

Stellar Reaches

A Fanzine for Traveller T20 And Classic Traveller

Issue #7: Spring 2007



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The Stellar Reaches fanzine’s website can currently be found at <http://stellarreaches.nwgamers.org>. Please feel free to browse the site for more information, as well as back issues and other downloads as they become available.

The **BITS Task System**, although modified to include Traveller T20 difficulty classes, has been provided with permission by **British Isles Traveller Support (BITS)**. Its presence here does not constitute any challenge to the rights for this system, and we gratefully acknowledge Dominic Mooney and Andy Lilly for their generosity in allowing our use of this system to allow future adventures to be written in such a manner as to be more useful to all published Traveller rules sets.

For more information on BITS, check out their website at <http://www.bits.org.uk/>

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Calling All Adventurers



Intrigue, Espionage Opportunities, Corporate Trade Wars, Mysteries Abound, a Higher Calling and a Long Lost Treasure...They are *not* sure that you have what it takes.

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Join the Adventure over on the **Citizens of the Imperium** Board! Look under:
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Letter From The Editor

Greetings, Fellow Sophonts,

Another three months have flown by, and now I am proud to present to you **Issue #7** of the **Stellar Reaches** fanzine. Riding in at 41 pages, this issue is packed with plenty of goodness for Traveller fans: a Traveller gaming article, an adventure set in the Empty Quarter, an unusual location and an Empty Quarter Echo article based on that locale, an alternate universe, a starship data article detailing a barge, a weapon's locker article on flamethrowers, and a rather meaty biography column, which introduces new ships and their captains for your use in adventures and ship encounters. That's eight different articles for your enjoyment.

We can also see that two new artists have come to the fore, presenting the Traveller community with some excellent new material: Thomas Leichssenring and v gray.

Travis Leichssenring works hard for his money as a chemist by day and a freelance artist by night. He started playing Traveller a little over 25 years ago, and you can see how it has influenced his artwork. He prefers doing sci-fi art and hopes to do a few book covers and graphic novels in the future. His currently projects include a graphic novel, inspired by his previous successes in selling his artwork to the advertising department of the company he works for, as well as work for an online role-playing game site. For more of his work, check out his website at: <http://web.mac.com/kharum>

v gray is a long time sci-fi and traveller fan, currently exiled in frozen northern Colorado, dreaming of balmy breezes, tropical beach resorts, and flocks of nubile bioroid handmaidens. His hobbies include: contemplating the perfect TL25 battlefleet, photography, improving his computer art skills from stick-figure to finger-paint level (or beyond, as we can see here), wasting way too much time researching "stuff" on the internet, and upgrading his graphics software. He maintains a gallery of his work at: <http://gallery.bruno-me.org/v/3d-art/>

As always, my friends, I wish to thank you all for your continued support of the **Stellar Reaches** fanzine. Without your continued contributions, we simply couldn't do it, so once again I say "thank you, thank you, thank you" to each of the contributors for your efforts! With that in mind, please stop reading this intro and dive on into the good stuff. There's a lot to enjoy with the latest issue!

Prepare To Jump,
Jason "Flynn" Kemp
Editor, **Stellar Reaches** fanzine

BITS Task System

From pg. 8, BITS Writers' Guidelines June 1999. Copyright ©1999, BITS. All Rights Reserved.
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MegaTraveller (MT), Traveller: The New Era (TNE) and Marc Miller's Traveller (T4) all use a graduated system of task difficulty ratings – Average, Difficult, Formidable, etc. 'Classic' Traveller (CT) and GURPS Traveller (GT) use modifiers to the task rolls instead. Traveller T20 (T20) uses difficulty classes (DCs) to define target numbers for skill checks. The BITS Task System provides a simplified common ground for all these rule sets, using difficulty ratings with corresponding task modifiers for CT and GT and DCs for T20 as shown in Table 1. The means by which spectacular (GT: critical) success or failure are achieved are defined by the rule set used. Similarly, the GM should apply the rules for special tasks – opposed, co-operative, hasty, cautious, etc. – according to the rule set used. As always, these are only guidelines – the GM may alter any task roll as appropriate to enhance the game.

TABLE 1: TASK DIFFICULTIES

BITS Task Difficulty	T4 Difficulty	T4.1 Difficulty	GT Target Modifier	TNE Difficulty	MT Difficulty	CT Target Modifier	T20 DC
Easy	Easy (Auto)	Easy (1D)	+6	Easy	Simple	-4	10
Average	Average (2D)	Average (2D)	+3	Average	Routine	-2	15
Difficult	Difficult (2.5D)	Difficult (2.5D)	0	Difficult	Difficult	0	20
Formidable	Formidable (3D)	Formidable (3D)	-3	Formidable	Difficult	+2	25
Staggering	Impossible (4D)	Staggering (4D)	-6	Impossible	Formidable	+4	30
Impossible	(5D)	Hopeless (5D)	-9	Impossible	Impossible	+6	35
Hopeless	(6D)	Impossible (6D)	-12	Impossible	Impossible	+8	40

Ex. Maria Charles is forging a complex document, which the GM rules is a Staggering task. Maria has Forgery-4 (GT: Forgery-16, T20: Forgery +18) and the relevant attribute (MT, T4) is INT 10 (TNE: INT 9, T20: 15).

CT: Task success is normally $2D + Skill \geq 8$. Maria requires $2D + Forgery \geq 12$ ($8 + 4$ for Staggering difficulty).

Alternatively, the GM may prefer to apply the target modifier as a negative modifier on the dice roll, i.e. $2D + 4 - 4 \geq 8$.

MT: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to MT's Formidable (15+), thus the task is $2D + Skill + (Stat / 5) \geq 15$. For Maria this is: $2D + 4 + 2 \geq 15$.

TNE: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to TNE's Impossible, thus the task is $d20 \leq (Skill + Stat) \times \frac{1}{4}$. For Maria this is $d20 \leq 3$, i.e. $(9 + 4) / 4$ rounded down.

T4: Maria requires $4D \leq INT + Forgery$. (Note that T4's Staggering rating of 3.5D is ignored.)

GT: Maria requires $3D \leq Forgery + Target Modifier$, i.e. $3D \leq 16 - 6$.

T20: Maria requires $d20 + 18 \geq 30$. (Note that the INT modifier is already factored into the skill check.)

Task definitions should always be used sparingly – the GM should be able to define the difficulty and required skills and equipment for most tasks using common sense. Where strange skills or equipment are needed, these can usually be listed, without requiring a full task definition. Where a full task definition is required, use the following format (you don't need to use the bold or italics formatting; plain text is fine):

To find a boar:

Difficult Recon (GT: Tracking), or

Difficult Hunting (T20: P/Hunting), or

Formidable Survival

+1 Difficulty if riding at full gallop.

+1 Difficulty if lost.

-1 Difficulty if moving slowly.

Spectacular Success: They have surprised a boar and have one round to act before it reacts.

Success: They have found boar tracks and can begin following them.

Failure: No tracks found.

Spectacular Failure: They have become lost.

+1 Difficulty indicates a harder task (e.g. an Average task becomes Difficult) whereas -1 Difficulty is an easier task (e.g. Difficult would become Average).

NOTE: This system has been extensively play-tested but suggestions for refinements are always welcome.

Traveller Campaigning: Rolling Your Own

By Jason “Flynn” Kemp

Despite the myriad of roleplaying options available in a Traveller campaign, it is hard to find players willing to step outside the mold of the World's Most Popular Roleplaying Game and the fantasy genre. If you are lucky enough to be involved in a Traveller campaign already, then congratulations are in order. Otherwise, you may find that the only way to participate in a Traveller campaign, at least at first, is to run one.

Understandably, some people elect to run their first Traveller campaign in the hopes of finding people of like-minded interests, and then teaching them enough about the milieu and the system of choice that one of the players will eventually step up and start Refereeing a game, so that you can sit back and actually play. However, you may be surprised to discover that running your own Traveller campaign can be a very rewarding experience. Some people enjoy the ability to create a wide range of adventures, because of the width and breadth of acceptable story lines that science fiction supports. Some enjoy building the worlds and detailing the cultures of a particular section of space, and then revealing that to their players. Others enjoy creating ships, robots or vehicles and then, then finding reasons in the game to use their creations. Some just find emotional satisfaction in a game well-run.

In this, the second article of the Traveller Campaigning series, we'll cover the topic of starting your own Traveller campaign. Here, we'll explore some basic concepts, such as choosing a specific version of the Traveller rules, determining a schedule of play and establishing a campaign background.

A Note on Gaming Systems

Traveller has a wonderful and vibrant history in terms of gaming systems. In the beginning was Traveller (now called Classic Traveller, or CT), the original Little Black Book rules that inspired the creation of the Official Traveller Universe. After ten years, the rules were consolidated, updated and re-released as MegaTraveller, which quickly became known by its abbreviation MT. Every few years thereafter, it sometimes seems, a new version of the game came out using new game mechanics. Traveller: The New Era (or TNE) came out in the early 1990's using GDW's in-house game system, the original D20 System, which powered other GDW games such as Twilight 2000 and 2300 AD. In the mid 1990's, Imperium Games released T4, also known as Marc Miller's Traveller. When Imperium Games folded, Steve Jackson Games released a GURPS version of the

Traveller game, referred to as GT by the Traveller fan base. QuikLink, Inc. followed in the early 2000's with a version of Traveller based on Wizard of the Coast's version of the D20 System, called Traveller20 or T20 for short. Fans have also created a number of variant rules, inspired by other gaming systems, including the HERO System, the Storyteller System, the Basic Roleplaying System, Fudge and other popular gaming systems.

What does it all mean? How do you choose a gaming system to use for your campaign? Well, contrary to the beliefs of some die-hard fans, so long as you are having fun, it doesn't matter what the game mechanics are. You simply need a means to define a character in terms of their skills, and a system by which tasks may be resolved using a character's skill set. All of the above work well at accomplishing this simple requirement for a roleplaying game, and so you are free to choose whatever works best for you.

Now, be sure to look at your intended audience before finalizing that choice. For some, like myself, QLI's D20 version of Traveller has been a godsend, because it allows us the opportunity to attract players that refuse to look outside the D20 System for their gaming experiences. In a more experimental crowd, or a crowd that enjoys another specific gaming system, you might want to use a system they are familiar with to ease in the transition.

Note that some things just aren't covered by most gaming systems. Methods for generating world data, building starships and the like do not directly impact character creation, and so you have the option of using whatever works best for you. Players just want to have fun, and the gaming system is simply a vehicle towards that end. The flavor of Traveller is not defined by the system so much as by the background materials and the style of the game itself. The only thing to bear in mind is to be sure you select a system that does not, in your own personal opinion, hurt the flavor of the Traveller campaign you intend to run.

When to Play?

There's not a lot to be said on the topic of determining a schedule of play, but it is important to think about. The first article in the Traveller Campaigning series contains some thoughts on schedules and how they potentially impact gamers. I'd definitely recommend reviewing that article and discussing this with your potential gamers, if you've already got a few gathered together. It won't help

you much if you schedule your game at a time that you lose one or more of your players.

A valuable suggestion: If you are unable to find people interested in a weekly Traveller game, consider running your game once a month. Sometimes, it's hard to talk gamers into giving up another day or evening in their already busy schedules. By going to the "Once-A-Month" model, you may find it easier to get those elusive commitments from gamers. Most people feel better about giving up one Sunday afternoon a month, for example, instead of every single Sunday afternoon. By using a mailing list such as Yahoo Groups, it is easy to set up reminders and stay in occasional contact over the weeks between sessions.

This "Once-A-Month" model has given me the chance to have a long-term Traveller campaign where I wouldn't have been able to run otherwise. With it, I ran a year-long exploration campaign in 2003, and then in January 2004, I started a Fourth Imperium campaign that is still going strong over three years later. I attribute the longevity of these campaigns to the "Once-A-Month" model, and thus I heartily recommend it as an option.

The Campaign Background

Once you have decided on a gaming system and put some thought as to when you'd like to play, it's time to settle on the actual background for your campaign. Here's where you can make or break the feel of your Traveller campaign. Depending on your campaign goals and preferences, you have many different options that you can pursue to create the background for your Traveller campaign. Before you go too much further in the whole process, however, you should stop and think about what you want out of the game.

Grab a pen and a piece of paper, or open up a document in a word processing application on your computer. Make a list of the kind of things you want to see in your Traveller campaign, the places and scenes and scenarios that you would like to be able to use as part of the gaming experience you want to create. Perhaps you have some favorite aliens you'd like to see in the campaign. Maybe you prefer an Early Stellar "low tech" setting, or perhaps you enjoy extremely advanced technology. Do you want to run an exploration game or a mercantile game, or both? Maybe you want space stations hidden in interstellar nebulae, or the decaying ruins of a long-lost civilization. Perhaps you also collect pictures of natural landmarks and want to use them as props, so you want to add some scenes inspired by your favorites. Your imagination and your desire are your only limits in this exercise.

The key here is to get out your ideas, and make a tangible list of items to integrate into your new setting. In the end, you may only have one item (using an official Traveller setting such as the Spinward Marches sector) or you may have tens or even hundreds on your

list. Keep your list with you, as it will be a guide during the creative process of campaign background design.

Let's discuss published or official materials for a second. Some Referees prefer to use published materials because it lightens their work load in running a campaign, while others do so simply because they don't have the time to put in that much effort. Indeed, many Referees use published materials, in whole or in part, simply because there's a metric ton or more of good ideas in them. It's perfectly okay to use published materials instead of creating your own, and it can help create a lot of investment in the campaign setting for players that have previously had good experiences with that material. However, there are some Referees that like to have a greater hand in the creation of their campaign background. The rest of this article is aimed at them, because they need to create what you may already be using in the form of published materials.

The OTU versus the ATU

Now that you've made a list of the things you'd like to see in your campaign setting, you need to build a setting that has a good majority of the items you listed. This process may appear to be a challenge, but the rewards can be extremely satisfying and fulfilling.

One of the first questions a Referee often asks himself when coming up with a campaign setting is whether or not to place their campaign in the Official Traveller Universe or in one of his or her own creation. For some, there is an air of legitimacy in keeping your work in the Official Traveller Universe. However, if you are not using published materials, but are "rolling your own" worlds, it really doesn't matter whether you place your work within the OTU or not. The setting is still wholly created by you. Ultimately, this decision lies in your hands.

With all the fan-based materials out on the internet, sometimes it is easier to use someone else's work as the basis for your own campaign. That's perfectly acceptable, although the original creators would probably appreciate a little recognition, even if only in the form of an email that thanks them for the hard work they have done upon which you are building your new campaign.

However, it is entirely possible to start fresh. You can easily hand-generate your world stats, for example, or use any of the widely-available world generation applications found on the web. I heartily recommend Galactic, if you are still looking for one. Personally, I use some software that I've written myself, but that's because I enjoy writing computer software for my own gaming needs.

The important thing to remember is that you do not, and probably should not, stop once the basic UWPs have been created. Take some time to review the worlds you'll be using. Check them out for internal consistency. Can you find places for all or most of the things on your

campaign list among the systems you've got? If not, now's the time to change them. For the sake of consistency and personal taste, this is the point that I fix UWP combinations that don't make sense to me, based on a small checklist I've come up with over the years. You may have similar desires. You may even have some ideas of the adventures you'd like to run in the beginning of your campaign, and may need to alter a few worlds to facilitate running those adventures.

Don't be afraid to make changes, even in published materials. This campaign is going to be yours, and in the end, it doesn't matter if it matches exactly what's printed in someone's book. The goal of any game is to have fun, so feel free to make any changes you see fit to make it a fun gaming experience for yourself.

Your Setting's Scale

Scale has an interesting impact on the scope of your adventures, and on the overall story of your campaign. Smaller playgrounds can be developed much more richly than larger ones, simply because the amount of work is less. However, options are more restricted in a smaller setting, because there are fewer worlds to choose from. The goal here is to find the size of setting that you are most comfortable with, balancing depth with breadth within the confines of your already busy week. The three primary campaign scales I'll discuss here are: Subsector, Quadrant and Sector. I'll also briefly discuss a fourth scale, that being the Grand Tour.

Subsector campaigns are small, intimate affairs. On the average, the usual PC vessel at Jump-2 can make it from one edge to the other in four or five jumps. A round trip at that scale is about three months at a determined pace. Depending on the world generation method used and the desired world density, a subsector might have an average of 26 to 40 systems, although seeing more or less worlds is not unheard of. It's hard to reasonably place more than one polity in a single subsector at tech levels above 11, simply because the higher jump ranges begin to make small polities feel unrealistic. However, as a frontier region including the border of a larger polity mostly off-camera, a subsector campaign makes a bit more sense. Many of the original Classic Traveller campaigns people ran in the 70's and early 80's were scarcely more than a single subsector in size, so for some, there is plenty of nostalgia involved in a campaign set at such a scale.

Quadrant campaigns walk the middle ground between subsectors and sectors. Twice as wide and twice as tall, a Jump-2 vessel can take nine or ten jumps to cross entirely, making a round trip around six to seven months. With average world densities, a quadrant should have between 100 and 160 worlds, providing a greater chance for world diversity. The existence of a few small polities at lower tech levels does not stretch the imagination to visualize, allowing for more conflict within the context of the setting. Contested space

between two larger polities still fits easily, allowing for a more reasonable "neutral zone" between two interstellar super powers. Most of the campaign would likely be set near the middle of the quadrant, giving more room for exploration. I personally find the quadrant-sized setting to be my preferred option, but that's a personal preference.

Sector campaigns are huge regions of space, covering between 425 and 650 worlds on the average. A Jump-2 vessel can cross a sector in about twenty jumps one-way, which makes a non-stop round-trip somewhere around 14 to 15 months in length. A single sector can easily house a number of small polities, and even the frontier to one or more larger interstellar governments. A campaign set in a sector will almost certainly not run out of locations to visit over the course of the campaign, and large areas will likely remain unexplored. However, some Referees may feel overwhelmed by the sheer size of a sector, and all the options that are available. Nonetheless, as the first two official settings published for Classic Traveller were sectors, there's a lot of nostalgia associated with campaigns set on this scale, too.

Finally, there is a fourth type of campaign scale that should be mentioned here: the Grand Tour campaign. In essence, this campaign follows some route through multiple sectors, allowing the characters to experience the highlights of various regions within a larger setting such as Charted Space, while glossing over the intermediate regions lying between these focal points. DGP managed this quite well in their adventure series for *Traveller's Digest*, and GDW touched on it as well with their MT product, *Arrival Vengeance*. The Grand Tour campaign is very difficult to pull off, and for that reason, I am leaving that as an exercise for the truly experienced and inspired Referee.

Fleshing It All Out

Generally, once you have selected a scale for your campaign, there are two methods by which the campaign can be developed. These are commonly referred to as the Top-Down Approach and the Bottom-Up Approach.

In the Top-Down Approach, you start by looking at the overall picture you want to create, and you start placing the larger pieces in your setting. After the large-scale details are settled into place, you place slightly smaller details, and so on, and so on, until you have worked the smallest details you want into your setting. The advantage of the Top-Down Approach is that you have a good idea of how all the pieces of your setting fit together, and your campaign presentation should maintain a higher degree of internal consistency. The disadvantage to the Top-Down approach is that you often find yourself creating a lot of details you will never use. In addition, the urge to provide a consistent level of details often means that you may not feel ready

to run your campaign until you've practically written a sourcebook for the setting. That's a lot of work. Some Referees like it, while others do not.

In the Bottom-Up Approach, you start by detailing only the starting point of your campaign. As the campaign grows, only then do you worry about detailing any outlying areas. If you need a desert world for your next adventure, then you simply write one in as the next world on the players' route. Often, such campaigns tend to be rather focused, but suffer from consistency issues if they grow too quickly. The advantages of a Bottom-Up campaign is that you rarely create more material than you need to run your game, allowing you to focus your limited time on the adventure that lies ahead for your players. The disadvantage is that you are more frequently taken by surprise when players push the envelope, and as a result, your level of detail may be spotty in areas where you are caught unprepared. Still, a Bottom-Up campaign tends to promote a sense of exploration and discovery, for the Referee as well as the players.

Personally, I tend to start Top-Down, until I have a big picture. Once I'm satisfied on that level, I choose a

nice starting point and build up from there in a manner similar to the Bottom-Up approach. I don't force myself to build everything before I start running the game, but I have enough information available to help me with the major consistency issues. This combination of methods works well for me, but in the long run, what really matters is what you are most comfortable with. It may take some experimentation to find the approach that works best for you, but I highly encourage it. Not only do you get the chance to play Traveller, but you also get to exercise your imagination. That's definitely worth the effort, in and of itself.

In Our Next Issue

In the third article of the Traveller Campaigning series, I will explore a few methods for creating a Traveller adventure, with a focus on creating the first adventure that will kick off your campaign. In addition, we will touch on adventure presentation, and take a quick look on the different styles that have graced the pages of Traveller source material over the last 30 years.



Strange Places: Beta Niobe Nebula

By Jeff M. Hopper

On day 122 of year -836, at hex location 2825 of the Turley subsector of the Empty Quarter, the star Beta Niobe went nova. The star that originally occupied that hex was a red supergiant and the star there now is a blue-white supergiant. The gas blown off of the star, expanding outward, excited by the fast moving solar wind and illuminated by the leftover B6 Ia star has formed a colorful ring nebula around Beta Niobe. The ring nebula is about a parsec in radius.

The Beta Niobe Nebula is not only part of a stellar evolutionary process that will eventually lead to a supernova, it is a common target for research expeditions, and is responsible for vehement sectarian debate amongst members of the Church of the Stellar Divinity within the Empty Quarter sector. Like Deneb and Antares, Beta Niobe is a supergiant star undergoing the process of its own eventual death, yet it is unknown whether that death will be a few hundred thousand years in the future or as soon as several hundred years from now. Imperial institutions such as the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service and the Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin both conduct research expeditions and sponsor such expeditions from planetary universities into the nebula and around the star. The Church of the Stellar Divinity also maintains a monastery in orbit around Beta Niobe where clergy from various sects meet to discuss the meaning of the nova and attempt to gain spiritual enlightenment through its study.

The Beta Niobe nova itself was a rare occurrence due to the relative scarcity of supergiant stars in the galaxy, but a natural one for these high mass stars. As everyone knows, a star is balance between its own mass wanting to undergo gravitational collapse and the pressure of the fusion reactions holding up against that collapse, keeping it in a steady state. High mass stars, like red supergiants, burn their fusion fuel fast. Once the rate of fusion slows down, such as when the main element being fused transitions from one to another, the interior of the star collapses until the fusion process is reignited. This causes the outer shell of the star to be blown off in a nova-like explosion that creates a nebula. Since a blue-white supergiant has faster but sparser solar winds in comparison to a red supergiant's slower but thicker solar wind, the expanding nebula shell becomes ionized and sections of it tend to glow softly as the faster solar wind excites the slower solar wind and gas.

Beta Niobe was believed to be transitioning between the hydrogen-fusing state to the helium-fusing state when the red supergiant underwent a nova to

become a blue-white supergiant. This is the subject of much discussion among scientists because there are significant indications that hydrogen-fusing is still going on in Beta Niobe and the composition of the nebula itself is not as compositionally uniform as was predicted. Beta Niobe is classified as a B6 Ia star, similar to, but dimmer than the B3 star which became supernova event SN 1987A. Solar flare activity is intense but predictable thanks to a network of early warning satellites emplaced by the Church of the Stellar Divinity. Communications can be problematic as there can be a great deal of radio interference and laser communications can be scattered by the volume of solar wind output.

The Beta Niobe Nebula is a spherically shaped tenuous wall of gas traveling outward from Beta Niobe at about 550 kilometers per second. Composed primarily of ionized hydrogen and helium, the nebula does also have significant amounts of heavier elements scattered throughout. Some patches of the nebula have significant dust grains which are speculated to be the remains of mass concentrations within the proto-planetary disk of Beta Niobe's formation or hapless interstellar cometary bodies that got destroyed when the nova occurred. The nebula has a subtle bulge that corresponds to the equator of Beta Niobe, suggesting that the nova initially erupted in a donut shape from the surface of Beta Niobe. The nebula itself, while visible from elsewhere in the sector easily, is practically invisible to the naked eye when viewed from inside the shell. If one is on the edge of the nebula and looks inward, the nebula appears to be a faint halo surrounding the bright point of Beta Niobe - a visual effect that clergy of the Church of the Stellar Divinity enjoy pointing out to people and placing on postcards.

Historically, the Beta Niobe nova inadvertently helped to bring about an end to the Long Night, with help from the Church of the Stellar Divinity. Since contact between worlds was sporadic at best during the Long Night, individual branches of the Church of the Stellar Divinity developed independently of each other for eight hundred years and interpreted the Beta Niobe nova in fashions unique to those surviving individual worlds. As the availability of interstellar travel increased over time with the expansion of the Third Imperium into the area, local world clergy of the Church of the Stellar Divinity began to expand outward as missionaries to spread the word of their individual sects and recontact other branches of the Church. The main difference of these individual sects was the interpretation of the Beta Niobe nova.

Since the Church of the Stellar Divinity believes that all stars are gods and thus conscious beings of transcendental power and that if a person lives right that the person's soul will gain spiritual mass upon death to allow them to join their god, the Beta Niobe nova brings up some very important questions for worshippers. Do the souls of those believers who worshipped the red supergiant ascend to paradise or are they trapped in the blue-white supergiant until it goes supernova? Are the souls condemned to damnation because the star underwent a transformative nova? Are souls trapped within the nebula shell itself? Since the original star died in the nova and its remains have been reborn into a brighter star, can it be viewed as a messiah among the rest of the stars worshipped? If Beta Niobe is considered messianic, can worshipping that star above others be more beneficial to the worshipper?

As local worlds regained contact with each other, the debate amongst the clergy of the Church grew. One of the driving forces behind recontact soon became the Church's Beta Niobe Debate. Individual sects began competing to recontact and recruit world populations to their particular viewpoint and engage other sects in figuring out the answers to these important ecclesiastical questions. During this process, violence broke out only once and was quickly and universally denounced by all sects of the Church with the perpetrators being the only known example of excommunication within the Empty Quarter from the Church of the Stellar Divinity. In an effort to try and emphasize the similarities between Church sects instead of the differences by creating a place where sustained discussion could happen, a monastery was built in orbit around Beta Niobe.

From the early years of the Third Imperium, the Church of the Stellar Divinity has maintained a fleet of six subsidized merchants, each with 160 ton interior demountable fuel tanks to allow the four parsec journey to Beta Niobe. Depending on the current finances of the Church, the Beta Niobe Church Fleet is either wholly owned by the Church or subsidized by it and the crews are either clergy or at the very least church members. This transport fleet is what was used to build the initial monastery. Besides transport duties, the fleet is used to mine ices for volatiles and fuel requirements of the monastery.

The initial monastery was finished in the year 69, but has been continually built up since that time. The Monastery at Beta Niobe began as a number of advanced bases with a solar array on a small rogue asteroid. The population waxing and waning over the centuries before finally settling into the few hundreds, mostly clergy and monks, but with a capacity for double that number in transients and pilgrims. The UWP of the Monastery is C000268-9 and it is owned by the Church of the Stellar Divinity. The Monastery has grown into a baroque structure that balances the artistic efforts of the Church's parishioners and the life support requirements

of an asteroid settlement. Laser carved surface sculptures and stained glass being a common medium for the religious themes present.

Most scientific research expeditions use the Monastery as a base of operations, as long as they have the approval of either the AAB or the IISS for the expedition. The Church of the Stellar Divinity doesn't mind the disruptions caused by researchers as long as they respect the religious beliefs of the inhabitants, whose worship has allowed for detailed observations of both Beta Niobe and its nebula for almost a thousand years. The AAB and the IISS have made agreements with the Church and work closely with each other. The only bones of contention being that the Church will not allow an IISS scout base to be built on the premises and also will not allow an AAB branch to be established there, although each institution has a consulate at the Monastery and the Church shares all research information gathered freely with anyone willing to travel the distance there.

The Monastery is also of historical and political importance. Since the Church of the Stellar Divinity is an apolitical institution, the Monastery was chosen as the best location to hold the peace talks to end the Julian War of 175 to 191. Since then, the Monastery has been used for negotiations and trade talks between interstellar governments within the Empty Quarter for over seven centuries.

Beta Niobe and its nebula are balanced on the cusp of creation, destruction, and divine illumination. It is the object of worship for billions, the target for the research of millions, and the center of discussion and debate for a few who must be held accountable to those billions and millions. It will eventually explode in a supernova and kill every living thing in the Empty Quarter, but that day is not today.

Adventure: Visiting Wesaswek

By Alvin Plummer

Introduction

Visiting Wesaswek is a low-violence, high-roleplay adventure for merchant/explorer types with their own starship, interested in learning more about the Bwaps of the Empty Quarter. As the Bwaps are a powerful influence in the Imperial Empty Quarter, this adventure hopes to provide Traveller Referees with ideals on how to handle visits to Bwap-dominated worlds and societies. This adventure uses the BITS Task System, with Classic Traveller rules.

It is **STRONGLY** recommended that the Referee read the **Stellar Reaches #1** article, "The Bwaps, a Minor Race of the Imperium for T20", as well as the subsector notes for Gamma Quadrant. The more additional material you can get on the Bwaps, the better. This adventure assumed a high tolerance for Bwap bureaucracy: if the PCs get fed up with fighting red tape, the Referee is advised to let them move on. As the Bwaps dominate much of Gamma Quadrant of the Empty Quarter, bureaucracy-hating PCs may wish to avoid this region.

Family Fun

The PCs receive something of a windfall: a wealthy non-noble, Dr. Narayan Subbarao Hardikar and his extended family of 15 (two wives, six children, one brother, four grandparents, one granduncle, one grandaunt) plus three lower-caste servants wish to move from the PCs current location to Wesaswek, where he is to be the new subsector division manager for StarGulf Construction, LIC. He also has a lot of stuff that needs to be shipped, as well. He isn't a particularly hard bargainer, as StarGulf is paying for this move: a sharp PC can make good money off of this run. (BITS Task: Average: use Broker skill.) He wants to keep the family together, and is willing to put up with cramped accommodations in order to keep everyone together. If the PCs have a tiny ship – Scout/Couriers, for instance – four to a room is perfectly acceptable. (Now, if the PCs can just do something about life support...) Dr. Hardikar won't allow 'steel-floor steerage accommodations' for anyone except the servants; but he'll compromise and pay for good 'habitat crates' with life support, comfortable beds, and Tri-V for his older relatives.

The journey to Wesaswek (hex 0229 – A8868DB-D 225 Im F5V) is stressful, due to familial reasons. Having two opinionated wives does not make for domestic peace, and the screaming can be heard thru the

'soundproofed' walls - and the crystaliron bulkheads. The elders are as senile, loud, rambling, wandering, or just plain weird as the Referee desires. The kids are divided into two separate camps – membership is determined by the question 'who's your mommy?' Each camp sticks together like glue, and alternate between 'cold war' and 'hot war' with the other camp of kids. Naturally, the PCs are routinely caught in the crossfire. For extra pain, make the kids practical jokers, rumor-mongers, thieves, cherubic liars, and technologically talented troublemakers....

"Obsessive-Compulsives Of The Imperium, Unite!"

Wesaswek is a major Bwap world, continually inhabited for a touch less than 4,000 years. All the asteroids, comets, and small bodies of the system have been grouped together and organized into mathematically elegant orbital patterns – justified with 'ease of navigation and exploitation' claims, but really done to soothe the Bwap mind, which simply HATES clutter. It is rather amusing – and a bit frightening - to bypass an Organized Asteroid Cluster (OAC), with every rock sorted by size, shape, composition, and albedo, synchronized in a perfectly spherical four-layer pattern – each with a high-output warning beacon and a hive of automated "worker bees" keeping the rocks in flawless formation.

Docking procedures are as rigid as you'd expect. The Wesaswek System Defense Boats and Customs frigates are numerous and competently run, enforcing Order and Good Discipline on unruly visitors¹. Docking procedures involves carefully and rigorously going thru the entire Imperial Starport Authority checklist. Most non-Bwaps choose to dock and reside at Duchess Yin Imperial Highport, including Dr. Hardikars' family³. However – despite the horror stories about Bwap bureaucracy – Dr. Hardikar wants a day trip to see the advanced world of Wesaswek. As a megastructure engineer 'in a former life', he especially wants to see the massive Weather Generators the Bwaps use to keep humidity between 100-98% in the major cities. As the PCs are 'trustworthy, experienced Travellers', he wants to hire them at a good rate as guides. Naturally, his mutually jealous wives insist on bringing themselves and their relatives along for the ride.

The Horde Strikes

The PCs as neophyte tour guides have their work cut out for them. They had better make sure that their pay covers all the expenses they incur, from hiring tolerant Bwap guides to organizing what to see, and when to see it. Any changes in their plans causes headaches galore, as the Bwap hates chaos & disorder – and when they get stressed, they get more stubborn and start lecturing vigorously about “the organized life”, “propriety and duty”, “doing things decently and in order”, “systematic thought vs. scattered thought”, etc. The greater the stress, the longer the lectures!

As the PCs are planning their tour, the Referee should determine if the PCs know how to get things done on a Bwap world: an Average test of Education for experienced Empty Quarter travellers, who (out of necessity) have often dealt with Bwaps before. (The test is Easy if the PC is a Bwap⁵, Difficult for Travellers without extensive Bwap experience and Formidable+ for ‘first-time’ tourists.) The Referee should tell successful PCs to use the local Bwap services as much as possible: it’s a bit cheaper on average than the PCs doing everything themselves, and a lot less time-consuming. Local guides are also a big help with language: local Bwaps speak & write in the Bwap tongue, and the few Bwaps who bother to learn another language study Modern Vilani (“the least chaotic, disorganized, and ridiculous” major interstellar tongue.) Arranging to see the Pesta-wasakeswasa (the massive Weather Control installation) should be the final test of the PCs Liaison abilities: well-prepared PCs (Bwap or non-Bwap) can take a Difficult test of Liaison, or this may be roleplayed out. Total expenses for all activities should be around the 1,500 Cr mark.

If the PCs insist on keeping “their freedom of action”, let them, but you can start planning the consequences now. These woes include reams of paperwork (written in Formal Bwap, naturally), form-filling, runarounds, lectures, bureaucratic Catch-22s, standing in line, licenses, regulations, interviews, procedure, Complaint departments, “phone trees”, and queuing up (again). Attempts to bribe the Bwap bureaucrats automatically fail⁶: the Referee determines the level of punishment for attempted bribery. Increase all expenses by a factor of ten (both in time and money). Some red tape follows the unprepared PC across the Empty Quarter, especially when they interact with Bwaps.

Assuming, the PCs followed the Referee’s advice, they utilize one of the cheap shuttle services to bring the Hardikars to the high-tech, spic-and-span Duchess Yin Imperial Downport. On their way down, they may admire the greenery and elegance of Tasewath city, gaze at her mountain-trees and floating towers, and gape at the amazing grey ovoid, the Pesta-wasakeswasa, floating silently near the city, ripples of clouds drifting away from its immense bulk.

After landing, the PCs and company must present recognized IDs and short-term visas to the impersonal, maze-like Customs & Immigration Post. Passing Customs is a Difficult test of Legal or Liaison skill (Average, if the character is Bwap). If their first attempt to cross the border fails, and an hour must be spent getting all the proper papers in order and approved before another attempt can be made. Every time an attempt fails, the wait period for another attempt triples (i.e.: the PCs must wait three hours for a third attempt, nine hours for a fourth attempt, etc.) The additional time is spent form-filling, undergoing health inspections, interviews, etc. Exceptional failure means that additional penalties (fines, detainment, imprisonment, even a permanent ban on ever entering Wesaswek) can come in force, at the discretion of the Referee.

Rings In The Air, Trees To The Sky

Assuming that the PCs and the tourists manage to cross the Extrality Line, they can finally get to see Wesaswek up close. Getting authorization for most city districts and notable landmarks is a Hopeless Liaison task for clueless visitors (taking 10 hours to make one attempt); a Formidable task for clueful but Bwap-inexperienced visitors (time needed for an attempt: 30 minutes to two hours); a Difficult task for Bwap-experienced visitors (10-90 minutes); an Average task for visitors with Bwap guides (5-30 minutes), and an Easy task for towelheads⁷ (1-10 minutes.)

Taeswath is the third-largest city on Wesaswek (population: 8,297,111 Bwap, 20,133 non-Bwap). As the home of Duchess Yin Imperial Downport, Taeswath is the most convenient place for the PCs to tour. It is a very beautiful and wealthy city⁸, and has a proud place in the Bwap wapawab (“Tree of Life”, the Bwap vision of the Universal Order.) While many nearby Bwap worlds – including Marhaban, four parsecs away - is dominated by a Charismatic leader of the local crèches, Wesaswek is more traditional (and yet, less tightly controlled), with typically non-violent - yet deeply annoying and persistent - hectoring for breaking the rules. About 10% of the Bwap in Taeswath have the “Bwap Tolerance” trait: such Bwap have a higher tolerance for alien disorder and disorganization than baseline Bwaps, and are noticeably less prejudiced than other Bwaps.

Before the PCs and the Hardikar family can see the Pesta-wasakeswasa (Weather Control installation) up close, they wish to visit the ground-based and airborne commercial buildings and famous residences. The city is a major trading and commercial centre for the entire planet, and this kind of wealth shows. Unless they are Bwap or familiar with Bwap culture, neither the PCs nor the Hardikars really understand what they are being told – but they are definitely impressed with what they see. The city is set in an enclosed bay, with broad virgin

beaches and lush vegetation. The buildings and structures of the city are widely spaced: there are no city blocks, only greenery lightly dotted with signs of an elegant civilization. Tall silver towers soar into the air, with shorter gunmetal towers dot the landscape, surrounded by ring-like structures. There are several natural slim stone formations that climb straight up from the surrounding beach several hundred meters: these 'mountains' have been reinforced, and now bear huge, grav-supported 'leaves' of residences, bearing tens of thousands of Bwaps on each 'leaf'. Partial arcs, composed of dozens of long, ovoids of dozens of meters in length, grace the air as the occasional group of rockets arc into the sky, sharing it with carefully chosen birds⁹ obtained from worlds across the Imperial Empty Quarter. (Local Bwap crèches adore birds: they are intertwined with tree-motifs in Wesaswek art, and no local Bwap home is complete without a songbird or two... or three....)

The Solomani and Vargr PCs quickly note the lack of locks, guards and security: crime is an extreme rarity, "something that non-Bwaps do"¹⁰. The observant traveller also notices the common use of small, efficient robots; the relentless organization that even 'random crowds' have; and the lack of vehicles – everyone walks, or uses conveyor belts, escalators, or nifty "one-Bwap wall rings" for faster transportation. The hot and humid offices are exceptionally well organized, and are covered in a meter of water for the comfort of the amphibian Bwaps: common spaces (green plazas, ritual baths, and mass auditoriums) are flooded. Certain 'recreational pathways' have a depth of two-three meters: they are marked out with Bwap symbols/lighting/holographic glyphs, but ignorant and unobservant foreigners discover them by a surprise step into the 'deep end' of the walkway. (In crowded areas, smart observers notice that some Bwaps seem to be 'substantially shorter' than others, and may intuit the reason.)

Elite Bwaps prefer to live with a hot (but not scalding) steam flow (in a variety of colors and flavors), to complement their tastefully designed baths and perfumed waters. Naturally, this steam spoils the clothes of the PCs, and has a good chance of destroying any electronics they have. (Bwap electronics, of course, are built for the Bwap environment... and the four-digit Bwap hand.) Everywhere, there are flowers, greenery, vines and fungi, carefully groomed and contrasted with high-tech holographic displays and smooth, featureless chrome and plastic.

The few areas designed for shared Bwap/non-Bwap use have a fine warm mist covering everything in sight to the delight of all (except the PCs – who, incidentally, are the only ones wearing clothes, dripping and stinking with sweat and water.) Most floors in non-Bwap areas are flooded by a warm, clear, water-like 'goo' to a level of 20 centimeters, and many areas have a kind of sweet-smelling, multi-coloured slime that emanates from the

walls and certain fixtures. As this IS a startown (albeit a very rich, well-organized, and Bwap-dominated startown), non-Bwaps are occasionally spotted. Soaking and miserable, they are usually trying to figure out how to get from A to B, without being able to read or speak Bwap, while being continually harangued by a crowd of locals for breaching protocol in some manner or another¹¹.

Local 'Wetbacks' (non-Bwap residents, usually Vilani, who adopted to the Bwap environment and culture) keep a list of Bwap businesses and families who'll 'lend a hand', know where the Vilani quarter is (the only substantial non-Bwap community in the city), and have memorized the necessary rituals for daily needs: from getting Vilani (NOT Anglic!) translations for common notices, to finding a washroom suitable for humaniti, to the best time to hit those beautiful beaches ("High noon. The Bwaps dislike the lower humidity, and the beaches are deserted".) Some even have an elementary grip of crèche politics....

"Bwaps with this body pattern hate Bwaps with that coloration and body pattern..."

"How can you tell?"

"Isn't it obvious? The way they twitch the end of their tail six times, instead of seven? It's a dead giveaway! Anyways, you need to swing your arms like this and tilt your head like this and say, 'Ta-pathsa esposabeth de-abadaketheb fa-e-ar ta-taabsa,' if you get within two meters of a meeting between them."

If the PCs were able to make the arrangements, the tour group can finally move to the highlight of the tour: the Pesta-wasakeswasa. After going thru a security check, the tour group is allowed to board an air/raft shuttle (built for the shorter, tailed Bwap frame, naturally). The ascent to the huge Weather Control installation is very impressive, but once the air/raft docks, all you see are tubes, controls, immense machinery and piping, and endless computer screens. Dr. Hardikar, on the other hand, is enjoying himself, talking shop with the technicians who can read & write (but not speak) technical Anglic.

A Death In The Family

At this time, the family is ready to head back when one of the male elders of the family, exhausted by the overwhelming humidity and heat, the culture shock, and the endless trekking on foot, suffers a heart attack. The Bwaps begin to follow the complex & bureaucratic procedures to contact the correct professionals: PC and family objections that "time is of the essence!" are ignored. Attempts to hijack the air/raft fail, due to unfamiliar Bwap controls and lack of readable maps. By the time the official, licensed trauma team arrives, the old man is dead.

Dr Hardikar is furious, as is one of his wives. There IS a certain Bwap procedure to deal with this event, but with everyone furious, crying or preaching about

“propriety and the Proper Order of Things,” nothing worthwhile gets done. In a few hours, finally, a proper Bwap ritual team arrives to intern the body, until hearings can be held on how to dispose of the dead man.

The PCs may decide to collect the tour payment at this point. Doctor Hardikar, an honest man, pays without rancor - he knows it isn't their fault. His more vindictive wife may decide to sue the PCs over the death of her relative: the PCs may be able to mollify her quickly (a Difficult check of Liaison, Streetwise or Broker(Bargain)), but if not, they'll have to stick around for the lengthy trial. The PCs may attempt to flee across the Extrality Line to the Imperial Port: if they succeed, the PCs won't be pursued, but they shouldn't visit Wesaswek anytime soon.

If the PCs go thru the trial, they are eventually deemed innocent after a month or so of hearings, bureaucracy, round-table meetings, interviews, and ritual debates. The defeated wife must pay for the PCs time & costs (Referee's discretion: a first-order estimate is about 30,000 – 50,000 Cr.) Dr. Hardikar tries to cut a deal with the PCs: if they agree to forgive the debt, he will put in a good word for them to his fellow division heads in StarGulf Construction, LIC. If they agree, they gain the favor of Dr Hardikar, and after a month or two the Referee should provide a few easy-money milk runs for the PCs, courtesy of StarGulf – with an adventure hook thrown in, using high-risk/high-reward as the bait. If the PCs don't agree, then Dr. Hardikar pays up: but sporadically. The lost earnings are quite steep for a single, non-noble family to pay, so it will take a few years to pay off. The PCs must visit Wesaswek every so often to collect on the debt – with 1% - 5% interest, of course.

Footnotes

¹The Tap-a-wewaka-atapas acts as the “Cudgel of the Grand Council” are accorded the high respect they are due by local Bwaps. With most of the Regular Fleet absent, they also serve as a trusted branch of the Colonial fleet, acting with Imperial authority in local defense, pirate suppression and law enforcement².

²The astute observer will notice a lack of naval bases in the Empty Quarter, compared to other stellar regions. In the Coreward half of the Quarter, this stems from the Treaty of Var-Inaka between the Julian League and the Lorean Hegemony, which restricts the number of naval bases possible within the Empty Quarter. Within the Imperial Quarter, the lack of naval bases stems not only from there being little of value to protect, but reflects Bwap naval doctrine, which prefers using mobile ‘tender-fleets’ for resupply, instead of fixed bases.

³And why do most non-Bwaps prefer to reside in the Imperial Starport? Mainly, for comfort and culture. Sweating like a pig⁴ as soon as you leave home is quite uncomfortable, especially for sophonts who've enjoyed

A/C for millennia Moreover, it's quite difficult to always deal with a Bwap bureaucracy “specifically designed to crush the spirit” – with support from the perennially overcast weather, stifling humidity and occasional downpours of Wesaswek. Most of the million or so non-Bwap residents prefer to live in the orbital ports encircling Wesaswek: only 100,000 non-Bwap actually live dirtside. (or ‘mudside’, as local wags unjustly put it.) These include a few perennially morose and depressed Solomani, and even fewer semi-suicidal Vargr. The Vilani make up over 90% of the mudwalkers – while they don't particularly enjoy the weather, at least it is very predictable and reliable, (“What's the weather like?” “It's humid/It's raining.” Repeat 20 million times) and they find the rigid bureaucratic, ordered Bwap mentality... comforting.

⁴Yes, I know – pigs don't actually sweat. But you know what I mean.

⁵Bwaps are divided by crèches- an analogue to ‘nation/race/people’ - with different blotches, shading and coloration, as determined by the mother's diet. Even so, the minutely regulated and very ancient (pre Ziru Sirka) culture of the Bwaps provides a strong a basis for species unity.

⁶The Bwap don't do bribes. The clever Referee can use this fact to remind the PCs that this frontier sector is very different from the freewheeling Spinward Marches. The integrity of the Bwaps can also be used by smart PCs to cripple powerful enemies: used to just buying what they need, numerous Nobles, Executives and Great Leaders have been stymied by the stubborn integrity of the humble towelheads.

⁷Actually, the Bwaps don't need to wear their hydrated clothing – specially made kaftans and hoods, worn over their heads and torsos - on Wesaswek. The environment is quite humid, thanks to extensive terraforming, weather drizzling and stifling humidity, please!”) and the Mother of All Humidifiers that hovers over the major Bwap cities.

⁸To see just how beautiful Taeswath is, I'd use this picture created by Nikolay Yeliseyev:
<http://www.yeliseyev.ru/gallery/displayimage.php?album=3&pos=1>

Note the massive Pesta-wasakeswasa (Weather Control installation), looming over Taeswath – a triumph of Bwap engineering. The level of wealth of this city fits Core Sector far better than the Empty Quarter. Just maintaining that megastructure cost some serious coin.

Note that the tallest “mountain-tree” dominating the image above is one of the personal residences (and a legally sovereign fief) of the Baron Wesaswek, Dethwabtakewebwakawa - who is also the Sector Duke of the Empty Quarter. When he is absent, the Duke traditionally opens non-sensitive floors to the public, as chosen by a daily lottery.

⁹The term ‘birds’ (in modern Imperial Empty Quarter Anglic usage) means “a lifeform which uses

wings to fly, larger than a bug, smaller than a man". Terran bats would count as 'birds', just as Terran whales count as 'fish'. 'Bugs' categorize various small animals with an exoskeleton.

¹⁰The more predatory-minded PCs may well decide to try to a little violence or theft. While security is light, it is higher than in Zhodani societies (Bwap ritualism tends to enforce some security). Major crimes require careful planning, as the extremely ordered nature of Bwaps makes detecting theft, violence, and irregularities easy; public and private questions insistent, demanding, and inescapable; and hiding the evidence surprisingly difficult. Even minor theft is quickly discovered, requiring the thief to make a very swift getaway. Moreover, the Bwaps are no fools: they are perfectly aware that outsiders (especially Solomani and Vargr) have a far lower respect for law and property than they themselves. Numerous unapologetically discriminatory precautions are taken with such individuals – especially when they arrive in large groups. Bwap cultures with regular contact with outsiders tend to have firm and strict security procedures in place.

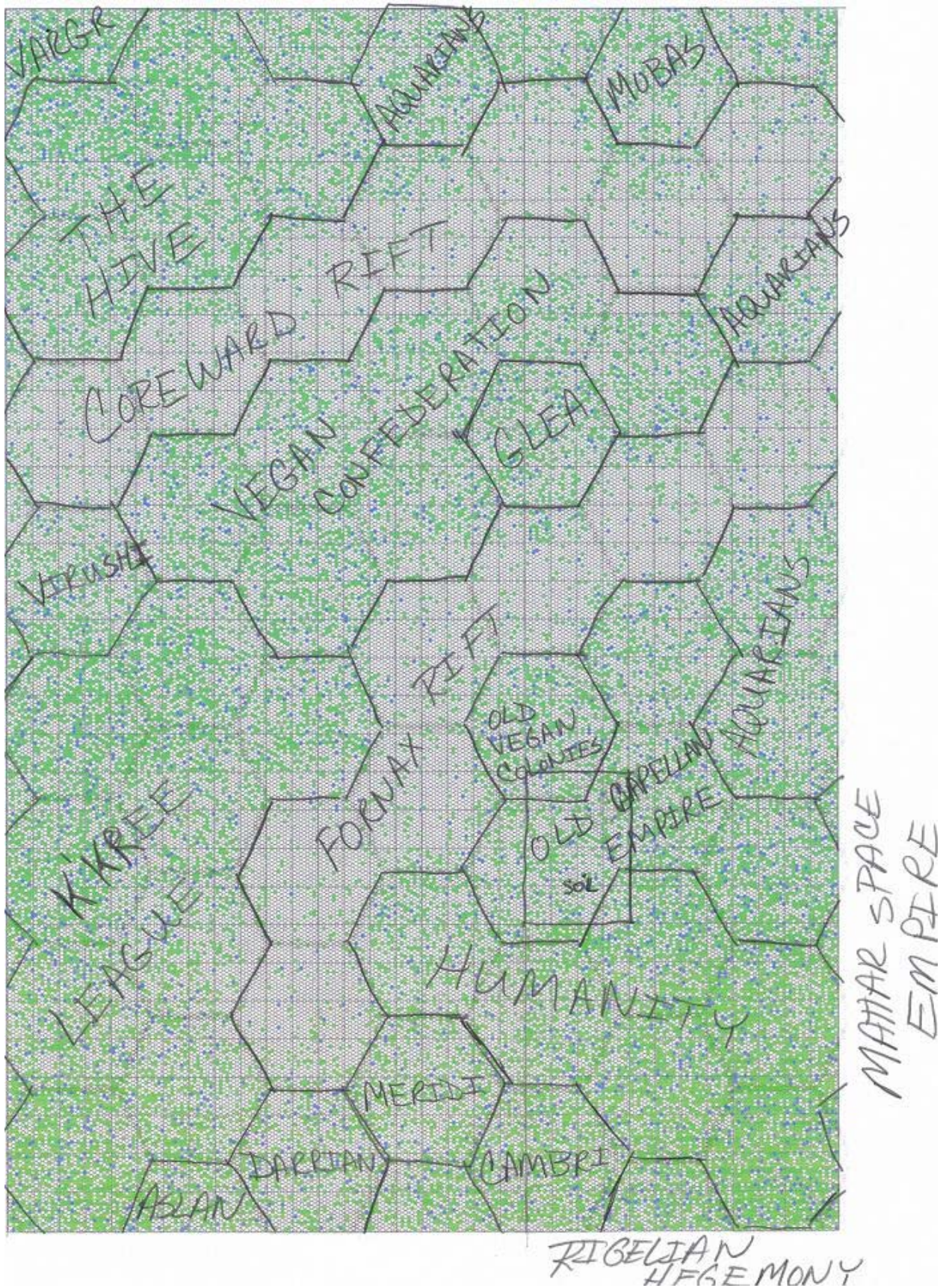
Should violence or crime break out, Bwap Security forces on Wesaswek (and several other Bwap systems) bear the versatile gyrojets the Tap-a-wewaka-atapas soldiery prefers. The Bwaps of Wesaswek are not a violent society, but they are quite wealthy, well-connected with the Powers that Be, and relentless, highly-competent investigators. They are not going to cross legal lines to get at the PC... but then again, a lot of Imperial, planetary, and corporate regulations are subject to the interpretation of a bureaucratic Bwap. Moreover, Tap-a-wewaka-atapas warships, conducting

patrols and customs duties, may well meet the PCs in the unlikeliest of places....

¹¹Struggling starfarers will notice that – starship ownership aside – they have less disposable wealth than Bwap locals: in most of the Empty Quarter, starfaring travellers are substantially richer than the locals. This change of social dynamics cries out for good roleplay. On the larger scale, Bwap-Human relations are divided: the Vilani get along swell with the Bwaps, but the Solomani as a rule dislike Bwaps. Major reasons include financial and political envy (read: Bwap wealth and Imperial favor): the Bwap 'goody-two-shoes' nature also rubs the Solomani the wrong way.

Trivia: "It's raining on Wesaswek" is the oldest known Emptyhead traveller joke, first recorded at 57 Imperial. Used initially as an ironical play on non-starfaring interstellar literature: the "It was raining on Mongo" fallacy. (As a simple scientific fact, it IS always raining on most of Wesaswek, most of the time.) Eventually, additional meanings were added:

- Stating the blindingly obvious: "We'd better load up on extra ammo." "And I hear that it's raining on Wesaswek, too!"
- A catchphrase for Emptyheads to recognize each other
- A signal to change the subject: "Do you know what Sandy's in for?" "I don't know, but I hear that it's raining on Wesaswek."
- A synonym for 'a situation beneficial to Bwaps'. "Did you see the paperwork we need to complete? How can we ever get in on the deal?" "I hear that it's raining on Wesaswek."



Alternate Universes: Space Patrol

By Marc Kuhl

***Author's Note:** Since my original material is well over 20 years old, some of it is just not real good. D20 system has made it possible for me to better reflect what I wanted than the D6 rules we originally played with. Our map was originally made on a Hex grid. We overlaid the blank sector grids very recently, after getting a copy of HE2's Galaxy Module.*

The universe my players and I used for three years is divided into 4 quadrants. Each quadrant has 16 sectors, and each sector has 16 subsectors. There are five major powers, and six minor ones. There are also two minor races, and two powers that are off the edge of the map. The territory covered by our map is crossed by two rifts.

Some of the labels on my map got added long after my players and I ended our campaigns. I did this to complete the map, in case I ever got to use it again.

The "Coreward Rift" never did get officially named in our games. It is the smaller of the two rifts, and its entirety is displayed on this map. The Fornax Rift extends off the map across 4 other sectors.

A blank space on our map doesn't always contain "nothing". It has either a dwarf star with no planets, a neutron star, a black hole, or a Brown Dwarf with no sun. The two rifts represent streams of old, burn out stars or gas clouds. Some hexes are garrisoned by deep space stations, such as those described in **Stellar Reaches Issue #2**.

The Ancient Races

Two ancient races left ruins of their civilizations behind. The Krylons and the Cornelsy waged a war when Dinosaurs roamed the Earth. The Krylons were a race of aquatic fish-people. Their descendants, the Aquarians, remain scattered across the Coreward-trailing regions of space. The Cornelesy have disappeared, though the Darrians and the Capellans may be descendants.

The Major Powers

The Major Powers consist of: the Aquarian Theocracy, the Hive, Humanity, the K'Kree League, and the Vegan Confederation. The Mattar Space Empire and the Rigelian Hegemony also play a role in this universe. Many areas have Human given names. These are what show on the map. Human given names are not always what the natives of the area call the same region.

Only Particle Accelerator barbettes and Pulse lasers use turrets in this universe. Laser and Sandcaster Bays are available for ships. Assume that a Mining Laser bay

has a USP of 4, a Beam Laser Bay has a USP of 8, and a Sandcaster Bay has a USP of 7. Add +1 if TL is over 13.

The Aquarian Theocracy: The Aquarians are amphibious humanoids capable of breathing underwater. They have the eyes, and mouth of a fish. Fins run the length of their spine, ulna (forearm), and fibula (lower leg). They have webbed fingers and toes. Each Aquarian has five fingers and an opposable thumb on each hand. Each foot has three large toes. The Aquarians call themselves the Calomaraen (Kal-O-Ma-Rain). Each world has a priest leading it. Captive worlds are ruled by a monk that reports to the priest of it's owning world. A Cleric rules each subsector, and an Arch-cleric rules a district. 4 Arch-Clerics report to the Magus of Calomaraen.

Aquarian Racial Traits

Con -2, Int +2.

Medium Size.

Speed: Aquarian base speed is 10 on land and 6 in the water. Breathe underwater: Aquarians can't drown in water. They get +4 to swim checks. Low-Light Vision: Aquarians can see twice as far as normal in dim light, such as moonlight or underwater. They retain ability to judge color. Aquarians receive a +1 species will save in moist or watery environments. This is -1 in dry or arid environments. Aquarians get a +4 species bonus to any one tech skill chosen at character creation. Aquarians are not afraid of Psionics.

Star Gates: The Aquarians use Star Gates. Any Jump that originates at a type A or B starport and ends at a type A or B starport can jump 1 hex further than rules normally allow. This allows Aquarians to sometimes jump 7 parsecs with a jump 6 engine, if the start and ending system have class A or B starports. A ship with a jump-1 drive could jump-2 under the same conditions.

The Aquarian Military has a navy and an Army, but no Marines or Scouts. Branches of the Army and Navy fill the roles of those two services. Aquarian ships are well defended but under gunned.

The Hive: Humanity refers to them simply as "Bugs". The Bugs are arachnid-like aliens from beyond the Coreward Rift. They can adapt to practically any planetary condition. They can not be reasoned with and attack any species that hinders their expansion. They are technologically backwards but breed like wildfire, and

are the most aggressive species in the known universe. Diplomacy and trade are both alien concepts to the Hive.

Bug Racial Traits

Str +4, Dex +2, Con +4, Wis +2, Cha-2.

Medium Size.

Skill Modifiers: Climb +2, Jump +2, K/Tactics +2, Survival +2.

Bugs naturally produce fields of energy that that causes non-bugs to feel weak and tired. Any non-bug within 10 meters of a bug must make a Fort Save of DC 10 or take 1D3 temporary damage to strength. Beings affected by multiple fields do not make multiple saves. Instead, modify the save by +2 for each additional field affecting the being. Bugs are best fought at a distance.

The Hive does not have Star Gates. The maximum Jump rating of a Hive ship is jump-4. They are otherwise max TL of 14. The Hive has a navy, Army, and Marines. The Navy carries out the tasks of the Scout service. There is one known incident of a Bug betraying the Hive and joining a human mercenary group.

Humanity: Humanity gave their names to the other races of the galaxy, and the other races returned the favor. People living in Human controlled space call themselves the “United Planetary Federation”. The Vegans and the Hiver federation call us “The Human Alliance”. The Aquarians call us “The Terran Empire.” The highlighted rectangle shows the location of “The Solomani Rim” sector. Two changes need to be made to worlds in this publication. Altair has a Gas Giant, which has six moons. The main one has the UWP: A788899-C Ri. A Scout Base and Naval base are both present. Pollux has a water world orbiting it: A87A943-C Hi Wa A Naval Base is here. All worlds belong to the Federation. The Federation controls territory marked as “Humanity”, “Old Capellan Empire”, and “Old Vegan Colonies”.

The Region labeled “Old Capellan Empire” (4 superimposed hexes), once belonged to the Capellans. The Capellans are responsible for the UFO sightings and kidnappings that Earth-men once reported. The single hex, between the Capellans and the Fornax Rift, once was inhabited by the Vegans. The Vegans abandoned their colonies after a war. The Humans and the Capellans formed an alliance that continues to this day.

Human Subspecies: There are three types of humans. The base, normal humans, from world sizes 6-9 follow all rules from Traveller T20 Handbook. Humans from World Size ‘A’ have adapted to high gravity. Modify Dex by -2 and Con by +2. They tend to be shorter and stockier than normal humans. No other modifications. Humans from Low Grav Worlds (Size 3-5) are Dex +2 and Con -2. They tend to be taller and

slenderer than normal humans. Human subspecies have no other modifications.

Capellans: Capellans have large, bulb-shaped heads. Capellans are not afraid of Psionics like most Humans.

Capellan Racial Traits

Str -4, Con -4, Int +4, Wis +4, Cha+4.

Small Size.

Skill Modifiers: Hide +4, -4 on grapple checks.

The Federation has all branches of military service. They have Star Gates at class -A starports only. Increase Jump Range between class-A Starports by 1. That is a Jump-1 Ship can jump 2 parsecs if the Origin and Destination Starports are both class-A Starports. Though the Federation mistrusts Psionics, any world with a Pop of 9 or A will have a government sanctioned facility to train Psionic users.

The Vegan Confederation: The Vegans are a humanoid race of serpent-men. They are a proud warrior race that seeks honor and combat. They once controlled colonies on the rimward side of the Fornax Rift but abandoned those during the Capella-Vegan war with Humanity. They now have a genuine respect for Humanity, though they do not fully understand the human sense of honor. There is no such thing as an unarmed Vegan ship.

Vegan Racial Traits

Dex +2, Con -2.

Medium Size.

Skill Modifiers: Swim +2, Survival +4 (in swamps), +2 on grapple checks.

Soc measures how much honor the Vegan has acquired in his or her lifetime. Honor usually comes from battle but honor can be awarded for a great invention or a crafty trade.

Vegans have stargates at TL 15 worlds. Increase maximum jump for ships starting and ending at TL 15 worlds by 1. So ships with a Jump-1 rating can jump 2 parsecs if the starting and ending system both have TL 15. Vegans have all branches of the military. Members of their Scout Service pursue the Mercenary Class, however.

The K’Kree League: The K’Kree League is organized into herds. Each herd has it’s own military. Each herd controls about one subsector, though there is one herd that has worlds in 4 of the superimposed hexes. This is the Podar Herd, which has the greatest influence in the league. The League is a loose alliance of the herds, held together by a xenophobic hatred of meat eaters.

The Minor Powers

The Minor Powers include: the Aslan Hierate, the Cambri, the Darrian Confederation, the Hiver Federation of Glea, the Meridi, the Mobas Star League, the Vargr Enclaves, and the Virushi.

The Aslan Hierate: The Aslan here are the same as Classic Traveller. Just less territory. They control 4 superimposed hexes, in a 'Y' shape, with three touching K'Kree space and the fourth off the rimward edge. The Aslan get along with the Darrian but have a tense relation with the K'Kree and border incidents are common. The Aslan understand the importance of defeating the Hive but don't like the territorial aspects of the war. The vast majority of Aslan's efforts to defeat the Hive consist of dilettantes that have signed on with mercenary groups.

The Cambri: The Cambri are insectoids that thrive in a High-G environment. They have the appearance of large Pill-Bugs. The Cambri are peaceful, by nature. They sometimes clash with their neighbors, the Meridi, over high-gravity worlds. They get along well with Darrian, but only moderately with the Humans, who they regard as warlike. The Cambri call the Federation "The Terran Combine". Their ships are large, but moderately armed.

Cambri Racial Traits

Str +8, Dex -2, Con +4, Wis +2, Cha -2, Edu +2, Soc -2. Large Size.

Natural AC +2, Trample: A Cambri may run at twice normal speed. Any creature Medium Size or smaller takes bludgeoning damage 1D6+(1.5 x str Mod; 1D6+6 is average). Trampled creatures may make attack of opportunity but do so at -4 to hit. Cambri have two long antennae that they can use to manipulate objects, but not hold items. They may use their front pair of legs as hands to hold or carry equipment designed for them. These limbs may use human-type equipment with a -4 penalty.

The Darrian Confederation: This race of humanity evolved independently on a world that many believe was once controlled by the Cornelesy. Darrian has the highest tech level in this universe. They have regular access to TL 16, and have caches of TL 17 relics. The Darrian get along well with their neighbors, but have had to defend themselves, and the Federation, from the K'Kree. Darrian scientists have captured a Hive Warrior and are attempting to communicate with it.

The Federation of Glea: The Hivers of Classic Traveller live in this region of space. The Federation is labeled by its capital name, instead of the race, to avoid confusion with the Bugs of the Hive.

The Hivers are mysterious to Humans and Vegans alike. Glea belonged to Vega until after the Capella-Vegan War with Humanity. The Hivers invoked civil

disobedience, which the vegans took as a revolt. When they found themselves unwilling to attack the Hiver population, the Vegans granted them independence. Many believe the Hivers manipulated the Vegans into granting their independence.

Glea has stargates at class-A and B starports. Their ships tend to rely on missile bays and prefer to fight from a distance.

The Meridi: The Meridi are floating gas-filled jellyfish that evolved in the atmosphere of the gas-giant Kalestron. A Meridi appears as a large Octopus. The gas-filled head floats, and eight powerful appendages are used for manipulations. Being the largest creature in their environment, the Meridi had little that could challenge them, so tend to be peaceful. Classic Traveller does not use force fields that are prevalent in many Sci-Fi settings. The very nature of the Meridi body requires them to have force fields to keep their massive bodies pressurized in space. Count the force fields on Meridi ships as a Sandcaster that all weapons have to penetrate, including particle beams. The Meridi have traded force field technology with the Darrian, but nobody else. Meridi ships are enormous. Early ships are vastly underarmed, intended for exploration. Later ships are heavily armed. Meridi destroyers are manned by robots or subject races.

Meridi Racial Traits

Str +8, Dex -2, Int +2, Wis +2, Cha -2, Soc -2. Large Size.

Creature type is Aberration.

Because they have Eight tentacles, they are +4 to grappling. A Meridi flies in a hydrogen atmosphere with a base speed of 16. They can swim with a base speed of 6. Meridi require their force fields to be activated when exploring normal gravity worlds. When exposed to Oxygen atmospheres, for one round, a Meridi must make a fort save (DC 15 – atmosphere code) or take 1D6 temporary Constitution Damage. The Difficulty increases by 4 each round until the force field is restored. A Meridi can not be flanked.

Meridi may be distant relatives of the Colossal Jagd-II-Jagd.

The Mobas Star League: Humans gave the name Mobas to the inhabitants of this region of space. The Mobas call themselves "people" and call everybody else "Monoforms". Their home world orbits a class "M V" star that is paired to a "M Ib" Giant. The main sequence star is in far orbit of the super-giant. Two other planets orbit the smaller star. Two asteroid belts and a single gas giant orbit the larger star. The gas giant has nine moons that humans would find suitable.

A Mobas is a Medium-sized metamorph that has no bones or hard body parts. Its skin is a clear, flexible, tough, and scratchy, and lined with dark veins that meet

at their nucleolus, or brain. Each Mobas has two eyes, which appear to be made of crystal.

The Organs, including its brain, and numerous hearts, float in a transparent jelly-like mixture of proteins and body fluids. A Mobas breathes by absorbing oxygen directly through its skin, and so has no lungs. They are omnivorous, and eat by surrounding their food, and absorbing it through their skin, so there is also no visible digestive tract or intestines.

A Mobas goes through male and female stages. A Phase lasts a number of days equal to the Mobas constitution minus their charisma modifier. Thus the average phase lasts ten days. If this number is less than one, take this number and subtract it from 24. This is how many hours the phase lasts. Males release spores into the air, which float until they contact a female. A young Mobas will then sprout from its mother, and mature until it drops off. This process is called "Budding", and requires 10 months to complete.

They have voice boxes, but no lungs, so their voices are monotone. Their most important sense is smell. They can identify individuals by smell alone. They can hear and feel with their skin.

If a Mobas has to travel where it needs protection, they use small, one man vehicles in place of environment suits. They carry equipment in specially made belts and backpacks.

Mobas Racial Traits

Dex +2, Con -2.

Medium Size.

Creature type is Aberration.

Base Speed: 8. Mobas are slower than other species.

Armor Restrictions: A Mobas can not wear armor.

Darkvision: A Mobas can see in black and white up to 20 meters. They can function with no light at all. A

Mobas stretchable skin is supported by a complex Muscular structure. They can not be thinner than ten centimeters, or be wider than two meters. A Mobas can grow arms and legs to handle objects and walk. They can reabsorb limbs they no longer need. A Mobas does not get extra attacks for having multiple limbs, but does get +1 to a grapple attempt for each limb, to a maximum of +4. A Limb can be up to one meter long, and no less than one centimeter thick. A Mobas with no arms or legs gets +4 stability bonus to resist bull rush and trip attempts. Scent: A Mobas can detect creatures within 10 meters by their scent. If the target is upwind, increase the distance to 20 Meters. If the target is downwind, decrease the distance to 5 Meters. Strong odors, such as smoke or rotting garbage can be detected at twice the given distances. [Note: A K'Kree will insist that the smell of a meat-eating human should count as a strong smell but for these rules, it does not.] Detecting a scent does not give its location, only its presence. If the source is within 2 Meters, its source can be pinpointed. A Mobas automatically has the "Tracker" feat in the

T20 handbook. A Mobas gets +2 species bonus on bluff and sense motive checks. Due to their heightened sense of smell, a Mobas gets a -4 penalty to Fortitude checks made to resist gas attacks.

The Vargr Enclaves: Their close proximity to the Hive has forced the Vargr to be more organized than they are in the Classic Traveller Universe. They are still only as well organized as a confederation, with each world having it's own military. Vargr territory consists of five superimposed hexes. They are arranged as follows: Two hexes are off the spinward edge, both touching the Hive. Two hexes are to the coreward edge, with one touching the Hive, and one not touching the Hive at all. The last is completely off the map, touching the most Coreward border of the Hive territory.

The Virushi: The Virushi control this small corporate state. Their government has power only to regulate trade and commerce. They have had to fight three wars. The first was with the vegans, who they roughed up enough to teach the snake men about their own sense of honor. The second was with the K'Kree. The Virushi did well, but survived only because the Vegans entered the war on their side, and drove the K'Kree back. The third is the on-going war with the Hive.

The Mattar Space Empire: The Mattar Space Empire controls 11 Hexes off the trailward-rimward edge of the map. There is a one sector wide neutral zone separating them from Humanity and the Aquarians. The Mattar are humanoids best described as Dark Elves. They have a popular central government and a strong military. They have clashed five times with the Rigelian Hegemony, and twice with humanity over the sector-wide neutral zone separating their territory. Humanity and mattar now trade with each other, while respecting a fragile treaty.

Mattar Racial Traits

Dex +2, Con -2, Wis -2, Cha +2.

Medium Size.

The Rigelian Hegemony: The Rigelian Hegemony controls 9 Hexes off the rimward-trailward map edge. Rigelians are bird-people. Their bodies are covered with feathers from head to foot. Only their fingers, toes, and beaks are not covered with feathers. The males tend to be brightly colored, such as green, red, or blue. The females tend to be brown, grey, or black. They are warlike in nature, and flood airwaves with angry squawking sounds during a battle. They have fought five times with Mattar, (losing two times, and drawing once) and three times with Humanity, (winning the first war but losing the last two). They fought just one war with Aslan, and won it decisively. A sector-wide neutral zone separates them from Human-controlled space now.

They trade with Humanity, Aslan, and Darrian. The peace treaties with all of these powers are fragile at best.

Mattar Racial Traits

Str -2, Dex +2.

Medium Size.

Skill Modifiers: Jump +4, Tumble +4.

The Hive Wars: “The Hive Wars” is a collective name given to a series of wars, and border incidents pitting one side against the Hive. Many of these battles consist of long range raids. Only the Cambri, Rigel, and Mattar have not been attacked by long-range Hive fleets. No Matter how badly the hive is beaten, they seem able to replace their losses and come back again. The more peaceful races, including the Aquarians, Meridi, Cambri, and Virushi have shown signs of becoming discouraged.



Empty Quarter Echo

By Jeff M. Hopper

Beta Niobe (Empty Quarter 2825)

I'm typing this from the Monastery at Beta Niobe, sitting at a cafe table underneath a clear dome and the view is tremendous. By looking up, I can see the sharp blue tinted point of Beta Niobe with a halo of the Beta Niobe Nebula surrounding it. You've probably seen the view on postcards, but it is awe-inspiring when you are three orbits beyond the life zone looking in. Especially knowing in the back of your mind that it could kill you with all that beauty.

I'm damn glad I took a charter with the AAB to let some interior demountable tanks be installed so that I could haul twenty-five tons of sensors and three grad students out here. So, while they are busy teasing the secrets of the universe out of this star, I'm eavesdropping on a couple of Church of the Stellar Divinity monks discuss the afterlife with a couple of Church of Elvis missionaries. They keep comparing Beta Niobe and some place called "Graceland", I don't know because I try to be just religious enough to keep myself from being struck down as a heretic in the afterlife.

My attitude towards worship amuses my liaison, Brother Koh, who keeps telling me that I am a virtuous pagan and that he used to be just like me so there is hope for my soul. He's a good man, an ex-Navy Chief Petty Officer who left the Navy to, in his own words, "fully pursue his religion." After twenty plus years out of the service the man still knows his way around a docking collar and didn't flinch when some grit on the port power coupling arced over as he plugged me up. Religion or not, you've got to respect that.

Since I'm superfluous while the grad students are conducting their research, Brother Koh has decided to take me around the Monastery and show me this place as he sees it. We've spent a lot of time in vacc suits out on the surface as he shows me the artwork there. The devotees who have made exterior art have made them to be seen only by those who are willing to go for a walk on the surface. There is one piece of stained asteroidal glass that when you look through it, you see Beta Niobe centered with Deneb and Antares off to either side in one pane and all three stars superimposed on each other in another pane. That is only one of hundreds of pieces scattered around the surface, built up over the near thousand years of the Monastery's existence.

If you ever feel that humaniti was a wasted exercise by creation, all you have to do is look at the artwork here to be proven wrong.

Now, the monks here are not the same group of dour theologians that appear in the holos. Brother Koh pointed out the vicious sense of humor in one of the other monks (whose name will be withheld in order to protect the guilty). Seems my cargo of grad students has one who has been making fun of the monks about their beliefs, saying that the soul is just an imaginary construct. Now, the monks have been studying Beta Niobe and its nebula as an expression of their religion since the Monastery was built, so if you want to compare research notes then there is no better group to compare notes with than the monks. Every time this grad student has enthusiastically declared a discovery which proves the triumph of science over religion, the brother has made sure that he tells the grad student that the monks already knew this along with the name of the monk who discovered it and the date of the discovery. The brother reassures me that the grad student's tempering has been coming along nicely these past few weeks.

Brother Koh invited me to worship a couple of days ago with the Baptist sect of Church. The Baptist sect believes that to fully become a believer you must bathe naked in the pure light of the star you worship. So I watched as seventeen people were baptized by stripping off their clothes and walking into an airlock, evacuating the air, and then standing there on the surface for ten seconds before coming back inside. After the baptism ceremony, there was a celebration like none I've ever seen with a choir and band playing, enough food to feed twice our number, and people welcoming you whether you were a believer or not. The recently baptized were treated as the guests of honor and paraded around and toasts were drunk in their names. It was a great experience, but sucking vacuum for the divine makes me wonder about their sanity. Even if they do throw a great party.

Something I should include here to further demonstrate the sense of humor these monks have. I may have had too much to drink at the Baptist ceremony and possibly I might have passed out. Upon waking up the next morning, I found myself wearing the jumpsuit and robe combination of the monks. They let me run around for half a day in a panic telling me that they welcomed me into the monastic order before finally giving me my clothes back. Of course, there is now a holo of me in the monk's garb declaring that I participated in their "catch and release" program. Brother Koh ensures me that all the holo means is that I

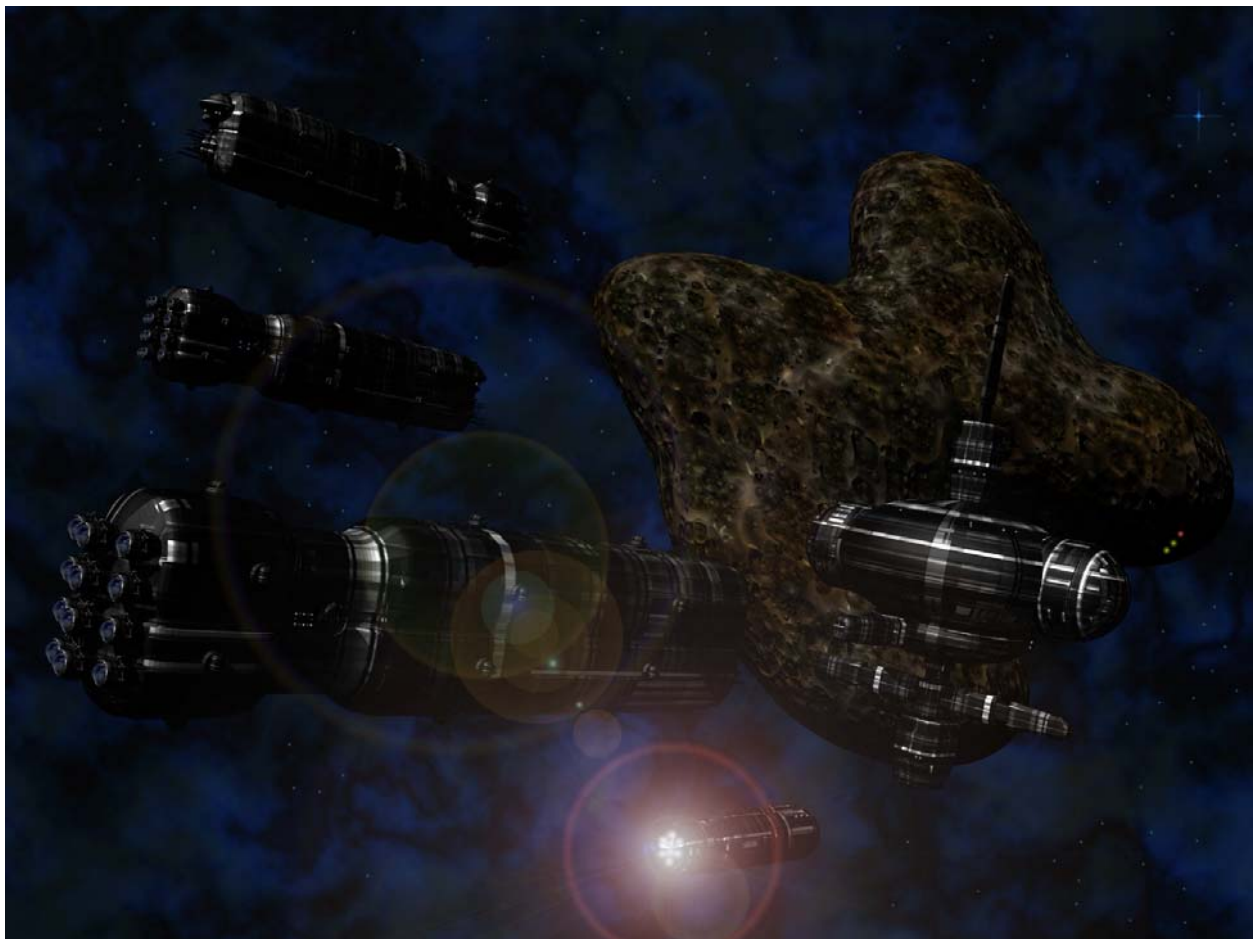
have been adopted by the Monastery, in his own words, "Adopted in much the same way a stray cat is adopted."

One of the Church of the Stellar Divinity subsidized merchants came into port today and unloaded some pilgrims. I became interested when I saw how the monks handled a bit of speculative cargo that was being hauled. The merchant who was riding with the cargo to ensure it was transshipped properly made sure that a decently sized donation was given to the church, above and beyond any storage fees he would have to pay. I'd have to say that she was a smart merchant to so appropriately show her respect for the church.

The pilgrims themselves were a mixed bunch from Turley. They, like me a couple of weeks ago, walk

around staring at everything but where they are going. Along the Corridor of Saint Eneri they stare at the walls to see the entire history of the Church of the Stellar Divinity carved as a bas relief into them. I was surprised to see a Bwaps among the pilgrims, but the Church is blind to race and the Bwaps seem to enjoy the ongoing Beta Niobe Debate among the clergy. Probably because it is another way to create order of doctrine out of the chaos of the different sects and a Bwap would definitely find that appealing.

If you can swing the charter or hitch a ride on a Church subbie, the Monastery at Beta Niobe is well worth the trip. I've enjoyed this accidental vacation quite a bit even though it lacks in the excessive vice that I've been used to.



Starship Datasheet: Barge

By Jeff M. Hopper

Barge (Type W)

Medium-sized starship

TL 9, MCr20.1596, 100 tons. The Barge is an uncommon design minimal capability starship. The Barge is a partially streamlined starship capable of only 1-G and Jump-1, but with a 55 ton cargo capacity. Barges are cheap and many of these minimal capability ships were purchased by governments and then mothballed before being sold off by those same governments to private users. They are often seen as training ships or auxiliaries, and are more often then not disposed of as garbage scows or gunnery targets. Most are between 100 and 200 years old and thus depreciated.

Demountable Fuel Tankage: Many have been refitted with demountable fuel tanks to increase their range and act as auxiliary fuel tenders. A 5-ton demountable tank costs KCr5, fits in a cargo bay (10 required for 50 tons), and is available at any C or better starport where they can be manufactured within 10 weeks. Demountable tanks can be mounted or removed in 2 weeks by the ship's crew or in 1 week by a starport crew for Cr5 per tank with a storage fee of Cr5 per tank per day.

Barge (Type W)

Class: Starship, Type W	EP Output: 1 (+0 extra)	One hardpoint.
Tech Level: 9	Agility: 0 (-1 in ATM)	
Size: Medium (100 tons)	Initiative: +0	
Streamlining: close PS	AC: 10	
Jump Range: 1x Jump-1	Repulsors: None	
Acceleration: 1-G	Nuclear Dampers: None	
Fuel: 12 tons	Meson Screens: None	
Duration: 8 weeks	Black Globes: None	
Crew: 1	AR: None	
Staterooms: 1	SI: 100	
Small Cabins: 0	Main Computer: Model/1	
Bunks: 0	Sensor Range: Close	
Couches: 0	Comm. Range: Close	
Low Berths: 3 slb, 1 elb		
Cargo Space: 55 tons	Cost: MCr20.1596 (disc)	
Atmospheric Speeds: NoE = 12kph Cruising = 180kph Maximum = 320kph		
Other Equipment: Fuel Scoops		

TAS Form 3.1 (Condensed)

Ship's Data

Type W Barge, Notes

"I don't know who had sex with whom to get the IISS to buy these hunks of crap, but I damn well hope they got a disease!"

These ships are the result of a government contract going to the lowest bidder. They are cheap and absolutely minimal capacity (save cargo), and plentiful (one can be found at almost every scout, navy, or military base). Because of this, many are mothballed or sold off after a suitable time with a depreciation of 1% per 2 years if maintained and 1% per year if not maintained.

"I swear that the Chief Design Engineer of these crates was named Rube Goldberg!"

Malfunctions: Roll a DC 20 save every week to see if the ship breaks down, +1 per week past monthly or annual maintenance, and +1 if using unrefined fuel. A T/Engineering check must be made that is equal to or greater than the malfunction save roll to fix it, one roll per day allowed.

Quirks: These ships have design quirks, a lot of them. Referees are encouraged to be creative here. Be annoying, not deadly.

Design Specifications

Installed Components	Tonnage	Cost	EP
100-ton Close Structure Hull	+100	MCr6	-
Bridge	-20	MCr0.5	-
Computer	-0.1	MCr2	-
Avionics	-0.4	(MCr0.9)	-
Sensors	-0.3	(MCr0.6)	-
Commo	-0.2	(MCr0.5)	-
Jump Drive 1	-2	MCr8	-1
Jump Fuel	-10	-	-
Maneuver Drive 1	-2	MCr3	-1
TL 9 Power Plant	-1.5	MCr4.5	+1
Power Plant Fuel (8 weeks)	-2	-	-
Fuel Scoops	-	MCr0.1	-
1 Hardpoint	-	MCr0.1	-
3 Low Berths	-1.5	MCr0.15	-
1 Emergency Low Berth	-1	MCr0.1	-
1 Stateroom	-4	MCr0.5	-
Cargo (55, 50+5)	-55	-	-
<i>Totals</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>MCr24.95 (MCr20.1596 with 20% standard design discount)</i>	



Weapons Locker: Flame-Throwers For Classic Traveller

By Omer "Employee #2-4601" Golan

Fire has been used as a weapon ever since Humaniti (or any other sophont race for that matter) has discovered it. From the most primitive torch used to chase prey into a trap, though "Greek fire", to the most modern flame-rifle, the power of fire has been utilized for combat throughout the generations, and many are still in use throughout the Known Space. This article details three flame-throwing weapons for use in Classic Traveller games, along with the rules governing their use.

Rule Considerations

All three ranged flame-throwing weapons described below operate in a similar manner – by projecting a jet of flaming liquid towards their target – and therefore use the same set of rules:

1. **Ammunition:** While flame-throwing weapons use streams of highly flammable liquid (ignited when it leaves the muzzle) they are treated, for game-play purposes, as if they shoot a single "shot" per round; a fuel tank attached to such a weapon holds a specific number of such "shots".

2. **Group Hits by Flame Weapons:** Each "shot" by a flame-throwing weapon may attack up to three additional individuals adjacent to the original target, provided that they are in a group (herd, pack, band, etc) and are each human-sized or smaller. In addition, when firing against flying targets (winged animals, flying vehicles) within Close, Short or Medium range, a DM of +2 is allowed.

3. **Hits to Flame Weapon Fuel Tanks:** Flame-throwing weapons are fuelled by tanks containing highly flammable liquid; direct hits to these tanks will cause them to implode. However, since Light Flamers and Flame Rifles use small fuel tanks which are attached beneath them rather than on the user's back, they are very unlikely to be hit by shots or swings generally aimed at him; instead, whenever the user is caught in the blast radius of a shotgun, another flame-throwing weapon, a plasma or fusion weapon or an explosion, roll 11+ for the fuel tank to explode, causing double normal weapon to their user. On the other hand, Flamethrowers are fuelled by large, back-mounted fuel tanks; every shot fired at their user might hit them as well. Whenever a Flamethrower's user is hit in combat, roll 10+ for his tanks to explode, causing double normal damage to the user.

4. **Aiming directly at Flame Weapon Fuel Tanks:** Considering the previous rule, the fuel tanks used by flame-throwing weapons make lucrative targets, and characters may attempt to aim at them directly. Since Light Flamers and Flame Rifles use small fuel tanks which are attached beneath them, these tanks incur a -6 DM to hit. On the other hand, aiming at a Flamethrower's fuel tanks is not very difficult, incurring only a -2 DM to hit. If a shot misses the tank, it may still hit the weapon's bearer; in such a case, roll an attack against him as usual.

Weapon Descriptions

The descriptions of three flame-throwing weapons follow:

Light Flamer (1,250 grams loaded; Cr525; TL8): A light flame-throwing weapon operating by pumping highly flammable fuel from its small fuel tank, igniting it near the muzzle and projecting a stream of fuel towards the target. The fuel is usually synthetic, though hydrocarbons might be in use on certain worlds. A fuel tank holding sufficient fuel for 4 combat rounds of continued operation is inserted into the weapon forward of the trigger guard. While the weapon fires a continuous stream of flaming fuel, it is considered (for game purposes) as firing one "shot" per round. Replacement of an empty fuel tank requires one combat round. The Light Flamer fuel, but not the fuel tank, is interchangeable with that of Flamer Rifles.

Length: 250mm, Weight, Unloaded: 1,000 grams (a full fuel tank weights 250 grams). Base price: Cr300 (full fuel tank: Cr20). Tech Level 8.

Flamer Rifle (4,500 grams loaded; Cr1,750; TL8): A heavy version of the Light Flamer, the Flamer Rifle operates by pumping highly flammable fuel from its small fuel tank, igniting it near the muzzle and projecting a stream of fuel towards the target. The fuel is usually synthetic, though hydrocarbons might be in use on certain worlds. A fuel tank holding sufficient fuel for 8 combat rounds of continued operation is inserted into the weapon forward of the trigger guard. While the weapon fires a continuous stream of flaming fuel, it is considered (for game purposes) as firing one "shot" per round. Replacement of an empty fuel tank requires one combat round. The Flamer

Rifle fuel, but not the fuel tank, is interchangeable with that of Light Flamers. Flamer Rifles are equipped with slings to allow ease of carrying.

Length: 750mm, Weight, Unloaded: 4,000 grams (a full fuel tank weights 500 grams). Base price: Cr1,750 (full fuel tank: Cr40). Tech Level 8.

Flamethrower (8,000 grams, including fuel tanks; Cr2,250; TL5): A massive low-tech flame-throwing weapon, the Flamethrower operates by pumping highly flammable fuel from a pair of back-mounted fuel tank, igniting it near the nozzle and projecting a stream of fuel towards the target. At the TL of its introduction, the fuel is made of refined natural hydrocarbons; later versions (TL8+) may use synthetic fuels. Two heavy fuel tanks holding sufficient fuel for 30 combat rounds of continued operation are carried on the user's back. While the weapon fires a continuous stream of flaming fuel, it is considered (for game purposes) as firing one "shot" per round. Replacement of an empty fuel tank requires one combat round. The fuel tanks are connected to the Flamethrower with a flexible heavy-duty hose. Flamethrower fuel is rarely interchangeable with that of other flame weapons.

Length: 750mm, Weight of Flamethrower: 2,000 grams. Weight of fuel tanks: 6,000 grams. Base price: Cr2,250 (extra pair fuel tanks: Cr500). Tech Level 5.

Weapon Tables

Table 1: Weapon and Ammo Data

Item	Base Weight	Ammo Weight	Rds/ Clip	Length Overall	Base Price	Ammo Price	TL
Light Flamer	1,000	250	4	250	525	20	8
Flamer Rifle	4,000	500	8	750	1,750	40	8
Flamethrower	2,000	-	-	750	2,250	-	5
Flamethrower Fuel Tanks	6,000	-	30	-	500	100	5

Table 2: Effects of Dexterity on Weapon use

Weapon	Required Dexterity Level	Required Dexterity DM	Advantageous Dexterity Level	Advantageous Dexterity DM
Light Flamer	7	-2	10	+1
Flamer Rifle	6	-2	8	+1
Flamethrower	5	-2	9	+1

Table 3: Weapon Matrix

Weapon	No Armor	Jack	Mesh	Cloth	Reflec	Ablat	Cbt. Armor
Light Flamer	+5	+2	+2	+2	+2	+1	-2
Flamer Rifle	+6	+3	+3	+3	+3	+1	-2
Flamethrower	+7	+4	+4	+4	+4	+2	0

Table 4: Range Matrix

Weapon	Close	Short	Medium	Long	Very Long	Wounds
Light Flamer	+1	+1	no	no	no	2D
Flamer Rifle	-4	+2	-5	no	no	3D+3
Flamethrower	-4	+1	no	no	no	5D

Biography: Selected Ship Masters and Vessels of the Empty Quarter

by Alvin Plummer

Introduction

Biography is a planned series of small biographies of various personalities within the Empty Quarter. For Referees, this is a selection of useful NPCs and starships. My focus is on the Imperial Empty Quarter, especially Gamma Quadrant. Starships are designed with the Classic Traveller format, using High Guard Shipyard v1.13 written by Andrew Moffatt-Vallance.

For this particular installment, we have a factory ship owner, some smart and opinionated kids, a pirate hunter, a mercenary working with experimental mecha, and a Noble with a problem.

The Respected Captain Keokuk¹

The Respected Captain Keokuk is the Amerindian-Vilani owner/manager of the Cornucopia-class Factory Ship Appleseed, registered out of Rasu/Nulinad. A native of Antares sector, he finds Emptyheads lazy, gullible and ignorant – but mighty fine customers to deal with. At once very bossy and very sensitive to any slight (real or imagined), The Respected Keokuk is a rather difficult individual to deal with. On the other hand, he is a shrewd factory manager, and quite successful – in normal times.

Unfortunately, there aren't normal times. Most of the Sector Fleet has gone to fight the Sillymany, leaving local space rather unsafe for his unarmored, ungainly (but oh-so-profitable!) factory ship. Even though he has upgraded some weaponry, he still doesn't dare take it out of Rasu's orbit. Not only is he running at a loss: that totalitarian little world aggravates him personally – he never knows what's legal or illegal at any given moment, and has resolved never to cross that extraterritorial port line again. "No, not even if that egomaniac Baron Sallan – pardon, 'The Bright Golden Sallan!' – begged me to!"

He's looking for a reputable Starmerc to work as an escort as he journeys to Fathwaas/Gimushi in search of a decent contract. "Something to get more cash flowing, keep the union happy, and his wife and four children in the style they have grown accustomed to."

Attire: The Respected Keokuk wears spacer's boots, good steam-pressed slacks and a clean T-shirt. His current favorite has the smilin' face of Emperor Gavin on the front, superimposed on the galaxy. On the back: "It's his galaxy: we just live in it."

The Respected Captain Keokuk, Merchantman, Captain/Owner of the Appleseed: 523778, 38 years
Aministration-1, Bribery-1, Mechanical-1, Grav Vehicle-1, Computer-0, Vacc Suit-0, Legal-0.

Ship: Appleseed		Class: Cornucopia		Tech Level: 12
Type: Mobile Factory		Architect: Alvin Plummer		
USP				
MF-L721353-080000-80000-0		MCr 10,355.000		20 Ktons
Bat Bear	3	2	Crew: 585	
Bat	3	2	TL: 12	
Cargo: 7,457		Fuel: 5,200	EP: 600	Agility: 0
Shipboard Security Detail: 20				
Backups: 2 x Model/5 Computers				
Architects Fee: MCr 103.550 Cost in Quantity: MCr 8,284.000				
Detailed Description				
HULL: 20,000 tons standard, 280,000 cubic meters, Dispersed Structure Configuration				
CREW: 15 Officers, 570 Ratings, 585 total crew. Breakdown: Command 11, Engineering 28, Gunnery 6, Services 40, Security 20, Factory workers 480				
ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 1G Maneuver, Power plant-3, 600 EP, Agility 0				

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/5 Computer, 2 Model/5 Backup Computers
 HARDPOINTS: 48 Hardpoints
 ARMAMENT: 24 Triple Beam Laser Turrets organized into 2 Batteries (Factor-8)
 DEFENCES: 24 Triple Sandcasters Turrets organized into 3 Batteries (Factor-8)
 CRAFT: None
 FUEL: 5,200 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 56 days endurance)
 No Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant
 MISCELLANEOUS: 300 Staterooms, 7,457 Tons Cargo
 USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: 480 Manufacturing Plants (6 tons, Crew 1, 1 Energy Point, Cost MCr 1)
 COST: MCr 10,355.000 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 103.550), MCr 8,284.000 in Quantity
 CONSTRUCTION TIME: 172 Weeks Singly, 138 Weeks in Quantity
 COMMENTS: The Appleseed is designed to provide mobile light manufacturing capacity for the population of quiet, low-tech regions of space like the (peacetime) Empty Quarter. It does not come with small craft: the ship owner is expected to contract out fuelling and transport. This particular ship has been modified with additional lasers and sandcasters to discourage pirates: but these upgrades do not make up for the lack of armor and agility.

Jack Pisco, Diane Pisco, and ‘Uncle’ Hiram Sibley

Jack & Diane Pisco are Mixed Vilani adolescents touring the Imperial Empty Quarter as part of their sociological and political training. They are very idealistic youths: Jack is certain that the Imperium can do more to develop the Quarter, while Diane is fascinated with the interaction of race, religion and art in the region. Studying under the aegis of Sir Ernestine Schumann-Heink, an upper-level servant of House Diensyak of Uo/Lishun, hex 1220 (as of 993; B000A97-E²), they are expected to follow in their adopted father’s footsteps into Household service.

Their society back home is very much a variation of the “bright, shiny future” of 1950s science fiction, with a monocultural Mixed Vilani people inhabiting beautiful space cities and cultured asteroid gardens. In Uo, it is taken for granted that the Imperium is a force for good, and the vast majority consider it an honor to build a unified civilization for all sophonts. They have heard of intransigent, stubborn types who refuse to get with the program – i.e. those silly Solomani loons – but after the Imperium wins her inevitable victory in the current war, such issues can surely be resolved in a rational and fair manner, satisfying all parties.

The Piscos’ grew quite a bit on their 2-year journey⁴, but culture shock in the Imperial Empty Quarter still hit the Piscos’ hard. However, their young minds were able to adapt and learn from their new, rather fluid, and very strange environment. Master Jack is eager to speak to anyone about his ideals to resolve strife and promote unity within the Quarter: a few on the Nets have heard him out, and have argued with him on how well his ideas translate to reality. Miss Diane is writing her first draft on a book on the local art: while there is nothing that really stands out like Darrian flame sculptures in the Marches, she finds the interaction of Islamic and Vilani abstract patterns enchanting – but the Bwap love of trees motifs and networks turns her off.

Accompanying the Piscos’ is their tutor/bodyguard, Hiram Sibley. He was originally the ship’s pilot and navigator as well, but as a gifted teacher, he has taught Jack Pisco how to manage the ship himself. Diane was educated partly by RNA Implant Technology⁵, partly by rote memorization, and partly by hands-on training.

His combat skills are actually weaker than you’d expect, but he’s very good at persuading trouble to back off without resorting to force. Moreover, he’s actually quite fond of the children: if called upon, ‘Uncle’ Hiram is quite willing to act above and beyond the call of duty to protect their interests. Often, however, when the Piscos’ are safe onboard studying or sleeping, Mister Sibley will spend the night gambling, drinking, and whoring. He knows his employers won’t approve, so he keeps his nocturnal activities fairly well hidden: but Master Jack has his suspicions.

Attire: Both Pisco’s dress in “modern Vilani fashion”, which really means ancient Vilani fashion, with the addition of ‘high-platform disco boots’ which automatically lowers when the user beaks into a run. As high-caste Vilani (of mixed heritage), they wear smooth, silk-like, multi-layered clothing that leaves only their faces and hands bare.

Mister Hiram Sibley usually wears some baggy shorts, a plain t-shirt and comfortable shoe-socks. He keeps his old Army dress uniform as a memento, and has a Lishun-style civilian suit for formal occasions. He loathes his skimpy, low-caste “slave clothes”, but wears them when chasing women.

Master Jack Pisco, Wonderkid, Captain of the Ocean of Dreams: 844B79, Age 16

Pilot-1, Navigation-1, Anglic-0, Vacc Suit-0, Computer-0

Miss Diane Pisco, Wonderkid, First Mate of the Ocean of Dreams: 837B79, Age 15

Mechanical-1, Engineering-1, Anglic-1, Navigation-0, Vacc Suit-0, Computer-0, Fine Arts-0

[Note that both adolescents are native speakers of Modern Vilani]

Mister Hiram Sibley, bodyguard/servant, ex-Army (1st Lieutenant): 76BBB2, Age 30
 Intimidation-2, Instruction-2, Computer-1, Electronics-1, Navigation-1, Pilot-1, Vacc Suit-0, Automatic Rifle-0,
 Carousing-0, Liaison-0, Streetwise-0, Steward-0.

Ship: Ocean of Dreams Type: Scout	Class: Type S Architect: Standard (part of the High Guard install)	Tech Level: 11
USP	SS-11222R1-000000-00000-0	MCr 52.134 100 Tons
Bat Bear Bat	Crew: 4 TL: 11	
Cargo: 4 tons	Fuel: 34 EP: 2 Agility: 2	Craft: 1 x 3T Air/Raft
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification		
Architects Fee: MCr 0.521 Cost in Quantity: MCr 41.707		
Detailed Description		
HULL: 100 tons standard, 1,400cubic meters, Needle/Wedge Configuration		
CREW: Pilot, 3 Other Crew		
ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 2G Maneuver, Power plant-2, 2 EP, Agility 2		
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/1bis Computer		
HARDPOINTS: 1 Hardpoint		
ARMAMENT: 1 None (Empty Turret:		
DEFENCES: None		
CRAFT: 1 3-ton Air/Raft (Crew & Cost not factored in)		
FUEL: 34 Tons Fuel (3 parsecs jump and 56 days endurance)		
On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant		
MISCELLANEOUS: 4 Staterooms, 4Tons Cargo		
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None		
COST: MCr 52.655 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.521), MCr 41.707 in Quantity		
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 38 Weeks Singly, 30 Weeks in Quantity		
COMMENTS: The Ocean of Dreams is merely another wedge-shaped surplus Imperial scout. There have been no special modifications that change the design specs. However, the Pisco's have added the usual personalizing touches: the Pilot and Co-Pilot chairs are uniquely made to suit each occupant; the hallway is lined with curios from their journey from Lishun to the Empty Quarter, and one stateroom has been reconfigured & relit to create an optical/aural/tactile illusion: it feels precisely as if it was the sunroom of their old apartment in Uo system, overlooking a park in their native asteroid/city of Midlishu Era – complete with a permanent light breeze.		

Captain Muhammad Yunus

Captain Yunus is the highly respected captain of the Ray Passage, the 1000-ton warship of the Circle of the Rounded Sky. The Circle of the Rounded Sky is an organization of local retired military officers (Imperial, system and mercenary) who believe that they can do a better job tracking down the Shadow Cartel than the Imperium has. Funded by various planetary governments, they believe that the Cartel transports goods by a set of 'drop-off points' in deep space and unpopulated worlds. Hypothetically, some sites just provide 'cold storage', while other points have onsite platforms where hot merchandise is stripped/rebranded, and redistributed.

Captain Yunus was originally a planetary naval officer, who joined the three-ship Left Hook pirate band over fifteen years ago. He prospered with the band, until they were destroyed in a turf war with the then-rising Shadow Cartel⁶ in 986. Yunus managed to escape death, and later participated in an Imperial sting operation against the Cartel, pretending to be a part-time pirate with merchandise to sell. After his solid work with the Imperials - resulting in the arrests and/or deaths of two minor bosses, five black market dealers and fifteen foot soldiers – he was offered a new identity and relocation package, but refused. Instead, he circulated his ideals on how the Shadow Cartel operates among local naval officers. The governments brushed him off, but the semi-secret Circle was intrigued, and arranged for an elderly warship to be made available.

So far, the 'drop-off point' hypothesis hasn't been confirmed or refuted, but Captain Yunus has already defeated two Shadow Cartel pirate ships: one was destroyed, and another was successfully boarded. The Cartel has placed a 50,000 Cr bounty on Captain Yunus' head. His family and fiancée has been relocated to an undisclosed location, to evade Cartel reprisals. In the meantime, the Circle of the Rounded Sky has developed a net of low-level informers,

some of whom are actually useful from time to time. Also, sympathetic naval personnel are willing to share certain data with Captain Yunus and the Circle, on a quid pro quo basis.

The Circle doesn't have access to the kind of software tools, shipping records and space surveillance files the Imperial Navy has on tap. On the other hand, they do have great combined experience in spotting important patterns in a sea of disconnected data, understanding the black markets 'from soup to nuts', and the numerous tricks of the smuggling trade. Captain Yunus has another advantage: having been a successful pirate captain himself, he can second-guess their actions with much better accuracy than the law-and-order Naval mind can.

Currently, the Circle has no real base or command post. They have been renting various warehouses for temporary accommodations, but a recent bombing attack has made such sites risky. For now, operations are distributed in safehouses across a [Referee-chosen] world with an A or B-class starport. Plans to secretly rebuild an old freighter to house a mobile base are being debated within the Circle. A friendly shipping executive has promised to give one of his mansions to the Circle as a formal head office. The Circle still needs to properly survey the mansion to decide how to harden the site from ground or airborne attacks.

Attire: Mister Yunus prefers to wear a sweater, jeans with cargo pockets, spacer's boots, a utility belt, and a brown leather jacket. If a space battle is likely with 6 hours, he'll jump into a vac suit, and those under his command must do the same. In highly formal occasions, he'll wear spotless white Arab garb of a style that was ancient when First Contact was made with the Vilani.

Mister Muhammad Yunus, Captain of the Ray Passage: 3B28A4

Ship Tactics-1, Streetwise-1, Ship Gunnery-1, Ship's Boat-1, Forward Observer-0, Vacc Suit-0, Computer-0, Laser Pistol-0. Always carries a laser pistol on his person.

Ship: Ray Passage		Class: Muse		Tech Level: 12
Type: Light Corvette		Architect: Alvin Plummer		
USP				
	LL-A2244C2-200000-06000-0	MCr 739.343	1 Ktons	
Bat Bear	1	Crew: 46		
Bat	1	TL: 12		
Cargo: 166	Fuel: 240	EP: 40	Agility: 2	Marines: 25
Craft: 1 x 50T Cutter, 2 x 4T G-Carrier				
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification				
Backups: 2 x Model/3fib Computers				
Architects Fee: MCr 7.393 Cost in Quantity: MCr 591.474				
Detailed Description				
HULL: 1,000 tons standard, 14,000 cubic meters, Cone Configuration				
CREW: 11 Officers, 10 Ratings, 25 Marines				
ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 4G Maneuver, Power plant-4, 40.000 EP, Agility 2				
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/3fib Computer, 2 Model/3fib Backup Computers				
HARDPOINTS: 1 50-ton bay				
ARMAMENT: 1 50-ton Plasma Gun Bay (Factor-6)				
DEFENCES: Armoured Hull (Factor-2)				
CRAFT: 1 50 ton Cutter (Crew of 0, Cost of MCr 0.000), 2 4.000 ton G-Carriers (Crew of 0, Cost of MCr 0.000)				
FUEL: 240 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)				
On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant				
MISCELLANEOUS: 26 Staterooms, 166 Tons Cargo				
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: 4 Ship's Brigs (4 tons, Crew 0, Cost MCr 0.050)				
COST: MCr 746.736 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 7.393), MCr 591.474 in Quantity				
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 120 Weeks Singly, 96 Weeks in Quantity				
COMMENTS: This is an anti-pirate vessel, with four brig's (holding four sophonts each) and 25 Assault troops. (It is improper to formally call them Marines within the Third Imperium. Their job description still focuses on hostile boarding actions, though.) This particular corvette focuses on the One Big Gun approach. Captain Yunus has been careful to use his superior firepower in short, fierce engagements, defying weaker counterstrikes long enough to hit the decisive blow -- before the Plasma Gun gets knocked out of commission.				
The Ray Passage is an old warhorse, commissioned well over a century ago. She requires regular tender-loving care to run smoothly. Her life support and electronics were overhauled recently. The Plasma Gun bay overheats quickly, and can be temperamental in action. The manoeuvre drives have held up remarkably well over decades of heavy				

usage, but the jump system – especially the jump grid itself – is suffering serious fatigue. It is unknown if the patch jobs can hold until funds for a total grid replacement are available.

Star Lieutenant Bel Geddes

Star Lieutenant Bel Geddes, the commander of the experimental Creapoer⁷, believes that the platform can do better in mid-level fights with the right doctrine and tactics. He believes that a full platoon of four Creapoers would do better than four conventional tanks in most pacification and garrison operations, especially in guerrilla/bushfire warfare. In conventional operations, he uses his Creapoer in hit-and-run strikes on targets where enemy tanks can't follow, using the anti-air gun to keep enemy air power from tracking his moves. Finally, Star Lt. Geddes insists that the Creapoer can do infantry support better than tanks or APCs: 1) the troops can just ride on top of the clamshell; 2) they enjoy better sightlines without the mass of a tank blocking their field of vision; and 3) the Creapoer can go with the men to more trashed and torn terrain than tanks can.

Until he gets the Creapoer platoon he has repeatedly asked for, Star Lt. Geddes works closely with his attached infantry unit, wargaming new tactics, ambushes and building-clearing methodology. While the soldiers are officially a part of the Fourth Fist⁸, "The 1st Creapoer Unit" is hired out to a variety of employers likely to see action. The employers are somewhat wary of hiring Arakaa, who are famous throughout the Gamma Quadrant for their distain of interstellar society. They are usually won over by the unit's good discipline and professionalism in combat. While resistant to most anti-armor pressure mines and comfortable with rough terrain, the Creapoer has a high profile, making it hard to hide and vulnerable to tanks and artillery. On the other hand, it can retain mobility on as few as three legs, and it is difficult to knock it out by a one-shot kill. Now in the later stages of testing, the prototype Creaper has been involved in seven active engagements so far. Instellarms considers it moderately successful in the low-level and some mid-intensity conflicts, but a failure in large-scale armored clashes. Star Lt. Geddes believes that the Creapoer is a better squad support vehicle than a tank or an armored personnel carrier, and – with the advice of his men – is working hard on pounding out doctrine and tactics that makes the most of the Creapoer's strengths.

Star Lieutenant Bel Geddes is descended from a fairly illustrious line of military men. His Venerated Patriarch, Uss Geddes (844 - 882 Imperial), was a wandering interstellar mercenary who came into some money, and married into a respected family on the xenophobic world of Arakaad. While he died in a saber duel only 4 years after his marriage, the Venerated Geddes did sire two sons who eventually served in the planetary space force, establishing a tradition that endures today. Star Lt. Geddes isn't quite considered 'one of us' by the pureblood Arakaa men under him, but they greatly admire his proficiency and solid common sense in the field – something they value more than intelligence or innovation.

Attire: The Star Lieutenant wears the Fourth Fist dress of the day, usually fatigues. Undress greens, complete with Sam Browne belt, tie, and cape, is his preferred dress when off-duty.

Star Lieutenant Bel Geddes, Army Captain: B95887, Age 26

Tactics-2, Legged Vehicle-2, Automatic Rifle-1, Mechanical-1, Sword-1, Computer-0, Wheeled Vehicle-0, Pistol-0. Armed with an Automatic Rifle and a Slug Pistol. Wears Mesh armor and a helmet.

The Star Lieutenant commands only his ground force directly. The command of the starship that brings him to the next battlefield is assumed to be in the PCs hands – Star Lt. Geddes merely tells them which world is next. They command the low-tech Free Trader detailed here.

Ship: SWS Scohinah		Class: Type A	
Type: Free Trader		Architect: Standard	
		Tech Level: 9	
USP			
AA-2611111-000000-00000-0		MCr 67.200	200 Tons
Bat Bear		Crew: 3	
Bat		TL: 9	
Cargo: 91	Passengers: 7	Low: 20	Fuel: 22 EP: 2 Agility: 1
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops			
Architects Fee: MCr 0.672 Cost in Quantity: MCr 53.760			
Detailed Description			
HULL: 200 tons standard, 2,800 cubic meters, Flattened Sphere Configuration			
CREW: Pilot, Engineer, Medic			

ENGINEERING: Jump-1, 1G Manuever, Power plant-1, 2 EP, Agility 1
 AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/1 Computer
 HARDPOINTS: 2 Hardpoints
 ARMAMENT: 2 None (Empty Turrets)
 DEFENCES: None
 CRAFT: None
 FUEL: 22 Tons Fuel (1 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
 On Board Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant
 MISCELLANEOUS: 10 Staterooms, 20 Low Berths, 7 Middle Passengers, 20 Low Passengers, 91 Tons Cargo
 USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None
 COST: MCr 67.872 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.672), MCr 53.760 in Quantity
 CONSTRUCTION TIME: 57 Weeks Singly, 46 Weeks in Quantity
 COMMENTS: The Arakaad Government provides this ship to the PCs. Also supplied is a 20-Ton fuel bladder, allowing the starship to make two jump-1s at a reduction of cargo space to 71 Tons. (The bladder take up 1 Ton of space when rolled up for storage: replacement cost is 28,000 Cr.) As 60 Tons of cargo space is used as a spacious hangar for the 15-ton Creapoer (no additional difficulty for repairs: add 24,000 Cr to the ship's price), this leaves 11 Tons for cargo. Up to 30 tons of hangar space may be 'stolen' for additional cargo while allowing the Creapoer to enter – repairs to the Creapoer is at one higher level of difficulty.
 The StarFist War Ship Scohinah is unarmed. This oversight can be remedied on Arakaad: even though the single civilian Imperial port is Class-E, the planetary government maintains a separate archipelago of military ports for StarFist vessels. An anti-ship weapon is a must: the PCs should also consider adding ground support weaponry.

Baroness Adelina Layamon

Baroness Adelina Layamon is a prim and proper woman of 35 and a native of Gisid/Core 0810 (E567301-0 as of 993 Imperial.) While the world produces no goods (thus, TL-0), its single domed township is very comfortable, and is the primary fief of House Layamon. The house also has a separate Barony, but for the longest time Baroness Adelina thought that it was only a 'paper Barony', with no land attached. Only two years ago, upon her husband's death did she discover that there was actual land attached to the title⁹ – an aging city on Udusis/Empty Quarter 1831.

After settling her personal affairs - mourning her husband's death in the Rim War, and sending her two children to a good and outrageously expensive boarding school on Sylea – Baroness Adelina set off on a personal journey to the Empty Quarter in 989 with her family's blessings. To her horror, she has found the world itself in a decrepit and stagnant state, with no concern for anything outside of their own backyard. Even the local elites and nobility are barely aware of the Rim War: most have never left their continent, never mind gone off-planet! (Referee's note: The Udusis elites loathe Baroness Adelina, first as a foreigner butting into their private business; then as a woman who humiliates their manhood, being far wealthier and honored than they will ever be; and finally as a cruel reminder of a promising future, lost forever.)

Before her, no blood member of House Layamon has visited their namesake city in over a quarter of a millennium. In her visit of 992, she and her escorts saw the Free City half-eaten by slums and poverty: numerous blocks have been simply depopulated "as if the place was stuck by plague or neutron bombs." The local wildlife has already moved into many abandoned apartment blocks. Only the old city park¹⁰ still retains some of the grace and beauty of better days – if you ignore the drug needles, graffiti and dumped garbage.

The Baroness organized some of the poor locals to clean up the park, and tend to the trees and garden. She pays well, endearing herself to the poor – especially to the urban women – but angering the masculine establishment, whom she mocks as "The Rule of Man." Baroness Adelina was on the edge of establishing neighbourhood associations when the establishment (the city government and the criminal underworld, working hand-in-hand), sensing a threat to their power, intimidated the local poor from supporting her. Having done so, they now disrespect and trash-talk her character, morality and motives.

Such a challenge only increases her scorn and contempt for her opponents. If questioned, she will stoutly deny being a feminist - she is an Imperial aristocrat, not an egalitarian. More to the point, she feels that the Imperium needs real men who are fit to command, "as the Natural Hierarchy dictates... What the Imperium doesn't need are these pseudo-men, who value power over honor, and control over growth."

As the local establishment is closing off peaceful avenues for change, she is exploring more direct options. Both the Imperium and Kasainá continental government recognize her right to use armed force to retake control over her city & fief, and she already sent a few low-profile scouts surveying the city, mapping out likely free-fire zones and chokepoints. Her plans focus on retaking her park first, which means demolishing dozens of abandoned buildings with oversight her park (they are just too useful as sniping posts to leave standing.) The rest of the city is to be

retaken slowly and with caution. The half-collapsed subway system and the old financial district promise to be especially hard to clear out.

Her military advisers have run some preliminary numbers, estimating the price for victory in retaking the city. She was completely unprepared for the credit cost, but it was the expected death toll that forced her to take a seat. Baroness Adelina has no taste for “that monster, war” – it has already ripped her own man from her grip, leaving her empty. She intends to bring the joys and wisdom of True Civilization – Imperial Civilization - to her own long-lost fief: why should doing what’s right kill so many of her own people, the men she needs to rebuild her city? So many local women regard her with great honor – why should she steal so many of their husbands, as her husband was stolen away?

She is Imperial, and Imperials don’t back down: not on matters of honor and justice. But if there’s a better way – not dreamy lies or cowardly compromise, but something viable, something that would last – she’d love to hear it.

Attire: Baroness Adelina wears the traditional long thick dress, embroidered petticoat, and ornate hood/cape that the family women of her House prefer¹¹. A simple white linen dress with highly complex patterned embroidery (and white slippers) is worn in formal occasions. At very formal occasions, a massive sword is borne on her back, within a golden scabbard with red & ruby highlights. The general cut and form of her dress is closely patterned after Medieval European styles.

Baroness Adelina Layamon: 26867B, Age 35

Liaison-2, Anglic-1, History-0, Trader-0, Sylean-(-1). Despite being an Imperial Noble, the Baroness is usually unarmed. Old High Vilani is her native tongue.

Ship: Calantha		Class: Amethystium		Tech Level: 12	
Type: Liner		Architect: Alvin Plummer			
USP					
L-E332332-070000-40000-0		MCr 3,064.250		5 Ktons	
Bat Bear	1	1	Crew: 53		
Bat	1	1	TL: 12		
Cargo: 1,067 Passengers: 220 Low: 400 Emer. Low: 70 Fuel: 1,650 EP: 150. Agility: 2 Shipboard Security					
Detail: 5					Pulse
Lasers					
Architects Fee: MCr 30.643 Cost in Quantity: MCr 2,451.400					
Detailed Description					
HULL: 5,000 tons standard, 70,000 cubic meters, Cylinder Configuration					
CREW: 10 Officers, 43 Ratings					
ENGINEERING: Jump-3, 2G Maneuver, Power plant-3, 150 EP, Agility 2					
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/3 Computer					
HARDPOINTS: 10 Hardpoints					
ARMAMENT: 5 Triple Pulse Laser Turrets organized into 1 Battery (Factor-4)					
DEFENCES: 5 Triple Sandcasters Turrets organized into 1 Battery (Factor-7)					
CRAFT: None					
FUEL: 1,650 Tons Fuel (3 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)					
No Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant					
MISCELLANEOUS:					
250 Staterooms, 400 Low Berths, 70 Emergency Low Berths, 20 High Passengers, 200 Middle Passengers, 400 Low Passengers, 1,067 Tons Cargo					
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None					
COST: MCr 3,094.893 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 30.643),					
MCr 2,451.400 in Quantity					
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 148 Weeks Singly, 118 Weeks in Quantity					
COMMENTS: This is a Tukera Lines liner, of a type unique the Empty Quarter. It was originally built for the safety-conscious, first-time traveller, to reassure him that he will swiftly arrive at the destination alive and hale. As the few larger and faster liners have been chartered for troop transport, the Amethystium-class is the premier civilian liner locally in service.					
The Calantha has been quietly chartered by Baroness Adelina for troop transport purposes – but not for the Rim War. A selection of ground-support weaponry is planned, mainly ship-to-ground missiles and machine gun bays.					

Some of the cargo space is marked out for vehicular bays, mainly unarmored G-carriers and armored ground cars. The refit is expected to take 25-30 weeks, and is being done in the Cooke system, Hebrin subsector.

If things work out very well, the ship will be needed to transport supplies and material to rebuild the Free City of Layamon. The current market value of the ship is a bit over 1 billion credits, but an outright purchase by House Layamon is not out of the question.

House Layamon: A History

House Layamon is a long-lived minor Noble house. While they can document their bloodline to John and Virginia Dare (the first Terran family to settle on Kakaagu/Core, in -2182 Imperial), their moment of glory was during the antebellum Imperium, when they dominated the planetary Copyright and Trademark Ministry from 388 to 476. Their tight grip on this bureaucracy indirectly gave them control of Kakaagu, as they decided who had the legal right to propagate ideas in public forums. The rule of Copyright and Trademark eventually frayed apart, leading to the brutal Standards Wars (472-476) and the exile of the Layamons after their defeat.

House Layamon pleaded with Cleon IV (a.k.a. Cleon the Mad) to grant them another fief. The Emperor refused in his usual forceful manner. Afterwards, they conspired with others to install a new Emperor. Their plans failed, but the spectacular fiasco served as an example to others to do the same with greater success. The Layamon escaped identification as traitors, but Cleon IV fingered an annoying and vocal (but innocent) noble line and exterminated them. The destruction of the highly respected Uccello family only deepened both the hatred and the contempt of Core nobility against the Emperor, and weakened the foundations of the Imperium.

The Layamons kept a low profile afterwards, struggling to avoid the increasingly high-energy politics of Core sector until Cleon IV was assassinated in 555. They quickly offered their petition to the new Emperor, Jerome, who amused himself by granting this haughty and refined family a fief on Udisis, in the barbaric realm of the Empty Quarter. The family swallowed their pride and took the fief without a murmur. At the time, the world was ruled by two other baronial families: the addition of House Layamon led to a new grouping of responsibilities. Eventually House Layamon was given the continent of Kasainá to rule as best they could.

Between 556 and 622, the Layamons labored to make something of the continent: founding several cities, encouraging trade and immigration, and financing a little terraforming. The family was informally divided into three clans, with 20 'family heads' – most always men – tending the world's population and development, 15 family heads handling interstellar politics and finance, and a final 10 family heads managing military affairs, family security, and Imperial military obligations. Most of the fief was urbanized into the Free City of Layamon – the better to get maximum rents from the territory.

During the Civil War era (604-622), The Quarter was of too little worth for Grand Admirals and would-be-Emperors to fight over, and in any case military operations in the Civil War was highly aristocratic (and therefore focused on worthy (i.e. military) opponents and decapitating noble leadership), instead of the populist/nationalistic ideologies of the Rebellion Era (which naturally led to Total War policies.) Pirate raiders made life hard for peaceful traders: but when it came to the worlds themselves, they were more interested in Phat Loot than in mere vandalism and killing for killing's sake. Between 618 and 622, the smartest and most powerful group of thugs-with-starships – 'The Opie Corporation' - made an unofficial agreement with House Layamon and other local Nobility, in a standard 'protection for tribute' deal. "This way, we have only one band of thugs to worry about, instead of having our worlds trashed every few months by someone new," declared Baron Kinnan Layamon.

After the war ended, the new Empress was very interested in reasserting Imperial power in the Empty Quarter. As a prelude to the return of the long-absent and badly weakened Imperial Fleet, covert contact was made with House Layamon. The Layamons provided useful information, contacts, and stratagems on the most quiet and efficient way to take down the Corporation. At great personal risk, they managed to corrupt several pirate captains, making possible the remarkable betrayals during the Battle of Udisis, turning a likely defeat into an overwhelming victory for the Imperium. As their reward, Empress Arbellatra granted House Layamon an additional Core sector fief in 630 "as the previous lord is no longer available."

Between 630 and the 700s, House Layamon slowly reformed into two clans, one based on Udisis/Empty Quarter, the other on the new fief at Gisid/Core. Eventually, the Empty Quarter line abandoned their fief, turning their attention from managing a world to gaining influence in the subsector capital on Irash. They eventually converted this influence into wealth, which allowed them to comfortably relocate to Core sector – a.k.a. "Civilization" - with the rest of their House. The last Layamon to actually visit their fief was Mentor Layamon in 737. Between 737 and 992, only family lawyers, bankers, or accountants would visit their half-forgotten fief on Udisis.

Footnotes

¹The title “Respected” is a local Empty Quarter honor for civilians who have made a major contribution to the sector’s development. This award does not affect social standing, nor does it confer nobility. However, sophonts must have Social Standing greater than eight to receive it.

²As one of the Great Systems of the Imperium³, Uo’s “High Senior” education scheme is able to finance the travels of selected young scholars, with the goal of boosting them on the ladder to high office. Sir Ernestine Schumann-Heink is currently sponsoring the Piscos studies, backing their theories and defending the excellence of their coursework. So long as he can do an adequate job defending the Piscos, branches of the Uo government are willing to foot the bill.

³A Great System of the Imperium is a formal title granted to a system with Population A+, TL E+. Such systems automatically rate a Count as a noble lord. Within the Imperium of the 990, there are about 80 such systems. If the Navy is the Sword and the Shield, the Merchants the Lifeblood, and the Scouts the Emperor’s Eyes and Ears, then the Great Systems are the hearths and forges of the Imperium.

During the reign of Emperor Gavin, there was an entire hierarchy of ‘System Titles’, including Throneworlds (Sector capitals), High Systems (Starport A, Pop A+, TL E+), Elderworlds (systems with Sector-wide or greater historical significance), Honorable Worlds (regular systems with a long history of loyalty to the Iridium Throne), Forgeworlds (high population industrial systems), Heathworlds (Sylea, Vland, and Terra), The Sacred (systems of great religious significance), The Wise (cutting-tech high- and mid-pop systems), etc.

The reasons for these titles are simple: 1) to turn the eyes of the people to the Emperor 2) to reward the loyalty and hard work of Imperial subjects and citizens 3) To encourage worlds to see each other as part of a single Imperial fabric of society, with each world doing their part to better the whole 4) to have the population of a world identify with a single self-image, so discouraging balkanization of the small scale (and hopefully, on larger scales as well.) The ‘System Titles’ was already failing before the eruption of the Solomani Rim War: the War itself led to the discrediting of world titles, eventually leading to Emperor Strephon’s “Cultural Mosaic” social policy.

⁴It’s about 60 parsecs from Uo to Nulinad, or 120 weeks one way using the 1 week jump/1 week downtime cycle

⁵For more on RNA Implant technology, see “Traveller Science: RNA Implant Technology for T20” in **Stellar Reaches Issue #2**.

⁶The Shadow Cartel is a major criminal organization – probably THE major criminal organization - in the Empty Quarter. Affiliated groups can be found in both Julian space and the Imperium. To learn more, please see the story “Into the Lesser Rift” by Jason “Flynn” Kemp, **Stellar Reaches Issue #2**.

⁷The prototype – called “Creapoer” by the men in their flavor of Anglic – resembling nothing more than a large walking spider with various attached weaponry, most notably a main cannon and a quad-barrel anti-air flack gun. This eight-legged prototype has a clamshell centre, where a three-man crew operates the vehicle. A single machinegun set at the bottom-centerline rounds out the package. [The author doesn’t have Striker: but the interested Referee can see the visual: “MW-77 Prototype” by Eric Gooch (<http://digitalart.org/artwork.php?ID=28211>) and make the vehicle himself. TL is 9, with some TL 10 subsystems possible. The author guesstimates the size at around 15 Tons – he could be wildly wrong on this.]

⁸The Fists of Arakaad – the planetary military – rarely leaves their home system of Arakaad/Empty Quarter 0833. However, as part of a joint venture with the megacorporation Instellarms LIC, the StarFist has produced a prototype ‘mecha’ tank.

⁹According to current family law, titles are inherited by the spouse. Only after the spouse dies do all male family members over the age of 30 decide who received the title, by open vote.

¹⁰The image in the author’s mind is from UrbanOasis - Andreas Rocha (andreasrocha) - <http://andreasrocha.cgsociety.org/gallery/354518/>

¹¹The image in the author’s eye is “Maiden With Sword” by Jane Mere (Zhan Minye) at <http://janemere.cgsociety.org/gallery/272871/>. The sword shown is ceremonial only - for one thing, she can barely lift it, and must have it strapped on her back in the VERY formal occasions she must bear it: coronations, investments, weddings, and funerals – but not formal audiences with the Emperor (he has given her permission to leave the sword behind.)



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