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The Profession of Arms

How social class affects promotion in the legions

Tsolyánu, like almost all advanced societies, is stratified. Positions of authority are usually allocated as much on the basis of clan and lineage as on ability. In theory, the three ‘grand careers’ (Army, Priesthood and Civil Service) provide ladders of social advancement for all Tsolyáni. In practice, social class is the over-riding factor in such advancement.

These rules are for the legions, but the same principle can be extended to other walks of Tsolyáni life. The core concept is that a character who is competent in his career will quickly rise to a position that corresponds to his social class—and rarely further than that. A notably talented or courageous soldier thus could make it all the way to the top (as some indeed have), but the notion that the system is fully egalitarian is not true.

The legions are divided into seven categories according to the prestige they hold, ranging from ‘Elite & Exalted’ to ‘Lowly’. (I am indebted to Jack Bramah for classifying the legions into these categories, a process which he based on the type and quality of the troops, the ability of the general, and the unit’s history and battle honours.)

The table on this page shows the Social Status (see *TIRIKELU* page 4) for the different ranks. This table abrogates the method given in *TIRIKELU* (sidebar, page 5) for calculating the Social Status of different ranks.

Promotion

A soldier can apply for promotion on first joining the legion, at the end of each year of service, and at any time that he distinguishes himself in action. Use the following procedure:

1: In the case of Heavy or Medium Infantry find the average of the character’s Comeliness, Intelligence and Strength. In the case of Light Infantry take the average of Comeliness, Intelligence and Dexterity. (This Assumes the use of *TIRIKELU*, *RuneQuest*, *GURPS* or some other rules system in which attributes broadly fall in the range 1–20. For *Adventures on Tésumé*, first divide all percentile attributes by five.)

2: Average the result of 1 with the character’s Soldier level.

3: Use the result of 2 to make a standard 2D10 check subject to the following modifiers: +2 per level by which the character’s current Social Status exceeds that of the rank he’s applying for; +1 for every four months’ salary (at the rank applied for) offered as inducement; +1 per level of Tactician/Strategist; +1 for recent battle honours.

Results

Results of this check are interpreted as follows:

Critical failure: Demoted one rank.

Ordinary failure: Try again next year.

Ordinary success: No immediate promotion, but try again in six months with an additional +1 modifier.

Critical success: Promoted one rank.

(This is based on the 2D10 skill-check system used in *TIRIKELU*. Critical success is a roll of half the number needed for success, or lower. If you need to roll 14 or less, for instance, then a critical success would be a roll of 7 or less. Too high a roll—in this case 18 or more—indicates a critical failure.)

Recruitment

The same procedure is used on first joining a legion, recruitment being considered as ‘promotion’ to the rank of ordinary trooper.

For example: Tlangten hiSsanyusa applies to join the Legion of Red Devastation. Strength 14, Intelligence 11 and Comeliness 11 yield an average of 12. When he makes his application Tlangten has not as yet acquired any levels of Soldier, so this brings the basis for the 2D10 check down to 6 (the average of 12 and 0, rounded up). Tlangten’s Social Status is 9, which is 4 higher than the norm for a trooper in an Elite & Exalted legion, and his clan also offers the recruiting officer an inducement of 60 Kaitars, giving a total bonus of +9 on the 2D10 check. A 15 or less is needed for ordinary success, with critical success (indicating acceptance into the legion) on a roll of 2-8.

War gaming

When running a legion-based game, it’s often Assumed that player characters must be officers in order to be viable. This isn’t so. Consider the disadvantages. Firstly, having officers as characters will often embroil the game in the details of military action, which might not appeal to players who dislike table-topping. Also, characters of high rank will often be required to act alone. Five Kasi and a Molkar won’t often be asked to undertake a mission together; five Kuruthuni and their Tirrikamu might.

The aSsúmpTION apparently derives from players’ perception of an ordinary soldier’s status. In our world, the profession of soldiering carries little status. The ‘poor bloody infantry’ are predominantly drawn from disadvantaged social groups. This has generally not been the case in non-technological civilizations such as Tsolyánu.

Players prefer officer characters because they dislike the idea of being ordered around. But Tsolyáni discipline need not be predicated on the ‘scum of the earth’ philosophy that officers in our culture have held since Wellington’s day. The Tsolyáni soldier begins from a basis of self-discipline and an awareness that his place in the scheme of things is potentially glorious. For him, insubordination is not a gesture of defiance in the face of an arrogant aristocracy—it’s just a quick way for him to lose face and disgrace his family name. Since a capable soldier genuinely can rise right through the ranks, the effective segregation between officers and enlisted men that applies in the case of a 20th century army would not hold for Tsolyánu. A better way for players to conceive the true status of their position would be to imagine a Kuruthuni as equivalent in status terms to a lieutenant of the Britsh Army.

SOCIAL STATUS OF LEGIONARIES							
RANK							
LEGION	Tpr	Sgt	Lt	Capt	Maj	Col	Gen
Elite & Exalted	5	6	8	11	18	22	30
Venerable	4	5	7	10	16	17	28
Distinguished	3	4	7	9	15	16	25
Notable	3	4	6	8	13	15	20
Average	2	3	5	7	12	14	17
Mediocre	1	2	4	6	8	10	14
Lowly	1	1	2	3	5	6	10