There are currently 13 active cities, with plans to open two more over the next decade. The cities often have unofficial names, but most are known by their pedestrian republican names (i.e., Deepcore 1, 2 and 3, etc.). They are largely administered by Muster miners and Scraver archaeologists, though House Justinian has put in bids to run several mines, claiming that they will respect planetary sensibilities better than the League. This has led to fierce competition and even some violence between local guilds and the off-world nobles.

Power has been restored (at least partially) to some of these complexes, while in others miners still dig by oil-light. Strict Church and noble edicts ban exploration of the deeper tunnels, for fear of disturbing monsters, planetary engines and exposing the faithful to forbidden technology. The cities are widely seen as cursed; this is not purely superstition. Recent mining operations have been plagued by monstrous subterranean creatures. Disobedient Muster miners were blamed for the recent surge of earthquake activity on Austram East. After this incident, the Inquisitorial Synod sent confessors to ensure the theological purity of each mining operation. For the most part, however, the Church has to do little to dissuade the citizenry from approaching the ancient cities; they avoid the shafts with superstitious dread. Deepcore cities also draw the attention of Eskatonic geomancers who wish to study the planet's deepest secrets. This has unfortunately led to some arguments between the mystics and the Inquisition.

Folari

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

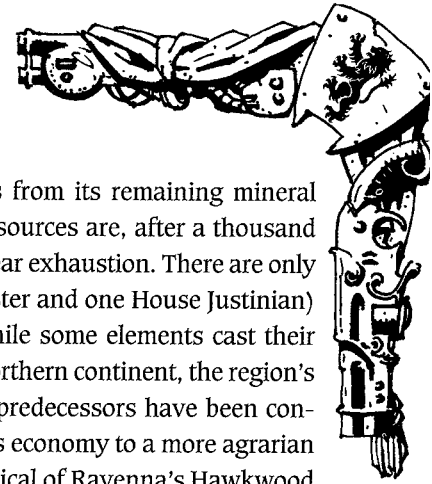
Folari South

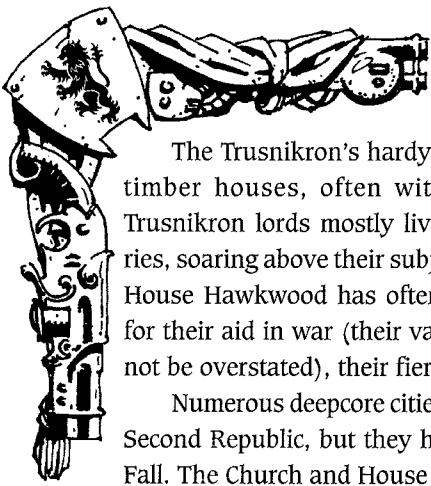
The dukedom still profits from its remaining mineral wealth, though much of its resources are, after a thousand years of exploitation, finally near exhaustion. There are only three deepcore cities (two Muster and one House Justinian) working on the continent. While some elements cast their eyes to the still mineral-rich northern continent, the region's ruler (Duke Cassius) and his predecessors have been content to slowly steer the region's economy to a more agrarian base. I found Duke Cassius typical of Ravenna's Hawkwood nobility: somewhat conservative (even reactionary) in political and theological principle, but a gracious host and a rational, conscientious leader. He is a tall thin man with long silver hair and a serious air, bordering on grave. As a planetary leader and well-known historical and theological scholar, Duke Cassius has proved to be a strong voice for stability in a time when the traditional world is undergoing unprecedented changes.

Muster leaders, Scraver bosses and Justinian emissaries have approached the duke about pressuring House Trusnikron (who control North Folari) to open their continent to mineral development, but he has refused. This is partially because of the local Church's strong objections to technological expansion, but mostly to honor the long standing treaty with the Trusnikron. The duke recently escaped an ambush while riding on his estate. Suspicion has fallen upon the Scravers, one of the groups interested in the northern continent. The Scravers have denied the charge, pointing to House Justinian. Despite his antipathy toward the guilds, the duke has been cautious in assigning blame for the act. A full investigation is underway; good preferment is due those who uncover the culprits. The Orthodoxy supports the nobility against additional encroachments of guild power on the continent. The peasantry here are largely uninterested in politics, but have strong opinions on religion and theology.

Folari North

North Folari is highly mountainous, forested and wild, with more species of wildlife than anywhere else on the planet. Some Muster activity takes place on the mountainous eastern coast, but there are strict rules governing the guild's mining and timbering practices. The Reeves also have a role maintaining the region's wealth, but high tech guilds such as the Engineers and the Charioteers are virtually nonexistent here. The local Church supports Trusnikron rule and fights to keep League interests out. A recent series of church fires and the murder of a prominent Orthodox priest have been blamed variously on Scraver, Muster and Justinian agents as a way of frightening the local clergy. Others blame the crimes on barbarian provocateurs, southern Hawkwood land speculators or even Decados agents.





The Trusnikron's hardy subjects live in either stone or timber houses, often with numerous animals. Their Trusnikron lords mostly live in palatial mountain-top aeries, soaring above their subjects on their great urroc steeds. House Hawkwood has often depended on the Trusnikron for their aid in war (their value as couriers and agents can not be overstated), their fierce loyalty and good council.

Numerous deepcore cities once operated here during the Second Republic, but they have been abandoned since the Fall. The Church and House Trusnikron ward off explorers, though the Scravers have sent several requests to conduct archaeological expeditions. So far the house's leader, Countess Morgana Solara Trusnikron, has refused all such entreaties.

I first met the Countess Morgana Trusnikron on a royal hunt on Gwynneth some 10 years ago. On my recent travels she greeted me in her cliff-top aerie with all the hospitality of her family. She is a compelling figure, with long brown hair and a shock of white running throughout. She is fiery and wild, yet with a stern sense of discipline and honor. A master fencer and champion urroc rider, she taught me the rudiments of taming the great beasts. She told me how the continent is coveted by Muster and Justinian miners, as well as Hawkwood profiteers, who have offered rich rewards for even a portion of the land.

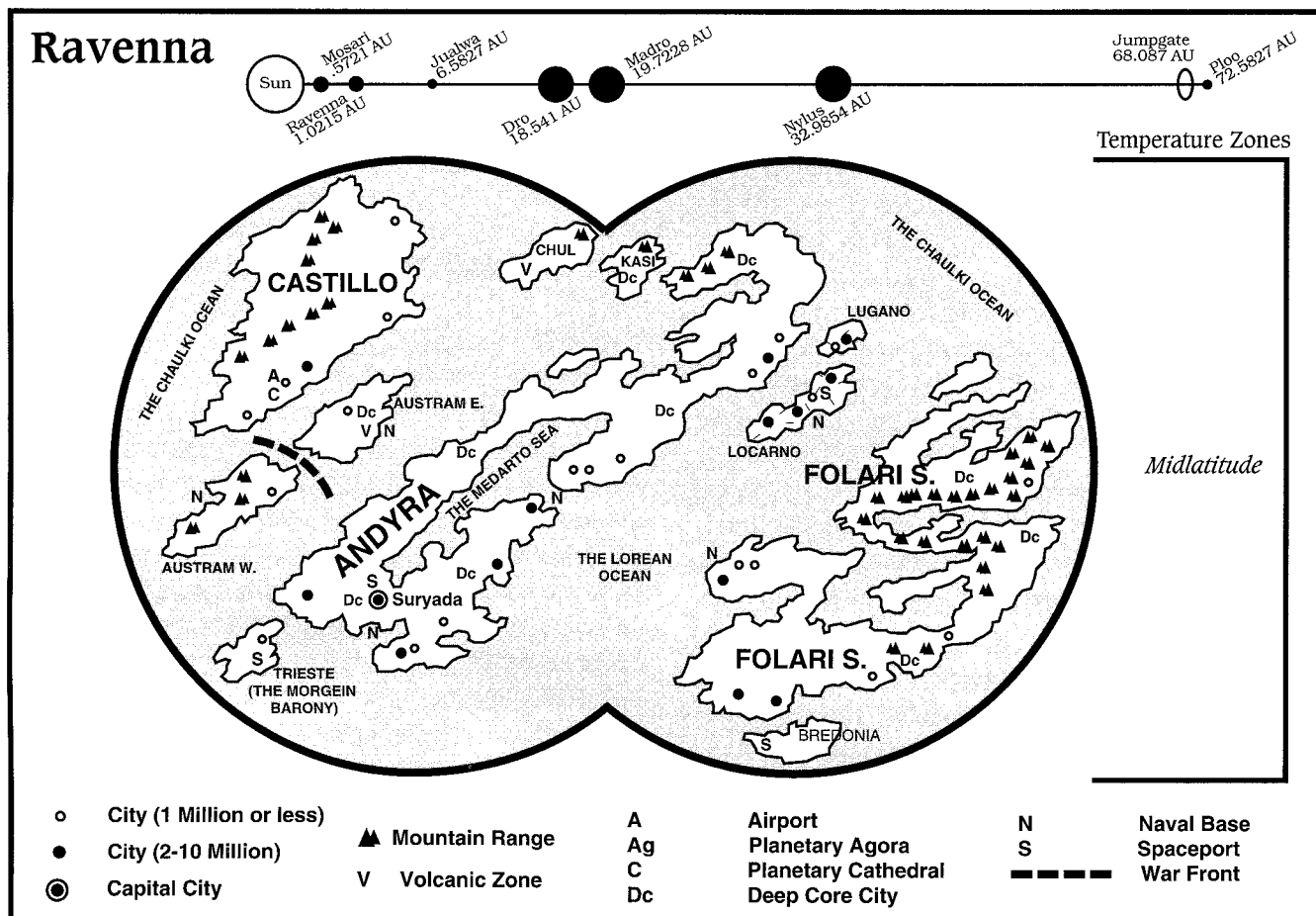
Major Islands

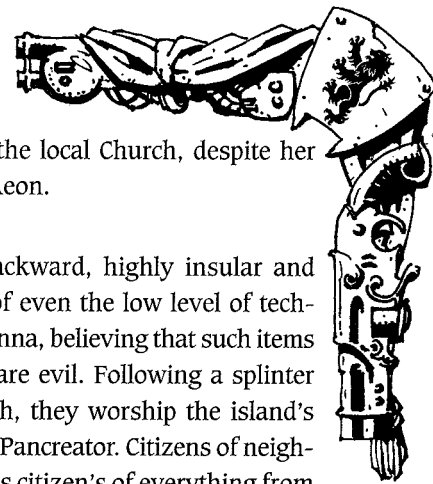
In addition to Ravenna's three continents, there are also eight notable island territories.

Austram (West & East)

If there is a tragedy on tranquil Ravenna, it is the war between the two Austram Islands. The island chain has traditionally been a single duchy, but the last duke divided it into two separate counties between his two eldest children (Count Otto Kierkegaard and Countess Cassandra Justinian Hawkwood) before he died, with provision that it would revert to a full duchy and go to the surviving child and his or her heirs. Over 25,000 people have died senselessly in the Austram war to date. Other Hawkwoods have offered arbitration, but so far to no avail. The rest of Ravenna's nobility are divided between who has the better claim; active participation in the war threatens to suck the rest of the planet into the conflict.

Austram (West): Ruled by Count Otto Kierkegaard Hawkwood, Austram West is a hilly country and the richer of the two islands. Heavily forested, the region has a reputation for big game hunting (including the ocelynx, a nearly extinct giant cat) and a number of rare spices not found elsewhere on the planet. The Orthodoxy retains a good deal of power here, though the Muster and Reeves also exert some influence. The Church and League are not as hostile





toward each other here as elsewhere on the planet.

I accompanied Count Otto on a hunting trip and found him likable, despite his eccentricities. He greeted me cordially as befits one noble to another. A hero of the Emperor Wars, he still cuts a martial figure, wearing a regal red uniform, numerous decorations (most self-administered, he laughed) and an ocelynx-skin cloak. The younger of the two heirs in the Austram conflict, Count Otto nevertheless believes that the entire chain should be his because he is the first born *male* heir. While history supports his claim somewhat (the Austram Islands are traditionally patriarchal), the terms of his father's will are clear. I also found the count has a vicious temper when he beat a servant for moving too slowly. Nevertheless, Austram's bishop (Hidalgo Lear) has generally supported his claim over that of his sister's because Otto has represented himself as the more traditional of the two claimants. The count has built many new churches on the island. He gave me a tour and I found his image conspicuously common in the churches' iconography.

Austram (East): Ruled by Countess Cassandra Hawkwood, Austram East is a lower lying island and has become a focal point for increasing earthquake and volcanic activity, but is richer in newfound mineral wealth. It has also suffered recent floods and sabotage to various dams and aqueducts, and has attracted a number of Sanctuary Aeon adherents to heal the injured here. About 20 years ago, Austram East opened one of its deepcore cities to Muster exploration. Since then, a series of earthquakes has rocked the traditionally stable continent. The Muster initially denied involvement, but when pressed, turned over two of its miners to the Inquisition. The Inquisitors determined the miners had disobeyed both Church and guild strictures by exploring deep into the mines, though some believe that the miners were sacrificed to protect higher-ups in the guild.

The Countess Cassandra is a quiet, studious woman, seemingly more interested in marine life and the arts than in conducting the war she has just entered. Although she has gained a certain degree of popularity with her people through land reforms, she is losing support from the planet at large. Not a stranger to controversy, Cassandra inherited a degree of scandal from her mother (the old duke's first wife). Her mother was a Justinian noblewoman from Delphi who died during childbirth. While many believe the old duke's statements that he married her for love, others claim that she was more interested in Ravenna's mineral wealth than in her husband. The duke's surviving Hawkwood wife has worked to undercut Cassandra's position at court. Cassandra's main support has come from her friendship with the Countess Morgana Trusnikron and the fact that she is a favorite second cousin of the Emperor (this being enough to bring Duke Alvarex in on her brother's side). The fact that she regularly entertains Ur-Obun artisans at her royal es-

tate has not endeared her to the local Church, despite her active support for Sanctuary Aeon.

Chul

Chul's inhabitants are backward, highly insular and suspicious. They disapprove of even the low level of technology seen on the rest of Ravenna, believing that such items as candles and water wheels are evil. Following a splinter sect from the Orthodox Church, they worship the island's live volcano as an avatar of the Pancreator. Citizens of neighboring Kasi have accused Chul's citizen's of everything from Antinomy to human sacrifice. Chul in return accuses Kasi's population of Technosophy. A recent Inquisitorial investigation found no evidence to support accusations of Antinomy. Nevertheless, visitors to Chul island have been known to disappear.

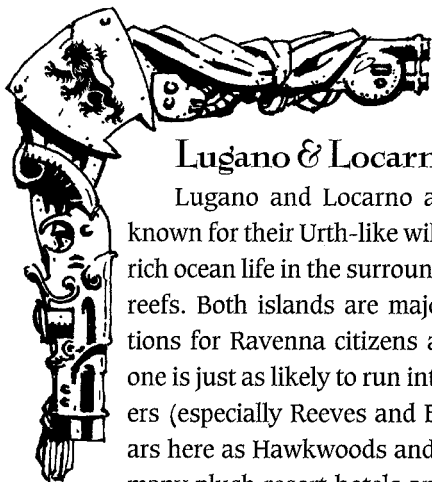
Kasi

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

Trieste (The Morgein Barony)

Trieste is probably best known these days for the scandalous exploits of its ruler, Baroness Morgein Hawkwood. In reality, the baroness is rarely found in her home country, instead jaunting around off-world. The barony is ruled in her stead by her "sainted-aunt," the Lady Elwynn. Rumors that Morgein was born as the result of a tryst between her mother, Lady Augusta Hawkwood, and a Decados lover are just the barest tip of the iceberg. (The Trieste branch of the Hawkwood family has frequently married outside of the house.) Trieste has always had a suspect reputation as the one island that never fully embraced the Prophet's teachings, and the baroness is but one in a long line of gadflies.

Trieste is a heavily wooded island and, despite its size, supports one of the planet's three spaceports because of its willingness to handle technology. The island acts as a center of trade and has a high League presence and several well-known agorae. Perhaps most importantly, Trieste is one of the Empire's few sources for luminite. The baroness leases the mining rights for five-year periods, and has encouraged the Muster and House Justinian into a bidding war to determine who will control the deed for the next five years.



Lugano & Locarno

Lugano and Locarno are two relaxed resort islands known for their Urth-like wildlife, breathtaking scenery and rich ocean life in the surrounding clear blue waters and coral reefs. Both islands are major tourist and business attractions for Ravenna citizens and off-worlders alike. Indeed, one is just as likely to run into foreign nobility, League traders (especially Reeves and Engineers) and Ur-Obun scholars here as Hawkwoods and Orthodox clergy. The area has many plush resort hotels and some of the highest concentrations of technology on the planet can be found around the spaceport on Locarno. Both islands are more cosmopolitan than the planet at large, with a combined population exceeding that of every continent except Andyra.

Bredonia

Bredonia is a small, sleepy barony administered by Brother Bernardo Li Halan, a former commander of the Teldor Garrison on Leminkainen. Since the Barbarian Invasions of the 46th century, Bredonia has become a retirement home of sorts to warriors who live out their remaining lives in either monastic solitude or as teachers to a new generation of soldiers. The agricultural island boasts a well known military college, the Lextius Academy, and aspiring warriors from Brother Battle and various noble houses come here to learn. Technologically backward, the only evidence of high-science is in the academy's rather surprising arsenal of ancient, modern and alien weaponry.

Leminkainen

From space, Leminkainen appears to have all the hallmarks of a lush and verdant world. Vast blue oceans cover most of the planet; mighty green forests carpet much of the land, interrupted by large red deserts on two of its continents. This seeming health, however, like much about Leminkainen, is partly deceptive. Baked in the heat of its red giant sun, its arboreal splendor is largely the result of biological super-science, erected in the dying days of the Second Republic. By all rights Leminkainen should be a desert world, but somehow it continues to bloom. A planet of stark contrasts, Leminkainen is both a border world at the far end of Hawkwood space and yet hosts many jumproutes.

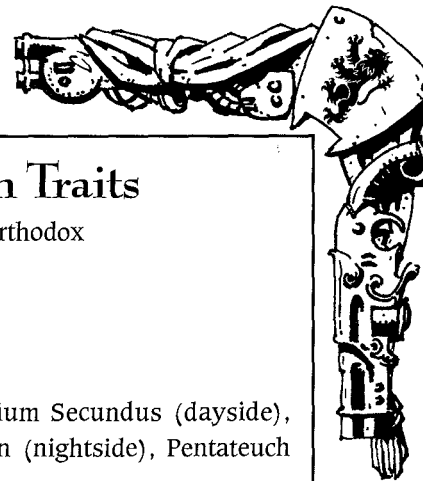
History

Discovered from Byzantium Secundus (then New Istanbul) in the 25th century, Leminkainen was a primordial planet with a yellow sun. It was rich in plant life, but virtually devoid of animal life beyond the insect level. From the beginning, the planet's role was that of a scientific laboratory for the First Republic's wealthiest conglomerates. Several corporations purchased the planet outright from the cash-strapped republic and set to work. Details of these years are incomplete, but some of the better known concerns were Agricorp Interstellar (which took over the continent now called Grikkor), several major mining concerns, and Dextrite Medical Interplanetary, which built bio-weapons for various republican and corporate military factions. It was an axiom of the time that Leminkainen did not have citizens, only

employees.

Without having to answer to official agencies of any sort, the planet's owners were free to remake the planet in their corrupt mercantile image. Agricorp seeded the world with experimental plants and fertilizers, turning it into one of the largest food exporters of the day, along with Grange (now known as Pandemonium). This arrangement lasted for over 1,000 years, surviving the dissolution of the First Republic, the Diaspora and much of the Second Republic era with little change in ownership. This does not mean there was no conflict on the planet. Corporate wars took the place of nationalist conflict, making much of Leminkainen a battle zone for centuries as various corporations battled for ascendancy. So involved in these struggles were they, that the Prophet's historic meeting with the Ur-Obun Disciple, Ven Lohji, went scarcely noticed. Corporate control did not fully stifle philosophical debate, however. Zebulon's Church eventually found devout adherents among the planet's citizenry. During the Diaspora, Leminkainen also birthed an animistic "Universal Mother" philosophy (Gjarti), which still has some sway on Manitou, Grail and, apparently, several Vuldrok worlds. I have known an apologist or two for these "Gjartins," who claim that they are harmless, even benign, mystics. I cannot speak from firsthand knowledge of these shamans, but their connections with the Vuldrok makes this a doubtful proposition in my mind. In any event, it is clear that Leminkainen's populace was free to practice its faith, despite the planet's corporate hegemony.

All things must come to an end, however; the combined



might of the corporate powers could not hold sole property of the planet forever. As the planet continued to transform under their control, space around them also changed. Leminkainen's neighbors — among them New Istanbul, Ravenna and Aylon — had changed in disposition and were no longer content to leave such a strategic world solely in the hands of irresponsible corporate powers. Historians record that the terminal event came when a shipment of Agricorp fruit carried a deadly plague to New Istanbul, killing over a million people. House Hawkwood seized control of the planet, putting its land and people under more responsible stewardship. The Dextrite corporation's leaders managed to survive this transition by discovering a cure for the plague; although many maintain their timing here was questionable, no proof was ever found. Already for all practical purposes a noble house, House Dextrite made allies among other corporations (and later certain factions in the Supreme Order of Engineers) and has survived (although under distant Masseri rule) on the island of Kriel through the present.

As many planets divested themselves of technology after the Fall, Leminkainen resisted this trend. The planet was bombed into submission after the *Doctrine of the Cleansing Flame*. The events leading up to this bombardment took over a century as the Church, planetary leaders and family members in House Hawkwood bickered, negotiated and threatened. Eventually the Church excommunicated Leminkainen's leaders and persuaded nobles from more devout planets (including the Li Halan and nobles from Ravenna) to bombard Leminkainen during the early 43rd century. This period is now infamous as a time our house fell into civil war. Abandoned by Delphi and unable to receive adequate aid from Gwynneth, Leminkainen was on its own. By the time Leminkainen recanted, its cities were in ruin and there was no longer any choice about a return to the countryside. Leminkainen's reputation as one of the most iniquitous of worlds drew the Inquisition's wrath in the years that followed.

Ironically, it was the brilliant Leminkainen diplomat, Duke Lawrence Hawkwood, who later negotiated the *Doctrine of the Privilege of Martyrs*, removing the technological sanction on the clergy. Leminkainen was an early beneficiary of this holy writ, and thus one of the earliest planets to regain its technological edge (almost 200 years before Patriarch Nadrim officially extended the privilege to the nobility). Despite the Church's blessing in this matter, however, something soon went very wrong with the planet's sun.

The star turned blood red over several generations and expanded to twice its normal size. The oceans evaporated; plant and animal life died off in mass numbers. Ironically, what technology may have caused, it could also partially cure. Drawing upon deeply buried botanical secrets, the

Leminkainen Traits

Cathedral: Brother Battle/Orthodox

Agora: Open

Garrison: 7

Capital: Hakkonen

Jumps: 1

Adjacent worlds: Byzantium Secundus (dayside), Ravenna (nightside), Aylon (nightside), Pentateuch (parallel)

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

Leminkainen orbits an unstable red-giant A0 star (surface temperature 17,000° F) at a distance of 185-million miles. Church and Charioteer astronomers rate the star's mass at 3.5 HTSM. Leminkainen's sun is badly affected by the fading suns phenomenon and has advanced from a stable yellow sun into a dying red giant.

Tech: 5

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

Alien Population: 8,000 Ur-Obun/4,000 Ur-Ukar

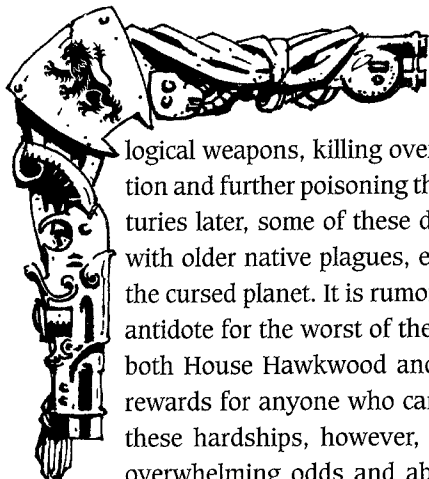
Resources: Pygmallium, agriculture, prisons

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

Landscape: Leminkainen has four continents (Jyväskylä, Grikkor, Valdalla and Isalight) and six major islands (Kriel, Vree, Mog, Tesla, Mazor and the Cordan Chain). Despite its almost oven-like temperatures and dry climate, most of the planet still retains a lush covering of genetically engineered green. Indeed, plant growth here is mostly deciduous in appearance and nature here is tenacious to a degree that cannot fully be explained by past bio-engineering. The planet's three moons cause great tidal swells in the shallow, salt-laden oceans; an area that is underwater at high tide may be as many as 50 miles away from the nearest water at low tide. Parts of the planet are home to unpredictable storm belts of a monstrous magnitude and a number of strange bio-engineered species.

planet introduced hardy strains of fauna that could survive, even thrive, in the planet's hot house conditions. These biological miracles have super hard skins, fibrous water-stingy interiors, and roots that can find purchase in solid rock and live for years without rainfall. The faithful see this tenacious plant life as a blessing from the Pancreator, while the Gjartin shamans see it as the bounty of their "Good Gjarti."

In 4525 the planet became a battleground as barbarian invaders swept into the Known Worlds. The invaders fully justified the label of barbarian: they employed outlawed bio-



logical weapons, killing over a third of the planet's population and further poisoning the environment. Even now, centuries later, some of these diseases resurface and combine with older native plagues, enforcing a gruesome legacy on the cursed planet. It is rumored that the barbarians have an antidote for the worst of these epidemics, Kessler's Plague; both House Hawkwood and the Empire have offered rich rewards for anyone who can recover this antidote. Despite these hardships, however, Leminkainen held out against overwhelming odds and absorbed much of the barbarian assault, giving other planets a chance to defend themselves. Even though the planet fell briefly during the Emperor Wars, it was later liberated by a combined Hawkwood and al-Malik fleet. In return for a cease fire, the Teldor Treaty of 4965 gave the Valdalla continent to the Vuldrok as a semi-autonomous fiefdom.

During the recent schisms that swept through many worlds earlier this century, many people on Leminkainen openly revolted. Temple Avesti has gained a good deal of power on the planet lately. The Orthodoxy shows little interest in restraining them, leaving it to House Hawkwood to condemn their more extreme activities. Despite this, a mere nine years ago, the Urth Bishop Obion's *Beatitudes* urged humanity to look to new horizons and mentioned Leminkainen as a harbinger of a brighter future. In this he extended an olive branch to the oft-maligned world. Many hope that the bravery of Leminkainen's iniquitous populace has finally earned them a degree of clemency from the Church, and that they have, at last, paid enough penance for their sins.

Solar System

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

Leminkainen (Staltos, Cox, Momerath): Leminkainen is the system's second satellite and the only planet with a life-sustaining atmosphere. The planet's three moons cause unpredictable tidal swells and are considered to be three sister goddesses by the Vuldrok barbarians.

Shylkor: During the Emperor Wars, barbarian raiders seized Shylkor and claimed it for the Vuldrok Star Nation. In accordance with the Teldor Treaty, the Vuldrok have promised not to use the planet as a base for raids, but House Hawkwood believes they have broken the treaty. Shylkor hosts a spaceport and possible weapons caches hidden in caves and chasms. It is a windy world rife with dust storms, though its lack of atmosphere makes it of limited strategic value.

Tantalus: Tantalus is a primordial, volcanic world with

a thin atmosphere containing a large percentage of free floating oxygen. Past explorers discovered liquid water under the planet's surface and primitive microbial plant and even fish life in subterranean caves near volcanic vents. House Dextrite, the Engineers and even Decados Genetechs have visited the planet for less than wholesome purposes.

Ivald: A seething, violent world, Ivald has over a dozen major volcanoes spitting lava and ash hundreds of miles into the planet's atmosphere. The planet is so radioactive that it would take lead shielding several feet thick to protect a visitor.

Mord: Mord is a desolate, heavily cratered planet in the middle of the system's great asteroid belt. Ships that try to land on Mord must be skillfully piloted or be smashed to pieces. It is believed that an ancient Diaspora research colony may once have existed in one of the planet's sheltered canyons, but all attempts to find the facility have failed.

Bilgo: Bilgo is an icy asteroid-pitted world. Since the breakdown of the Teldor Treaty, the jumpgate has been blockaded against Vuldrok forces. Various Imperial, house and League ships are still allowed through the gate, but piracy and smuggling are commonplace; visiting ships are frequently subjected to boarding by Hawkwood forces.

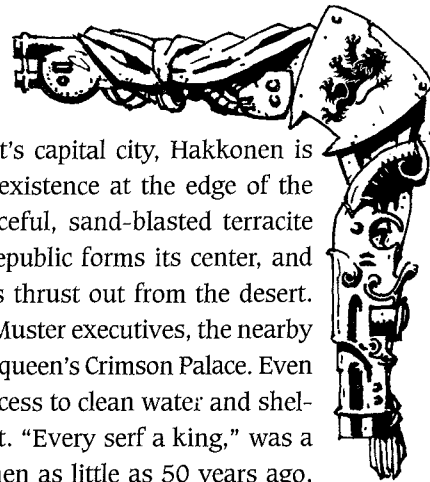
People & Places

Leminkainen's populace are a diverse lot, and this is no less true of those who rule over them. Due to the planet's harsh history, the peasants are understandably suspicious of strangers, though some are surprisingly open.

Jyväskylä

Ruled by Duchess Catherine Hawkwood, Jyväskylä ranges in land surface from hard rock plains to great forests, low mountain ranges and a vast desert of scarlet sand. A series of great rivers also wind their way through the continent's interior, though these are mostly sluggish and heavy laden with silt. The regions along these rivers are also quite fertile and teem with jungles.

The central portion of the continent is covered by the so-called Blood Desert, a vast wasteland of scarlet sand. The desert gains its name from the oxidized metals in its sand, and was once a major mining and industrial region. Heavily bombed in consecutive wars, the area is mostly devoid of human activity. Ruined husks of buildings protrude from the desert sands and rumors of Changed cultists and other Second Republic monstrosities keep this region free of all but the boldest explorers. This changed somewhat about 50 years ago, when an Engineers guild geological team discovered deposits of Pygmallium, the material used to create the neural matrix of intelligent golems (or so my Engineer scholar informs me). House Hawkwood closed in on the area and now maintains a small garrison there to protect the mining



site from attack or misuse. Permission for Imperial oversight has so far been politely rebuked by Duchess Catherine. She also denies the Inquisitorial Synod's public accusations of apostasy and "monster making," concentrated primarily around the Engineer-owned Tesla Research Island off Jyväskylä's southern coast.

North Jyväskylä is cooler and receives more rainfall than many areas. A series of robust farms in this region feed much of the continent; here great fields of red wheat alternate with rich forest land. In opposition to this, the dusty eastern end of the continent is in what the citizens call the Tornado Belt, and hosts some of the most extreme weather in the Empire. Here tornadoes have stripped away the vegetation, scouring the land surface down to its rocky mantle. Despite this, the region maintains a small population working from maxicrete domes while searching for Pygmalium and other strategic elements. I understand that as many as 10 funnels may appear on a given day, sometimes shattering even the most sturdy structures and hurling victims miles into the air. The constant howling of the wind is enough to drive some workers mad and many believe there are evil wind spirits here who steal men's souls.

South Jyväskylä is densely forested but, except for its river valleys, the soil here is thin and dusty. Strong winds can knock over trees and blow away the little remaining soil; it is said that a strong man can kick over the largest tree. Thus, despite the region's seemingly diverse plant life, farming here is a tricky business. Further, the area was the one part of Jyväskylä to suffer invasions during the last barbarian incursions. The Hawkwoods eventually expelled the invaders, but the barbarians left a new strain of Kessler's Plague behind. Over a third of the population died in the years that followed and now much of the region is completely deserted. It is also rumored that some barbarians remain in hidden enclaves as advanced scouts for future invasions. Rumors of Vuldrok weapons and technology caches here are unproved but consistent.

Jyväskylä's ruler, Duchess Catherine, is a cagey, strong-willed woman in her 60s who has ruled over the continent since she was a child. Surviving a barbarian attack that took the lives of both her parents, the duchess grew to adulthood to become a bulwark against the anarchy of the barbarian hordes. In just 30 years, the duchess has built the region into a formidable military power. Unquestionably loyal to house and Emperor, she keeps peace with the Valdalla barbarians as long as they abide by the Teldor Treaty, but stands prepared to "bring the battle to the barbarian raiders" if needed. During the Emperor Wars she was a skilled commander of a Hawkwood battle fleet, and struck deep into Hazat space. She is a tall blonde woman who, thanks to her use of longevity drugs, remains in her warrior prime almost 30 years after her exploits on the Aragon Front.

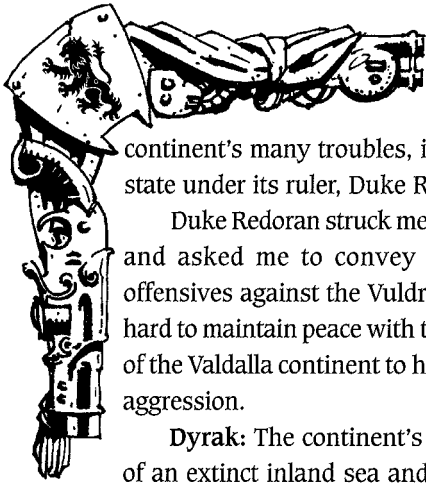
Hakkonen: The continent's capital city, Hakkonen is beautiful despite its tenuous existence at the edge of the Blood Desert. A maze of graceful, sand-blasted terracite structures from the Second Republic forms its center, and gold towers and smoked glass thrust out from the desert. Air-conditioning comforts the Muster executives, the nearby spaceport and the nobles in the queen's Crimson Palace. Even those of lesser stature have access to clean water and shelter from the sun's intense heat. "Every serf a king," was a popular expression in Hakkonen as little as 50 years ago, though the planet's increasing prominence has forced many serfs into poorer dwellings, as League, Church and Imperial off-worlders have swarmed to the planet. The great eight-sided Morali Cathedral in Hakkonen houses one of the largest libraries in the Empire.

Grikkor

Located in the planet's northern hemisphere, Grikkor was originally controlled by Agricorp Interstellar and derives its name from the now extinct corporation. A small and dispersed population of hardy farmers scabble a mostly subsistence living from the arid land. Grikkor has so far escaped the wild weather patterns and tectonic instability of neighboring Jyväskylä. Despite its luck in this regard, Grikkor has gained a dark reputation for having more husk plagues than any other place in Hawkwood space. Grikkor's southern regions are mostly difficult to farm and largely unpopulated except by hardy forest nomads and genetic monstrosities. Despite this, the planet's most fertile area is in South Grikkor's Mikkelschire Region, a place renowned for its unique plant growth. Situated in a wide river flood plain, the region produces a fantastic quantity of scarlet wheat and the planet's specialty: enormous vegetables. I saw brute-sized radishes and even larger tubers. The region has drawn Avestite attention because of rumors about a powerful Antinomist stalking the region, as well as stories about Changed humans and other Second Republic monstrosities.

The majority of the continent's population lives along the northern coast, in rural enclaves or in the domed city of Sardan. These northern, "polar" climes are somewhat cooler than the planet at large and receive rain on a regular basis. The region was once covered with glaciers, and is now a rugged territory of river valleys, fjords and steep moraines. Glacial till covers much of the region, and boulders the size of houses sit incongruously in the middle of open grassy plains. Hardy blue grass and various lichens and mosses cling tenaciously to almost every surface.

The region is mostly peaceful and hospitable, though it has had increasing troubles with bandits and barbarian raiders who live in the foggy cliffs. Many of these barbarians do not consider themselves bound by the Teldor Treaty and have taken to openly attacking farming villages. Even given the



continent's many troubles, it remains a politically cohesive state under its ruler, Duke Redoran Hawkwood.

Duke Redoran struck me as a thoughtful, honorable man and asked me to convey his concerns about rumored offensives against the Vuldrok Star Nation. He has worked hard to maintain peace with the barbarians who occupy most of the Valdalla continent to his south, despite recent Vuldrok aggression.

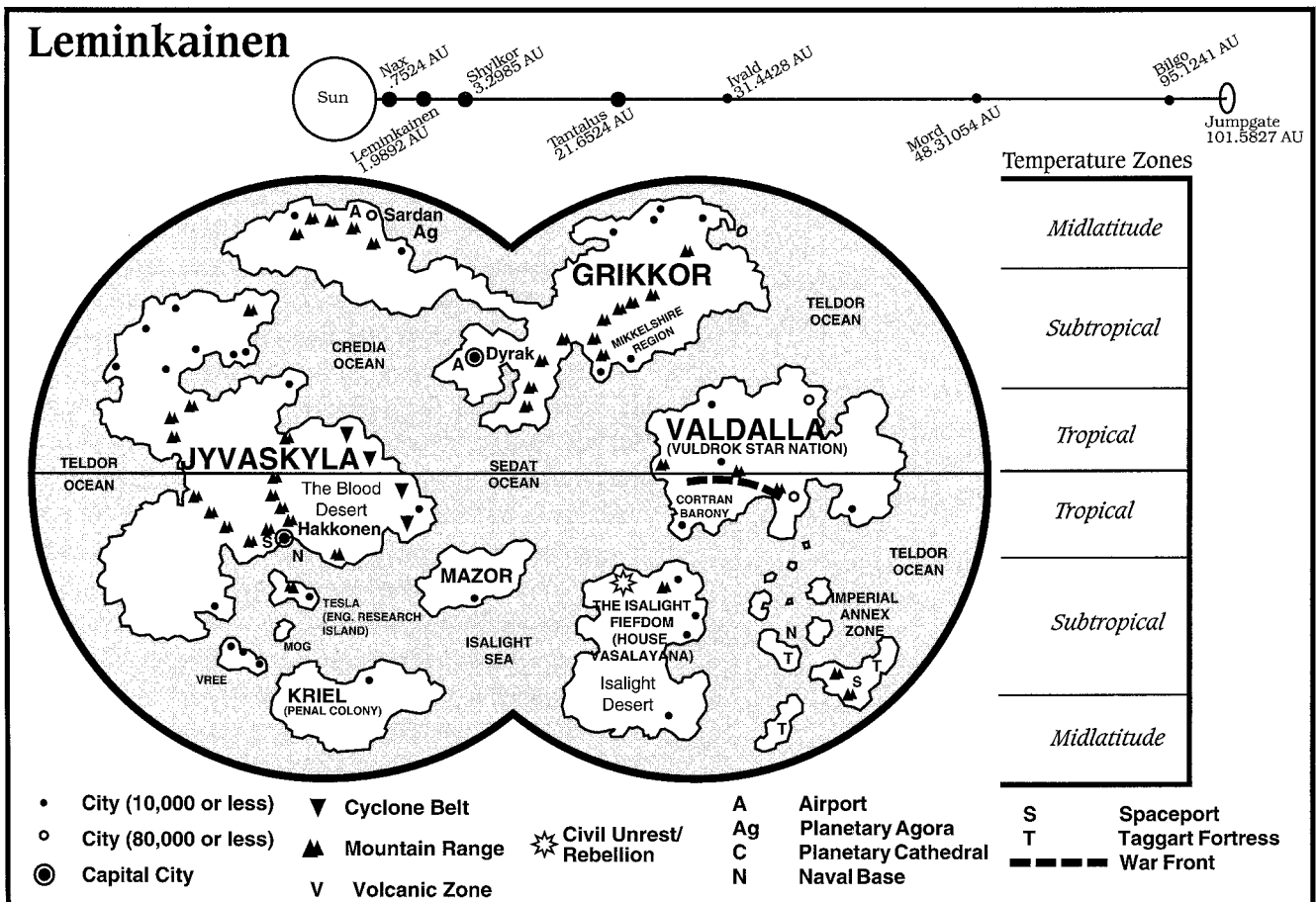
Dyrak: The continent's capital, Dyrak sits on the edge of an extinct inland sea and appears to be an unimportant city of maxicrete jutting from the continent's otherwise abandoned southern region. Despite appearances, the city maintains a grim vitality. The inner city remains functional, but is not a place to elevate one's soul. Technologically advanced in some ways (the city has an airport, but no spaceport), Dyrak was originally an Agricorp center. It is still a site for advanced food production, producing everything from advanced hydroponics and hyper-intensive factory farming to self-perpetuating foodstuffs. Despite this productivity, transportation difficulties, corruption and barbarian raids prevent the city from effectively feeding the planet.

The city is built in a radial pattern around the ducal palace and the royal concourse. The palace is a Second Republic terracite structure (originally Agricorp's corporate headquarters), and shares the royal concourse with the city's

cathedral and the central agora. The agora was once an opulent structure, but its richest fixtures were sold to service its debt. The League is strong here, nevertheless, and includes a criminal element with suspected Scraver backing. This has drawn the attention of Temple Avesti. Around the royal concourse are hundreds of abandoned office buildings and maxicrete factories. Many of the latter are still functional, though their windowless facades give little indication to their function.

Sardan: This pleasure resort on Grikkor's northern coast is either an oasis paradise or a pit of sin and iniquity, depending on to whom you listen. Shielded from the elements under great blue poly-shielded domes built with scavenged Second Republic technology, the resort is for the super-wealthy of any planet. Indeed, the city allows guests from any background, as long as they are willing to pay. The operation has been a major source of income for the continent, handsomely rewarding its investors. Here one is likely to meet extravagant dilettantes from any house, League deans, successful criminals, archbishops, barbarian chieftains and — if you believe the gossip — undercover agents from the Li Halan Jingcha, the Imperial Eye or the Decados Jakovian Agency. With such interested parties, it is little wonder the city has successfully resisted Inquisitorial efforts to terminate its operations.

Leminkainen



Valdalla

Ceded to the barbarian invaders by the Teldor Treaty, Valdalla houses a patchwork of barbarian farmers, shanty towns and warrior barracks. The lead barbarians have taken the better accommodations in the region's old palaces, cathedrals and agorae, often despoiling them. Owing nominal allegiance to House Hawkwood in accordance with the Teldor Treaty, Valdalla has taken on some civilized Hawkwood aspects, but its citizens remain barbarians and pagans nonetheless. Many of the Vuldrok here are Gjartins, though their practice apparently varies somewhat from the native variety on other continents. Those who follow this path espouse a philosophy of personal enlightenment which is at variance with the Universal Church. It also became apparent from stories I heard while on Valdalla that Gjartin shamans wield strange powers of — as my Orthodox confessor explained — an unwholesome thaumaturgical nature.

Trade and cultural exchange is limited, but does exist. The Valdalla barbarians, though mostly sundered from the larger body of their so-called Star Nation, remain a useful window onto the barbarian hordes who teem beyond Leminkainen and Gwynneth's jumpgates. Hawkwood administrators oversee certain governing functions, but such positions are dangerous and intrigue-laden. Service on Valdalla is reserved as a punishment or as a battleground for swift promotion.

Although the Teldor Treaty proscribes barbarian military activity beyond the Valdalla border, this has not stopped them from violating the treaty's tenets in the past. The barbarians are a fractious lot and prone to rebellion within their own ranks. Some claim no particular interest in honoring past treaties; the Valdalla barbarians occasionally sally forth on wars against their neighbors. Valdalla's last ruler, Governor Krychek, was killed in 4989 to make way for his successor, a monstrous bravo named Thorium Ukrops. Lord Ukrops launched an expeditionary raid on the Isalight Fiefdom in 4991. Lord Vaclav Vasalayana II (King of the Isalights) repelled the invaders, but then died under dubious circumstances. The barbarians also attacked the Cortran Barony, a Hawkwood fief that still clings tenaciously to the continent's southwestern coast.

I met with Ukrops at the front. Word that I wore the Emperor's firebird blazon was, I suppose, enough to pique his interest and offer me an audience. Clearly a product of forbidden genetic engineering, Ukrops is a monster of a man, over 8' tall with wild blue hair and skin like stone. He showed the proper obeisance to House Hawkwood, but spoke with contempt about the Universal Church and the Empire. When I spoke to him about his nation's violation of the treaty by their attacks on the Isalight Fiefdom, he scoffed, accusing the fiefdom of attacking first. Hinting at a vast Vuldrok ar-

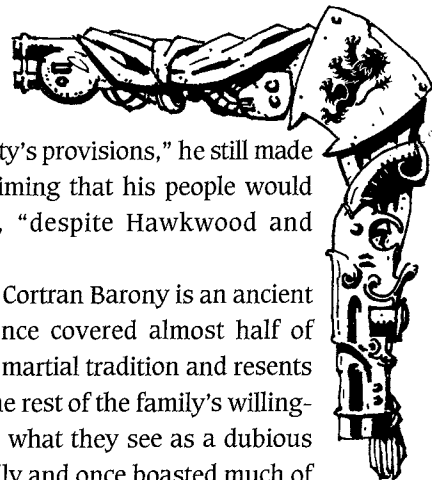
mada ready to "enforce the treaty's provisions," he still made a great pretense of honor, claiming that his people would continue to hold the treaty, "despite Hawkwood and Vasalayana dishonor."

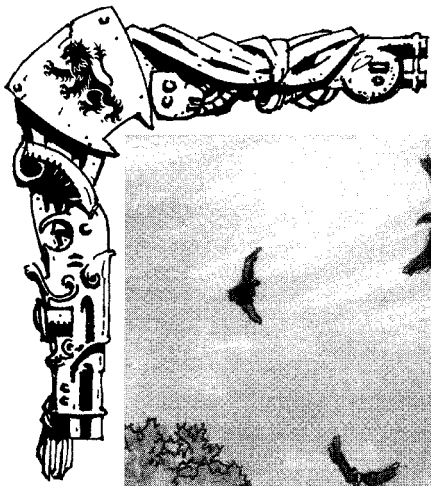
The Cortran Barony: The Cortran Barony is an ancient Hawkwood territory which once covered almost half of Valdalla. The barony follows a martial tradition and resents the loss of their territory and the rest of the family's willingness to trade off their land for what they see as a dubious peace. The barony is mostly hilly and once boasted much of the greenery that covers the rest of Leminkainen. Centuries of war, however, have left much of the region scarred, especially along the 500 mile front where both sides maintain a permanent state of trench warfare. I met Baron Antonius Cortran Hawkwood along the Vuldrok Front in his barony's northern provinces. The barbarians have recently, and abruptly, escalated their war technology from horses and lancers to blasters and aircraft — a direct violation of the Teldor Treaty.

The baron, a small wiry black man with a bristly mustache, told me that it was only timely intervention and volunteers from Jyväskylä that had prevented the Valdalla Hawkwoods from being pushed into the sea. He criticized family indifference to the barony's struggle, though it is well known that family funds have allowed the barony to continue its fight. He also showed me something very disturbing. Several of the barbarians his men killed had carried Decados-made radium blasters, barbaric weapons that kill their victims through radiation poisoning if they survive the initial blast. House Decados has denied involvement, citing a recently raided weapons transport as a possible source for the weapons. Nevertheless, the baron told me that this was but one of several pieces of evidence he had gathered linking Vuldrok "advisors" to the Decados Jakovian Agency.

Major Islands Fiefdom of Isalight (House Vasalayana)

The Isalight Fiefdom is an independent kingdom ruled by House Vasalayana. While the house is largely honorable and a nominal Hawkwood ally, its independent nature has lead it to make some bad mistakes. Suffering barbarian incursions, the house finally repelled the invaders last year. Unfortunately, due either to overconfidence or other reasons, they unwisely attacked Hawkwood installations in the Cortran Barony and the fiefdom's southern provinces. Shortly thereafter the house's leader, King Vaclav II, died under mysterious circumstances, leading to a power struggle eventually won by his son — King Sasha Vasalayana. Among the Hawkwood dead was Sir Erasmus Henry Hawkwood, a man of quality and favorite nephew of Princess Victoria of Delphi.





In the wake of Lord Vaclav's death, his son, Sasha Vasalayana, took the crown. Eager to renew Hawkwood favor, he surrendered the knight's body. The body showed not, as had been maintained, that the knight had fallen in battle, but that instead he was a victim of torture. This incident has engendered outrage on Leminkainen and the knight's native Delphi. "Erasmus Brigades," consisting of young nobles spoiling for war, gather in Jyväskylä and the Cortran Barony, demanding the house's destruction. Despite Vasalayana offers of restitution, this act and suspected Decados involvement in the death have made reconciliation between the two houses difficult.

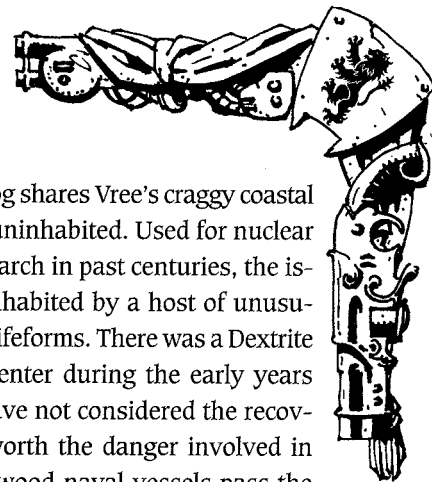
Mazor

Mazor is a small and, for Leminkainen, peaceful place. Miraculously resisting the earlier barbarian invasions, the jungle island now exists in a state of fearful vigilance. Its ruling noble, the Baroness Latera al-Malik, maintains an orderly court from her hillside mansion. The court has garnered a reputation for its high art and civilized ways, attracting artisans, poets and scholars from a dozen worlds. Unfortunately her wealth has also attracted pirates and other brigands; only a powerful automated defense system has maintained the island's independence.

Kriel

Kriel is the traditional home of House Dextrite and rivals Valdalla for sheer barbarism. How this house, more appropriate to Decados space, has survived all these years on Leminkainen is as much a testament to the house's roach-like ability to survive as to Hawkwood tolerance (some would say credulity). The house survived scandal and criminal negligence during earlier ages and has since thrived under the aegis of its masters, House Masseri. They have garnered wealth and privilege by selling their admittedly superior medical skills to House Hawkwood and the Engineers. Even a few Amaltheans have turned a blind eye to their atrocities in return for their advanced healing technology. The island's ruler and *de facto* house leader, "Duke" Honorius Masseri, has received honorary doctorates on planets as disparate as Leagueheim, Criticorum and Severus.

For the past 200 years Kriel has also offered another infamous service: the island is a penal colony for violent criminals from throughout Hawkwood space. Few spare any pity for these offenders and fewer still see any sign of them again. Some suspect that it is little coincidence that strange deformed pirates ply the waters of the surrounding oceans in metal submersible ships. These Changed corsairs launch brutal raids on shipping lanes and vulnerable coastal townships on Mazor, Vree and the Isalight Fiefdom before disappearing into a hidden island safe haven. Queen Catherine has offered a rich reward to those who can uncover the raiders' origins.



Tesla

House Hawkwood gave the Supreme Order of Engineers a 100 year lease to Tesla Island in 4965 for unspecified services. In little time the guild constructed a research facility (an austere maxicrete complex) and mined the waters around the island to discourage visitors. With an Imperial introduction in hand I was able to visit the heavily guarded compound. The island's administrator, Master Gridjz Kodak, escorted me throughout the facility on a carefully choreographed tour. I am not a scientist and understood little of what he showed me, though my Church scholar hedged that most of what we saw fell within the Church's technological guidelines (if loosely interpreted). Among other things, I was shown research into new strains of fauna, medical advances and new engine technology. I saw no evidence to support Avestite claims that the Engineers build golems here, but clearly there is far more to the island than met my eyes.

Vree

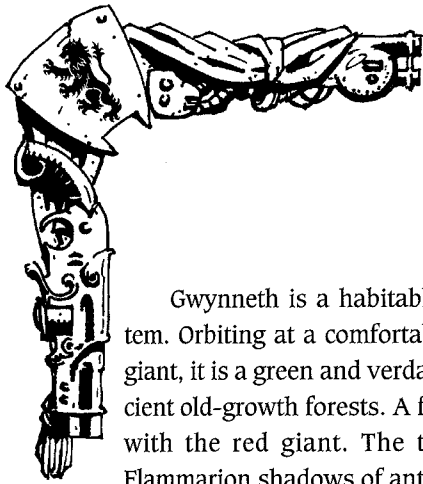
Like much of the southern Jyväskylä coast, Vree is catacombed with fjords from the planet's previous ice ages, now laid bare by the pitiless sun. Great stone arches, numerous caves and subterranean rivers provide ideal hiding places for pirates, escaped serfs and a suspected cabal of Antinomists. The island has a haunted reputation; its few legitimate citizens inhabit three small towns along its northern coast and live in fear, despite a contingent of Jyväskylän soldiers.

Mog

A small forested island, Mog shares Vree's craggy coastal appearance, but is ostensibly uninhabited. Used for nuclear testing and bio-weaponry research in past centuries, the island is rife with plague and inhabited by a host of unusually large and voracious insect lifeforms. There was a Dextrite research lab on the island's center during the early years after the Fall, but even they have not considered the recovery of its resources (if any) worth the danger involved in returning to the island. Hawkwood naval vessels pass the island from time to time; access is strictly forbidden by house law.

The Teldor/Imperial Annex Zone

The annex zone consists of the Cordan Island Chain and occupies a strategic position in striking distance of Grikkor, Jyväskylä, Valdalla and the Isalight Fiefdom. Overseen by Bishop Nostroma Del of Brother Battle, the Annex Zone came under Hawkwood/Church control in the wake of the Teldor Treaty. Heavily fortified with Taggart Forts, and patrolled by Hawkwood ships, the militarized zone provides a bulwark against barbarian aggression in case they fail to live up to the terms of the Teldor Treaty. Taggart Forts are sturdy dome-shaped forts fashioned from maxicrete and pre-fabricated ceramsteel ribbing; the forts were a proven defense against several enemies during the last Emperor War. Access in and out of the area is only allowed to those with the appropriate credentials.



Gwynneth

Gwynneth is a habitable world in a binary solar system. Orbiting at a comfortable distance from a mature red giant, it is a green and verdant planet, predominated by ancient old-growth forests. A far more distant blue sun circles with the red giant. The twin suns cast double edged Flammarion shadows of anti-red and anti-blue through the dense foliage, giving Gwynneth a deserved reputation as one of the most mysterious of planets. Strange creatures and secretive pagans ply their way through the vast stretches of unexplored arboreal territory.

History

Gwynneth was an enigma from the very beginning. In the 25th century a corporate science ship was returning to Delphi from the Ravenna system. Instead of Delphi on the other side, however, the ship's crew discovered a bizarre binary system orbited by a fertile forest world. The ship reportedly suffered serious navigational problems as it explored the system and several of its crew members were mysteriously incinerated in the halls or as they slept in their bunks. The centuries since are sad testament to what happens when ships get too close to the Paracelsus Belt, which passes in a great fiery arc between the planet's twin stars. The planet itself, with its strange red and blue shadows, proved more confusing than deadly to the first explorers, though later colonists encountered the planet's more sinister secrets.

The first colonists found abundant game in the mist-shrouded forests, and the oceans teemed with life. Anunnaki ruins were scattered throughout the planet. Given that much of the world is still unexplored, there are certainly ruins as yet undiscovered. The planet's discoverers sold knowledge of the world to House Juandaastas, but it lacked the resources to properly exploit it. Settlers and fortune hunters from numerous neighboring planets flooded to the frontier world; most notable among these were the Hawkwoods.

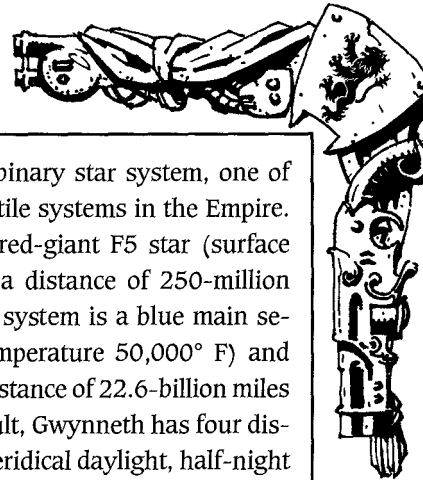
The forests that covered almost every square mile of the planet's land surface made it easy to hide from the authorities. Gwynneth quickly gained a self-perpetuating forest population (often pagan) who largely rejected authority of any sort. Settlers found the planet hospitable, to a point. They had little trouble building in most coastal regions and some inland areas, but faced disaster every time they attempted to settle the inner-most forest regions. The first of these problems surfaced 10 years after the planet's discovery. A 3,000 person lumber operation sent out a distress call, claiming that the forest itself was attacking them. When a rescue ship arrived, it found destroyed buildings and smashed machinery, but not a single colonist.

This soon turned out to be the doing of the planet's previous inhabitants, a race of primitive humanoids who soon gained the name Rock Trolls from the frightened settlers. These monstrosities possess a dim but brutal sentience and ruled Gwynneth long before humanity. They are massive, stooped humanoids with craggy stone-like skin and great rock-crushing pinchers instead of hands. There were other, equally fearsome predators on the primal world, but few escaped the settlers' systematic efforts at extermination as well as the trolls. In the first century of human colonization, most of these threats were eliminated, but the Rock Trolls escaped into the planet's caves and tunnels. Centuries passed and humanity tamed the world. Despite occasional fearsome reminders, most forgot the world was ever populated by monsters.

In 2849 the Delphian patriarch, Lord Cyprian Hawkwood, pledged his daughter, Analise Hawkwood, to wed Fergal ap Llwyn of a powerful colonial family, thereby bringing much of the world peacefully under Hawkwood control. The young heiress was tragically murdered before her marriage, however; suspicion fell on a group of Decados advisors who swiftly fled to other households across the globe. The Decados accused the Hawkwoods of unchecked colonial aspirations and urged many local factions to attack Hawkwood protectorates. Enraged, Lord Cyprian invaded, swiftly defeating the other powers. The Decados were, not surprisingly, absent when the bodies were counted.

Early Hawkwood rule was challenged in 2855 when the Ur-Ukar attacked human space. Ur-Ukar ships bombed Criticorum and concentrated much of their forces on Gwynneth. The Ur-Ukar seemed to have a special interest in the forest world; it was later found that a lost tribe of the aliens had reached the planet in the past, making unwholesome alliances with the lumbering Rock Trolls. Both races saw humans as invaders to the world. Gwynneth's human defenders rallied against the unprovoked assault, turning the tide against the alien invaders. Many historians believe the Ukari's nearly suicidal obsession for Gwynneth made them waste resources better spent elsewhere.

During the Second Republic, pilgrims and tourists crowded Gwynneth to observe its twin suns and majestic haunted forests. Gwynneth architecture was grand and soaring, yet its crystalline agorae and cathedrals never overshadowed the planet's natural beauty. The planet's populace have always been a generous and free thinking people, with a high percentage of artists, philosophers and mystics. As a result, divergent sects of the Holy Church, and other dissenters — who would have been imprisoned or worse on



Gwynneth Traits

Cathedral: Eskatonic Order/Orthodox

Agora: Charioteers/Muster

Garrison: 7

Capital: Llanfyrth

Jumps: 2

Adjacent worlds: Criticorum (dayside), Ravenna (parallel), Bannockburn (parallel)

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

Tech: 5

Human Population: 840,000,000 Hawkwood/100,000,000 Forest People (estimated)/1,350,000 barbarian (estimated)

Alien Population: 25,000 Ur-Ukar (estimated)/10,000 Ur-Obun

Resources: Lumber

Exports: Lumber, furniture, etc.

Landscape: Gwynneth has numerous temperate conditions, ranging from tropical jungles along its equator to snow at its two poles. The planet has four continents (Moshala, Fordan, Tolth and Paltrow) and four major island chains (The Clement Barony, Dûn, Hôd and Rangor). Much of the planet is covered by old growth forest and jungle, with a medium-sized desert region in central Fordan and mountain ranges on almost every major landmass. Much of Gwynneth's landmass is limestone and caves; subterranean lakes and millions of underground tunnels riddle the planet. Gwynneth is also home to a number of strange indigenous species, the most dangerous of which are a race of subterranean Rock Trolls.

Gwynneth is part of a binary star system, one of the strangest and most volatile systems in the Empire. Gwynneth orbits a mature red-giant F5 star (surface temperature 11,400° F) at a distance of 250-million miles. The other star in the system is a blue main sequence B0 star (surface temperature 50,000° F) and maintains an approximate distance of 22.6-billion miles from the red-giant. As a result, Gwynneth has four distinct light cycles: daylight, veridical daylight, half-night and veridical night. Daylight occurs when only the red (prominent) star is visible. Veridical, or "true," daylight occurs when both stars are visible (and can be confusing for those not used to the binary system). Half-night is when just the more distant blue star is visible and veridical night (the rarest condition) is when neither star is apparent. Church and Charioteer astronomers rate Gwynneth's blue and red suns at 9.5 HTSM and 2.1 HTSM respectively. The system's most bizarre astrographic feature is the Paracelsus Belt.

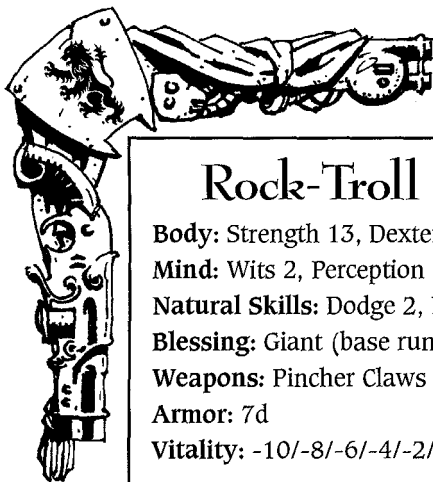
the Church could never conquer it. The blockade proved ineffective and the Church eventually negotiated a settlement with the hold-out planet. Gwynneth had to cede much of its day to day technology, but its urban centers remained largely intact. Fortunately, the planet's urban infrastructure (sanitation, etc.) was so flawlessly designed that the city converted to a comparatively low-tech existence with little effort.

Gwynneth also faced a new problem — or rather, an old one. The Rock Trolls had lumbered through the darkness for the past centuries, never forgetting that they were once masters of the world above. As technology broke down, the giants again dared the surface, though a thousands years of cave dwelling left them ill-equipped to deal with sunlight. They now threatened remote villages by night and slowed down attempts to vitalize the planet's mining operations.

After Halvor Li Halan's rise to theocratic power, Gwynneth was especially adamant that Ravenna not be allowed to join the Li Halan. Many on Ravenna believe that Gwynneth blockaded their planet (4687-4689) in revenge for Ravenna's earlier role in quarantining Gwynneth. There is a certain degree of antipathy between the two planets' royal families, who rarely see eye to eye. Gwynneth has also had a strained relationship with neighboring Criticorum. Criticorum is politically unstable and prone to exterior aggression when its internal pressures become too great, and Gwynneth has often proved a tempting target for its frustrations. In 4810 the al-Malik launched a full scale invasion, bombing Gwynneth's population centers and invading much of its territory. The al-Malik held power for a mere two years before the full might of House Hawkwood decisively crushed

other planets — have thrived on Gwynneth. The planet is the major font for the Eurygnostic faith (an Incarnate sect). Preceptors, Children of Zuran and forest pagans are tolerated as well, as long as they do not interfere with the faithful.

Gwynneth did not fall into the Dark Ages after the Fall so much as it slid into a long, slow twilight decline. Maintaining many of its technological advances, Gwynneth, like Leminkainen, drew the Church's ire by refusing to adopt a pastoral existence. The same noble fleet that bombarded Leminkainen soon attacked Gwynneth's technological enclaves. Gwynneth resisted stiffly and local Hawkwood cruisers repelled the attacking fleet. The Church excommunicated the planet's leaders and put the world under quarantine for almost 300 years. While this led to a great century-long depression in the 4100s, and further bombings in the 4200s,



Rock-Troll

Body: Strength 13, Dexterity 6, Endurance 10
Mind: Wits 2, Perception 4, Tech 0
Natural Skills: Dodge 2, Fight 6, Observe 5, Vigor 7
Blessing: Giant (base run: 14 meters)
Weapons: Pincher Claws (7 DMG)
Armor: 7d
Vitality: -10/-8/-6/-4/-2/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0/0

their fleet over the planet Somme, retaking Gwynneth and invading Criticorum in return. This occupation lasted only a year before the patriarch threatened to excommunicate the leaders of both planets unless they made peace.

Unfortunately, the peace did not last long. During the recent Emperor Wars, Gwynneth first fought against, and then as allies with, neighboring Criticorum. Furthermore, during the religious schisms that surfaced during the war, the Church unleashed the Inquisition against Gwynneth's forest people. As a result, recent sporadic raids and even open rebellion against the house have occurred in some regions. The barbarians took advantage of the conflict and stepped up their raids, going beyond mere space piracy to openly attacking the planet itself. Despite such recent assaults, however, Gwynneth's people continue to hold their heads high and live in the proud tradition of the planet's earliest colonists.

Solar System

All the planets listed below orbit the system's red sun. The blue star has three known satellites: Scorpius 1, 2 and 3. (The distance to these planets and rumors of Salamanders, Void-Krakens and other menaces, means they are seldom, if ever, visited.)

The Paracelsus Belt: Also called Paulus's Bane because of its affect on travelers, the Paracelsus Belt is a 22.6-billion mile long serpentine column of red solar plasma which proscribes the system in a wide, undulating arc. The belt is visible from Gwynneth at veridical night and remains a major component in Gwynneth folklore. The most dangerous aspect of this phenomenon are strange solar entities called Salamanders. A ship that travels too close to the Paracelsus Belt may find key areas — bulkheads, wiring and oracle panels — scorched or melted. Critical ship functions begin to fail and eventually crew members are incinerated by fiery phantoms that roam the hallways. Entire compliments have been destroyed in this manner, their ships left to float derelict or pulled to fiery ruin in the Paracelsus Belt. Some believe the fire spirits are demons, while others, pointing to most demons' fear of light and heat, believe they are of another genesis, not demonic but no less dangerous.

While some maintain they are merely a natural phenomenon, most see them as intelligent and inimical to human life; the fire beings seem to have an instinctive understanding of human technology and know which systems to damage to invoke the maximum fear and confusion. Salamanders have several known forms. When traveling through the void they are practically invisible, appearing as little more than wavering heat impressions. My Charioteer pilot informed me that infrared and EMS sensors can detect the creatures in this form, though with varying degrees of accuracy. In an oxygen atmosphere, the creatures are said to look like balls, columns or tendrils of fire.

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

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

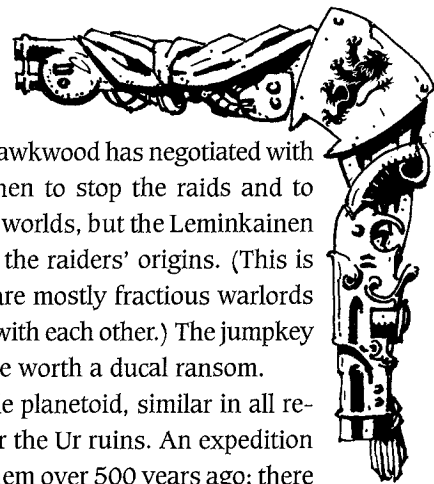
Gwynneth (Norian, Cheux): Gwynneth is the system's third major satellite and the only planet with a life sustaining atmosphere.

Somme: Somme is roughly the same size as Gwynneth and was extensively colonized during earlier eras, becoming an outpost for free thinkers and dissidents, as well as the republic's military industrial machine. Its hospitable gravity, vast mineral resources and proximity to Gwynneth made it a coveted prize. Somme sustained heavy bombing and played host to a major land war during the Fall, and suffered later attacks by the al-Malik and Vuldrok. Somme is where House Hawkwood secretly maintained its shipyards after the Fall. The planet is still used as a depot, mining colony and spaceport.

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

Saturnus: Almost identical to Saturn in the Holy Terra system, Saturnus once served as a major tourist attraction. The ruins of space casinos and luxury hotels dot several of its moons. There is still an operating hotel (the Saturna) for the super wealthy located on one of the larger asteroids on the outer rings. A recent Charioteer/Reeves consortium has arranged regular Empyrean Luxury Yacht cruises to Saturnus from Gwynneth and other planets. Unfortunately, such obvious wealth is a magnet for Vuldrok pirates.

Chantaclier: Chantaclier is an immense Jovian planet, roughly twice the size of Saturnus, and emits a strong electromagnetic pulse at regular eight second intervals. Second Republic scientists researched this phenomenon, but their findings, if any, are lost to antiquity. There are gravimetric and seismic disturbances on the planet, and winds as fast as 1,000 mph rip through its outer atmosphere. Over 20



moons orbit the planet, but none are hospitable to life or technology because of the planet's electromagnetic pulse. Nevertheless, there is a strongly shielded, and long abandoned, research facility rumored on one of the planet's moons.

Jumpgate: At least one *Vladimir* class cruiser is always available to defend the gate. Chandrasekhar Station, a floating Charioteer/Engineer research station, keeps a constant distance from the jumpgate, taking readings and performing various experiments. It shares nearly the same orbit around the red sun as the jumpgate, trailing it like a dog follows its master; both share a counterclockwise orbit from the rest of the planets. I visited the station and the scientists spoke to me excitedly about GUDs, hyperheterotic strings and plasma cosmological proof of the Pancreator's existence. While much of what they said made little sense to me (I am no scientist), I understood that they were also concerned about "extra-dimensional ghosts" and that several of their crew members had disappeared into thin air. The station has drawn Inquisitorial interest and, at the Church's insistence, an Eskatonic investigator has recently joined the crew.

Vuldrok raiders remain a constant threat to the planet's spaceways. No one knows when, or how many, raiders will appear on any given occasion, or from where. What worlds these barbarians come from is unknown, and those Hawkwood ships that have followed raiders back to their

origin never returned. House Hawkwood has negotiated with Vuldrok leaders on Leminkainen to stop the raids and to discover the key to their secret worlds, but the Leminkainen barbarians claim ignorance of the raiders' origins. (This is possibly true; the barbarians are mostly fractious warlords who do not often share secrets with each other.) The jumpkey to the raiders' system would be worth a ducal ransom.

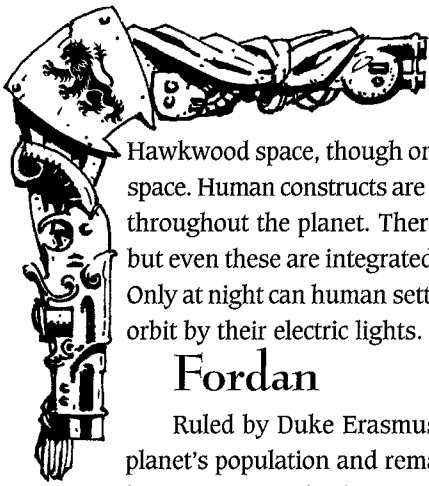
Manx-2: An unremarkable planetoid, similar in all respects to Manx-1 — except for the Ur ruins. An expedition of Muster minors discovered them over 500 years ago; there are rumors that some artifacts still remain. However, since it lies past the system's jumpgate, it is considered to reside dangerously close to the Dark; the Church forbids expeditions there, fearing what entities may lurk beyond the light of the red sun. Nonetheless, scientists, fortune hunters and mystics have gone there, evading the jumpgate's occasional Church warden ships. Scourings of the planet have as yet yielded few discoveries.

People & Places

As with the population on many Hawkwood planets, Gwynneth's citizens are mostly a solid, industrious people. Generous and less paranoid of strangers than those on many planets, they are quite adept at balancing their material and spiritual concerns.

Next to Delphi, Gwynneth has the highest population in





Hawkwood space, though one would hardly guess this from space. Human constructs are scattered more or less uniformly throughout the planet. There are a number of major cities, but even these are integrated into their forest surroundings. Only at night can human settlements be easily detected from orbit by their electric lights.

Fordan

Ruled by Duke Erasmus, Fordan houses over half the planet's population and remains a central hub for interstellar commerce and culture. Like most of the planet, dense old growth forest covers the majority of the continent. This is partially interrupted by the Qualuth Desert in the continent's central equatorial region. One of the Empire's highest mountain ranges splits the continent nearly in half. The regions mixture of haunted mist-shrouded forests and Ur-ruins have attracted poets, scholars and mystics from across the Known Worlds; it is also popular to various authors and magic lantern companies.

Unfortunately, the continent has recently gained a different reputation. Open revolt by the forest pagans is now a regular event on Fordan. A recent pagan raiding party burned one of the continent's oldest and most cherished cathedrals, murdering the clergy within. Although this was ostensibly done in return for recent Inquisitorial excesses, the church was not an Inquisitorial center. Indeed, one of those killed was Mother Twyla Nirak, a much-beloved Amalthean priestess. The resultant wrath of the local peasantry against area forest dwellers (many innocent of the crime) would have saddened the healer.

I have known Fordan's ruler, Duke Erasmus, since he visited my father in Hôd; he seems scarcely older now than he did when I was a child. A regal silver-haired man, the duke exhibits all the best qualities of our house. A fierce warrior and skilled orator, he is loyal to the Emperor without forgetting his familial duties. Against Church and family pressure, Duke Erasmus lead the planetary effort to censure Duke William Rochfort for his atrocities at the beginning of this decade.

Llanfyrth: Llanfyrth is a graceful republican-era city in a river delta about 50 miles from the southeastern coast. Architecturally a mix of Second Republic, post-Fall and more modest wooden structures, the city is one of the most beautiful in the Empire. Great parks and tree-lined vistas are the norm, and even the tallest modern buildings have trees and shrubbery planted on their rooftops. There are various forms of transportation popular in Llanfyrth, from horses and skimmers to bicycles. The most interesting, however, is a leftover from the Second Republic: much of the city is crisscrossed by a series of glasteel pneumatic tubes that shunt riders from place to place through the tree tops. I have seen these sky-tubes in other places (Anschock and Byzantium

Secundus), but they are ubiquitous here.

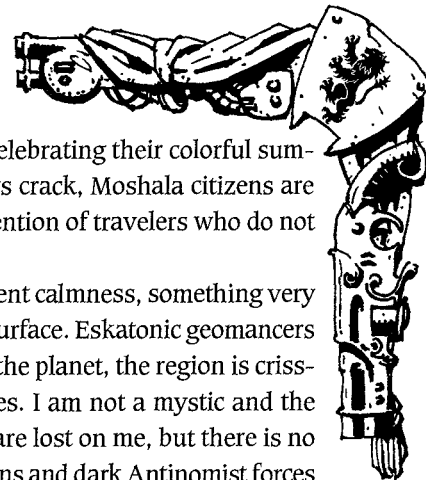
Llanfyrth remains a major center of art and learning, and supports both a major Mahayana Orthodox university and several League-sponsored technical colleges. Various art galleries nurture the population's soul. Known for its high percentage of yeomen and other free peoples, the city also serves as the continent's center for political and theological discourse.

Tolth

Tolth is similar to Fordan in many ways. Their land, history and native customs carry a common mark, but their present realities differ vastly. I freely admit to my prejudices when it comes to Tolth's ruler. Duke William Rochfort Hawkwood is almost as enigmatic as Gwynneth itself. An ascetic mystic, scion of House Hawkwood and luminary of the holy Church, the duke is also a religious fanatic, genocidal madman and a black mark on the Hawkwood name. He is responsible for the death of millions of his own subjects, and his entire continent is lurching toward anarchy.

Duke Rochfort has the blood of two noble families flowing through his veins. The younger child of Duke Manard Hawkwood and Lady Dara Li Halan, Duke William was raised and educated on Midian. Devoted to the Church, the young noble seemed destined for a life in the Orthodoxy until an unfortunate accident drowned his brother in the Komasi Ocean. Returning from Midian, the remaining heir was shocked at the condition of his dukedom. Paganism and other evils seemed to inhabit his lands at every turn. Off-world Inquisitors from Ravenna and as far away as Pyre heeded the duke's request to cleanse the continent of sin. Mass executions became common throughout the region and, while the duke originally claimed not to have actively participated in them, it was clear from the beginning that he did nothing to reign in their excesses.

The Inquisition quickly spread beyond the forest pagans and soon included targets among the guilds, intelligentsia, alien community and ultimately the duke's Hawkwood rivals. These actions did not sit well with the planet's nobility nor, indeed, the Gwynneth Orthodoxy. Since the duke never moved militarily against other family members, there was initially little enthusiasm about bringing the rogue noble to justice. Once the true extent of his crimes became known, however, it was clear that something had to be done. The Inquisitorial hysteria was soon seen for what it was, an aberration from planetary and Hawkwood norms. Shortly even the staunchest defenders of Gwynneth's Orthodoxy protested and ultimately forced a censure directly from Holy Terra. In the meantime, rather than stopping the forest dwellers' raids, the duke's tactics actually encouraged them. The final Church tally of the Inquisition's actions estimated 2.3 million dead in Tolth's killing fields, though other



parties estimate twice that amount.

Now ostracized by the Church mainstream, Duke Rochfort has continued his private inquisition, this time under the pretense of protecting public order. As a result, Tolth (and especially Londynium) has become the most politically unstable region on the planet. Military action against the duke is not a likely option, however, and assassination is not our way. Tolth was already the main military power on the planet, and the duke now hires Muster mercenaries to supplement his army and continue his purges. For now, the policy against the duke is one of containment, embargo and information-gathering. Opposition among the continent's lower nobility is growing, but the duke's overwhelming military superiority and reputation as a powerful theurgist have quelled most domestic dissension. Publicity from as far away as Kish and Vera Cruz have variously portrayed the duke as a dangerous madman, wronged martyr or void emissary to the Dark Between the Stars.

Londynium: Similar in size and comportment to Llanfyrth, Londynium is now a city besieged by fear. Squeezed between the out-of-control Muster on one side and forest terrorists on the other, the city's people try to live out their daily lives and ride out the storm. While the forest people are technologically primitive, some have learned enough to become effective terrorists. Londynium and other cities in Tolth have suffered a rash of bombings in crowded pedestrian malls, sporting events and agorae. The attacks usually involve explosives surrounded by bags of nails or other metal shrapnel, clearly intended to cause maximum death and terror to civilian targets. Letters demanding religious autonomy and freedom from the Church mark the terrorists as forest pagans. Despite this, Tolth authorities have alternately accused Vuldrok and al-Malik agents of being the real instigators behind the massacres — theoretically as a prelude to invasion. While many question these assertions, fear of alien involvement has allowed the duke to continue his state of martial law. Muster guards drive around the city in skimmers or brute-carts, waving clubs, rifles and wearing a bastardized Hawkwood lion emblem circled by a flaming jumpgate cross.

Moshala

Moshala is the planet's volcanically active northern polar continent and the one region heavily terraformed during the Second Republic. The region's volcanic activity, while sporadically deadly, also makes the region far more habitable than the planet's southern polar continent (Paltrow). Magma-heated steam vents allow natural areas of greenery on the continent's coastal regions. The populace lives in small townships distributed around the thermal valleys; they are a calm and industrious people. Indeed, the Icelanders, as they sometimes call themselves, are among the most civi-

lized people I have ever met. Celebrating their colorful summer festival when the ice-flows crack, Moshala citizens are quaint enough to draw the attention of travelers who do not mind braving the cold.

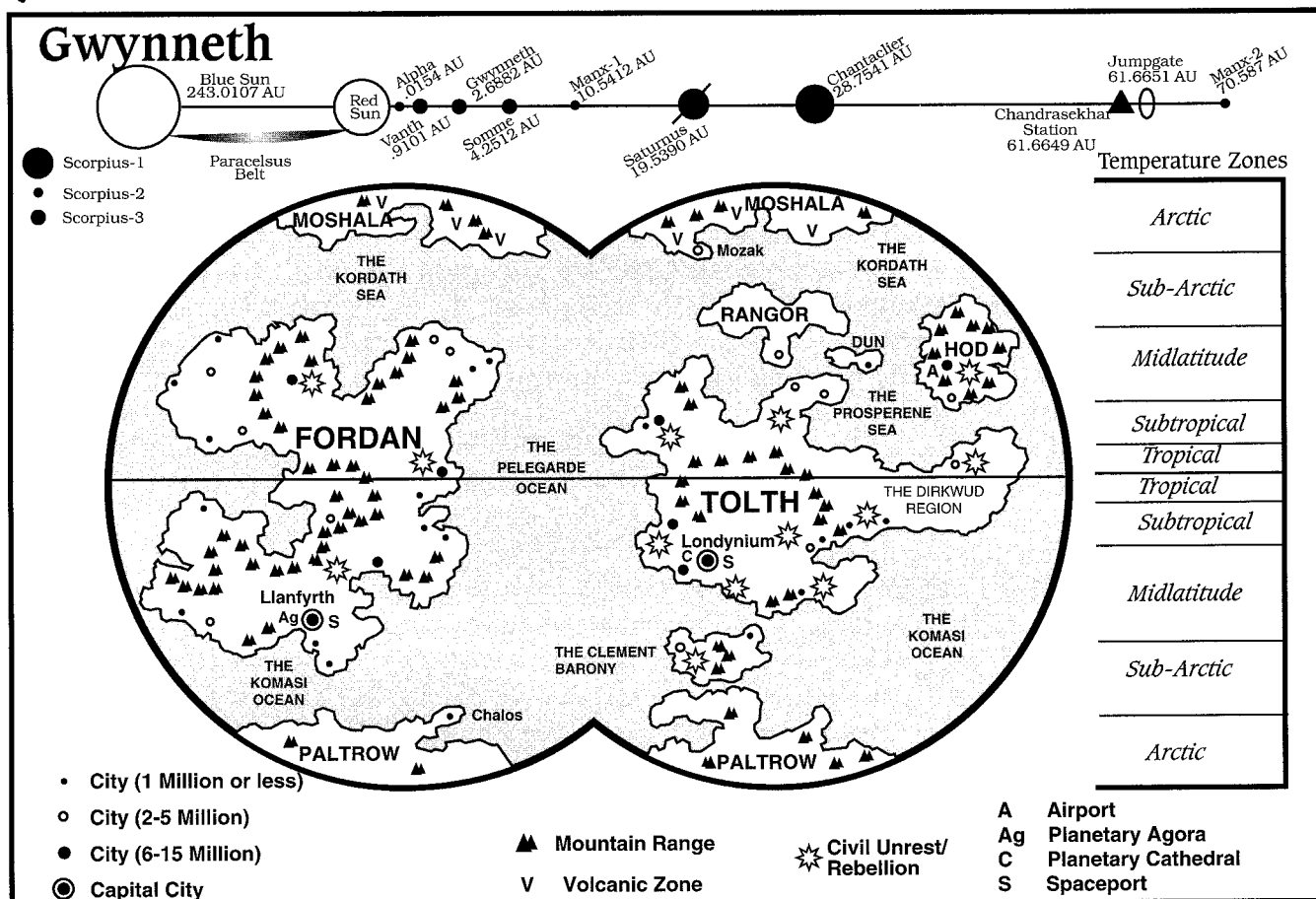
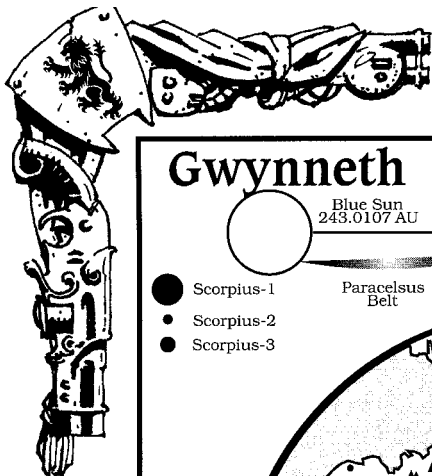
Despite the region's apparent calmness, something very different is at work below the surface. Eskatonic geomancers believe that, unlike the rest of the planet, the region is crisscrossed by a system of ley lines. I am not a mystic and the implications of this discovery are lost on me, but there is no denying that Eskatonic magicians and dark Antinomist forces have waged a shadow war over the continent's ephemeral resources for centuries now. This conflict has had subtle and occasionally disturbing affects on the people, a few of whom have gone on murderous rampages or practiced horrific rites to appease dark presences.

The continent's ruler, Countess Elan Hawkwood, may well be the most popular leader on Gwynneth, despite occasional criticism by the Inquisition. Born to one of the planet's oldest uninterrupted dynasties, at the age of five she realized that she had one skill not shared by the rest of the family: she is a natural born healer. The countess's few critics feel she rules through a cult of personality; their criticisms were recently underscored by an attempt on her life. The countess could not heal herself and came perilously close to death, bitten by a Vrasht Bug (an insect clearly not indigenous to Moshala's polar climes). Blame for the incident quickly fell on a visiting knight from House Van Gelder. The knight committed suicide in his cell before a full investigation could be launched. Where a Van Gelder strikes, the Decados are usually not far behind. Decados motives in this matter (if any) are unknown, though the worst of that house are not above dabbling in Antinomy.

Paltrow

During the Second Republic, glacial Paltrow was heavily populated thanks to its advanced building and energy gathering technology. Ancient holograms portray vast cities under glass-like domes, sanctuaries of greenery in the polar wastes. After the Fall, however, these cities were bombed from space or slowly disintegrated as the planet's technological and financial infrastructure collapsed. The continent lay fallow for 500 years until Baroness Mary Elizabeth Hawkwood of Hôd opened it up to exploration as a semi-autonomous free state in 4745. Heavily influenced by Juandaastas and Amalthean philosophy, the baroness publicly justified her actions by describing the operation as a business decision and handing administration of the region over to the Scraver's guild.

Although the stated goal was to exploit the region's remaining mineral wealth, some darkly hinted that Scraver presence (rather than that of Muster or Justinian miners) indicated another goal — the unearthing of proscribed tech-



nologies. Church opposition was initially muted, some say because of generous tithes paid by the guild; for a time the operation was a success. Merchants, freed serfs, forest dwellers and other yeomen migrated to the icy continent to try their luck. Unfortunately, the operation could not survive the death of its founder and by 4810, increasing Muster and Church criticism closed down the operation, seemingly for good.

Only in the last four years has Imperial attention again opened it for exploration. Overseen by a joint committee consisting of noble, Church and League representatives in the continent's only city (Chalos), freemen are allowed to explore and homestead the continent. Strict Church and Imperial laws govern what technology may be removed from the region; both Scraver and Engineer specialists examine the finds. Those who uncover lost tech may receive either a finder's fee or are allowed to develop the technology, if appropriate. Although many explorers have swarmed to the region, initial findings have been disappointing. Many of the explorers are poorly trained and equipped, and fall prey to the continent's many dangers.

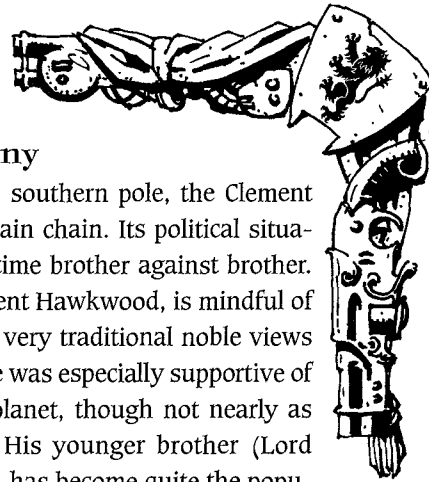
Besides howling arctic winds, vast ice-sheets and natural predators (including a cousin to Delphi's Ice Wurm), there are more mundane dangers to consider. The Muster has restricted mining privileges, but feels cut-out of the process.

Chainers and other freelancers are not shy about violent claim jumping. Also, a few small communities of so-called ice-pagans have homesteaded the region for centuries. While some of these are harmless, others are either religious zealots (including poisoning cults) or common bandits. Still, there are an increasing number of adventurers who feel the rewards are worth the risk.

Major Islands

Hod

Home. How does one describe one's homeland without sounding boastful, apologetic or sentimental? I could describe its natural beauty: The great ring of mountains which circles the entire land like dragon's teeth, protecting it from invasion and the storms that sweep in from the Fordan Sea. Its three great rivers that flow out from its mountainous center and through its fertile interior, past forests of silver trees. I could describe its people: most are brown skinned, industrious as any peasant stock anywhere, yet educated to the ways of faith and the world. I could talk of our grand woodland cathedrals or of how, in over a full millennium, the island has never been conquered. Yet, this is only half a truth. Hôd, like any other place in the Empire, has its problems. Although my father restrained the earlier excesses of the Inquisition, recent relationships with the forest pagans



have become increasingly strained. A firefight that broke out between a raiding party and some of my soldiers while I was away on Ravenna yielded up three Vuldrok rifles and serpent-oroborous coins similar to those I saw in Valdalla. Superstition, rural poverty and other social ills also play a part in my barony. While these factors compare favorably to what I have seen on other planets, there is still much left to be done.

Rangor

The Rangor Freehold contains some of the planet's densest forests and is the longtime fiefdom of the planet's other noble family, House Juandaastas. House Juandaastas has long sought to foster peace and understanding between humans and alien sentients; an admirable, if impracticable, goal. The Rangor palace attracts almost as many Ur-Obun as the ducal palaces at Delphi or Ravenna. The house has turned its island into a sanctuary of sorts for aliens, unpopular Church sects and even, some rumor, unrepentant psychics. Count Phillipe Juandaastas also has friends among the forest people, though he does not support their pagan ways. Unfortunately, these legitimate contacts have lead some to accuse him of harboring Vuldrok spies. The count himself is an intelligent, good humored man and always happy to entertain anyone who can bring a new form of art, music or other contribution to his cultured court.

Dûn

Dûn is a small, semi-forested island resting between the Kordath and Prosperene Seas. Known for its excellent cheese and folk-music, some believe it may have also become a source for far more troubling exports. Sympathetic to the plight of the forest pagans, the island's nominal ruler, Baron William Erhardt Hawkwood, has been publicly accused of harboring Vuldrok spies in the island's forest regions. Little has been done about this so far, in the interest of family unity and because little substantive evidence has surfaced. Alternative theories posit that the rumors were planted by house enemies in an attempt to divide family unity, already badly fractured by Duke Rochfort's actions in Tolth. In any event, those who can settle this issue will earn the family's gratitude.

The Clement Barony

Situated near the planet's southern pole, the Clement Barony is divided by a mountain chain. Its political situation is similarly divided, this time brother against brother. The island's ruler, Baron Clement Hawkwood, is mindful of his family duties, but harbors very traditional noble views on the role of the peasantry. He was especially supportive of the Inquisition's role on the planet, though not nearly as excessive as Duke Rochfort. His younger brother (Lord Randall Hawkwood), however, has become quite the populist in recent years. Tutoed on Delphi and Velisamil, he has caused much commotion by publicly advocating rights for the forest pagans to worship in a way divergent from the Church. Excessive even by the planet's egalitarian traditions, Lord Randall's activities eventually drew the attentions of the Inquisition, who tried and convicted the young baron, condemning him to banishment on Leminkainen. Rather than accede to this sentence, however, Lord Randall escaped into the forest and now rallies the forest pagans to rebel against his brother. The situation is rapidly spinning out of control and the small barony may soon be engaged in civil war.

Far more dangerous to the barony's order are the activities of a pagan terrorist known only as "The Wake." An international menace, The Wake first appeared on Fordan during the middle of the Emperor Wars and announced his presence by destroying a sky-tube in Llanfyrth, killing a dozen innocent people. Other incidents followed, including the destruction of several agorae, cathedrals and the now famous mid-air destruction of the *Calbo*, a spaceship carrying a visiting delegation of Justinian nobles. No one knows what The Wake really looks like, and indeed some suggest he does not really exist but is instead a fictitious leader like the Crimson Death in al-Malik space, invented solely to spread fear and misinformation. The Wake has been most active in Londynium and the Clement Barony in recent years. There are some rumors linking him with the rebellious Lord Randall Hawkwood, though for the baron's sake, I hope these are not true.

Other Holdings

Velisamil (Ur-Obun Protectorate)

Obun (or Velisamil to its natives) is a Hawkwood protectorate, but is by no means a Hawkwood planet. The Ur-Obun have a long history stretching back into the mists of time, long before they met with humanity. We were the first to reach space and open the universe to them, and we have shared with them the truth of the Pancreator. House Hawkwood recognizes that the Ur-Obun constitute a cultural treasure and have largely left them to their own devices. Despite some initial failings in early human/Obun relations, Velisamil aided humanity in its struggle against the Ukari assault during the 29th century. The Ur-Obun were especially useful in deflecting Ukari psionics, an assault humanity was ill-equipped to handle. In return for their aid, Princess Augusta Hawkwood swore our house to protect Velisamil, a debt of honor we still abide by to this day. Our presence on the planet is centered in the capital city, Looajen, in a large complex near the city center. This facility contains administrative offices, barracks and an Orthodox chapel.

Today the planet's ruling council, the Umo'rin (or Conclave of Federates) rules over the planet in most respects, consulting House Hawkwood only on major policy matters. The recent ascendancy of Emperor Alexius and changes in Church policy have again allowed the Obun to explore the Empire. Hawkwood ships still guard the system's jumpgate to protect the planet from raiders and to prevent Ur-Obun separatists (thankfully a minority) from leaving the system.

Holy Terra

Holy Terra is the cradle of humanity and the center of the Church. As such, the noble families have little more than a diplomatic presence on this holy world. The Hawkwood embassy is in the fertile Vallee du Rhône Meridionale located in the Avignon Bishophoric. The region consists mostly of fertile vineyards and was chosen in the 42nd century because its temperature and biome reminded the family of Ravenna. The Hawkwoods also have small properties in England, the Ravenna region (fitting, I suppose) and Finlandia. Our house has always had a very up and down relationship with the Holy See, varying greatly from planet to planet and changes in theological climate. Current relations with Holy Terra are on the upswing, despite the Church's doctrinal disputes with the Emperor.

Tethys

Although Tethys is not officially a Hawkwood world, the family has maintained strong economic, cultural and

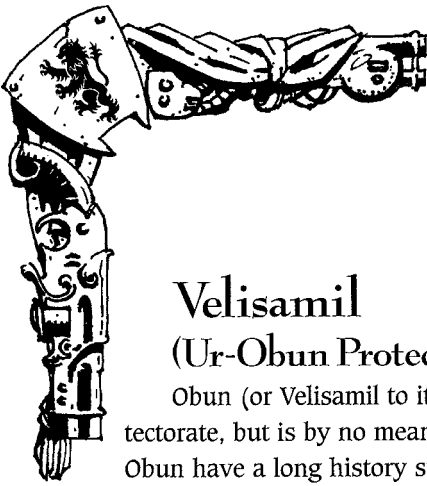
military interests there from the beginning. Perhaps the most valuable of these are the house's ties with the Ambrim crafter-family; this alliance has provided the Hawkwoods a secure source for their spaceships. Although other noble families (and now, the Empire) have contracts with the crafters, House Hawkwood still holds the most valuable shipping contracts here. The Tethys system has also long been a site for Hawkwood wargames and the Empire has continued this tradition. The Dowager Mother, Lady Regnus-Octavia Hawkwood, is a major player on Tethys and houses much of her private fleet here. With its jumpgates leading to Delphi and Byzantium Secundus, Tethys is seen by the family as a strategically vital buffer zone. Hawkwood influence there proved important during the Emperor Wars, when the house used forces stationed there to surprise attackers from Sutek and Aragon, effectively flanking the invading Hazat. In addition to its Imperial forces, a major portion of the Hawkwood fleet is stationed here.

Bannockburn

A League planet, family power is still a negotiated necessity here because of its position between the Hawkwood worlds and the Symbiots. Besides its cultural ties, Hawkwood worlds have always been one of the largest customers for Bannockburn goods and services. The house has used this leverage to maintain a strong diplomatic presence on the planet. Because of possible Symbiot infection, any products that come into Hawkwood space from Bannockburn must be checked; the house maintains a custom's house to interdict illicit traffic from Stigmata and other suspect worlds. Additionally, the Hawkwoods have donated efforts to Bannockburn's defenses and maintain a garrison of soldiers on the planet.

Severus

It is an ancient axiom that one should keep one's friends close and one's enemies even closer. It should, then, be little surprise that House Hawkwood keeps an embassy on the Decados's homeworld, just as they and other houses hold embassy on Delphi. Service on the treacherous jungle planet is not for the squeamish, but then Hawkwoods were never ones to shrink from a challenge. The Hawkwood embassy is in the steamy Buorka Region and maintains a sense of martial alertness that might seem to verge on paranoia — if it were on any other world. Hawkwood legates on Severus have, on occasion, been murdered, driven mad or even defected. Still, this distasteful duty has its benefits, such as experience and fast promotion; there are a good number of volunteers to serve as liaisons to the Mantis Court.

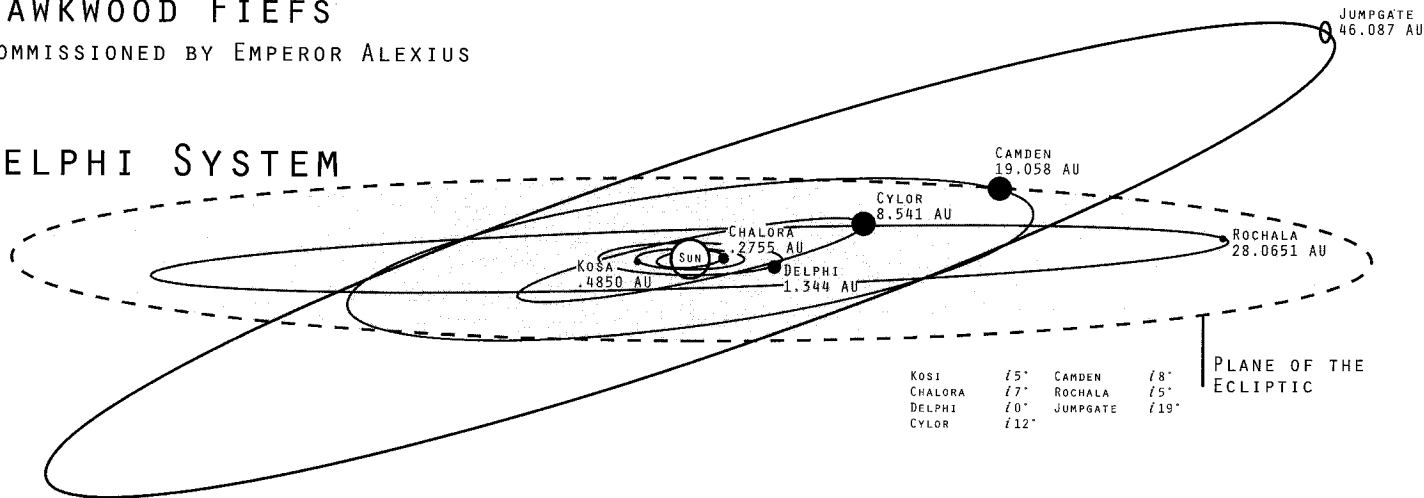


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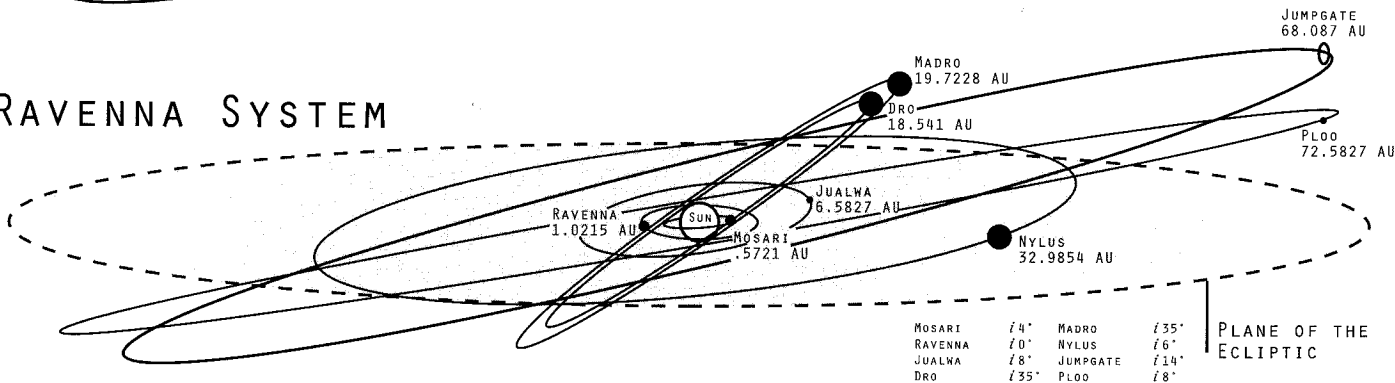
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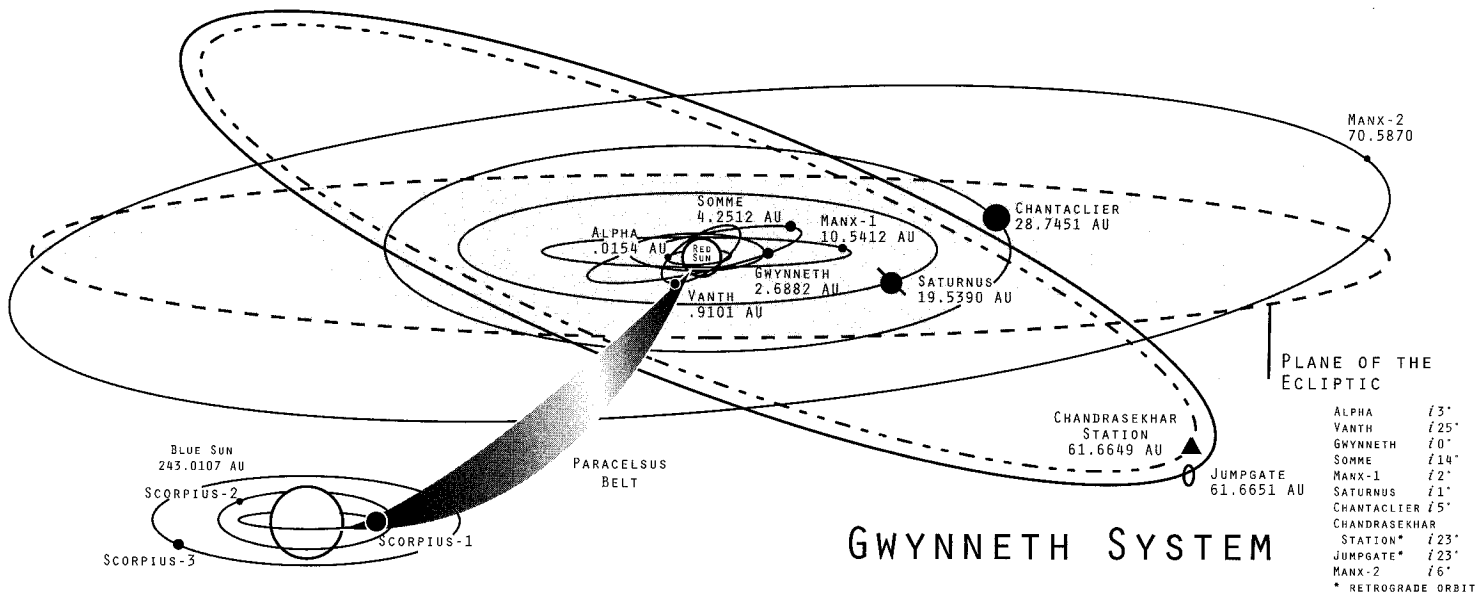
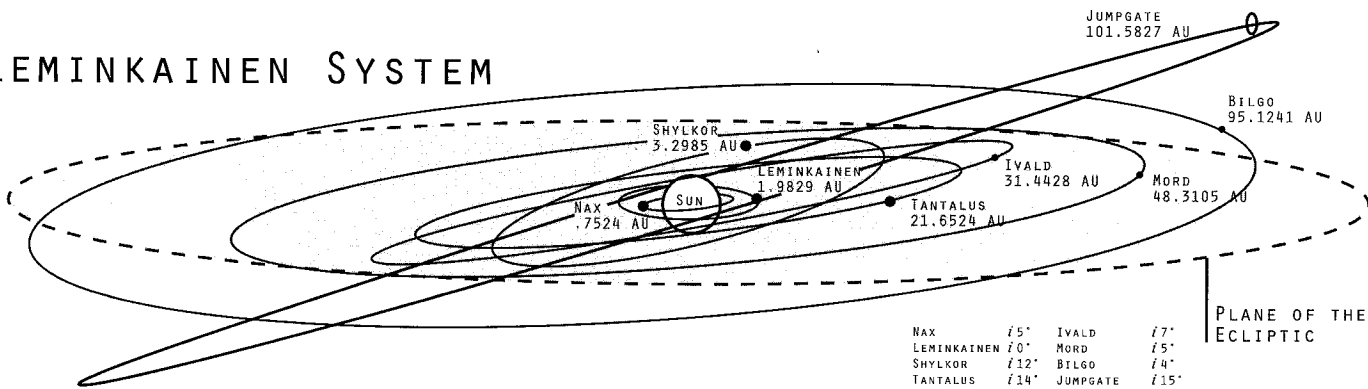
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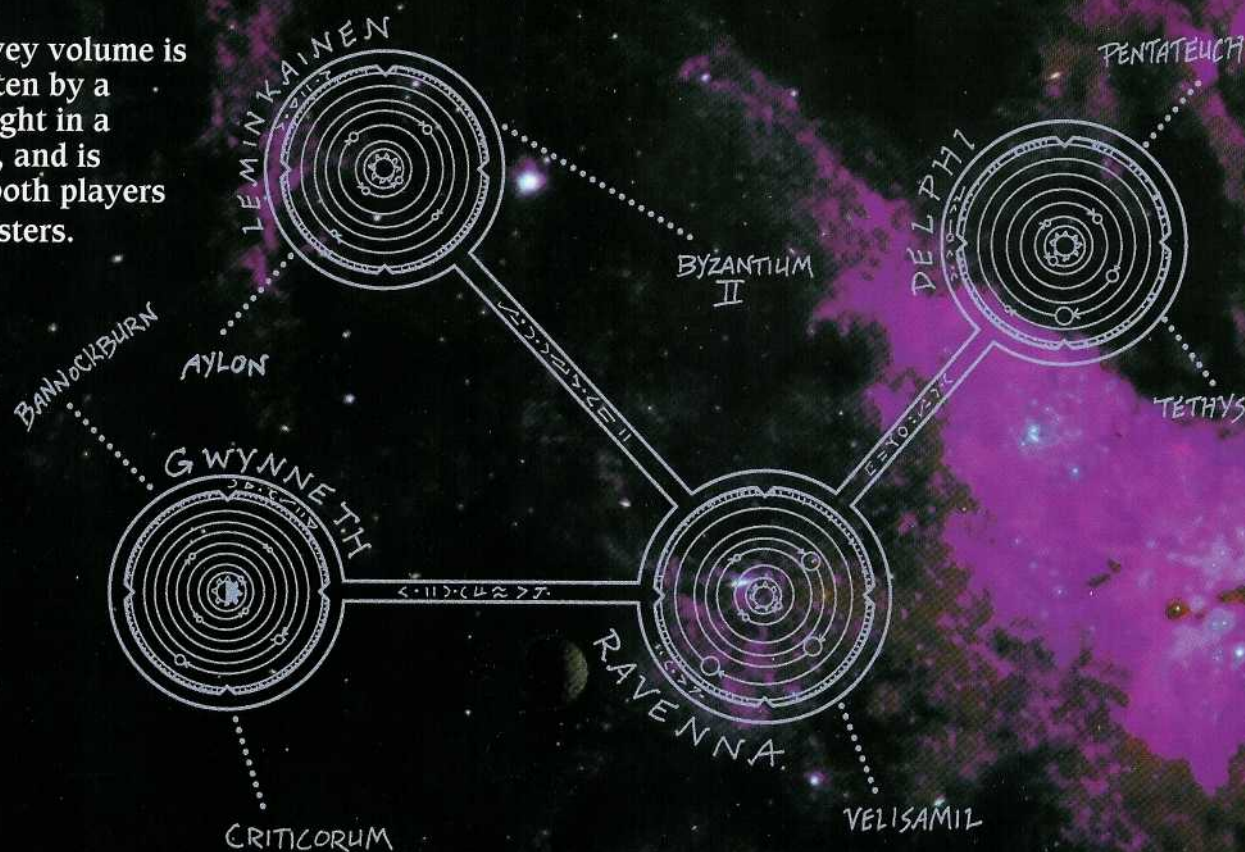
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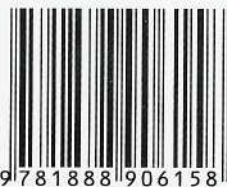
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