



Explorator Warbands

By Gav Thorpe,

With help and additional ideas by Andy Chambers and Jes Goodwin

In this article Inquisitor author, Gav Thorpe, investigates some of the inner workings of another of the Imperium's most secretive organisations – the Priesthood of Mars.

When I sat down with Andy and Jes to discuss the Adeptus Mechanicus, with the aim of writing an article for Inquisitor, it soon became readily apparent that one article could never hope to encompass the wealth of material regarding the adepts of the Machine God.

So, I decided that this article needed a definite focus in order to contain something useful for Inquisitor players and GMs. Of the many and varied types of Techpriests across the galaxy, there was one particular group that struck me as being almost tailor-made for Inquisitor games and campaigns – the Explorators.

Physically independent, possessed by a singular purpose in their Quest for Knowledge, and with the vast and diverse resources of the Adeptus Mechanicus at their command, an Explorator-led warrior band is fertile territory for players inclined to characters with more metal than muscle.

So, in this article I'll be taking a look at the role and motives of the Explorators, the sorts of characters that might exist in their warrior bands, and the unique wargear that such individuals may possess.

The Adeptus Mechanicus

With its foundations stretching back to before the Horus Heresy, right back through the Age of Strife to the Dark Age of Technology, the Adeptus Mechanicus is the oldest

institution in the Imperium. In fact, it is so old and the power it wields so great, the Adeptus Mechanicus is more akin to an allied empire than part of the Imperium itself.

The reason for this power is straightforward in its origins. The Adeptus Mechanicus has a monopoly on perhaps the most vital resource in the galaxy – knowledge. They control the means by which mighty battleships are constructed, the secrets of Space Marine gene-seed, and the building of warp engines and plasma reactors. Put simply, without the cooperation of the Adepts of Mars, the Imperium would not exist.

Isolated during the Age of Strife, the Adeptus Mechanicus suffered its own trials and tribulations, and from this time arose the worship of the Machine God. The Machine God is the ultimate object of the Techpriests' veneration. It is the Machine God that gave rise to all technologies and made them manifest through his chosen Illuminati among Mankind. To the Mechanicus, machines represent a higher form of life than that thrown up by the crude processes of evolution. The planned perfection of form and function embodied in a machine could only originate from a divine source, using biological or mechanical vessels to embody and pass on its great knowledge. The Machine God can be interpreted as the combined power of machines everywhere, or a self-replicating idea that leads to technologies being the ultimate expression of perfection that can be created by evolved life.



The Quest for Knowledge

To understand the mind of a Techpriest, one must understand the purpose of his being. This is encapsulated within the tenets of the Cult Mechanicus, which dictate the goals and behaviour of every Techpriest. In essence, the Sixteen Universal Laws that rule the thinking of a Techpriest help him understand the nature of life and its relevance to the Machine God, and the ways that a mere mortal can come to comprehend the Machine God. To fully understand the Machine God is the ultimate goal of the Cult Mechanicus, and Techpriests strive to achieve a kind of enlightenment through their studies and biological/mechanical symbiosis. This is generally known as the Quest for Knowledge. Several of the Sixteen Universal Laws deal specifically with the Quest for Knowledge:

The Fourth Universal Law – Intellect is the Understanding of Knowledge: The ability to understand and use knowledge forms the measure of intellect. It is entirely possible for a sentience to realise the value of knowledge/stimulus and yet possess only simplistic levels of it. It is also possible for an archive or holomat to contain a vast font of knowledge and the understanding thereof without apprehending the value of that knowledge. Neither of these two examples would be rated as possessing intellect by Techpriests.

The Fifth Universal Law – Sentience is the Basest Form of Intellect: The commonly held trait of sentience is hence only the first 'tier' of intellect. Intellect is attained through the acquisition and understanding of knowledge.

The Sixth Universal Law – Understanding is the True Path to Comprehension: What all knowledge leads to is comprehension, a level of intellect that encompasses all the knowledge there is to be understood.

The Seventh Universal Law – Comprehension is the Key to all Things: Comprehension of the forces of the universe brings with it the keys to reality, the ability to affect any change or creation desired.

The Eighth Universal Law – The Omnissiah knows all, comprehends all: The Omnissiah is the supreme being, the entity able to comprehend all knowledge in the universe.

It is thus the logic of the Cult Mechanicus that if the Machine God exists (which, of course, it does as far as they are concerned), then all knowledge must already exist, and it is really just a matter of time and effort to put it all into one place. The fact that this Quest for Knowledge has lasted well over ten thousand years does not seem to deter the Techpriests!

All other considerations, including personal comfort, are secondary to the Quest for Knowledge. A devout Techpriest will sacrifice his comrades to heighten his intellect, and will even willingly lay down his life if, in doing so, he can assist the Cult Mechanicus in the Quest for Knowledge.

The Fifteenth Universal Law – Flesh is Fallible, but Ritual Honours the Machine Spirit: Organic components (people) are weak, forgetful and ultimately expendable for the greater glories of the Machine God. The fallibilities of the flesh can be assuaged through the correctly prescribed rituals to enable the enlightened to interact with the Machine Spirit. To so dishonour a Machine Spirit by not undertaking the correct rituals to honour it is a grave crime, and considered extremely risky with certain spirits, for example failing to undertake maintenance rituals on a plasma reactor is sure to end badly.

The Sixteenth Universal Law – To Break with Ritual is to Break with Faith: Techpriests rely on ritual over understanding, every screw turn and button press is precisely documented for every mechanism they build or use. Many Techpriests believe that the slightest deviation is an invitation for disaster and unleashing uncontrollable forces. Others take a more pragmatic view, believing ritual is mainly there to placate Machine Spirits and it can be hurried or even (horrors!) dispensed with altogether if the circumstances dictate – although the Machine Spirit will have to be appeased later.

The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Universal Laws open a window into how the Techpriests approach most situations and deal with unfolding events. They are, on the whole, predictable, unimaginative and low on intuition. Before making an important decision, a Techpriest will always endeavour to seek a precedent that that can accede to – or in their terms, to see if this particular piece of Knowledge has already been discovered.

This means that Techpriests are disinclined to rash or emotional reactions, and it is this attitude that gives them their inhuman air, which in many ways serves to separate them from Humanity as much as their physical alterations. This is not to say that Techpriests are without feelings, and certainly they can be angered or feel fear, but as they grow in experience they are more able to detach themselves from these fleshly weaknesses. A Magos several centuries old will make decisions based upon the relevance of the situation to his Quest for Knowledge and the probabilities of this being advanced or hindered. When confronted by an armed man, the threat to the Magos and the Knowledge he has uncovered and may potentially uncover in the future is paramount, and he is likely to retreat to preserve this. If,

on the other hand, the armed man is guarding a repository of potentially important Knowledge, then the Magos is likely to be confrontational.

When playing an Adeptus Mechanicus character in a scenario or campaign, it is important to understand that these tenets are not guidelines, or even rules. To a greater or lesser extent they are the foundations of the Techpriest's thinking, the paradigm that provides him with a framework to deal with the outside world.

Pro-xenos and Anti-xenos

Individuals may on occasion break one of the Sixteen Universal Laws, through quirk of personality or personal interpretation, active sabotage of their psyche or incorrect instruction into the Cult Mechanicus. Often this will cause great angst within the individual at a later date, suffering the biological equivalent of a repeated error message in his mind. This can be cured with re-programming (or Bio-error Purgation as it is commonly referred to by the Techpriests), but if it is not treated can lead to all manner of psychological problems, leading to greater and greater heresies. This is no more evident than in the conflict between the pro-xenos and anti-xenos factions within the Cult Mechanicus. In many ways this mirrors the Puritan and Radical divide that exists

within the Inquisition, but originates not from a philosophical viewpoint, but rather on interpretation of the Sixteen Universal Laws. As such, in some areas this is an open, theological debate, while on some forge worlds such discussion may itself be deemed worthy of castigation. Much of this stems from the contradictions thrown up by the Eighth Universal Law (often known as the Xenos Testamenta, and also the Prime Warning).

The Eighth Universal Law – The Alien Mechanism is a Perversion of the True Path: Alien science is twisted and perverse, a corruption of the pure thought of the Machine God. Most aliens enslave Machine Spirits to their will without showing them proper respect, hence their creations are invariably rebellious, dangerous and corrupt – rather like bound Daemons in Mechanicus Lore.

The pro-xenos believe that even though it has been corrupted, the knowledge to be found within alien technology, and ancient archeotech for that matter, can be salvaged for the Quest for Knowledge. Thus comprehension of xenos tech is paramount to the continued mission of the Adeptus Mechanicus and should be embraced.

Opposed to these thinkers are the anti-xenos, who believe that the corrupted knowledge within alien technology is no different from the knowledge that can be found in honest-to-goodness human technology. They ridicule the idea that somehow aliens could be privy to different knowledge to Humanity, and instead point to the perversions of the Machine God that have been created as lures away from the true path to understanding.

There are also those who think that much can be learned from xeno artefacts in the right conditions, but Techpriests are at risk of being immolated in some accident or corrupted by alien ideas. Many forge worlds officially ban the study of alien artefacts, others allow it but only under the most rigorous monitoring and restrictions. Nonetheless many Magos study alien artefacts in secret, hoarding their knowledge for fear of reprisals.

Just as with the Inquisition, this conflict can sometimes become physical, and the weight of belief varies widely from one forge world to the next, and may even be influenced by the beliefs of the most senior ranking Magi at any given time. Thus a pro-xenos inclined Fabricator General of a forge world may instigate several programs of research into alien tech, and direct his Explorators to locate such things for study. By the time the Explorators return, if ever they do, an anti-xenos Fabricator General has ascended to command and the expedition may well be declared heretical and hunted down.



Character Types

All of this is very interesting of course, and should help players and GMs devise suitably tenet-shattering revelations for their Techpriests to endure. However, I promised at the start of this article to look at some of the unique character types that the Adeptus Mechanicus provide.

Explorators

Explorators form something of a breed apart in the Cult Mechanicus, though any Techpriest is free to join their ranks. Explorators undertake the Quest for Knowledge across the stars, seeking out undiscovered data and uncatalogued phenomena, forgotten archeotech hordes and unknown life forms. Research stations, exploration ships and outposts any distance from a forge world are likely to be manned by Explorators, intrepid (most Techpriests would say foolhardy) adventurers delving in the unexplored reaches of the galaxy.

Explorators have found many of the greatest prizes in the Quest for Knowledge, and their role in many other affairs has been key to their success. However, countless Explorators also meet with grisly deaths in the hostile galaxy they discover and, on mercifully rare occasions, their ill-conceived prying has unleashed cataclysmic horrors on Mankind.

An Explorator is not physically different from the Techpriest and Magos as defined in Inquisitor already. However, he will be the senior-ranking official in the warrior band. In addition, you should decide how far along the pro-xenos/anti-xenos track your Explorator is, as this can give rise to all manner of interesting scenarios, and in the case of a pro-xenos Techpriest, also some intriguing options for using alien wargear (whether suitably modified or unmodified by the bearer is up to you).



Engineers

Engineers are highly trained members of the Cult Mechanicus, often assigned to duties in the Imperial Guard or other parts of the Adeptus Terra. An Engineer is well versed with Machine Spirits of all kinds, and capable of coaxing the most recalcitrant into operation with the correct liturgies and rituals. Within the Cult Mechanicus Engineers are accorded little respect as their skills are seldom used directly in the Quest for Knowledge, rather they are viewed as lowly but essential cogs in the workings of the Cult.

	WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
Engineer	45	40	45	50	45	65	60	55	55
Random	40+D10	35+D10	35+2D10	40+2D10	40+D10	60+2D6	55+D10	45+2D10	50+D10

Servitors

Servitors are altered humanoids that have had limbs and other body parts replaced with cybernetics and machinery. They are mind wiped and mentally reprogrammed to be able to perform simple tasks and obey specific instructions. Often a criminal, and particularly those who have offended the Cult Mechanicus, will be sentenced to Servitude Imperpituis and will be handed over to the Techpriests for modification. There are many different types of Servitors, but a few are detailed below.

Servitor command: All Servitors use the basic profile given below, modified by type as noted later. A Servitor must be given commands otherwise it will default to its programmed behaviour. Commands must usually come from a single authorised individual (the Inquisitor or Techpriest in charge) but in some circumstances secondary authority may be given to other members of the warrior band. These commands must usually be given verbally, by some Techpriests may have MIUs installed into a Servitor, or allow some other form of remote activation.

Equipment: Servitors are usually heavily modified with bionics, although these will almost always be crude or average in terms of their sophistication. If you wish to randomly generate a Servitor, then D6+1 body locations will be bionic. For each location, roll a D6, on a 1-3 the part is crude, on a 4-6 it is average. If the chest is bionic the character will have bionic lungs and heart. If the head is generated, the character will have bionics for all senses.

Special Abilities: Force of Will (or No Will would be more appropriate); Nerves of Steel; True Grit. A Servitor may have a remote MIU implanted in which case it will count as a Familiar.

	WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
Servitor	0	30	60	60	25	90	10	120	5
Random	25+D10	25+D10	50+2D10	50+2D10	20+D10	85+2D6	5+D10	100+4D10	D10

Technical Servitors

Technical Servitors are a common sight in the Imperium, they are not really intended for combat but are very useful in assisting battlefield operations. These are often referred to as mono-tasks, being physically changed and augmented to perform a specific function. Commonly they are used as load-lifters and cranes, but more exotic mono-tasks include the heavy weapon mount and the mobile weapons rack. These are the standard Servitors that accompany a Techpriest.

Combat Servitors

Combat Servitors are modified mono-task lifters intended to fight in close combat, they are normally equipped with the equivalent of a power fist and close combat weapon (claw, chainblade, saw, breacher). This will is an Implant Weapon. Combat Servitors have +20 WS.

Gun Servitors

Gun Servitors are intended to provide fire support for the Techpriest while he works. Often they will have whole limbs replaced as an Implant Weapon. This can be any type of basic weapon. Gun Servitors have +20BS, and the Hipshooting ability. They may also be fitted with ammunition hoppers to confer the quickload ability.

Praetorian Servitors

Praetorians are intended to provide complete protection for the Techpriest on the battlefield. They are elite cyborg warriors which bodyguard the Magos and protect temples, shrines and other facilities threatened with direct attack. Heavily armed and armoured they typically mass over twice the bulk of a man or more, with tracks or jointed legs to carry their immense weight. Some Praetorians are created from vat-grown giants or mind-scrubbed Ogryns. All are designed to intimidate, and if necessary, obliterate. Praetorians may be either Combat or Gun Servitors as detailed above. In addition to the rules listed for these Servitor types, a gun Praetorian may mount a heavy weapon. Praetorians also gain the Deflect Shot ability, although this is to represent their extremely armoured nature rather than preternatural reflexes, and this may never be deflected back to the firer. They also receive the following bonuses to their characteristics:

	WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
Servitor	+15	+15	+20	+20	+10	-	+10	+20	-
Random	+4D6	+4D6	+4D10	+4D10	+3D6	-	+2D10	+4D10	-



Skitarii

The Skitarii are forge guards, human soldiers with basic bionic augmentations for communication, weapon links and sensory feeds. Some are more favoured than others, and those in the retinue of an Explorator may well have been blessed by mechanical and alchemical manipulation by their master.

Treat Skitarii as Imperial Guard veterans, although they are more likely to have wargear such as combat drugs, and also at least one body part is likely to be bionic. Their weaponry may well be implanted and they are generally issued with plenty of ammunition!

Electro-priest

Also known as Luminen or 'the spark of life', Electro-priests are living generators, capable of coursing energy into anything they touch. The bodies of Electro-priests are covered in spiralling electroo circuits, metal-based tattoos which coil about their bodies like a magneto. Electro grafts in their nervous system allow them to generate a crackling fount of electrical energy through their copper etched palms, the charge building as the Luminen works himself into a ecstatic frenzy until the priest collapses from physical exhaustion. Electro-priests use their power to 'resurrect' powerless artefacts or to destroy enemies of the Machine God like bolts of living lightning.

	WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
Electro-priest	65	50	55	65	65	80	70	70	50
Random	55+2D10	45+D10	45+2D10	55+2D10	60+D10	75+2D6	65+D10	50+4D10	45+D10

Abilities: Furious Assault

Wargear: Electroos; Rite of Pure Thought

Wargear

The following are new pieces of wargear available to Explorator Warrior bands and other Techpriest characters.

Familiars

Each of the following is 'wired-in' to the Techpriest and therefore follows the rules for being a Familiar.

Haemoncolyte

Haemoncolytes are vat-grown creatures formed from the Techpriest's own flesh and blood. They are typically created to cleanse the Techpriests' organic components of poisons and tumours, any such imperfections being passed along an umbilical and absorbed by the Haemoncolyte. They are ugly and dwarfish to begin with and over time they age rapidly, becoming covered in liver spots and lumpy growths. A Haemoncolyte adds +30 to all of the Techpriest's resistance rolls.

Techno-mat

Techno-mats are tethered Servitors which attend to the functions of a Techpriest's organic components, freeing them from the fallacies of the flesh in the pursuit of knowledge. Carefully monitored nutrients and stimulants are fed to the Techpriest continuously from the attendant servo-mat. A techno-mat allows the Techpriest to re-roll his Toughness test when attempting to recover.

Grafts and Implants

These are specialised bionic upgrades available to Techpriests and their minions.

Electoos

Metallicised strips bonded sub-dermally enable the Techpriest to channel limited amounts of energy like the renowned Electro-priests. Any close combat attack by the character also counts as a shock weapon.

Electro-grafts

More extensive subdermal implanting which allows users to interface directly with data sources and instantaneously acquire skills. Vulnerable to hard knocks and shocks. Essentially these convey an ability such as Deadeye Shot, Fast Draw or similar. A character with electro-grafts reduces their Toughness by 10 when testing for system shock.

Rite of Pure Thought

Considered an extreme measure even among some Techpriests, the rite of pure thought has become accepted practice over the millennia. The creative, emotional, illogical right hemisphere of the brain is replaced with a cogitator linked directly to the left hemisphere. This gives the devotee pure thought clear of distraction from emotions or any annoying sense of self-preservation. The character gains the Force of Will and Nerves of Steel skills.

Servo-harness

An articulated armature cage employed by Techpriests when undertaking arduous rites in plasma reactors or the maintenance of substantial Machine Spirits like Super-heavy tanks. The character is at half Initiative (including calculating Speed), but his Strength is doubled. He may fire heavy weapons one-handed.

Autosanguination

Some Techpriests exsanguinate themselves in order to replace their blood with a more efficient medium, usually topped up from a portable alembic carried externally. The sanguinous medium is able to plug holes and rebuild torn flesh with remarkable efficiency. The character adds +20 to his Toughness when working out his base Injury value.

Binary cortex

It is not uncommon for two Techpriests working on the same mysteries to coincide so entirely in their thinking that they decide to link up in a very literal sense. Both brains are linked to a single body so that they can work more efficiently together, a choice much admired by other priests, particularly for the one who accepts the burden of remaining clothed in flesh. Unfortunately,

these two personalities do not necessarily agree on the best course of action at any given moment. The character adds 70 to his Sg value, and gains the Heroic skill. However, roll a D6 at the start of any turn, on a roll of a 1, the two minds have a disagreement and the character is at -1 Speed that turn.



Archeotech wargear

Explorators unearth all manner of strange weaponry from alien civilisations and the Dark Age of Technology. This presents some interesting gaming opportunities for players with an Explorator warband.

A character may have one or more pieces of archeotech, which must be given a suitably impressive and yet informative name. A few characterful examples are given



later. The effects of the archeotech can be represented by one of the psychic powers given in *Inquisitor*. In the same way that psychic powers are used, the Techpriest can attempt to use his archeotech as an action. Instead of using his Wp, the Techpriest must use his Sg for the test. The difficulty of the ability (or in this case complexity) is applied as normal.

Like a Psychic test, using archeotech is a risky action, the Techpriest can attempt to concentrate first and may suffer the equivalent of a psychic overload. In the case of Sg test failure, there is a chance of the archeotech being rendered useless for the remainder of the game, equal to the amount the test was failed by. If the risky action is failed, this chance is equal to 150 minus the character's Sg. Obviously, archeotech cannot be nullified. In the case of an ability that is a ranged attack, there is no modifier to the test and, if successfully used the Techpriest must roll to hit as normal, counting the archeotech as range band D. You may also want such weapons to have ammunition capacities and recharge times. Archeotech has a weight equal to its complexity rating.

Example archeotech items

The Spatial Impasse Generator: This suit of Eldar origin enables the bearer to briefly slip into warp space and shift their location, passing through enemies, walls and any other type of barrier. The spatial impasse generator uses the Teleportation ability.

Tac-nuke Pistol: Though not much larger than a stub pistol, this potent weapon can fire a projectile capable of blowing up a small building. The tac-nuke pistol makes a ranged attack like the Firestorm ability.

Sub-conduit Cortex Scanner: Able to measure the minute variations in the electrical field of a creature's brain, the sub-conduit cortex scanner is able to relay this information via an implant in the sensory arrays of the wearer. This effectively gives the character the Mind Scan ability.

Author

*Gav Thorpe is a Games Workshop stalwart as well as being author to many books and *Inquisitor*.*

Further Information

*There are currently two *Inquisitor* Techpriest models in the range. These are Delpban Gruss and Techpriest Tezla. Both can be purchased from Games Workshop Direct.*

More *Inquisitor*

Turn the page 6 for the Judge.

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